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## Iraq: The Illegal War

### 1. Introduction

On May 1, 2003, President George W. Bush stood on the flight deck of the USS Lincoln, off the coast of San Diego, California, and told the United States (U.S.) that “major combat operations in Iraq have ended...the United States and our allies have prevailed.”<sup>1</sup> He went on to explain that, in the 21 days that U.S. troops spent fighting to overthrow Saddam Hussein, the United States was more secure and Iraq was free.

It is now 2009, almost six years since George W. Bush delivered his infamous “Mission Accomplished” speech, and despite the optimistic points he made about the hard work being done to rebuild Iraq and secure the safety of the U.S., the U.S. is not secure and Iraq is neither free nor has it been rebuilt. In fact, the country is now in a state of total destruction and has lost over 99,000 of its civilians.

There is a great deal of controversy over the legality of the U.S. invasion of Iraq, and George W. Bush’s speech is only one early piece of the evidence that proves him a liar about what is really going on between the U.S. and Iraq. He told his country that “the citizens of Iraq...welcomed our troops,”<sup>2</sup> when in fact, the people of Iraq did not want the United States interfering with nor occupying their country. He told us that new tactics and

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**1** George W. Bush. “Bush makes historic speech aboard warship [transcript].” CNN, May 1, 2003, Thursday; <http://www.cnn.com/2003/US/05/01/bush.transcript/index.html> (accessed April 9, 2009).

**2** Ibid.

precision weapons allowed our troops to “achieve military objectives without directing violence against civilians.”<sup>3</sup> Either he lied or decided that, once those first 21 days in Iraq had passed, it was no longer worthwhile to protect the hundreds of thousands of Iraqi civilians who have now been killed by the violence resulting from the war. And then he proceeded to tell the country the biggest lie of all, one which one out of every three Americans still believes:<sup>4</sup> “The battle of Iraq is one victory in a war on terror that began on September the 11th, 2001.”<sup>5</sup>

President George W. Bush went to great lengths to create the perfect setting in which to feed the world lies about the war that he claimed was over. But it was just the early days of a war that should not have been fought in the first place. Investigation conducted during the past six years of the U.S.’s occupation of Iraq has proven that the Iraq War is being fought on false grounds, many of which were built by lies told to the U.S. by government officials, and by the president himself. The facts point to only one conclusion: The Iraq War is an illegal war.

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**3 Ibid.**

**4 Steven Lee Myers, “Americans Feel Military is Best at Ending the War,” *New York Times*, September 10, 2007; [http://www.nytimes.com/2007/09/10/washington/10poll.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/09/10/washington/10poll.html?_r=1) (accessed April 10, 2009).**

**5 Bush, *Speech*.**

## 2. Legality of the War

Lack of international support was a major reason why the Bush administration did not receive approval from the United Nations (U.N.) to enter into the war. U.N. approval may have been unofficially excused in an environment of worldwide enthusiasm for action against Iraq, but the Bush administration received no such enthusiasm, and it remains a primary criticism against the U.S. invasion.

...a great deal of the criticism has its roots in the view that the United States attack on Iraq lacked an unambiguous mandate from the United Nations – or at least broad-based international support. As such it is viewed as a retrogressive step away from the establishment of a global order based on international law.<sup>6</sup>

The fact that the United States attacked Iraq makes a mockery of the U.N.'s system. If the U.N. did not approve the Bush administration to move forward in its attack on Iraq, and yet we remain in the war six years later, the U.N. cannot be considered a legitimate organization.

The U.N.'s laws regarding the prohibition of force, the necessity of negotiation, and the exception of self-defense are explicitly stated in the U.N. Charter:

Article 2, paragraphs 3 and 4:  
2(3). All Members shall settle their international disputes by peaceful means in such a manner that international peace and security, and justice, are not endangered.  
2(4) All Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or

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<sup>6</sup> Frederik Willem de Klerk, *The Iraq War and Its Consequences*, "American Leadership in a Globalised World: 9/11, Iraq and Beyond" (New Jersey: World Scientific Publishing Co., 2003), 83.

in any other manner inconsistent with the purposes of the United Nations.

