Bush's aims with Bin Laden and 9/11

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PNAC's failure at root of America's ruin

> "I kind of think that the decisions taken in the next few weeks will determine the rest of the world for years to come", Prime Minister Tony Blair to President G W Bush, 20 March 2003 as the Iraq war began [as quoted in Plan of Attack, Bob Woodward p399]. "An invasion of Iraq could turn the whole region into a cauldron and thus destroy the 'war on terrorism'", Brent Scowcroft, security adviser to Republican presidents since Nixon, on TV on 4 August 2002 [John Prados, Hoodwinked, p1]

Bush family friend -- FACT!

To a remarkable extent our world today results from the Iraq war. So if we are to understand the international challenges the next American president must face, we need first to understand the genesis of the invasion. But there is still astonishing confusion about the respective aims of Al Qaeda in attacking the World Trade Center and of the US in its response. Without the records of the White House and the Al Qaeda leadership records, we have to piece together the known positions of the two parties. When we do we find the logic behind their actions.

What did Al Qaeda hope to get from '9/11' in 2001? It was not a 'Pearl Harbour' (to weaken the enemy militarily prior to inevitable war) but a provocation to bring about a typical ill-considered disproportionately violent reaction from the US, which would pit the US against the Muslim world – a 'clash of civilisations' that would weaken the West, especially given its dependence is on oil in Muslim majority countries. The loss of one building, however prestigious, was not the loss of much of the Pacific fleet altering the balance of forces at the start of a war, but a deliberate taunting slap which could not be ignored. '9/11' was thus a 'jujitsu' ploy to use the opponent's own strength to bring about a fall.

Al Qaeda in effect sought to drive home Dr. Martin Luther King's remark about Vietnam: "The image of America will never again be the image of revolutionary freedom, but the image of violence and militarism."

To weaken the West is the necessary step for 'Al Qaeda & Co' to achieve a dominating position in the Middle East – with the ultimate aim of establishing something like a new, extremist 'Caliphate' for

the Muslim world. The prerequisite for that is the collapse of the Saudi monarchy. This, with its oil and guardianship of Islam's most holy places, is therefore Al Qaeda's target for 'regime change', not the US. (Osama bin Laden's message of 29 December 2007 all but dismisses the US as having "lost the war in Iraq" making plain that the Saudi monarchy is the chief enemy). In other words Al Qaeda is out to alter the balance of power to the detriment of the West so enabling it to control Saudi oil and gain a dominating influence in the Islamic ummah sufficient to alter the world order in favour of its extreme version of Wahabism and its ambitious geo-political aspirations for Islam. The empowerment of the Arab world after the centuries of impotence. Not so unrealistic given the precedent of defeat of the two superpowers – the US in Vietnam and the USSR in Afghanistan.

Al Qaeda will surely have known of the long standing neo-conservative calls for an invasion of Iraq, including those of leading neo-conservatives holding key positions in the new G W Bush Administration. So it is quite possible that it hoped the expected American over-reaction to 9/11 would include an invasion of Iraq. I myself was among the many Cassandras in 2002 who warned that nothing would help Al Qaeda more than an invasion of Iraq without UN authorisation.

Inter alia, an American invasion of Iraq -

i) would remove Saddam Hussein, who was doing the West's work for it by blocking Al Qaeda and other Muslim extremists, his principal ideological enemies - so opening in Iraq a second front for Al Qaeda terrorism in the heart of the Middle East and next door to Al Qaeda's arch-enemy, the Saudi monarchy.

ii) would unleash Sunni/Shia/Kurd rivalry within Iraq threatening its destabilisation,

iii) that in turn would lead to rivalry between Iraq's neighbours so helping destabilise the region, notably between Shia Iran and the Sunni countries (Iran being Al Qaeda's rival),

iv) such trouble in occupied Iraq would divert US resources from Afghanistan, providing an opportunity for Taliban and Al Qaeda resurgence,

v) would heighten the Christian v. Islam image of the 'war on terror' (indeed G W Bush himself at first inadvisedly used the term 'crusade').

The correct first response to Al Qaeda's 9/11 provocation was surely to target the Al Qaeda leadership, and to snuff out its appeal. So any American President was virtually obliged, if possible, to invade Afghanistan, to deny Al Qaeda its safe haven (and attempt to destroy or capture its leadership). But, second, this needed simultaneously to be accompanied by a consummate initiative to resolve the Israel/Palestine problem – the major immediate cause of Muslim resentment and thus of Al Qaeda's key source of its support, popularity, and recruitment. Never had the prospects for a settlement been so favourable as in 2002 after 9/11 when world and so much Muslim opinion was so supportive of the US. President G W Bush achieved the first with near unanimous international support or at least tacit approval. But he continued (until 2007) to turn his back on the second instead of following up President Clinton's determined but failed attempt in 1999. Instead President Bush invaded Iraq and his support unravelled.

