

UK Chilcot Inquiry: cover-up continues over war against Iraq

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The most critical documents regarding the preparation and instigation of the illegal war against Iraq will never be seen by the Chilcot Inquiry. The Inquiry was authorised by the previous Labour government, fully five years ago. It is now 11 years since the invasion of Iraq.

The inquiry into a war in which a sovereign nation was invaded by armies of imperialist occupation, on the basis of a monstrous pack of lies, concluded its sessions as far back as 2011. Headed by Sir John Chilcot, it has cost £7 million. However, publication of its findings has been delayed for three years due to the cover-up being concocted.

Last week it was revealed that the pre-war conversations of the two political figures who authorised the filthy war in which an estimated more than one million people died, former UK Prime Minister Tony Blair and former US President George W. Bush, will remain secret.

A deal reached between the Cabinet Secretary Sir Jeremy Heywood and the Inquiry will allow only selected “quotes or gists” of discussions to be published from 25 notes from Blair to Bush and more than 130 records of conversations they held. It also stipulates that not a single view expressed by Bush to Blair during the exchanges will be made public by the Inquiry.

The agreement comes after the Chilcot Inquiry had first offered to block out anything from the Bush-Blair documents that the UK government thought should not be included. Indeed, once the government told Chilcot in January 2011 that the Blair-Bush records were off limits this was accepted without a hint of protest.

On May 28 Chilcot wrote to Heywood, “Accordingly, the requests submitted by the Inquiry last summer were for permission to disclose quotes or gists of the content.

We have concluded they are sufficient to explain our conclusions.”

The letter further reassures the government that only a glimpse of what was discussed between the conspirators will make it into the report, with Chilcot adding, “We have also agreed that the use of direct quotation from the documents should be the minimum necessary to enable the Inquiry to articulate its conclusions.”

There is no end to the cover-up. Last month it was revealed that a personal letter written by Blair to Bush in July 2002, fully nine months before the invasion of Iraq, reportedly beginning with the words, “You know, George, whatever you decide to do, I’m with you,” has “gone missing” from the US Presidential library.

The inquiry was always a fraud. When setting it up, former Labour Prime Minister Gordon Brown, who succeeded Blair in 2007, ensured that no one would be held accountable for anything, let alone be brought to justice.

Chilcot’s terms of reference were explicit. No one could be subjected to any prosecutions or legal proceedings as a result of its findings. In his first proposal, Brown authorised that the inquiry could even be held in private without any media reporting. A public inquiry was finally settled on, with the proviso that it would have the most limited of remits and concentrate only on establishing the “lessons that can be learned” from British involvement in the Iraq war.

Even that was not enough. One of the members of the hand-picked committee of inquiry was Sir Martin Gilbert, a noted supporter of the invasion of Iraq, who opined in 2004 that the war criminals Bush and Blair may one day “join the ranks of [former US president Franklin Delano] Roosevelt and [British wartime prime minister Winston] Churchill.”

Finally, Chilcot was prohibited from disclosing matters considered “essential to our national security” or “likely” to “cause harm” to “defence interests or international relations.”

Witnesses to the Inquiry were not required to speak under oath and were not subjected to any proper cross-examination. On more than one occasion, including when Blair himself appeared, Chilcot reminded everyone, “This is not a trial.”

Now, following years of delays, the report may not even be published before next year’s May general election. A process officially known as “Maxwellisation” is still underway, during which any figures set to face criticism are to be presented with a draft copy of the report in order to give them time to be able to respond.

All three major parties of the British ruling class, the Conservatives, Labour and Liberal Democrats, are deeply implicated in the criminal war against Iraq. Following the news that the Bush-Blair documents are to be censored, John Major, the former Tory leader whom Blair replaced as prime minister, made a hypocritical statement claiming, “I think it is a pity the papers are going to be withheld for several reasons. Firstly, they will leave suspicions unresolved and those suspicions will fester and maybe worsen.”

Despite Major’s self-serving plea for disclosure of the documents, the present Conservative/Liberal Democrat coalition have no appetite for the truth being revealed about the Iraq War—with potentially disastrous consequences for the strategic relationship with the US. This is, after all, a government that was a leading player, in alliance with the US and France, in the 2011 neo-colonial war of aggression against Libya. In addition, the British government supported the February coup in Ukraine, spearheaded by fascist elements, which overthrew an elected government, and it is fully complicit in the moves by the major imperialist powers to provoke civil war and a military conflict with Russia.

The Tories wholeheartedly voted for war against Iraq in 2003. As with the Blair government, they opposed the mass anti-war protests that took place in Britain and internationally in the month leading up to the invasion.

Major himself was the prime minister during the first Gulf War in 1991, in which Iraq was invaded by hundreds of thousands of US and British troops, and

after which it was further devastated by more than a decade of crippling economic sanctions.

For his part, Blair knows full well that he has nothing to fear from Chilcot and he is increasingly brazen about it. He was asked at a press conference about the decision not to disclose the critical records of his discussions with Bush. Blair replied, “In respect of Chilcot, I’ll leave that for another day.”

The 2003 invasion of Iraq was a war of aggression carried out in the interests of the most predatory sections of the financial and corporate oligarchy in the United States and Britain. The five years since the formation of the Chilcot Inquiry have demonstrated that far more is involved than an attempt by those involved to cover up their crimes. The central role of the Inquiry has been to legitimise the invasion of Iraq and affirm the basis on which it was carried out—the US doctrine of pre-emptive war, a flagrant rejection of any concept of international law.



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