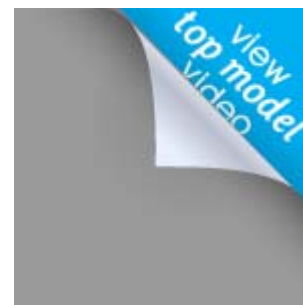


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Murphy's Law

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DOA: The Iraq War Story That Never Ran

by [Bruce Murphy](#) | Tuesday 1/5/2010

(This story was written in spring 2004 but was never published.)

Wisconsin Congressman Tom Petri voted with the majority to authorize the use of force against Iraq. But he is clearly uncomfortable with the war that resulted.

Last March, Petri, a Republican serving the state's 6th District, opposed his party's leader, President George Bush, and voted with the minority against the provision of \$87 million to bankroll the actions in the Middle East. In a recent interview with the Journal Sentinel, he spoke cautiously, admitting some doubts about our current policy. He wondered whether the president "should have worked harder to get international support" and declined to say whether he supports the war.

"I'd rather look forward than backward," Petri said. "I want us to do as well as possible." But his constituents, he added, "are worried about the safety of the troops."

The ambivalence of a moderate Republican like Petri ought to be worrisome for President Bush. His advisors have already targeted Wisconsin as a pivotal state in his campaign for reelection. Bush will need the enthusiastic support of Petri and his constituents.

Polls show the majority of Americans still support the war, but among the country's politicians and opinion leaders, including most members of the Wisconsin congressional delegation, there is widespread criticism of Bush's handling of the war. William Kristol, editor of the Weekly Standard, perhaps the foremost cheerleader for the war, has noted that "traditional Republican conservatives"

including columnist George Will, are “denouncing” Bush’s foreign policy.

One wag noted that every magazine but Car and Driver has had an article about the failures in Iraq.

Anthony Cordesman, an expert on Iraq at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, who called himself a lukewarm supporter of the war, now assails the theories behind it and the neoconservative thinkers who developed them.

“The Department of Defense was operating on its own concepts and ideology and none of it turned out to be true,” Cordesman said.

“It’s rather ironic. The best and brightest are no better as neo-cons than they were under Kennedy. We should have a prayer, ‘Lord protect us from the best and brightest.’”

Last fall, David Obey, the Democratic representative with the longest tenure among the state’s congressional delegation, called on Defense Secretary Rumsfeld and his assistant Paul Wolfowitz to resign. The results in Iraq, he said, were “a disaster.”

Obey’s demand was echoed by retired Marine Corps general Anthony Zinni, a Bush supporter who wondered why “heads haven’t rolled.”

But for all criticism of the war and its theorists, the neo-conservatives retain their power in the Bush administration, noted such observers as Michael Grebe, president of Milwaukee’s Bradley Foundation. The foundation has provided much of the funding for the thinkers and think tanks, like the American Enterprise Institute and the Project for a New American Century, that mapped out the reasons for attacking Iraq.

Why haven’t the neoconservatives fallen from power? And how has the Iraq war turned out differently than they predicted? The key issues include the following:

Were there weapons of mass destruction? In justifying the war in Iraq, vice-president Dick Cheney said “there is no doubt” its longtime dictator Saddam Hussein “now has weapons of mass destruction.”

Bush warned that Saddam “must not be permitted to threaten America and the world with horrible poisons and diseases and gases and atomic weapons,” adding that the US could not wait for “the final proof...of a mushroom cloud.”

To date, no such weapons have been found. Bush spokesperson Andrew Card has dismissed the issue as irrelevant now that Saddam has been captured and added the US may still find “programs” planning such weapons.

Was there a link to Al Queda?

Bush’s justification invoked the September 11 attack on America by Al Queda terrorists and noted that “Iraq and Al Queda have had high-level contacts that go back a decade.”

Rep. Gerald Kleczka, the Democrat from Milwaukee, says many Americans supported the war because they were led to believe Saddam was behind the 9/11 attack. Bush, however, never explicitly claimed this.