Article 33:

1. The parties to any dispute, the continuance of which is likely to endanger the maintenance of international peace and security, shall, first of all, seek a solution by negotiation, enquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, judicial settlement, resort to regional agencies or arrangements, or other peaceful means of their own choice.
2. The Security Council shall, when it deems necessary, call upon the parties to settle their dispute by such means.

Article 51:

Nothing in the present Charter shall impair the inherent right of individual or collective self-defense if an armed attack occurs against a Member of the United Nations, until the Security Council has taken measures necessary to maintain international peace and security. Measures taken by Members in the exercise of this right of self-defense shall be immediately reported to the Security Council and shall not in any way affect the authority and responsibility of the Security Council under the present Charter to take at any time such action as it deems necessary in order to maintain or restore international peace and security.<sup>7</sup>

The Bush administration did not acknowledge any of the aforementioned articles of the U.N. Charter. George W. Bush and his advisors wanted to go to war with Iraq for many reasons other than alleged threats to the safety of the United States. It is not surprising that, “in contrast [to Article 33, regarding negotiation], the Bush administration [did] its best to undermine efforts to achieve a peaceful solution through negotiation.”<sup>8</sup> There was a myriad of alternative solutions that precluded war, and George W. Bush could have taken advantage of any number of them. However, he made no effort to reach a “peaceful solution.”

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<sup>7</sup> Charter of the United Nations;” <http://www.un.org/aboutun/charter> (accessed March 10, 2009).

<sup>8</sup> Rai, War Plan Iraq, 143.

If Iraq posed an active threat of armed attack to the United States after 9/11, the Bush administration would have had reasonable cause to attack. But no amount of threats equates to proof of a possible armed attack. Moreover, the attack on Iraq was not self-defense in any way.

The use of armed force in self-defense is justified only when the need for action is ‘instant, overwhelming, leaving no choice of means, and no moment for deliberation. The threat to the United States and Britain from Iraq [was] not of this kind.’<sup>9</sup>

Because the attack on Iraq was not self-defense, it was not legal.

Furthermore, there is no proven link between the terrorist attacks on 9/11 and Iraq, but the Bush administration wanted the American people to believe that there was:

A leading figure in this effort [to link Iraq to the terrorist attacks on September 11<sup>th</sup>] has been former CIA director James Woolsey. Mr. Woolsey’s sponsor within the U.S. Administration, Donald Rumsfeld, the Defense Secretary, was ‘so determined to find a rationale’ for an attack on Iraq that ‘on ten separate occasions he asked the CIA to find evidence linking Iraq to the terrorist attacks of September 11.’ Unfortunately for Mr. Woolsey and Mr. Rumsfeld, ‘The intelligence agencies repeatedly came back empty handed.’<sup>10</sup>

Even in the days immediately following the events of September 11<sup>th</sup>, it was common knowledge that al-Qaeda was responsible for the attacks. Major General Amos Malka, head of Israel intelligence, was quoted in late September 2001 as saying “I don’t see a direct link between Iraq and the hijackings...there is no Iraqi angle or infrastructure that

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 144.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 127.

we can point to at this stage.”<sup>11</sup> Britain held, and continues to hold, the same stance on Iraq’s lack of involvement in the September 11<sup>th</sup> terrorist attacks: “Since the first days of the crisis, the British government have held unwaveringly to the line that there is no link between Iraq and September 11<sup>th</sup>.”<sup>12</sup> While the events of September 11<sup>th</sup> were tragic for the U.S., both our allies and our enemies know that we cannot blame our current state of war on such events.

Something about the aftermath of the September 11<sup>th</sup> terrorist attacks did work in the Bush administration’s favor, though: Iraq’s public adulation of the atrocities:

...at the time of the September 11 atrocities, headlines read, ‘Iraq stands alone as Arab world offers sympathy and regrets.’ The Iraqi response to the tragedies in New York and Washington, D.C. was interpreted as gloating.”<sup>13</sup>

Because Iraq as a nation did not provide support or sympathy to America after the attacks, and the people of the United States had already been fed lies by the Bush administration about Iraq’s direct connection to the terrorist attacks, Iraq was wrongly singled out as being responsible for the pain that America was going through. At such a fearful and emotional time, it is not surprising that the American people latched on to a theory that provided them with a scapegoat for the terrorism the country had recently faced.

