

The Truth About the Iraqi WMD and Britain's Support for the War on Iraq

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It is an astonishing fact that, despite near universal recognition now that the war in Iraq was a disaster, no major British social institution is headed by a single one of the majority of the population who were opposed to the war.

Every Cabinet Minister actively supported the war. Of the fifteen Tory MPs who rebelled and voted against the war, not one is a minister. Civil servants officially have no politics but privately their opinions are known. There is not one single Permanent Under Secretary of a UK government department who was known to be against the war and most were enthusiasts. Simon Fraser, PUS at the FCO, was an active Blairite enthusiast for the war. Though no Blairite, the Head of MI6 Alex Younger was also an enthusiast.

The BBC was of course gutted following its revealing of the truth about Iraqi WMD, and the subsequent murder of David Kelly. Following the ousting of Greg Dyke, both Governors and Directors-Generals have been known supporters of the war. Of the 107 bureaucrats in the BBC who earn over 100,000 pounds pa, insiders estimate that only five were opponents of the war. Craig Oliver – who has now left the BBC for Cameron's media operation – and James Purnell are absolutely typical of the BBC Iraqocracy.

Every current editor of a UK national newspaper supported the Iraq war. At the time of the war there was one editor opposed – Piers Morgan – who subsequently became a derided and marginalised figure. Not only are the editors firmly from the neo-con alliance, but the high profile commentators who cheered on the war – David Aaronovich, Nick Cohen, Melanie Phillips, John Rentoul, Rod Liddle etc. – have all seen their careers flourish. None has suffered from their appalling lack of judgement. There is no similar raft of commentators who were against the war who enjoy such constant media promotion and massive salaries. Many, like Peter Osborne, have suffered unexpected career glitches. There is no head of a major TV channel in the UK who was against the war in Iraq.

The theme runs through all the public professions. Of the hundreds of academics who took firm positions against the Iraq War, I cannot find a single example who went on to become a University Vice-Chancellor or Principal. By contrast actual war criminals Richard Dearlove and Valerie Amos were parachuted into academic leadership posts. The Chiefs of Staff of the armed forces were all true believers, compared to the massive scepticism that existed among senior officers.

The Iraq test even extends into the heads of institutions apparently quite unrelated, such as

City of London banks and insurance companies. There are a tiny number of heads of FTSE 100 companies who were against the war.

It is not that there is an Iraq test. It is that Iraq is the touchstone for adherence to the neo-liberal consensus. All these professionally successful people share a number of attitudes, of which support for the Iraq War is a good indicator. There is a very strong correlation between support for the Iraq War and fierce Zionism. But there is also a strong correlation between support for the Iraq War and support for austerity economics. The strongest correlation of all lies in support for the Iraq War and for “business-friendly” tolerance of corporatism, TTIP, multinational tax avoidance, low taxation and marketization of public services including in education and health.

To return to where I started, the quite extraordinary thing is that there is a near-universal recognition in wider society that the Iraq War was both completely unjustified and a dreadful strategic blunder. Yet its support is a major pre-condition for membership of the governing elite.

The answer of course lies in its value as an indicator for a broad range of neo-liberal consensus attitudes. That is why both the SNP and Jeremy Corbyn provide such a threat to the Establishment, through denying those attitudes. The fascinating thing is that the SNP and the Labour Party could be the only public institutions in the UK of any note with an anti-Iraq War leadership. The significance is that, in slightly different ways, both the prominence of the SNP and of Jeremy Corbyn are the result of a public revolt which the Establishment has been trying, absolutely desperately, to cut off.

Ed Miliband [did not](#) actually vote against the Iraq War, contrary to popular myth. Having both the Labour and SNP parties led by people who reject the raft of values symbolised by the Iraq test, who have broken through the depleted uranium ceiling, is a massive, massive threat to the meritlessocracy. Institutional control appeared to be complete and impermeable. Suddenly they face the danger of the opinions of ordinary people carrying weight. Expect the media control mechanisms to whirl into still greater overdrive.

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