Whether or not Al Qaeda hoped 9/11 would provoke an invasion of Iraq, the invasion did lead to serious weakening of the US and the West and to a general revulsion against the US or at least against the Bush administration. And, with the neglect of Afghansitan, it enabled Al Qaeda to achieve its relocation in Pakistan and its near worldwide metastasisation. Pakistan itself now appears to be Al Qaeda's next target for destabilisation on its the road to Saudi Arabia via a now

critically destabilised Middle East.

What did the 'neo-conservatives' advising Bush hope to achieve by invading Iraq?

Many pundits see the invasion simply as a foolhardy diversion from Afghanistan, many citing 'oil' as the primary reason. But the popular denigration of the neo-conservatives as either stupid or Israeli stooges, is far from correct. Neo-conservative writings and remarks, e.g. in the Project for a New American Century (PNAC), The Weekly Standard (owned by Rupert Murdoch) and the statements of the neoconservatives in key posts the G W Bush administration*, when put together, suggest there were some eight apparently logical reasons for the invasion:

[* Vice President Cheney – a signatory of PNAC's 1993 'Statement of Principles'; 'Scooter' Libby his Chief of Staff; Defence Secretary Rumsfeld; Paul Wolfwitz his Deputy; Richard Armitage, Deputy Secretary of State; John Bolton, Under Secretary Arms Control; Douglas Feith, Under Secretary, Defense Policy; Richard Perle ('Prince of Darkness'), Chair, Defense Policy Board, Pentagon (who saw the fraudulent Ahmed Chalabi as Iraq's new leader); Zalmay Khalilzad (Wolfowitz protégé and leading neo-com theorist born in Afghanistan and senior Muslim in the Bush administration].

The PNAC had called for the overthrow of Saddam even before its famous letter to President Clinton in 1998. Because of G W Bush's ignorance of foreign and defence matters the highly experienced Dick Cheney was chosen as his running mate in 1999. In the interim after the November election Cheney is reported to have made all or most of the above appointments. America thus had a remarkable team of idealist/realpolitik officials at the top of the G W Bush administration should anything untoward occur – or should anything happen to enable them to realise their vision of the 21st century. This involved invading Iraq:

-To overthrow Saddam Hussein, a hated dictator, winning widespread kudos for the US from humanitarians and justifying Bush's doctrine of preventive war. Further interventions could follow.

-To eliminate any WMD Saddam might possess. This 'soft target' success for non proliferation would be a warning for North Korea then the main WMD threat, and any others, like Iran, tempted to acquire 'the bomb'.

-To secure supplies of Iraq's oil – particularly given the uncertainty of Saudi Arabia's oil, given doubts about its long term stability and its Wahabist religious ideology that had spawned Al Qaeda.

-To obtain permanent US bases in Iraq – denied by Saudi Arabia - so achieving US military domination in the heart of the Middle East.

-To establish American style democracy in Iraq, the success of which would come to be imitated by the countries of a 'new Middle East'.

-To replace a hostile with a friendly Iraq, much improving Israel's security and its bargaining position with the Palestinians, Syria and others.

-To demonstrate by 'shock and awe' to all the world US overwhelming military and economic might – its ability to go anywhere, do anything, afford anything, so ensuring that the 21st would indeed be the New American Century: the key aim of the neo-conservatives.

And added after 9/11:

-To trump Al Qaeda in its Islamic heartland – effectively ending its prestige and appeal and dashing its hopes of re-making the Middle East in its own extreme Wahabist image. And of course this prospect enabled the pro-war cabal at last to get the green light for the invasion they had so long promoted.

How far even President Bush himself was fully aware of every aspect of this beguiling scenario is uncertain. But in December 2002 [according to James Risen State of War p171], when asked if there were a strategy to counter the growth of Islamic extremism, Bush replied that "victory in Iraq would take care of that." Certainly Bush does appear to have seen "Iraq" as the move that would make his presidency an outstanding and historic success for the United States and for himself. Blair though, as well as his stated conviction that Britain had to be close to the US to have any hope of influence, seems genuinely to have believed in intervention for humanitarian reasons. In both the US and the UK there was thus that particularly American 'exceptionalist' mixture of idealism and realpolitik – more the latter in the case of the US and more the former in the case of the UK.

In sum, far from being a diversion from the 'War on Terror', the invasion of Iraq would be the means of winning it.

Why did this so apparently well thought out plan go so disastrously wrong? Basically – it is generally agreed - because it did not take into account the historic fissiparous realities either of Iraq or of the Middle East, nor of the likely repercussions in the wider world. We know now [from e.g Sir C Meyers', then UK Ambassador in Washington, DC Confidential] that Messrs Bush and Blair, preparing their rationale for war self-secluded in the White House and No. 10 respectively, ignored - even excluded - professional advice setting out the dangers. Ross Carne (then in the Foreign office) describes how warning after warning from Foreign Office experts was ignored. The British had far more realistic knowledge of Iraq and the Middle East generally than the US – notably deriving from Britain's invasion during World War I and the monitory story of its subsequent League of Nations mandate. And it is becoming increasingly clear that not just diplomats, but top brass in both US and UK were privately voicing their considerable doubts.