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11 *Ibid.*, 128.

12 *Ibid.*

13 *Ibid.*, 129.

Airstrikes against Afghanistan and the pursuit of Osama bin Laden began only weeks after 9/11. However, despite evidence that Iraq was not connected to the attacks, the Bush Administration continued prodding for some way to link Saddam Hussein to al-Qaeda. After extensive research, the CIA determined that “there is no evidence that Iraq has engaged in terrorist operations against the United States in nearly a decade, and... President Saddam Hussein has not provided chemical or biological weapons to Al Qaeda or related terrorist groups.”<sup>14</sup> Iraq was not involved with the events of September 11<sup>th</sup> and a war was not going to change that fact.

As efforts to capture Osama bin Laden failed, President Bush succeeded in diverting the attention of the American people from bin Laden to Saddam Hussein:

How Bush and his junta succeeded in deflecting America’s anger from bin Laden to Saddam Hussein is one of the great public-relations conjuring tricks of history. But they swung it. A recent poll tells us that one in two Americans now believe Saddam was responsible for the attack on the World Trade Center.<sup>15</sup>

By early 2002, intelligence and military resources were being shifted from Afghanistan to Iraq, in what many believed to be an inevitable march toward war with Iraq.

Meanwhile, the Bush administration increased the rhetoric against Hussein and claimed that Iraq posed an imminent threat to the safety of America and the world. Bush even created a new “Axis of Evil,” grouping Iraq along with North Korea and Iran as rogue nations. Iraq thus became a focal target of the War on Terror, presented as a

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14 Ibid., 131.

15 John Le Carré, Not One More Death, *“The United States Has Gone Mad,”* 13.

dangerous and destabilizing force in the Middle East. Administration officials, including Vice President Dick Cheney, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz, repeatedly claimed that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction and would strike the U.S. if we did not strike first. These threats resonated with the American people, who were still reeling from the attacks on 9/11.

The U.S. never found evidence of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in Iraq, either before or after the war. Once it was confirmed that Iraq did not possess these weapons, and therefore posed no imminent threat to America, the Bush administration did not have a valid argument for war, and they were quite aware of it.

Both our governments [U.S. and British] knew there was no link between 9/11 and Iraq. They knew (from eight years of inspections and ten years of bombing and sanctions) that Iraq was not actually developing chemical, biological, or nuclear weapons...<sup>16</sup>

If the Iraq War was legal, the government would not have had to keep any information about the lack of WMD in Iraq from its people.

On October 16, 2002, President Bush signed a U.S. Congressional Resolution authorizing the use of force in Iraq, while claiming that force would only be used as a last resort. The United Nations, however, continued to oppose a similar UN resolution that was being pushed by both Britain and the U.S. In early 2003, as a final attempt to enter into the war legally, the United States endeavored to have the use of force against Iraq authorized by the U.N., but they were unsuccessful: :

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<sup>16</sup> Brian Eno, Not One More Death, *"The Missionary Position,"* (New York: Verso, 2006), 5.

As to Iraq, the United States attempted, particularly during the first months of 2003, to convince the Members of the Security Council to adopt a Resolution authorizing the use of force against Iraq, but without success. Without an expressed authorization by the Security Council, the invasion of Iraq was manifestly contrary to the Charter, hence illegal.<sup>17</sup>

Because the Bush Administration was not given permission by the United Nations to enter into the war with Iraq, and Iraq made no armed attacks on the United States, attacking Iraq was illegal:

...the war was illegal. It cannot be contended that the threat of an armed attack was real and imminent. Against the United States? Against one of its allies (but a request for help would have been needed)? No sign of such a threat has been found.<sup>18</sup>

The U.S. did not attack Iraq to protect its people. The U.S. did not attack Iraq because Iraq posed an active threat. The U.S. did not attack Iraq because the UN deemed it an appropriate action. The use of force against Iraq was illegal.

