American militarism and the US political establishment: the real lessons of the invasion of Iraq

Abstract

In the haze of popular memory, and even in intellectual circles, the most common explanation for the American invasion of Iraq is a simple one: that it was the brainchild of the neo-conservative cabal grouped
around Bush II, and it was motivated in large measure to open the door for American oil majors to take
control of the region. Among intellectuals and foreign policy experts this line has been taken further, to the
effect that the heightened militarism embodied in the invasion reflected a watershed in foreign policy more
generally, evident along several dimensions—from soft power to hard power, multilateralism to
unilateralism, economic coercion to military coercion, etc. One of the most common descriptions of the
Bush ascension is that it signalled the turn to a New Imperialism—in contrast to the policy orientation that
preceded it, and reminiscent of the global hegemony established by England two centuries ago. To some,
like Niall Ferguson, this was a development to be welcomed, a sign that America was finally accepting the
responsibility that comes with power; to more sober minds, of course, it was something to be deplored. If
these diagnoses were accurate, then the implication of the set-backs in Iraq would be simple—a return to
the status quo ante, a turn away from unilateralism, the abandonment of aggressive militarism, and
perhaps even an abatement of the imperial impulse. The task is to assess the extent to which they are in
fact true. How much does the Bush interregnum represent a break from the recent past, and how much of
his agenda can we expect to continue into the next administrations? We are thus obliged to turn to recent
history in order to place his decisions in the longer flow of policy.
The real threat of Saddam’s WMDs was not to America: "I'll tell you what I think the real threat is and actually has been since 1990 - it's the threat against Israel." American political system all failed utterly. of the neo-con role see James Bamford’s Pretext for War: 9/11, Iraq, and the Abuse of America’s Intelligence. Agencies, New York: Doubleday. The fact that several of the key players most aggressively pushing the Iraqi war.