Last fall, Bush clarified that “we have no evidence that Saddam Hussein was involved with the September 11 attacks.”

Klecza noted that “CIA officials say they’ve never found a link between Al Qaeda and Saddam.”

Rep. Paul Ryan, the Republican from Kenosha, said he believes the US may still prove a link to Al Qaeda, but also said “dozens of countries have links to Al Qaeda.”

Wisconsin Senator Russ Feingold went further, saying Iraq would not have been among the “top 20” countries with connections to Al Qaeda.

Was a pre-emptive war justified?

The classic definition of a pre-emptive war, one found in a Department of Defense manual, is “an attack initiated on the basis of incontrovertible evidence that an enemy attack is imminent.”

The failure to find any weapons of mass destruction makes this a difficult case to make. “It’s pretty clear the president was saying it doesn’t have to be an imminent threat and the US can go after countries on a lesser standard,” said Feingold. “What’s now legitimate is to say he might have (weapons of mass destruction) and he might someday use it against us.”

Jessica Mathews, executive director of the non-partisan Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, called this “a preventive war” done “under the cloak of a preemptive war.”

As historian Arthur Schlesinger has noted, presidents from Abraham Lincoln to Harry Truman, Dwight Eisenhower and John F. Kennedy have rejected preventive wars as contrary to the American tradition.

Of the two senators and eight representatives from Wisconsin, only one, Republican Mark Green of Green Bay, was willing to defend the Iraq invasion as a true preemptive war.

Can America go it alone?

Neoconservatives like Kristol or Washington Post columnist Charles Krauthammer argued America is a modern-day Rome with unchallenged power that need not consult the international community. A colossus like America, which spends as much on defense as the next 15 countries combined, can work its will to conduct simultaneous actions in several countries.

To preserve the military’s flexibility, Rumsfeld pushed to keep the number of soldiers in Iraq lower than some generals had wanted. Wolfowitz told Congress no additional troops would be needed for peacekeeping operations.

But two studies of the history of US peacekeeping operations both found far more troops are needed to successfully provide security during an occupation. The number of soldiers per capita was much higher in Germany and Japan after World War II, or for the international effort the US led in the 1990s in Kosova and Bosnia.

“I think a larger force deployed much earlier would have stabilized operations and in all likelihood resulted in fewer casualties,” said James Dobbins, who did a study for the Rand Corporation. Dobbins served as special envoy for Afghanistan under Bush.

“If we did it as we did in Bosnia and Kosovo, we would have had 500,000 soldiers,” said Mathews, whose Carnegie Institute did the other study. “And there we had not one American casualty.”

In Iraq there have been 300 Americans killed and thousands wounded since the war ended and peacekeeping operations began.

Even Republicans like Ryan concede there are “too few soldiers in Iraq,” a fact that William Kristol has written is “painfully obvious.”

But America lacks the military manpower to provide 500,000 soldiers in Iraq. In fact, even the current level of 120,000 soldiers in Iraq may be unsustainable beyond March, 2004, a study by the Congressional Budget Office concluded.

The only way to have provided a much larger force was with an international coalition. Dobbins noted that in Kosovo and Bosnia, the US “maintained a leadership role” while providing just 16% of the manpower and costs. In Iraq, he noted, “we were providing 90% of the troops and 90% of the spending.”

Ryan and Green say America needs to get other countries to share the burden in Iraq, something the Bush administration has pursued, though with little success so far. Rep. Tammy Baldwin, the Democrat from Madison, suggested the Bush administration’s style had alienated the international community. “I do not see that changing as long as this administration is in charge,” she said.

Can America impose democracies in other countries?

This theory is at the heart of the neoconservatives' approach. They argue America can do good by creating countries that are less likely to attack us by imposing democracies where dictatorships once ruled. News account suggest Cheney became convinced the Iraqis would “erupt with joy” at the arrival of Americans. Even if they didn’t, neoconservatives pointed to post-World War II Germany and Japan, where democracies were imposed from the top down.

