

## Tony Blair: False information and war

Tony Blair, former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom and ‘Middle East Peace Envoy’, has urged the government to take action in Iraq or face terror attacks on British soil. These comments sound strikingly familiar as the legacy of 2003’s invasion is highlighted by mass-killing in the Middle East. Indeed, the former PM sent tens of thousands of British troops to Iraq while warning the UK about weapons of mass destruction. However, Blair rejects claims that he is partly responsible for the current destruction taking place in Iraq and the death and suffering of hundreds of thousands of humans.

“We have to liberate ourselves from the notion that ‘we’ have caused this. We haven’t. We can argue as to whether our policies at points have helped or not: and whether action or inaction is the best policy. But the fundamental cause of the crisis lies within the region not outside it,” writes Blair in a recent essay.

Blair is correct in saying that issues within Iraq – such as religious extremism – have fuelled the carnage, but didn’t he have a role in lighting the match?

Blair took the UK to war, following the lead of the Bush Administration, on the account of Saddam Hussein’s alleged ability to launch weapons of mass destruction (WMD) at 45 minutes notice and the links to terrorism. This has proven to be false, however, and it seems that the intelligence was either dangerously flawed or hugely exaggerated to gain public backing.

The French government didn’t believe it and President Jacques Chirac refused to back the UN because the US-UK claims of WMD weren’t backed up by a shred of evidence. Across 600 cities, almost 10 million people protested against the invasion on one single day. London was the one of these cities and Londoners, in general, have rejected the war which has led to the death of many British Soldiers and hundreds of thousands of civilians.

Now as militants cause bloodshed across the fragile nation and there is a real risk of destabilising the whole middle east which will lead to more human suffering, Blair has called for a ‘selective use of air power’ while washing his hands of any responsibility. “Even if you had left Saddam in place in 2003, with the Arab revolutions in 2011, you would have still had a major problem in Iraq,” he said. “You can see what happens when you leave a dictator in place, as has happened with Assad now. The problems don’t go away,” continued Blair.

The former PM is probably right, the problems don’t go away. It is unlikely, however, that the problem would be a brutal sectarian war between Sunnis and Shias. The current events in Iraq raise the question of whether it is time for leaders like Blair to rethink our stance on intervention. Is it time to make a case for choosing between the more palatable of two problem situations, rather than always intervening with force?

Saddam Husain will rightly be remembered as a murderous war criminal. However, Iraq’s current crisis only highlights the fact that the country was more stable under his dictatorship than it is now. This alarming realisation demonstrates how the invasion of Iraq, based on false information, was a complete failure. Perhaps Blair should be pointing the UK away from another war. We still do not know the Blair’s agenda behind the war...but can we still trust him? Or is he simply a war criminal? If so, then why is he not being prosecuted for war crimes and only judged by history.