The American media, ten years after the Iraq war

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Multiple car bombs hit Shiite targets across Iraq yesterday, the tenth anniversary of the US invasion of Iraq, killing 65 and wounding 200. It was a bloody reminder of the effects of the neo-colonial US occupation of Iraq, including Washington's inflaming of ethno-sectarian conflict and of the escalating Syrian war.

Yesterday's bombings came after a series of anti-Shiite attacks by affiliates of Al Qaeda in Iraq, a group tied to the Al Nusra Front—currently the leading force in the US-backed Syrian opposition fighting to topple President Bashar al Assad.

Against the backdrop of these continuing atrocities, one can only be disgusted by the US media's deceitful and perfunctory retrospectives on the Iraq war. They present the war as safely in the past, after the election of an Iraqi government and the formal withdrawal of US troops from Iraq in December 2011. The lies and criminality with which US imperialism prosecuted the war—which devastated Iraq, leading to the deaths of an estimated 1.2 million Iraqis and nearly 4,500 American soldiers, and costing $2 trillion—are either ignored or dismissed as "intelligence failures."

The American population was railroaded into an unpopular war, despite mass protests, based on lies for which no one has been held accountable. Evidence to show Iraq's possession of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) was fabricated by US officials, including in Secretary of State Colin Powell's 2003 presentation at the UN. US President George Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney falsely claimed that the US had to attack Iraq to prevent it from allying itself with Al Qaeda—which now serves as a US proxy force in Syria.

Given the scale of the crimes and the devastation wrought by the Iraq war, the reaction of the American media has an Orwellian character. Ten years after a massive media campaign to pressure the public to support a war of aggression, there is not one serious review of the events that led to this catastrophe. The story is consigned to two-minute news spots and brief articles.

The *New York Times* carried a list of brief comments by US academics and state officials, titled "Was it Worth It?" Harvard University professor and former Deputy National Security Advisor Meghan O'Sullivan made the filthy argument, "Believe it or not, we're safer now" after the war. Reprising the WMD lies, she argued that without invading Iraq, "It is at least conceivable that [former Iraqi President] Saddam [Hussein] would have a nuclear weapon today."

The *Washington Post* wrote that Iraq is "teetering between progress and chaos," acknowledging ongoing sectarian warfare but citing Najaf Governor Adnan Zurfi's comment that, "Most people now have a good job and lots of opportunities." Besides the fact that this is a lie, even if it were true, it would not justify a US invasion and occupation of Iraq.

The pundits who most prominently promoted the war—including the *New York Times* ' Thomas Friedman and Richard Cohen and David Ignatius of the *Washington Post* —did not comment on the anniversary. Friedman felt no obligation to give any accounting for his infamous statement that he had "no problem with a war for oil" in Iraq.

The *Post* columnists were for their part too busy calling for war with Syria to write on their record in Iraq. Welcoming the sending of anti-aircraft missiles to Syrian opposition fighters, Ignatius advocated a US-led occupation of Syria, writing, "Let's be honest: when Assad is gone and Syria is finally rebuilding its state, it will need massive foreign economic and military assistance—probably including peacekeeping troops

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from the Arab League or even a NATO country such as Turkey."

In 2003, Cohen enthused that Colin Powell's lies on Iraqi WMD at the UN were "a reasonable man making a reasonable case"—a judgment that, as the WSWS noted, he made while "typing away before Powell even finished speaking" in a rush meet his newspaper deadline. He is again rushing to dismiss concerns, this time about "blowback" or unintended consequences from arming Al Qaeda in Syria.

The US should just get on with attacking Assad, Cohen writes. "Blowback is now a given. There is no sure way to avoid it, only to contain it. That can be done only by swiftly arming the moderates and pressing for as quick an end to the war as possible."

Cohen's warmongering remarks reflects the emergence of an enthusiastic pro-war constituency in the former liberal, pro-Democratic Party press.

The media's promotion of aggressive war, now the unquestioned basis of American Middle East policy, is open to the same condemnations as those issued against top operatives of the Nazi propaganda machine. UN Resolution 110, passed after the Nuremburg trials, censured "all forms of propaganda in whatsoever country conducted, which is either designed or likely to provoke or encourage any threat to the peace, breech of the peace, or act of aggression."

Despite the untold human and financial costs of the war, some have done very well from Operation Iraqi Freedom.

The war bankrupted the United States and devastated Iraq, whose oil fields are now looted by Western firms—including ExxonMobil, BP, Chevron, Shell, and Cheney's firm, Halliburton. Iraq even faces an energy shortage, with many Iraqi civilians still lacking electricity and running water, as 80 percent of Iraq's oil is exported by foreign firms. They work closely with the massive US embassy, hidden in Baghdad's still-fortified Green Zone, to oversee Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki.

US war plans in Iran and Syria flowed inevitably from the initial crime in Iraq. Concerned that its installation of a Shiite regime in Iraq tilted the regional balance of power too far towards Iran, the US let the Persian Gulf monarchies arm right-wing Sunni forces led by Al Nusra against Syria, a key Iranian ally. As yesterday's bombing showed, Iraq again finds itself in the middle of these war plans.

Ten years after the Iraq war began, US imperialist wars in the Middle East continue, new ones are being prepared, and the political criminals responsible for the wars and their media propagandists go unpunished.

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