The Carnegie study, however, noted that these two countries were ethnically united, had highly educated, economically developed societies, had some experience with constitutional rule, and an incentive to ally with the United States to resist Communism. None of those factors applied to Iraq, the study noted. “What’s very clear is this is very, very hard to do,” said Mathews.

The U.S. initially hoped a create top-down transformation by backing Ahmed Chalabi, the head of a group of Iraqi exiles, the Iraqi National Congress. But Chalabi, who had not been in Baghdad since the late 1950s, had no success rallying Iraqis.

Since then, said Heritage Foundation scholar John. C. Hulsman, the US has moved toward the painstaking process of trying to build a democracy from the grass roots level.

“What’s happened on the ground has changed what they’re doing,” he said. “They’ve had to work more bottom up.”

Bush has made in clear the US will stay until it succeeds at creating a democracy, even if it means increasing the number of American troops. British officials have said their troops could be there for five to seven years.

Ryan believes that within a year or two, the US could create “a viable democracy where they have

self-determination and minority rights are protected.“

Experts like Dobbins, Mathews, and Cordesmann say this is very doubtful. Rep. F. James Sensenbrenner, the Republican from Waukesha, said “Iraq is going to be a better place. Will Iraq end up a democracy like the US or Great Britain? Probably not.”

Klecza is even less hopeful. “I think as soon as we leave Iraq, the majority of people will restore the country to (leadership by) an Ayatollah.

Can America drain the Middle Eastern swamp?

With a democratic base in Iraq, neoconservatives argued, the US could begin to spread democracy through the Middle East and “drain the swamp” of dictators and terrorists. The theory loses its linch pin if Iraq does not become a strong democracy.

Still, experts point to recent announcement by Libyan autocrat Omar Kaddafi that he would renounce weapons of mass destruction in exchange for US aid, and the willingness of Iran to discuss its weapons with the US. The hard line by the US in Iraq has helped to persuade these countries to change, many argue.

“I think the administration can point to some successes with both Libya and Iran,” said Dobbins.

“It’s a positive development that comes out of the clear voice Bush has spoken with,” said Green.

Doubters say the Libyan economy was in such shambles that Kaddafi had to find a way to connect to western countries that might provide help.

The downside of a hard-edged policy was pointed out by Mathews, who argued it has inflamed terrorist opposition in Iraq and the entire Arab and Muslim world.

“Polls in the Arab and Muslim world show the percentage with positive feelings toward the US has fallen from 40% to 8%,” she noted. “We know humiliation is a major factor in the recruitment of terrorists and the war has to be seen as a major humiliation.”

Baldwin argued Bush’s policy of preemption is engendering “a very hostile and in some cases violent response.”

But Hulsmann said there is still hope on this front. “If we leave Iraq better than we found it, it takes away some of the oxygen for the fire Osama is trying to build,” he said.

Can the US fight alone on multiple fronts?

It would be “pathetic” if America couldn’t simultaneously go after both Saddam and Al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden, said Daniel Pleka, an American Enterprise Institute scholar who remains firmly behind Bush’s policies.

Klecza and Feingold, however, argue the Iraq war “distracted” the US from getting Osama and his followers in Afghanistan. Feingold has said he fears the US may “endanger our security” by losing focus on the terrorists who attacked this country.

Petri disagreed. “I have confidence from military briefings that they have not in any way lessened

their desire to get rid of Al Queda.”

Ryan said the US was hamstrung because any efforts to chase Al Queda operatives simply pushes them across the border into unpatrolled areas of Pakistan.

But Cordesman argued that without a nation-building effort in Afghanistan, the US cannot fully secure the area where Al Queda operatives are holed up.

Dobbins and Mathews note that the US has put too few resources in Afghanistan, compared to peace-keeping operations of the past, to succeed there. Dobbins points to the drain on resources caused by the Iraq war.

Last March, he noted, the Bush administration “asked for 18 times more money for Iraq than we did for Afghanistan.” Today, he noted, the US has twelve times more troops in Iraq than in Afghanistan.

