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GOP Frontrunner: ‘Bush Lied, People Died’

By Justin Raimondo
February 14, 2016

Pardon me while I sit back and enjoy the panic of the Republican – and media – elites as the GOP frontrunner takes up that old left-wing antiwar slogan: “Bush lied – people died!” That’s the essence of what Donald Trump said at Saturday’s South Carolina GOP presidential debate when moderator John Dickerson – who smirked his way through the entire debate – asked Trump if he still thought George W. Bush should be impeached as he supposedly said in a long ago interview:

“George Bush made a mistake. We can make mistakes. But that one was a beauty. We should have never been in Iraq. We have destabilized the Middle East.”

DICKERSON: “But so I’m going to – so you still think he should be impeached?”

TRUMP: “You do whatever you want. You call it whatever you want. I want to tell you. They lied. They said there were weapons of mass destruction, there were none. And they knew there were none. There were no weapons of mass destruction.”

The storm of booing from that crowd, which seemed mainly to consist of members of the Lindsey Graham Ladies Home Garden Club, conjured in my memory another signal moment in the history of GOP presidential debates: when Ron Paul said that the 9/11 attacks were “blowback” resulting from half a century of propping up Arab despots in the Middle East. Remember how everyone declared that Paul was finished: that by saying the un-sayable he had

forever dashed all hopes of making a political impact on the Republican party and that he was now consigned to the margins? What happened, however, was nothing of the sort: instead, that moment of speaking truth to power catapulted him to national prominence and was instrumental in creating a national movement that lives and grows to this day.

On Sunday morning, the same tired old pundits who gleefully predicted Paul's ruination are even more enthusiastically forecasting Trump's demise, albeit with a note of caution (because they've been saying he's doomed for months now). There was Bill Kristol, who ceaselessly agitated for war – and whose subsidized magazine retailed the lies that led to that disaster – predicting that Trump would be badly hurt if not summarily drummed out of the race by “responsible” Republicans. Here he demands Republicans shun Trump and that other candidates pledge not to support him if he wins the nomination.

But of course there's plenty of evidence George W. Bush and his neoconservative Rasputins lied us into war. To begin with, let's look at members of his cabinet who wanted to go after Iraq first, with Osama bin Laden a mere afterthought:

- At a National Security Council meeting immediately after the 9/11 attacks, Donald Rumsfeld declared that "Why shouldn't we go against Iraq, not just al-Qaeda?" Wolfowitz chimed in by characterizing Iraq as a "brittle, oppressive regime that might break easily" and that regime change was “doable.” Obsessed with the theories of neoconservative crackpot conspiracy theorist Laurie Mylroie, who insisted Saddam Hussein was behind 9/11, both Wolfowitz and Kristol's *Weekly Standard* pushed this “theory” in order to justify the Iraq war. Clearly, from their perspective, “weapons of mass destruction” had nothing to do with it: that was just a pretext to implement their agenda of war in the Middle East.
- The neoconservatives in the Bush administration suppressed CIA analysts who said there was little evidence of WMDs in Iraq, or any indication Saddam Hussein intended to build them. Vice President Dick Cheney and his top aide, the soon-to-be-indicted-and-convicted Scooter Libby, exerted maximum pressure on intelligence officials to come up with the desired conclusions, and personally traveled to CIA headquarters in Langley, Virginia, to make sure such dissent was crushed and analysts echoed administration talking points.
- Those talking points were manufactured in what one magazine aptly called a “Lie Factory” – the Office of Special Plans, a parallel intelligence-gathering agency set up by the neoconservatives in the administration that fed Congress and the media “factoids” which were later proved to be false. Again, these lies were mostly centered around the Laurie Mylroie conspiracy theory that pointed the finger at Saddam Hussein as being responsible for the 9/11 attacks. The “special planners” spread the story that Mohammed Atta, the ringleader of the 9/11 hijackers, had met with an Iraqi intelligence agent in Prague: a total fabrication. The Special Plans brigade – headed up by Abram Shulsky, a scholarly expert on the politics of the philosopher Leo Strauss, who believed in the necessity of telling “noble lies” – was the conduit that funneled fabrications authored by Ahmed Chalabi's Iraqi National Congress into the US intelligence stream. While Judy

Miller heralded Chalabi's lies on the front page of the *New York Times*, the OSP was landing them on George W. Bush's desk.

- One major and quite brazen example of lies in the service of the War Party's agenda was the "16 words" controversy originating in Bush's 2003 State of the Union speech, in which he said: "The British government has learned that Saddam Hussein recently sought significant quantities of uranium from Africa." The White House later disavowed this statement, saying it "should never have been included" in the speech. The reason: the documents on which they were based turned out to be forgeries, and crude ones at that. (I outed the authors of the forgery here.) And yet the "16 words" were included in Bush's speech, over CIA and State Department objections. This is the clearest evidence that Bush – who had seen the classified National Intelligence Estimate – consciously lied and manipulated the "evidence" to suit his preconceived agenda.