In the autumn of 2002 a DIA memo warned that a post war Iraq would be "highly complex and driven by political and religious factions". The US occupiers would be "hard pressed to keep the lid on... there would be an influx of Islamic fighters". A State Department analysis gave reasons why "a liberal democracy would be hard to achieve in Iraq". Nevertheless on 26 February 2003 President Bush confidently repeated his claim that "bringing democracy to Iraq would 'democratise' the other Arab countries.

Yet the many outside Cassandras warning of disaster not only in Iraq but worldwide ranged from Brent Scowcroft down to many lesser professional observers with a lifetime in diplomacy like myself. In his speech on 17 March 2003 Robin Cook, Britain's former foreign minister, pleaded for multilateralism warning that without widespread approval the US would risk squandering the world sympathy expressed after '9/11' - so making suppression of international terrorism harder to achieve. On 30 September 2002 Republican Senator Chuck Hagel made a prescient speech at the Eisenhower Institute insisting that Iraq "not be viewed in a vacuum", it required a multilateral "comprehensive strategy for peace" inter alia including moves to resolve the Israel/Palestine problem and maintaining the priority for Afghanistan.

And of course by October 2002 it had become clear, even to the general public, that both the British and American governments were 'massaging' the intelligence to make their case for war. Those qualified to judge were satisfied there was no truth in the remarkably effective scare mongering

claims that Iraq had or was near obtaining nuclear weapons, and that Saddam Hussein was in cahoots with Al Qaeda (as suggested by Vice President Cheney – an obvious gross misperception that somehow still persists in the US).

Another reason was political – both Bush and Blair assessed that the war on Iraq had to be presented as low key and as low cost as possible if they were to get the votes for war that they needed. That meant adopting the Rumsfeld 'lite' invasion force (despite General Eric Shinseki's warning to Congress in February 2003 that a force of 'hundreds of thousands' would be needed to secure an occupation of Iraq). The US budgeted only $50-80bn making no provision for vastly increased costs should things not go as hoped (today direct costs are around $500bn and fiscal experts now place the eventual overall costs as likely to prove as high as $1-3 trn).

To win the needed political backing in both countries, the US and UK publics had not be asked to make any sacrifices. This did not stop the remarkable so called 'march of the million' anti-war protesters through London which would appear to have expressed not just majority opinion in the UK, but also in all of Europe. Blair and a majority of both Labour and Conservative Members of Parliament simply ignored this.

This minimalism contributed to the failure of both the US presidential and the UK parliamentary forms of democracy when, ironically, both the US and the UK were about to use force to impose 'democracy' on Iraq. Neither the opposition Democrats in the US nor the Conservatives in the UK took the trouble to perform their duty of opposition – to probe fully the viability of government policies and the likely true cost in blood, treasure, and severe international repercussions. Yet the truth was readily available to lawmakers. But several senators (famously including Mrs. Clinton) did not read the secret documents prepared for them in the Senate library. In the UK Ian Duncan Smith – appointed Conservative opposition leader almost simultaneously with the destruction of the World Trade Center - was an honourable ex-Guards officer who appears simply to have taken the word of the British Prime Minister when given a top secret briefing by Mr. Blair.

So, many left leaning Democrats and right leaning Conservatives voted approving their Republican and Labour governments' respective call for a 'cheap, quick' war without performing their opposition duty to examine and, if need be, challenge proposed policy. On the Iraq Resolution of 11 October 2002 the Senate voted 77 - 23. On the Declaration of War Amendment of 18 March 2003 the House of Commons voted 396 - 217.

Yet the military and financial demands for simultaneously securing Afghanistan, and invading of Iraq without adequate resources was clearly high risk ('reckless' UK cabinet minister Clare Short dubbed it) – and unrealistically dependent for success on the intelligence being correct of such suspect sources as Ahmed Chalabi that the invaders and occupiers would be welcomed as liberators. These miscalculations (despite CIA and State Department warnings) were compounded with the virtual absence of planning for the occupation (despite British disquiet and the State Department's Future of Iraq project). On top of this came the subsequent gross errors of dismantling key Iraqi state institutions and 'de-Ba'athification' extending far further down than denazification in Germany or similar 'cleansing' in Japan in 1945. The disbanding of the Iraqi army and the failure to secure Iraq's conventional weapons led, as predicted, to unemployed disgruntled well-armed soldiers with every reason to revolt, backing factions of their choice.

Had an invasion and occupation been properly planned and had it enjoyed the widest possible international approval, the outcome and the worldwide repercussions would have been very different. But neither the Administration, nor the neo-conservatives (including Vice President Cheney) wanted such foreign involvement diluting American control of a venture the over-arching

purpose of which was to ensure a unipolar New American Century: anathema to Russia, China, and many other countries. Hence President G W Bush's initial reluctance to go to the United Nations.

http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/article20716.htm

Cleaves Alternative News. http://cleaves.lingama.net/news/story-1232.html