

## Blood is His Argument: Tony Blair's Gentle Cuddling at Iraq "Inquiry"

Written by Chris Floyd  
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On Friday, [Tony Blair appeared](#) before the "Chilcot Inquiry," the panel of hoary, lugubrious Establishment worthies set up to "examine" -- with extreme circumspection, exquisite politeness, and all due reverence to authority -- the "origins" of Britain's involvement in the mass-murder spree known as the invasion and occupation of Iraq. The event could be summed up entirely in a single headline:

**Tony Blair to a million dead Iraqis, and the grieving survivors of British soldiers: Fuck you.**

Blair's appearance before the panel has occasioned some entirely misplaced and uninformed kudos from some in the American progressiverse, who laud the Brits for holding such a bold inquiry. "It's the kind of thing you would never see in the United States," they say, forgetting, if they ever knew, such minor matters as the Watergate hearings -- which actually had the power to send people to jail for lying, unlike the completely powerless Chilcot panel -- or the Watergate grand jury, which named a sitting president as an "unindicted co-conspirator" in a criminal case, or even the impeachment of William Jefferson Clinton by the United States Senate, which I believe happened well within the adulthood of at least some of our leading progressives.

In any case, there was never any chance that the well-wadded Chilcot worthies were going to lay a glove on former PM turned corporate shill and Catholic saint-in-waiting. Blair was never going to do anything but repeat the bluster -- and outright lies -- he has regurgitated ad infinitum about his blood-soaked adventure with George W. Bush -- and the Chilcotniks were never going to call him on his bullshit. [Blair's knowing and deliberate lies [are thoroughly detailed here](#) .]

And so it proved. Blair strutted in -- through a back entrance, to avoid protestors -- and did the expected regurgitation. The war was legal, the war was righteous, the war was legal, and it was the right thing to do. After all, he claimed over and over, Iraq was clearly "in breach of UN sanctions ordering him to destroy all his weapons of mass destruction." Yet, as one observer noted in the Guardian, none of the Chilcot worthies deigned to point out to Blair that Iraq could not possibly been in breach of UN orders to disarm -- because it had no weapons of mass destruction. It was already disarmed -- a fact which the US and UK had known since 1995, and which could have been reconfirmed by the UN inspection teams in 2003 ... if Bush and Blair had not invaded before the inspections were over.

But Blair's illogical connections were never challenged by the panel, nor did he explain why he and Bush invaded before the inspections were completed. Instead, he simply evoke 9/11 over and over and over again -- and then blamed "the external elements of Iran and al Qaeda" for anything that went wrong after the invasion. Apparently, there was not a single Iraqi opposed to the destruction of their country; it was just a bunch of "outside agitators" causing trouble.

Blair's absolute erasure of the Iraqi people in these passages is a perfect encapsulation of the whole mindset that drove the Anglo-American attack: the Iraqis are non-people, they are

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worthless chits in a geopolitical game, they are rags and automatons at the mercy of big-time players like the Western powers, Iran and al Qaeda.

Indeed, this was his main theme of the day: it was Iran's fault. In fact, Blair seemed to regard his appearance before Iraq War panel chiefly as an opportunity to foment war fever for a new "humanitarian intervention" against Iran. [As Jonathan Freedland notes](#) :

Blair pushed further, apparently touting a new war in the Persian Gulf, this time against Iraq's neighbor, Iran. All day Blair used his platform to bring up Iran, even when it was only tangentially related to the topic in hand. The arguments that applied in 2002 – about WMD falling into terrorist hands – applied in spades to Iran in 2010, he said.

Blair took "responsibility" for the war -- but it was a responsibility he gladly shouldered, one he was proud of. As for all the people who have died because of this criminal folly, Blair had nothing nothing to say. As Jonathan Freedland notes:

I thought Blair would have prepared a closing statement that would express, if not regret or apology, at least sorrow for the young British men and women in uniform who had lost their lives. There was, surely, a way for a communicator as gifted as Blair to do that without giving ground on the justness, as he still sees it, of the war. And yet, even when Sir John Chilcot asked him one last time if he had anything to add, Blair did not pay tribute to the dead – British or Iraqi. He simply said "no";

Just like the Hutton inquiry into the strange death of WMD whistleblower Daniel Kelly -- the results of which have recently been sealed up for the next 70 years in a "highly unusual move" by UK authorities -- the Chilcot panel was never going to bring any powerful miscreant to accountability. It was set up -- like the American 9/11 Commission -- to siphon off festering anger and suspicion with a show of official concern. By stirring up just enough murk to cover the small nuggets of truth that inevitably surface in such probes, the Chilcot inquiry, like Hutton, the 9/11 Commission, will be able to claim that while there may have been some regrettable "system" failures here and there on this and that, no actual powerful person should be held accountable for any inadvertent "mistakes" that were made.

And the scam is already working. One of the panel of Guardian commentators, writing alongside Freedland, the "moderate," Broder-like Martin Kettle, was already chewing up some conventional wisdom cud by the end of the day:

On the other side of the argument there were fewer interruptions than there might have been,

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fewer silly stunts, and actually fewer demonstrators than one might have expected. Though passions are still strong, it may be that a lot of the poison and pain is ebbing. In that sense, today was probably cathartic.

Yes, as good old Kevin Drum always used to say back in the old days, when splitting the difference between some atrocious Bush policy and the president's "far left" critics, "that sounds about right." That hits the comfortable middle spot: yes, it was all a bit unpleasant, but now the "pain is ebbing," and we can look forward to seeing fewer of those "silly stunts" that shrill extremists have used to draw attention to the mass murder of human beings in a war based on ostensible reasons which even the war's architects now happily admit were unfounded -- and, according to Blair, unimportant. So Saddam didn't have WMDs? So what? It was a good thing to kill all those people anyway.

Another of Kettle's fellow commentators has a different view, however, and we'll give the final word here to Seamus Milne:

The spectacle of official indulgence of a man many here and abroad regard as responsible for a devastating war crime has been sickening. John Chilcot said at one point that the lessons of occupation had been "expensive, but very necessary". Millions of Iraqis who have actually paid that price take a very different view.