Rewriting history to defend failure

Blair denied denying a link between the London bombs and Iraq. Not the only case of him rewriting history...

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Blair took to the cameras again to attack those who raised the truth, namely that the invasion of Iraq had been a contributing factor to the London attacks. He used his monthly Downing Street press conference to criticise those who claim that western policies in Iraq (and other Muslim states) provided some justification for such tactics. Yet no one said that these policies justified the attacks, simply that they explained them. As a lawyer, you would expect Blair to know the difference between understanding the motive of a crime and justifying that crime.

After beating one straw man to death, he then rewrote history, stating that he had never said that the attacks on London had "nothing to do with Iraq" — only that it was an excuse and that the roots of the crisis go much deeper. Yet in the House of Parliament days after the attack he had rejected any link between foreign policy and the threat of terrorism, stating that

this was "a form of terrorism aimed at our way of life, not at any particular Government or policy." According to PM's Official Spokesman at a Press Briefing on July 12th, "it was a fact that terrorism of the kind that we had seen in London ... was a factor before the Iraq war. Therefore it was naive frankly to believe that you could say that this kind of terrorism was due to the Iraq war ... Therfore to put it down to the Iraq was misplaced." Fast forward a couple of weeks and Blair is now denying that he denied that Iraq had any influence on the bombings!

While Blair may try and deny it, this was the government line. Jack Straw, for example, was at pains to dismiss any link to Iraq, arguing that "the terrorists have struck across the world, in countries allied with the United States, backing the war in Iraq and in countries which had nothing whatever to do with the war in Iraq". Surely he was aware that such attacks were on Western interests within them. Faced with the utter stupidity of this argument and the fact that very few people belived it, the line has changed and the rewriting of history starts. And not only on this. The July 12th Press Briefing stated that it "would it have been right just to leave Saddam Hussein in power carrying out the atrocities that he had against his own people. As such the reasons for going to war in Iraq ... were set out. People may agree or diagree with them ..." Except, that is not why we went to war in Iraq. We went to war over non-existent WMD but that is now in the memory hole.

Blair warned the independent judiciary ("a principle of our democracy") had better start doing what the government says as "it is important that we do protect ourselves." And so Blair, according to his own logic, is appeasing the terrorists — by urging us to change the way we live our lives. And so if, as Blair and Bush assert, the terrorists "hate our freedom" then they are the greatest appeasers of terrorism in the world.

It is easy for Blair to urge people "not to give an inch" in terms of abandoning "their normal way of life." His "normal way of life" is hardly normal. He is extremely well protected. No get-

ting on public transport for him. Perhaps as a show of good faith he will start taking the tube or hoping on the bus?

In light of the bombs, Blair was adamant that Britain should not abandon its policies and alliance with the US. So in response to the failed policies which helped produce the London attacks, Blair is using those very same attacks to continue the same disastrous policies. And so we can continue to expect plain clothes police to shoot to kill, Bellmarsh imprisonment without trail and the steady elimination of the rights we have taken centuries to wrestle from the state. While, of course, continuing to fuel the terrorist problem with billions of pounds from our taxes to fund the occupation and stand "shoulder-to-shoulder" with a regime which regularly practises torture and indulges in wars of aggression.

According to Blair, we had to "expose the obscenity of these people saying it is concern for Iraq that drives them to terrorism. If it is concern for Iraq then why are they driving a car bomb into a group of children and killing them?" Yet Blair's current rationale for invading Iraq was his "concern" for the Iraqi people (WMD, as noted, have been put into the memory hole). At a minimum, 25,000 Iraqis have died as a result. Is it concern for Iraq which saw him approve "Shock and Awe"? Approve the bombing of cities and towns? Why is Blair killing children acceptable? So while there was "no justification for suicide bombing" anywhere apparently there is justification for bombing if it is done by advanced ground attack aircraft, tanks and artillery. As it is, revenge rather than concern would be the better word to explain the bombings of July 7th. As Blair surely knows.

According to Blair, "September 11 for me was a wake-up call." It is well known that when Bush is facing troubled times, he raises 911 as his "get out of jail free card." Blair is now doing the same. Blair continued, asking "you know what I think the problem is? That a lot of the world woke up for a short time and then turned over and went back to sleep again." Better

that than invade Iraq, so fuelling the terrorism you claim to oppose. Perhaps "the problem" is really attacking a country with no links to terrorism, based on dodgy dossiers and sexed up intelligence simply because this has been a long standing aim for sections of the US elite?

What really grates is that Blair is implying that anyone not holding his position on terrorism is somehow seeking to justify the actions of terrorists. This is obviously an attempt to narrow the debate and, consequently, allow him to avoid some difficult questions. It does raise one question, even if this were true is it worse than, say, using terrorists to justify an illegal invasion and occupation, the deaths of at least 25,000 people (more like 100, 000), the torture of men, women and children, the use of napalm, the levelling of a town, the imposing of a neo-liberal economic regime, and so forth?

It does seem strange to hear Blair and Straw categorically deny any connection between Iraq and the bombings in London given what their own state agencies have told them. Has Blair forgotten that a mere five weeks before the invasion of Iraq, his intelligence chiefs warned him that military action would increase the risk of terrorist attacks against Britain? According to the UK Parliament's Intelligence and Security Committee in 2003, the Joint Intelligence Committee assessed the threat from al-Qa'eda "would be heightened by military action against Iraq." In 2004, a joint Home Office and Foreign Office dossier, ordered by Tony Blair himself after the bombings in Madrid, identified Iraq as a "recruiting sergeant" for extremism and that it was acting as a key cause of British Muslims turning to terrorism. Just weeks before the London bombings themselves the Joint Terrorist Analysis Centre (which includes officials from MI5, MI6, GCHQ and the police) repeated this analysis, arguing that "Events in Iraq are continuing to act as motivation and a focus of a range of terrorist-related activity in the UK". Then there is the analysis by MI5, issued a few days

after Blair's denial of denial which made it clear that Iraq is "a dominant issue" among extremists in Britain.

Thus the analyses of MI5, MI6, GCHQ, the police and advisers from the Home and Foreign Offices have been contradicted by Blair's government. When it was becoming obvious that WMD did not exist in Iraq and so his (then) rationale for war was disappearing, Blair opined as follows: "You can only imagine what would have happened if I'd ignored the intelligence and then something terrible had happened." Blair did ignore the intelligence and something terrible did indeed happen.

It is good to know that most of us never bought into Blair's arguments. Before the war started, over a million took to the streets and nearly 80% of Londoners thought that that invading Iraq would make a terrorist attack on London more likely. In this, the Intelligence agencies concurred. After the bombings, two-thirds though that they were linked with the war in Iraq. Blair's current rewriting of history is a reaction to this.

Blair' policies have put us at risk. What is worse, he and his government did so by twisting the intelligence on Iraq deliberately to provide a pretext for invading that country. They have also choosen to ignore the intelligence services, departmental advisers and independent experts who told them that the chances of "something terrible" occurring (like a terrorist attack) would be greatly increased if Britain proceeded to invade Iraq. So now we face suicide bombers, in main due to appeasement of US imperialism and the gang of neo-cons currently in office there. By participating in their brutal occupation of Iraq, Blair made us a target.

If he had any morals, Blair would resign. But unless we take to the streets to demand it, he will not. Time for action.