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**17** Dominicé, *The Iraq War and Its Consequences*, 140.

**18** Dominicé, *The Iraq War and Its Consequences*, 139.

### 3. The Bush Administration's Justification for the War

Weapons of mass destruction were the primary reason the Bush administration gave America for going to war with Iraq. Though George W. Bush led the American people to believe that Saddam Hussein of Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction, Saddam Hussein did not in fact possess such weapons, and George W. Bush knew this all along.

As every single person here knows, the justification for the invasion of Iraq was that Saddam Hussein possessed a highly dangerous body of weapons of mass destruction, some of which could be fired in 45 minutes, bringing about appalling devastation. We were assured that was true. It was not true.<sup>19</sup>

As the Bush administration made plans for going to war with Iraq, the American people were in a state of heartbreak and loss, due to the events of September 11. Before the American people could be convinced that war with Iraq was a good idea, the Bush administration had to assure them that Saddam Hussein harbored weapons of mass destruction and represented an imminent threat to the security of America. Bush administration officials, including Vice President Dick Cheney, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, and Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, had to sell the war, and they used propaganda and manipulation of the media to do so:

To sell a war with Iraq, [Ahmed] Chalabi's people realized that it was essential to link Iraq somehow with al-Qaeda...In short order, the INC [Information Collection Program] produced a series of new defectors saying that Iraq was working with

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<sup>19</sup> Harold Pinter, Not One More Death, *“Art, Truth, and Politics,”* 24.

al-Qaeda and preparing to supply terrorists with weapons of mass destruction.<sup>20</sup>

The administration used all tools in their power to manipulate the media and convince the American people that the Iraq War was just.

Most people did not have a wide enough range of knowledge to fully understand the distinction between the War on Terror and war with Iraq. Almost everything the American people were told through the media and by the government was either fabricated, or exaggerated, or completely lacking in truth. Harold Pinter wrote,

We were told that Iraq had a relationship with al-Qaeda and shared responsibility for the atrocity in New York on September 11, 2001. We were assured that this was true. It was not true.<sup>21</sup>

We were told that Iraq threatened the security of the world. We were assured it was true. It was not true.<sup>22</sup>

Another lie that the Bush administration told the American people was that Iraq provided al-Qaeda with supplies to use against the United States. It was never proven that Iraq was in any way linked with al-Qaeda, nor were they proved to be supplying terrorists with weapons or money:

The former Iraqi exile group that gave the Bush administration exaggerated and fabricated intelligence on Iraq also fed much of the same information to leading newspapers, news agencies,

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**20 Sheldon Rampton and John Stauber, The Best War Ever (New York: Center for Media and Democracy, 2006), 106.**

**21 Pinter, Not One More Death, 24.**

**22 Ibid.**

and magazines in the United States, Britain, and Australia.<sup>23</sup>

If the American people had better understood the details of the Iraq War, the Bush administration would not have had nearly as much support as they did to enter the war.

It was so unclear why the war was going on that, when the American people learned that Iraq did not possess weapons of mass destruction, the majority of the country did not consider how little power Iraq held. When America learned that Iraq possessed no weapons of mass destruction, any fear of threat from Iraq should have been completely disregarded, considering that Iraq is a third-world country and does not have the means to launch an attack against America.

Aside from manipulation of the media, the Bush administration used the emotions of the American people to gather support for the war. After al-Qaeda's attacks on the United States, the American people were in a very vulnerable state; it is understandable that most of them believed what they were told about the connection between Iraq and al-Qaeda. It was easier and safer not to question what they were told, and not only did the Bush administration target the emotions of the American people, but they also made a point of telling the American people how convenient the war would be.

“It's clear now...that Iraq had nothing to do with al-Qaeda, which was after all the supposed target. But in the end a war in Iraq suited a lot of people who were happy to

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 107.

actively promote it, or at least approve of it or, if nothing else, not disapprove.”<sup>24</sup>

Also, because the war was not fought on home turf, and American citizens did not witness the atrocities of it, they only saw the convenience the war held for so many different groups of people.