That the cries of outrage over Trump's accusations are coming from the very same people who peddled the Bush administration's lies is hardly shocking. Bill Kristol avers that "no responsible Democrat" believes we were lied into war by Bush and his neocon advisors, but this is hardly the case. Indeed, congressional Democrats pushed for an investigation of the intelligence that the Bushies proffered as "evidence" of Iraqi WMD, but the probe was scotched for political reasons – i.e. they, like the Republicans, had nothing to gain from demonstrating how easily they were taken in. As I wrote back in 2005:

"[Then Republican National Committee chairman] Ken Mehlman was on Meet the Press Sunday morning, invoking the Select Senate Committee Report [.pdf], the Silberman-Robb report, and – laughably – the Butler report as evidence that we should all move along, there's nothing to see here. The argument from authority is a favorite debating tactic of the neocons, second only to smearing their opponents as "anti-Semites." You have to dig deep down in the archives and retrieve news articles as well as the texts of these various official and definitive-sounding 'reports' to realize that they say no such thing – and that, furthermore, an explicit political decision was made in the case of the SSCI report and the Silberman-Robb whitewash not to address the question of manipulated intelligence. No ordinary American has the time or inclination to do that kind of research, however, and that is what they are counting on – just as they counted on this same conceptual lethargy to deliberately create the widespread impression that Iraq was behind 9/11."

The Republicans in Congress had no interest in allowing an investigation of the Bush administration's deliberately misleading public statements claiming there were WMDs in Iraq, and the Democrats were equally squeamish about the subject – after all, why would you want to reveal to the public how you were bamboozled into going along with the biggest foreign policy disaster since Napoleon's invasion of Russia?

And so it was never investigated. Yet the resentment of how the lies of the neocons destroyed the lives of hundreds of thousands of people, in the Middle East and here in this country, has long been boiling beneath the surface – only to burst through, last Saturday, in the midst of the Republican debate.

Oh, it's a "conspiracy theory," they're saying: it's politically unwise, they aver; it's just another example of Trump's rudeness and crudeness. These same pundits, who gave us weekly forecasts of The Donald's imminent implosion, are so distanced from what the American people really think that they actually believe their own bloviations.

They are in for a rude awakening – and the ruder the better.

If Trump continues to win primaries and his ascent in the polls is uninterrupted, this is the end of the War Party's influence in the GOP. And when even Medea Benjamin can acknowledge Trump's contribution to the education of the American people on the causes of the Iraq war – although she was singing a far different tune *during* the debate – can the rest of the politically correct Left be far behind? In a match-up with Hillary Clinton, who fulsomely supported the war, Trump will have the upper hand on this important issue. Indeed, this will be a perfect opportunity for those Sanders supporters who despise Hillary and her coin-tossing super-delegate fixers to exact their revenge and cast their lot with Trumpian populism. And revenge, as libertarians all know, is what politics is all about.

To those know-it-all pundits who declared that voters don't care about foreign policy and that therefore we won't be hearing much about it this election year: how does it feel to be proven so wrong so decisively? Indeed, it may turn out that America's global empire is the pivotal issue in this contest, underscoring my argument that the American people are sick unto death of perpetual war – and have been unable to do anything about it because they've never been given a choice between interventionism and minding our own business.

This debate brought out many other aspects of Trumpism that are direct appeals to the dreaded "isolationist" sentiments of the American people the foreign policy "experts" have lived in fear of for these many years. Trump thinks we can actually get along with Vladimir Putin, an idea that seemed to horrify debate moderator John Dickerson; he challenges our bipartisan policy of arming Syria's head-chopping Islamist rebels – "We don't even know who these people are!" – and while he's bad on the Iran deal, unlike his rivals he hasn't pledged to "rip it up on Day One."

The significance of Trump's foreign policy "heresy," as liberal commentator Jonathan Chait characterized it, is that his views are only "heretical" inside the Washington Beltway. Out here in the real world, they're the conventional wisdom. I've been saying this for ages, and now that the rise of Trump is underscoring how distanced the elites are from the rest of us, the chattering classes – to their horror – are beginning to realize it, too.

So now I say to you: whatever you think of The Donald – and I don't count myself among his supporters – let's just kick back and enjoy the sheer *beauty* of this moment when the neocons, their "liberal" doppelgangers, and indeed all of "respectable" society melts down over the GOP frontrunner's "heretical" foreign policy views.

Which brings me to an important matter: I've been on Twitter conversing with myriads of Trump supporters, many of whom have followed me. I do my best to educate them because they are quite sympathetic, in most cases, to the anti-interventionist worldview: after all, that's at least part of the reason they were attracted to his candidacy in the first place.

The problem is I can't do all that much educating given Twitter's word-limits, and so I do my best to bring them to this site. Which means, of course, that we've got to keep this site going – and now we come to yet another problem, and that is the slowness of our current fundraising campaign. As I write, we're barely up to a measly \$10,000 – a very far cry from our goal – and if this keeps up Well, I don't even want to go there. I just want to bring to your attention the frustrating fact that anti-interventionist sentiment has never been stronger in this country, and we now have a golden opportunity to bring our point of view to the Great Albeit Silent Majority, and yet we are having trouble making ends meet.

We need your financial support in order to survive: *we can't continue without it*. With the prospect of another major war looming large on the horizon – the Russians are pointing to the likelihood of a “world war” over Syria – can we really afford to lose Antiwar.com?

The answer to that question should be obvious. So what are you doing just sitting there? Please ***go here now and make your tax-deductible donation to Antiwar.com*** – before it's too late.