

Chalabi Did It!

The US invaded Iraq on the basis of a lie, but US leaders easily avoid culpability. By Allan Abraham

Now the CIA says it was a man named Ahmed Chalabi who passed the US government wrong information about Iraq possessing WMD. It was Chalabi who misled the administration into believing that Iraq had WMD. It was Chalabi who convinced the administration that Iraq was going to use WMD against the US. It was Chalabi who said Iraqis would rise against Saddam Hussein once the first shots had been fired. It was Chalabi who said Iraqis would welcome the invading army with flowers. It was Chalabi...

Now it turns out that Chalabi had all along been acting for Iranian intelligence. America's intelligence agencies and administration had all been suckered by the smooth Chalabi. Double agent Chalabi was such a smart op, one US intelligence source described it this way: "It's pretty clear that the Iranians had us for breakfast, lunch and dinner." The whole thing was so embarrassing that instead of arresting Chalabi in Iraq before "sovereignty" was "handed over to the Iraqis" at the end of June (or at least seeking his extradition for the crime of single-handedly inveigling the US, sole superpower, into a war which has killed thousands), the US, sole superpower, resorted to some good old-fashioned spite. They sent US soldiers to "back up" Iraqi forces while these vandalized Chalabi's home in Baghdad and took away some of his belongings (including a Koran autographed by Ayatollah Khomeini). Chalabi was not even interrogated. (A case of once bitten, twice shy? Or does Chalabi give them the heeby-jeebies?) And then George Tenet, in splendid sacrificial mode (including tears), resigned early June from his post as CIA director. The Iranians could well have been enjoying the Americans as a midnight snack while they watched burlesque descend into farce. More centrally, there's a ham-handed cover-up going on, while everybody—probably out of patriotism—pretends not to notice.

Let's for a moment forget the "facts" which have been carefully placed before our noses and look instead at some background.

The CIA is a professional organization and very good at what it does. Ahmed Chalabi is a fraudster who fled Jordan in the boot of a car. He is wanted in Jordan, where he has been convicted *in absentia* for bank fraud. He went into the intelligence gathering business when he found there was money to be made by tailoring intelligence to meet client requirements. His main clients were a group of neo-cons in the Bush Administration, who were bent on invading Iraq. Reportedly, the CIA was, at the least, skeptical about the intelligence Chalabi provided the neo-cons, if not wise to his methods and motivation. But the neo-cons liked Chalabi's information, accorded it first class status, gave it prominence, and built up the reputation of their man. The CIA allowed itself to be pushed into the background, and stayed silent as the case for the invasion of Iraq was built on the basis of Ahmed Chalabi's false information.

So, of course, it is true that Chalabi gave the US false information and that he had an Iranian connection. He might even have passed information about the US to Iranian intelligence. But there's one point that is conveniently being overlooked: *Chalabi was placed in the role he eventually played, and abetted in it, by high administration officials, who did it to further their own goal of invading Iraq.* These officials aimed to mislead public opinion and used Chalabi to give credibility to false intelligence. Those are dirty tricks of a high order, which have resulted in a war that has cost thousands of lives. The CIA, for its part, is guilty because it allowed information it knew to be false to circulate unchallenged and so to gain credibility.

Now that things are going badly in Iraq, Chalabi and the CIA have taken the fall. But there is a third group of the guilty—the neo-cons in the Bush Administration, who have managed thus far to evade accountability by portraying their efforts as patriotic and necessary. All three parties (Chalabi, the CIA, and the Bush Administration) are guilty of the terrible crime of starting a war on false grounds. Will they ever be held accountable for

these crimes? Will the group of neo-cons in the Bush Administration ever be held responsible for anything more serious than embarrassing the country, sole superpower? Or will they get away simply by saying they were fooled by Chalabi?

And what of the American people? They, too, are passing the buck, choosing to look away. They allow their leaders to make monkeys of their intelligence, their morality, and their humanity. They allow themselves to be duped, and they compound that failure by losing their moral compass and their wits when faced with more lies and sophistry.

That this war was conducted against a country that was no threat to the US, brought to its knees by 12 years of sanctions, and begging not to be invaded ought to be a matter of shame for the US and UK. There was no heroism in this invasion, and there is none in this occupation. To “support our young people in uniform” is to woodenly support an ignoble act. That's the argument from morality and conscience.

There's also the legal argument. Starting an unjustified war is the most fundamental of all war crimes. International agreements, conventions, and customary law are full of principles and regulatory safeguards that have been disregarded by the invading forces. Article 22 of the Hague Regulations, for example, states that the ‘right of belligerents to adopt means of injuring the enemy is not unlimited’. And Article 23(e) specifies that it is *prohibited* to ‘employ arms, projectiles, or material calculated to cause unnecessary suffering’. [Iraq Body Count](http://iraqbodycount.net) (iraqbodycount.net) estimates that at least 13,000 civilians have been killed since the invasion began. Can you imagine how many more have been injured or otherwise damaged: burnt, maimed, psychologically crippled, orphaned, left homeless?

Parts of Afghanistan were carpet-bombed as retaliation (rough justice) for the 3,500 innocent civilians killed in the terrorist act of September 11. But when 13,000 innocent Iraqi civilians are killed in equally horrific ways, there is no talk of justice being done. There is a strong legal case that can be brought against

American and British leaders for the invasion. But these leaders successfully continue to hide behind the rhetoric of righteousness and claims of saintliness; to push forward a Chalabi here, a George Tenet there, as smokescreens and diversions. When will the American and British people finally have the courage to see through the charades to the really important matters; to see that their emperors have no clothes and that the sight is grim. When will they make their leaders truly accountable?

Bringing American leaders to justice may be a blow to American prestige. But not doing so is a blow to humanity and to progress towards a better world. Making leaders accountable will bring responsible, enlightened leadership—something which is in very short supply at the moment.

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SIDEBARS

Conscience First

I think that we should be men first, and sub-jects afterward. It is not desirable to cultivate a respect for the law, so much as for the right.

– Henry D Thoreau, *Civil Disobedience* (1849)

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A Respectful Line of Powder-Monkeys

A common and natural result of an undue respect for law is, that you may see a file of soldiers, colonel, captain, corporal, privates, powder-monkeys, and all, marching in admirable order over hill and dale to the wars, against their wills, ay, against their common sense and consciences, which makes it very steep marching indeed, and produces a palpitation of the heart.

– *Henry D Thoreau, Civil Disobedience (1849)*

Visible Justice

Justice should not only be done, but should manifestly and undoubtedly be seen to be done.

– *Lord Hewart, King's Bench Reports (1924)*

Justice as Humanity

For me, justice is the first condition of humanity.

– *Wole Soyinka, The Man Died (1972)*

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The invasion and occupation of Iraq is the result of a crude and mechanical way of thinking. According to this line of thinking, people are abstractions, whose death or suffering is not to be considered. What counts is some grand plan. This way of thinking is nothing but a **refined barbarism**. It is leading to confrontation and conflict. And it is

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shaping the framework of thought.

People who argue for an end to the occupation of Iraq are not just spoilers who have no positive suggestions to make. In **Constructive about Iraq**, we indicate the error of the present policy and point to a way forward.