It [the war] suited the Bushmen, with their certainty that the American way was the *right* way, and their desire to finish what the first Gulf War had started. It suited sections of the military, anxious to read-test new weaponry and tactics. It suited arms dealers and weapons companies. It suited the oilman, because it offered control over the tap, and weakened OPEC and the Saudis correspondingly. It suited the Israeli Right, so disproportionately represented in the White House, to have a potential enemy neutralized, and at the same time to send the strongest of signals to other ‘rogue states’ in the region. It suited the Evangelical Christians, who saw this war as a step on the road to Rapture. It suited the Evangelical Democratizers, who thought that free-market capitalist democracy could be planted anywhere, anytime, and that things would certainly be better if it were. It suited the oil-hungry American economy, which saw the chance of global hegemony and wanted a big army in the Middle East, from there to keep an eye on things. It suited the idealists – and there were many– who regarded Saddam as a monster who had to be removed (but unfortunately didn’t ask the question ‘And then what?’). And it suited Tony Blair, perhaps for some of the obvious reasons, but perhaps mostly because he wanted to be leading from the front with his hero-pal, two crusaders for freedom. And it suited the hollow men and straw men – the apparatchiks of Blair’s government – because, beyond anything else, they are people weak in mind and spirit who just want to be on the team that’s winning.<sup>25</sup>

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24 Eno, Not One More Death, 4.

25 Eno, Not One More Death, 4.

At this point, war seemed not only inevitable but also perversely justified, at least to the largely uninformed American public.

The terrorist attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup> allowed George W. Bush an opportunity to begin a war that he wished for for years. Conspiracy theorists believe that President Bush had prior knowledge of the 9/11 attacks, because the terrorist acts provided “just cause” to begin a war with Iraq. Others believe that part of the reason George W. Bush wanted the war was to seek revenge on Saddam Hussein, who had attempted to kill George Bush Sr. years ago when the ex-president visited Kuwait. There was an attempted assassination, which the CIA believed to be the work of Saddam Hussein. George W. Bush may have had motive to overthrow Saddam Hussein because, “That man tried to kill my Daddy.”<sup>26</sup>

Today there lies much ambiguity as to whether or not there was an attempted assassination of George Bush Sr. Forensic writer Seymour Hersh demolished the assassination plot in an article in the “New Yorker” many years later.<sup>27</sup> However, Hersh’s article is not known as official truth. Whether the assassination was attempted or not, rumors of such assassination attempt are no basis on which to begin a war. Furthermore, Iraq is not a terrorist state, and there was no rationalization for George W. Bush to attack a sovereign country under the banner of the War on Terror, if not for personal reasons:

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<sup>26</sup> le Carré, Not One More Death, 14.

<sup>27</sup> Milan Rai. War Plan Iraq. [New York, NY: Arrow Publications, 2002], 132.

‘It’s [Iraq] not a terrorist state. The only thing that Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden have in common is hatred of the United States.’ Saddam Hussein ‘is primarily a problem of hostile military power. He may get weapons of mass destruction or he may not. But it’s a pretty traditional enemy.’ An editorial in the *Independent* observes, ‘If Saddam wants to sponsor anti-American terrorism he has had plenty of opportunity; he has either been uninterested or unsuccessful.’<sup>28</sup>

If this is the case, George W. Bush must have fabricated reasons why the United States is at risk for Iraqi terrorist attacks in order to get the revenge he so desperately wanted for alleged assassination attempts of his father.

The effects of the war were severely underestimated before it began. Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz felt that “overthrowing Saddam Hussein’s regime would be the hard part, and that spreading democracy in Iraq and throughout the Middle East would be the easy part.”<sup>29</sup> In reality, overthrowing Saddam Hussein’s regime took only 21 days, while spreading democracy has taken six years and counting. Kenneth Adelman, former head of the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency in the Reagan Administration, was quoted as saying that “the Iraqi intervention would be ‘a cakewalk.’”<sup>30</sup> Richard Perle assumed that “the Iraqi people would rise up spontaneously in support of U.S. interventionary forces, making their [America’s] job far easier than it would be if they had to fight a hostile population.”<sup>31</sup> Unfortunately for said U.S.

