

tions it should never have won.

War also distracts the people from their economic problems, the need for decent housing, schools, and jobs, and a recession that shows no sign of easing.

Since George II took office, the stock market has dropped 34 percent, unemployment has climbed 35 percent, the federal surplus of US\$281 billion is now a deficit of US\$157 billion, and an additional 1.5 million people are without health insurance, bringing the total to 41 million.

War has been good for the conservative agenda in general, providing record military spending, greater profits for the defence industry, and a deficit spending spree that further enriches the creditor class at the taxpayer's expense, and is used to justify more cuts in domestic human services. Liberal intellectuals are never happier than when, with patronizing smiles, they can

dilate on the stupidity of George Bush.

What I have tried to show is that Bush is neither retarded nor misdirected. Given his class perspective and interests, there are compelling reasons to commit armed aggression against Iraq - and against other countries to come.

It is time we dwelled less upon his malapropisms and more on his rather effective deceptions and relentless viciousness.

Many decent crusaders have been defeated because of their inability to fully comprehend the utter depravity of their enemies. The more we know what we are up against, the better we can fight it.

***Abridged. For the full text visit:  
[www.michaelparenti.org](http://www.michaelparenti.org)***



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# **To Kill Iraq: The Reasons Why**

***By Michael Parenti, San Francisco-based historian and anti-war activist,  
author of "The Terrorism Trap" and many other books and articles.***

In October 2002, after several days of full-dress debate in the House and Senate, the US Congress fell into line behind almost-elected president George W. Bush, giving him a mandate to launch a massive military assault against the already battered nation of Iraq. The discourse in Congress was marked by its usual cowardice. Even many of the Senators and Representatives who voted against the president's resolution did so on the narrowest procedural grounds, taking pains to tell how they too detested Saddam Hussein, how they agreed with the president on many points, how something needed to be done about Iraq but not just yet, not quite in this way.

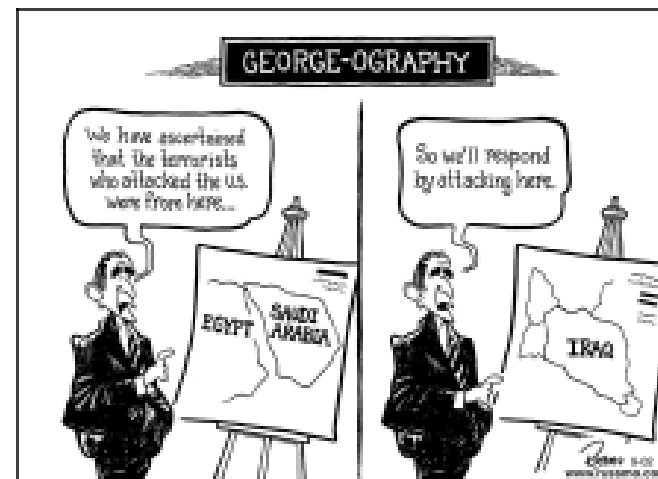
So it is with Congress: so much political discourse in so narrow a political space. Few of the members dared to question the unexamined assumptions about US virtue, and the imperial right of US leaders to decide which nations shall live and which shall die. Few, if any, pointed to the continual bloody stream of war crimes committed by a succession of arrogant US administrations in blatant violation of human rights and international law.

Bush and other members of his administration have given varied and unpersuasive reasons to justify the "war" - actually a one-sided massacre - against Iraq.

Having seen that the pretexts given by the White House to justify war are palpably false, some people conclude that the administration is befuddled or even "crazy". But just because they are trying to mislead and confuse the public does not perforce mean they themselves are misled and confused.

Rather it might be that they have reasons which they prefer not to see publicised and debated, for then it would become evident that US policies of the kind levelled against Iraq advance the interests of the rich and powerful at much cost to the American people and every other people on the face of the earth.

Here I offer what I believe are the real reasons for the US aggression against Iraq.



# Global Politico-Economic Supremacy

A central US goal, as enunciated by the little Dr Strangeloves who inhabit the upper echelons of policymaking in the Bush administration, is to perpetuate US global supremacy.

The objective is not just power for its own sake but power to insure plutocratic control of the planet, power to privatise and deregulate the economies of every nation in the world, to hoist upon the backs of peoples everywhere - including the people of North America - the blessings of an untrammelled “free market” corporate capitalism.

The struggle is between those who believe that the land, labour, capital, technology, and markets of the world should be dedicated to maximising capital accumulation for the few, and those who believe that these things should be used for the communal benefit and socio-economic development of the many.

The goal is to insure not merely the supremacy of global capitalism as such, but the supremacy of US global capitalism by preventing the emergence of any other potentially competing superpower or, for that matter, any potentially competing regional power. Iraq is a case in point.