Yet, for all the questions about the theories behind the Iraq war, President Bush does not appear to have lost any resolve about it. On his visit to England in November, he gave an impassioned speech pledging the US would not “retreat before a band of thugs and assassins” and will remain in Iraq until “a peaceful and democratic country” is established.

In response, Kristol proclaimed “Bush has broken from the mainstream of his party and become a neoconservative in the true meaning of the word.”

Even if Bush lacked such firmness, at this point it would be difficult to back out of Iraq. GOP campaign operatives have already said Bush will push his theory of pre-emptive war as the only way to deal with terrorists, while arguing the Democrats have no counter-approach.

In short, it may be irrelevant whether there are holes in the neoconservative theories, or whether many mainstream Republicans are uneasy with them. “Strong and wrong beats weak and right,” concluded New York Times writer James Traub. “That’s the bugbear Democrats have to contend with.”

Yet Republicans like Tom Petri remain uneasy.

“I think we should be working as quickly as possible to have Iraqis patrolling the streets and not Americans in Humvees,” he quietly noted. “That’s not what they’re trained for. They don’t know the language. It would be as though we had Saudis trying to patrol Milwaukee. I think there’s a significant danger for our troops.”

4 Comments

>> posted by **Jay Warner** on 1/5/2010 1:08:48 PM

Yes, this sounds like something written in 2004, and no, if published it probably would not have reversed the tsunami of "neo-con" thinking that drove the Bush administration and the Republican Party at that time. But I still wish it had been published it articulates my concerns of the time much better than I could or did.

Perhaps we do need a prayer, 'Lord protect us from the best and brightest.' What I want is people around those best and brightest who don't roll over for a tummy scratching every time a bright mind comes up with a bright thought. If they are so bright, make them justify and explain why they think their proposals will work.

Even a little real information could have stopped those neo-cons in their tracks today we need lots of solid information to make sure our best and brightest in this administration pick truly effective paths. I think this administration is on a good path today, but that's my opinion. I want them to keep finding good paths.

>> posted by **judith moriarty** on 1/5/2010 5:07:15 PM

why not just come clean? it's the Pentagon who now runs our country. Killing is big business. And while we're at it, what does it mean to be "truly patriotic?" I never understood the mania for patriotism.

>> posted by **Eliot Bernstein** on 1/7/2010 10:02:05 AM

Michael Grebe is a named Defendant in a Trillion Dollar Federal RICO Lawsuit, involving stolen patents and attempted murder, in the Southern District of NY that has been marked legally "related" to a Whistleblower lawsuit by Federal Judge Shira A. Scheindlin.

-

the court cases Foley & Lardner and Grebe are involved in below, also Senator Sampson Chair NY Judiciary Comm is holding hearings more @ www.iviewit.tv/wordpress for more.

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United States Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit Docket 08-4873-cv - Bernstein, et al. v Appellate Division First Department Disciplinary Committee, et al. - TRILLION DOLLAR LAWSUIT

Cases @ US District Court - Southern District NY

(07cv09599) Anderson v The State of New York, et al. - WHISTLEBLOWER LAWSUIT

(07cv11196) Bernstein, et al. v Appellate Division First Department Disciplinary Committee, et al.

(07cv11612) Esposito v The State of New York, et al.,

(08cv00526) Capogrosso v New York State Commission on Judicial Conduct, et al.,

(08cv02391) McKeown v The State of New York, et al.,

(08cv02852) Galison v The State of New York, et al.,

(08cv03305) Carvel v The State of New York, et al., and,

(08cv4053) Gizella Weisshaus v The State of New York, et al.

(08cv4438) Suzanne McCormick v The State of New York, et al.