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28 *Ibid.*, 131.

29 William D. Hartung, *The Iraq War and Its Consequences*, “*The Hidden Costs of War: How the Bush Doctrine is Undermining Democracy in Iraq and Democracy in America*,” 176.

30 *Ibid.*

31 *Ibid.*

interventionary forces, the Iraqi population has indeed been a hostile population, and does not approve of our intervention.

If there was not already enough proof given as to how the Bush administration illegally justified the Iraq War, it must be noted that colonial expansion into Iraq increased America's oil stash.

In historical and geo-political perspective, the invasion and conquest of Iraq, whatever the pretexts or alibis, appears as a new and modern form of colonial expansion. A massive and evident military superiority is used to take control over the resources of a foreign country, the oil factor being decisive. Furthermore, some evident strategic interests are at stake.<sup>32</sup>

The Iraq War can be seen as colonial expansion because it allowed the U.S., the invader, to imperialize Iraq, the invaded, and take advantage of its natural resource, which is oil.

It was not hard for the Bush administration to convince the American people that the Iraq War was justified, because, after 9/11, there was already a groundswell of racism towards anyone of Middle Eastern ethnicity. It was one hundred percent unjustified, considering it was only one specific group of terrorists who hijacked the airplanes, and not every Islamic person is part of al-Qaeda, but many found it hard to look past their fear of the unfamiliar.

Whatever anyone may say about weapons of mass destruction, or about Saddam's savage brutality to his own people, the reason Bush can now get away with his lovely war is that a sufficient number of

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**32** Dominicé, *The Iraq War and Its Consequences*, 142.

Americans...see is as *revenge* for 9/11. This...is pure racism and/or religious prejudice given that nobody has made even a faintly plausible case that Iraq had anything to do with the atrocity.<sup>33</sup>

Because so many Americans saw the invasion of Iraq as revenge for the events of 9/11, it was not hard for the Bush administration to generate support for the war.

One of the most significant mistakes that George W. Bush made in justifying war with Iraq was failing to provide a clear military exit strategy. He sent U.S. troops to war without indicating when the survivors would return home or what goal would have to be accomplished before the war was declared over. An important part of creating an exit strategy is to anticipate inevitable problems and mistakes. George W. Bush failed to anticipate Iraqi hostility in the face of occupation by U.S. and coalition forces, which is considered a major failure in the Bush administration's war plans.

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<sup>33</sup> Richard Dawkins, Not One More Death, "*Bin Laden's Victory*," 45.

#### 4. Economics of the Iraq War

American troops have taken over Iraq in an attempt to rebuild its system of democracy. In the eyes of the Bush Administration, the most efficient way to “spread democracy” appears to be dependent on privatization.

Much of the power to determine the future of Iraq’s security, economy, and government is being handed over to private U.S. companies like Halliburton, Bechtel, and Dyncorps – companies that are involved in everything from running Iraq’s oil operations to designing its criminal justice system.<sup>34</sup>

Such privatization makes one wonder whether America’s goal was to bring democracy to Iraq or simply to create a new profit center for a few corporations.

The Iraqi people do not want the U.S. in Iraq, so why is the U.S. still in Iraq? The billions of dollars represented by continuing the war provide a potential clue:

Some of jobs undertaken by the Bechtels and the Halliburtons – such as rebuilding water and electrical systems for instance are necessary and important. Yet as a nation and a democracy we must ponder seriously whether such private corporations, with firm connections to our leadership, are necessarily the ones who should be handed these jobs...If the experience thus far in Iraq is any indication, we clearly have a long way to go before we establish the appropriate balance between profits and patriotism in the use of private corporations to implement our national security strategy.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Hartung, The Iraq War and Its Consequences, 177.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 179.

