

## After the Drop: Iraq's Inheritors

Posted by

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**Empire Burlesque** - Chris Floyd - George Bush [lauded](#) the hanging of Saddam Hussein as a hallmark of Iraq's efforts to create "a society governed by rule of law." But as both

[Steve Gilliard](#)

and

[Juan Cole](#)

note, Saddam was not actually hanged by the "sovereign" Iraqi government at all; he was turned over to the Mahdi Army militia of Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, religious Chekists in black leather jackets and black masks ? and the very people that Bush's viceroys say are the main instigators of the murderous violence roiling the Leader's Babylonian satrapy today.

<http://www.atlanticfreepress.com/images/stories/chrisfloyd/sadr.jpg>

[www.chris-floyd.com](http://www.chris-floyd.com)

### Thug Bones in Bushland and Babylon

#### Chris Floyd

Empire Burlesque  
05 January 2007

Now, of course, there is an ["investigation"](#) afoot of how Saddam's execution was botched so badly, and how he was allowed to comport himself as a dignified martyr being sacrificed for the nation by crude thugs on one of Islam's holiest days. Or rather, there is the usual whitewash going on in which a bit of low-hanging fruit ? in this case, a guard ? will be thrown to the dogs while the true culprits escape accountability. Yet the fact remains: Saddam ? who had been a murderous blunderer throughout his reign, not unlike a certain brush-cutting goober from Crawford ? managed to pull off a PR masterstroke at the end. The level of sheer idiocy and incompetence it would take to make Saddam look good even for a nano-second is almost inconceivable; yet the remarkable Mr. Bush and his team were obviously up to the challenge.

Meanwhile Gilliard makes the telling observation that there is no essential difference between the Sadr forces and the Iraqi "government" anymore. Everything that Bush does to aid the Iraqi "government" merely augments the power of its various sectarian militias, the Sadrists above all. (Gilliard has long been penetrating, and prescient, on Sadr's role as kingmaker ? and perhaps future "king" ? in Iraq.) Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki ? the hardline leader of an extremist sectarian party that once made war directly on the United States and killed several Americans, but who is now, both Bush and Blair agree, "our guy" ? not only gave Saddam to the Sadrists to kill; he gave the very rope that hanged Saddam to Muqtada as a keepsake, as Cole

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reports.

But there is nothing really new in this. Bush has been backing death squads, sectarian militias and religious extremists throughout the war. As I noted in a post ( [Death Mask: The Deliberate Destruction of Iraq](#) ) in 2005:

Investigative journalist [Max Fuller](#) marshals a convincing case for this dread conclusion in a remarkable work of synthesis drawn from information buried in reams of mainstream news stories and public Pentagon documents. Piling fact on damning fact, he shows that the vast majority of atrocities now attributed to "rogue" Shiite and Sunni militias are in fact the work of government-controlled commandos and "special forces," trained by Americans, "advised" by Americans and run largely by former CIA assets, Global Research reports.

We [first reported](#) here in June 2003 that the U.S. was already hiring Saddam's security muscle for "special ops" against the nascent insurgency and re-opening his torture haven, Abu Ghraib. Meanwhile, powerful Shiite militias ? including Talibanic religious extremists armed and trained by Iran ? were loosed upon the land. As direct "Coalition" rule gave way to various "interim" and "elected" Iraqi governments, these violent gangs were formally incorporated into the Iraqi Interior Ministry, where the supposedly inimical Sunni and Shiite units often share officers and divvy up territories.

Bush helpfully supplied these savage gangs ? who are killing dozens of people each week, Knight-Ridder reports ? with American advisers who made their "counter-insurgency" bones forming right-wing death squads in Colombia and El Salvador. Indeed, Bush insiders have openly bragged of "riding with the bad boys" and exercising the ["Salvador option,"](#) lauding the Reagan-backed counter-insurgency program that slaughtered tens of thousands of civilians, Newsweek reports. Bush has also provided a "state-of-the-art command, control and communications center" to coordinate the operation of his Iraqi "commandos," as the Pentagon's own news site, DefendAmerica, reports. The Iraqi people can go without electricity, fuel and medicine, but by God, Bush's "bad boys" will roll in clover as they carry out their murders and mutilations.

...Earlier this year, one enterprising Knight-Ridder reporter, [Yasser Salihee](#) , actually found several eyewitnesses willing to testify to the involvement of the U.S.-backed commandos in 12 such murders. The offer was shrugged off by the Interior Ministry's spokesman ? an American "adviser" and veteran bones-maker from the Colombian ops. In the end, it didn't matter; Salihee

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was shot dead by a U.S. sniper at a checkpoint a few days afterwards.

