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Not Sorry Enough: Tony Blair Apologizes for Iraq War ‘Mistakes’

By Justin Raimondo
October 25, 2015

Tony Blair says he’s sorry. It only took him twelve years to own up, but hey – it’s better than what’s happening on this side of the Atlantic, where not one word of apology to the relatives and loved ones of those who died – never mind the nation at large, or the Iraqi people – has been uttered by the architects of the Iraq war.

While practically everyone but the most recalcitrant neocons now admits that war opponents were right, the advocates of that disastrous adventure are admitting nothing, and regretting even less: not only that, but they are still turned to by the media as credible spokesman on matters of state. Indeed, the neocons are everywhere these days, attacking the Iran deal, calling for regime-change in Syria, demanding a return to Iraq, and – lately – agitating for confronting the Russians in Ukraine and the Middle East.

To be sure, Blair’s apology sounds more like an apologia. Asked by CNN interviewer Fareed Zakaria whether the invasion of Iraq and the overthrow of the Ba’athist regime had been a mistake, Blair replied:

“You know whenever I’m asked this I can say that I apologize for the fact that the intelligence I received was wrong. Because even though he had used chemical weapons extensively against his own people, against others, the program in the form we thought it was did not exist in the way that we thought. So I can apologize for that. I can also apologize, by the way, for some of the

mistakes in planning and certainly our mistake in our understanding of what would happen once you had removed the regime.

“But I find it hard to apologize for removing Saddam. I think even from today 2015 it’s better that he is not there than he is there.”

How is it possible to admit the war was a mistake, but the removal of Saddam was somehow justified? Here is what George Orwell dubbed “doublethink” in full operational mode. Zakaria, frowning his brow, went on to ask whether the Iraq invasion was the “principal cause” of the expansion of ISIS. Blair’s reply:

“I think there are elements of truth in that. But we have got to be extremely careful otherwise we will misunderstand what’s going on in Iraq and in Syria today. Of course you can’t say that those of us who removed Saddam in 2003 bear no responsibility for the situation in 2015.

“But it’s important also to realize – one, that the Arab Spring which began in 2011 would also have had its impact on Iraq today. And two – ISIS actually came to prominence from a base in Syria and not in Iraq.”

Let’s stop *right there* for a much-needed correction: the so-called Arab Spring was brutally repressed in Iraq by the government the US and its allies, including the United Kingdom, installed. And ISIS did not “come to prominence” in Syria initially, but in Iraq, where Sunni fundamentalist fighters coalesced and then later invaded Syrian territory. But to the promulgator of the “dodgy dossier,” facts are infinitely malleable, and so let’s move on to Blair’s policy prescriptions for the future:

“This leads me to the broader point, which I think is so essential when we are looking at policy today. We have tried intervention and putting down troops in Iraq. We’ve tried intervention without putting down troops in Libya. And we’ve tried no intervention at all but demanding regime change in Syria. It’s not clear to me that even if our policy did not work, subsequent policies have worked better.”

To say this is disingenuous would be an understatement. The reality is that we did indeed have covert military personnel on the ground directing the movements of our proxy forces as they overthrew Libyan strongman Moammar Gaddafi. The Brits, as well as the Saudis and the Qataris, were in on it, too. The only reason we didn’t have an occupying army on the ground was because there was no political support for it – and it would’ve contradicted the myth that the rebellion was entirely an indigenous affair.

And to characterize Western policy in Syria as “no intervention at all” is a sick sad joke. We have been training, funding, and arming Islamist “rebels” in that country for years, and the result has been a catastrophe that is beginning to dwarf the mess we made in Iraq: a refugee exodus, the destruction of Syria’s minorities, and the triumph of ISIS, which has benefited by regular defections from the “moderate” rebels to its ranks. If this is “no intervention at all,” then words have no meaning – but then again, the English language as utilized by the Tony Blairs of this world is an instrument of distortion rather than illumination.

In spite of Blair's dissimulations, however, it's interesting to note that our own war criminals are still running around without having been confronted by our lickspittle media, let alone faced any legal ramifications. Because, after all, lying a nation into war is illegal as well as immoral – and yet there has been no real inquiry into how and by whom we were lied to.

Oh, it was all a gigantic “mistake,” we're told: “everyone” thought Saddam had “weapons of mass destruction.” Except “everybody” didn't: there was significant dissent within the intelligence community, which was systematically silenced by the White House and specifically by de facto President Dick Cheney and his neocon staff. The policy shop at the Pentagon, under Douglas Feith, regularly falsified “intelligence” to fit the administration's preconceived conclusions. And when the lies began to catch up with him, Feith resigned.

The Senate conducted an investigation into prewar intelligence-gathering, but the several reports it issued were compromised by partisan bickering and wound up basically whitewashing the entire process: in particular, the key role played by Feith's rogue Office of Special Plans and the complementary Policy Counterterrorism Evaluation Group was swept under the rug. No one was held accountable.

And, on this side of the Atlantic, no one has said “I'm sorry.”