War profiteering is not a new concept; however, a great deal of evidence has been presented to suggest that the same people who designed and managed this war are greatly profiting from it.

Furthermore, if the U.S. is not entirely sure that the way they are operating their troops overseas is the right way to be doing it, they should not be overseas. There is no need to spend the money that they are on something that may not even be productive.

The Bush administration faced much criticism for its investments in private companies that all fed back into the major players of the administration. It comes as no surprise that most, if not all, of the money going into the rebuilding of infrastructure in Iraq has been invested in companies supporting the Bush administration.

After a secretive bidding process, Bechtel Group of San Francisco was announced as the winner...[of] a wide ranging \$600 million reconstruction contract awarded by USAID [The United States Agency for International Development] to cover the cost of rebuilding critical infrastructure: airports, roads, water and power systems, schools, and hospitals... Its ties to Washington are so intricately and firmly woven that it is nearly impossible not to imagine that pressure was applied to those making the contracting decision...<sup>36</sup> Awarding the first major contract for reconstruction in Iraq to a politically connected American company under restricted business procedures sends a deplorable message to a skeptical world...the award of a contract worth up to \$680 million to the Bechtel Group of San Francisco in a competition limited to a handful of American companies can only add to the impression that the United States seeks to profit from the war it waged."<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Hartung, The Iraq War and Its Consequences, 187.

If we are to believe that there was no real exit strategy from the Iraq War, we should also consider that there has been a financial strategy all along.

Hartung makes an excellent point by stating that “the United States seeks to profit from the war it waged.” It is amazing that the American people did not see through the plans and goals of President Bush and realize that every move he made in the planning of the war generated more money for either himself or his friends.

In March 2003, Halliburton subsidiary Kellogg, Brown, and Root (KBR) was awarded the main contract to control oil fires and stabilize oil fields under U.S. command; no limit was placed on the duration of dollars involved in this venture...<sup>38</sup>Since September 11, [2001] the Bush administration has doled out over \$2.2 billion in defense-related contracts to Cheney’s former company [Halliburton].<sup>39</sup>

Many of the contracts awarded in Iraq were done without the required bidding process, raising suspicions of corruption that reached to high levels of the administration.

A huge portion of the money spent on the Iraq war comes directly from the pockets of U.S. taxpayers, and much of that money spent never achieved its intended goals:

American taxpayers are also paying for the specialized rebuilding of other essentials in Iraq. USAID has given \$4.8 million to Stevedoring Services of America for

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37 *Ibid.*

38 *Ibid.*, 186.

39 *Ibid.*

‘assessment and management’ of the Umm Qasr port on southeastern Iraq. U.S. occupying authorities gave \$10 million to Abt Associates Inc. to reform the Iraqi Ministry of Health and to deliver health services and supplies in the interim. Skylink Air and Logistic Support (USA) Inc received \$2.5 million to help reopen and manage Iraq’s airports. \$7 million or more was given to the International Resources Group for the management of relief and rebuilding efforts. The Research Triangle Institute (RTI) was granted \$7.9 million to promote Iraqi civic participation in the reconstruction process. \$2.5 million was given to Creative Associates International Inc. to address ‘immediate educational needs’ of Iraq’s primary and secondary schools.<sup>40</sup>

The amounts listed above seem like arbitrary numbers, but they are anything but arbitrary, as they underline the fact that President Bush made it very clear that he would spend whatever money it takes to win this war, even while his own country was slipping further into recession.

From the perspective of U.S. taxpayers, the most important question is how many billions of dollars has the Bush Administration paid private corporations to secure a U.S. ‘victory’ in Iraq – whatever victory means in the context of an unstable, open-ended military occupation of another nation.<sup>41</sup>

Without a clear definition of victory in Iraq, the billions of spending for both military and private efforts in Iraq could potentially be endless.

It is safe to say that nearly all Americans have been affected by the current economic crisis in this country. It is ironic that while we continue to funnel money into a

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40 *Ibid.*, 190.

41 *Ibid.*, 180.

war that was, in theory at least, intended to provide stability to the Middle East, the economic situation in the United States has made our own country less stable.