() John L. Petrec-Tolino v. The State of New York

Eliot I. Bernstein

Inventor

Iviewit Holdings, Inc. – DL

Iviewit Holdings, Inc. – DL

Iviewit Holdings, Inc. – FL

Iviewit Technologies, Inc. – DL

Uview.com, Inc. – DL

Iviewit.com, Inc. – FL

Iviewit.com, Inc. – DL

I.C., Inc. – FL

Iviewit.com LLC – DL

Iviewit LLC – DL

Iviewit Corporation – FL

Iviewit, Inc. – FL
Iviewit, Inc. – DL
Iviewit Corporation
2753 N.W. 34th St.
Boca Raton, Florida 33434-3459
(561) 245.8588 (o)
(561) 886.7628 (c)
(561) 245-8644 (f)
iviewit@iviewit.tv
www.iviewit.tv
<http://iviewit.tv/wordpress>
<http://iviewit.tv/wordpresseliot>

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www.newyorkcourtcorruption.blogspot.com

>> reply posted by **Eliot Bernstein** on 1/7/2010 10:09:13 AM

Well Excuse Me but did I hear the word WAR, a definable legal concept with rules and regulations engraved in law? There are NO WARS currently LEGALLY waged according to US Laws and therefore WAR POWERS and WAR FUNDS appear used ILLEGALLY by CONGRESS, the EXECUTIVE and the COURTS. A President can declare a war in an Emergency but then at the next convening of Congress, the Congress must OFFICIALLY DECLARE LEGAL WAR on the enemy. Remember it has to be a real Enemy, usually one with country, airforce, nukes, etc. not a WAR on a WORD - TERROR - that is a war tactic. At the next meeting of Congress if Congress does not DECLARE LEGAL OFFICIAL WAR NO WAR FUNDS OR WAR POWERS CAN BE USED legally forward. Sure you can call it an insurgency or occupation or covert action, usually illegally but different rules apply to these, but those powers are limited and the funds usually secret, etc...

To violate the LAWS OF WAGING WAR, is to COMMIT TROOPS ILLEGALLY and steal WAR FUNDS illegally and KILL SOLDIERS ILLEGALLY and TORTURE PEOPLE ILLEGALLY and WAG WAR ILLEGALLY! No small abrogation of LAW, major crimes falling under the absolute definition of TREASON and SEDITION, we can hang ya for these crimes. Eventually, when this coup on country by our leaders is defeated, these WAR CRIMINALS WILL ALL BE TRIED TOO, including all those TWO FACED LYING POLITICIANS who voted to give WAR POWERS and FUNDS ILLEGALLY, sacrifice the LIVES OF SOLDIERS in false WARS, sacrifice the LIVES of the VICTIMS of our WAR CRIMES against their countries and STOLE the FUNDS to finance these CRIMES ILLEGALLY. Good riddance to all in Congress Repub or Dem who aided and abetted the ILLEGAL WARS GRANTING ILLEGAL WAR POWERS that have led to WAR CRIMES.

As our leader parade around, scaring you about WAR from TERRORISTS, to hide their crimes through fear mongering and misnomers like WAR and PATRIOT ACT, they all commit war crimes, except the few lone wolves in Congress who voted against the WAR CRIMES, say Kucinich, Paul,

Gravel, and ??? What are we the PEOPLE to DO when the GOVERNMENT is committing CRIMES in our, the PEOPLES names? We the People are then compelled by the Constitution to bear arms and form militias to beat them out of office, if voting them out does not work due to voter fraud.

Hijacking the vote already occurred like when the country went to Hell in a Bucket, when the Supreme Idiots voted the biggest loser President Bush into power by a 5-4 vote. At that moment in history we witnessed and did not PROTEST the usurping of our Democracy and they picked a DECIDER who was a DECIDEDLY EVIL GUY AND A WAR CRIMINAL. With this SUPREME TREASON to usurp the People Vote, went the very word Democracy and to fix the country we will need to reboot the country to that point and remove any one that Bush appointed, as his crown was gained illegally by voter FRAUD committed by the Supreme Court Justice, the 5 that appointed him. Prescott Bush should be proud of his grandson, Prescott's companies seized for trading with the ENEMY HITLER in WORLD WAR II, leading to the death of many US Soldiers, his grandson followed well in his footsteps.

More @ <http://iviewit.tv/wordpresseliot/?p=47>