The Bushists may have been forced to ditch their idiotic fantasies of "cakewalking" into a compliant satrapy, but they have by no means abandoned their chief goals in the war: milking Iraq dry and planting a [permanent military "footprint"](#) on the nation's neck. If direct control through a plausible puppet is no longer possible, then fomenting bloody chaos and sectarian strife is the best way to weaken the state. The Bushists are happy to make common cause with thugs and zealots in order to prevent the establishment of a strong national government that might balk at the ongoing "privatizations" that have continued apace behind the smokescreen of violence, and the planned opening of Iraq's oil reserves to select foreign investors ? a potential transfer of some [\\$200 billion](#) of Iraqi people's wealth into the hands of a few Bush cronies, the Independent reports.

...There's nothing new in this; Bush is simply following a well-thumbed playbook. For example, in 1953 the CIA bankrolled Islamic fundamentalists and secular goon squads to destabilize the democratic government of Iran ? which selfishly wanted to control its own oil ? and pave the way for the puppet Shah, as the agency's own [histories re](#) count. In 1971, CIA officials admitted carrying out more than 21,000 ["extr](#)

[a-judicial killings"](#)

in its

["Phoenix"](#)

counter-insurgency operation in Vietnam. (The true number of victims is certainly much higher.)

In 1979, the CIA began sponsoring the most violent Islamic extremist groups in Afghanistan ? supplying money, arms, even jihad primers for schoolchildren ? to destabilize the secular, Soviet-allied government and provoke the Kremlin into a costly intervention, as

[Robert Dreyfus details](#)

in his new book, Devil's Game: How the United States Helped Unleash Fundamentalist Islam.

Later, Saudi magnate Osama bin Laden ? whose family firm helped kick-start George W.

Bush's business career ? joined the operation, and his men were sent to America for "anti-Soviet" terrorist training, as

[Greg Palast reports](#)

. And of course, these examples only scratch the scorched-earth surface of America's double-dealings in this deathly shadow world.

This bi-partisan policy has been remarkably consistent for more than half a century: to augment the wealth and power of the elite, American leaders have supported ? [or created](#) ? vicious [ga](#)

[ngs of killers](#)

and cranks to foment unrest, eliminate opponents and [terrorize whole nations](#)

into submission. The resulting carnage in the target countries ? and inevitable blowback against

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ordinary Americans ? means nothing to these Great Gamesters; it's merely the price of doing business. Bush's "incompetence" is just a mask for stone-cold calculation.

Bush's current urge to "surge" is more of the same. It's the only thing these one-trick ponies know how to do.

I see that Patrick Cockburn, who new book, *The Occupation*, is one of the best I've read on the Iraq War, has had similar thoughts in the Independent about the unique genius of George W. Bush in turning Saddam "from a [monster to a martyr](#) ." Some excerpts from his excellent analysis:

It takes real genius to create a martyr out of Saddam Hussein. Here is a man dyed deep with the blood of his own people who refused to fight for him during the United States-led invasion three-and-a-half years ago. His tomb in his home village of Awja is already becoming a place of pilgrimage for the five million Sunni Arabs of Iraq who are at the core of the uprising.

During his trial, Saddam himself was clearly trying to position himself to be a martyr in the cause of Iraqi independence and unity and Arab nationalism. His manifest failure to do anything effective for these causes during the quarter of a century he misruled Iraq should have made his task difficult. But an execution which vied in barbarity with a sectarian lynching in the backstreets of Belfast 30 years ago is elevating him to heroic status in the eyes of the Sunni - the community to which most Arabs belong - across the Middle East...

When Saddam fell Iraqis expected life to get better. They hoped to live like Saudis and Kuwaitis. They knew he had ruined his country by hot and cold wars. When he came to power as president in 1979, Iraq had large oil revenues, vast oil reserves, a well-educated people and a competent administration. By invading Iran in 1980 and Kuwait in 1990, he reduced his nation to poverty. This was made worse by the economic siege imposed by 13 years of UN sanctions.

But life did not get better after 2003. Face-to-face interviews with 2,000 Iraqi adults by the Iraq Centre for Research and Strategic Studies in November revealed that 90 per cent of them said the situation in their country had been better before the US-led invasion. Only 5 per cent of people said it was better today. The survey was carried out in Baghdad, in the wholly Sunni Anbar province and the entirely Shia Najaf province. It does not include the Kurds, who remain favourable to the occupation....

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It could get worse yet. The so-called "surge" in US troop levels by 20,000 to 30,000 men on top of the 145,000 soldiers already in the country is unlikely to produce many dividends. It seems primarily designed so that President George Bush does not have to admit defeat or take hard choices about talking to Iran and Syria. But these reinforcements might tempt the US to assault the Mehdi Army.

Somehow many senior US officials have convinced themselves that it is Mr Sadr, revered by millions of Shia, who is the obstacle to a moderate Iraqi government. In fact his legitimacy in the eyes of ordinary Shia Iraqis, the great majority of the population, is far greater than the "moderate" politicians whom the US has in its pocket and who seldom venture out of the Green Zone....An attack on the Shia militia men of the Mehdi Army could finally lead to the collapse of Iraq into total anarchy. Saddam must already be laughing in his grave.

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<http://www.atlanticfreepress.com/content/view/586/81/>