We need to recognize the symbiosis between stability, prosperity, and freedom: Economic prosperity creates the environment in which democracy and free institutions can grow – and they, in turn, help to promote the stability that is essential for economic growth.<sup>42</sup>

At a time of domestic turmoil, rising unemployment and homelessness, it seems more tragic than ever that billions of dollars continue to be spent on a war that has no evident purpose or conclusion.

## 5. Conclusion

There is a myriad of evidence that proves the U.S. attack on Iraq to be illegal. Legally speaking, the Bush administration possessed no international support for going to war with Iraq, whether from the UN or individual countries. Attacking Iraq undermined the U.N.'s power and made a mockery of the system. And because Iraq posed no imminent threat to the U.S., and was not responsible for the terrorist attacks on September 11, the attacks cannot be considered self-defense. Calling the attack a pre-emptive strike, as President George W. Bush did, did not provide any support for the war either, because, according to the UN Charter, pre-emptive strikes are illegal if there is no threat of armed attack.

President George W. Bush told the American people that he had plenty of justification for going to war with Iraq; unfortunately for him, most of that justification

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42 Klerk, The Iraq War and Its Consequences, 85.

was not actually justified at all. The main reason that the Bush administration gave for going to war was that Iraq posed an active threat to the U.S. by possessing weapons of mass destruction. After a very thorough investigation, it was discovered that Iraq had no weapons of mass destruction whatsoever. Without such weapons, Iraq posed no threat to the United States. However, the Bush administration worked very hard to manipulate the media in a way such that Americans began believing every lie that they were told to provide justification for the war. They provided the U.S. with a scapegoat, and because the country was in such a vulnerable state due to the events of 9/11, American citizens did not question what they were told. What the Bush administration didn't tell the public was that the war was beneficial for the Bush administration itself: by some accounts, George W. Bush was finishing what his father had started with the first Gulf War; also, the war provided convenience for a multitude of social and political groups, and the colonial expansion that came out of the invasion represented further U.S. control over Middle Eastern oil.

Privatization is a favored hobby of the Bush administration, so it is not surprising that almost every company involved in the rebuilding of Iraq is a private company. Money begins in the hands of American taxpayers, is sent to private companies rebuilding Iraq, and straight into the pockets of the major players of the Bush administration. The president of the United States should not be lying to the public; the transfer of money between Iraq and Washington, D.C. is just as egregious as the lies about weapons of mass destruction and the lack of approval for entering into the war. Finally, President Bush provided no exit strategy or budget for the war, so as far as the American people know, their money could continue disappearing forever.

U.S. troops need to get out of Iraq immediately. We are not there for the right reasons, and the Bush administration knew that from the beginning. The new administration, led by President Barack Obama, also seems to know that.

If the U.S. was making any sort of positive impact on Iraq, there may be an argument for continuing the efforts, if it was for the greater good of all. But it is hard to see how we are making any sort of positive impact. We are only destroying the country further. America never seemed to have a thorough-enough understanding of the situation in Iraq to affect the sort of change that was envisioned.

The American leadership's profound misunderstanding of the situation in Iraq led them to adopt overly optimistic notions about such crucial issues as the fighting capabilities of the Iraqi military, popular hostility to American forces, and the ease of establishing a new Iraqi government in post-Saddam Baghdad.<sup>43</sup>

With the overthrow of an undeniably brutal dictator, it can be said that some positive changes were made; however, the removal of Saddam Hussein from power happened only 21 days into the war, which is now in its sixth year.

On February 26, 2009, President Barack Obama announced that all military combat operations in Iraq would end on August 31, 2010. It is the duty of the American people to ensure that he honors this promise. Because the U.S. has been in Iraq for so long, the effort to bring home 140,000+ troops stationed overseas is not insignificant or without risk. However, it is essential that all of the troops come home as soon as possible so that more American lives aren't lost to this illegal and unjustified war.

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<sup>43</sup> Yossef Bodansky, The Secret History of the Iraq War (New York: HarperCollins, 2004), 4.

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