Some nations in the Middle East have oil but no water; others have water but no oil. Iraq is the only one with plenty of both, along with a good agricultural base - although its fertile lands are now much contaminated by the depleted uranium dropped upon it during the 1991 Gulf War bombings.

In earlier times, Iraq’s oil was completely owned by US, British, and other Western companies. In 1958, there was a popular revolution in Iraq. Ten years later, the rightwing of the Ba’ath party took power, with Saddam Hussein serving as point man for the CIA.

But instead of acting as a compradore collaborator to Western investors, Saddam and his cohorts nationalised the Iraqi oil industry in 1972, ejected the Western profiteers, and pursued policies of public development and economic nationalism.

By 1990, Iraq had the highest standard of living in the Middle East, and it was evident that the US had failed to rollback the gains of the 1958 revolution.

Soon after the collapse of the Soviet Union, US

leaders decided that Third World development no longer needed to be tolerated.

Just as Yugoslavia served as a “bad” example in Europe, so Iraq served as a bad example to other nations in the Middle East. The last thing the plutocrats in Washington want in that region is independent, self-defining developing nations that wish to control their own land, labour, and natural resources.

We can anticipate that following a US occupation, an Iraqi puppet government will be put in place, headed by someone every bit as subservient to the White House as Tony Blair.

The Iraqi state-owned media will become “free and independent” by being handed over to rich conservative private corporations.

Anything even remotely critical of US foreign policy and free market capitalism will be deprived of an effective platform.

Conservative political parties, heavily financed by US sources, will outspend any leftist groupings that might have survived.

On this steeply unlevelled playing field, US advisors will conduct US-style “democratic elections”, perhaps replicating the admirable results produced in Florida and elsewhere.

Just about everything in the Iraqi economy will be privatised at giveaway prices. Poverty and underemployment, already high, will climb precipitously. So will the Iraqi national debt, as international loans are floated that “help” the Iraqis pay for their own victimisation. Public services will dwindle to nothing, and Iraq will suffer even more misery than it does today.

We are being asked to believe that the Iraqi people are willing to endure another massive bombing campaign in order to reach this free-market paradise.

## Natural Resource Grab

Another reason for targeting Iraq can be summed up in one word: oil. Along with maintaining the overall global system of expropriation, US leaders are interested in more immediate old-time colonial plunder.

The present White House leadership is com-

posed of oil men who are both sorely tempted and threatened by Iraq’s oil reserve, one of the largest in the world. With 113 billion barrels at US\$25 a barrel, Iraq’s supply comes to over US\$2.8 trillion dollars.

But not a drop of it belongs to the US oil cartel; it is all state owned. Baghdad has offered exploratory concessions to France, China, Russia, Brazil, Italy, and Malaysia.

But with a US takeover of Iraq and a new puppet regime in place, all these agreements may be subject to cancellation. We may soon witness the biggest oil grab in the history of Third World colonialism by US oil companies aided and abetted by the US Government.

One thing that US leaders have been interested in doing with Iraqi oil - given the glut and slumping price of crude in recent years - is keep it off the market for a while longer.

The San Francisco Chronicle (22 February 1998) headlined its story “IRAQ’S OIL POSES THREAT TO THE WEST.”



In fact, Iraqi crude poses no threat to “the West” only to Western oil investors. If Iraq were able to re-enter the international oil market, the Chronicle reported, “it would devalue British North Sea oil, undermine American oil production and - much more important - it would destroy the huge profits which the United States [read, US oil companies] stands to gain from its massive investment in Caucasian oil production, especially in Azerbaijan.”

We might conclude that direct control and ownership of Iraqi oil is the surest way to keep it off the world market and the surest way to profit from its future sale when the price is right.

## Domestic Political Gains

War and violence have been good to George W Bush. As of September 10, 2001, his approval ratings were sagging woefully.

Then came the attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon, swiftly followed by the newly trumpeted war against terrorism and the massive bombing and invasion of Afghanistan. Bush’s approval ratings skyrocketed.

But soon came the corporate scandals of 2002: Enron, WorldCom, and even more perilously Harken and Halliburton.

By July, both the President and vice-President were implicated in fraudulent corporate accounting practices, making false claims of profit to pump up stock values, followed by heavy insider selling just before the stock was revealed to be nearly worthless and collapsed in price.

By September, the impending war against Iraq blew this whole issue off the front pages and out of the evening news.

By October 2002, the Republican party, reeling from the scandals and pegged as the party of corporate favouritism and corruption, re-emerged as the party of patriotism, national defence, and strong military leadership to win control of both houses of Congress, winning elec-

(conclusion on back page)