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After invading Iraq 13 years ago the US is still making the same mistakes

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We invaded Iraq 13 years ago on Sunday, but you would barely know from watching the news. Perhaps because there are so many war anniversaries these days it's hard to keep track, or perhaps, it's because our country has learned virtually nothing from the biggest foreign policy debacle of our generation.

The US government celebrated the Iraq war anniversary by announcing that they were sending more troops to the country. Remember this is a war that supposedly "ended" more than three years ago, yet thousands of troops have been sent back there since late 2014 to fight Isis, a group whose creation can be directly tied to the first Iraq war – or I guess the second one, depending on how you count.

In all, the US has been bombing Iraq for 25 years, which includes the last four presidents (you can watch a montage of all four announcing their respective bombing campaigns here). And if you listen to the leading candidates for both political parties, you can bet that streak will reach five on their first day in office.

Both Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton have called for an expansion of military action in the Middle East in response to Isis. Trump has repeatedly referred to “bombing the hell out of” their oil fields, despite not being afraid to call the Iraq war a “disaster”.

If Clinton learned anything from the Iraq war, it’s hard to tell. She has claimed her vote for the war as a senator was a “mistake”, but that didn’t prevent her from leading the charge into Libya in 2011 to overthrow another dictator only to see the country fall into the hands of terrorists. She has pushed for a similar strategy in Syria to deal with Bashar al-Assad.

In a little-reported remark at a public event in November 2015, Hillary Clinton openly said the US would have to send ground troops in response to Isis.

But how many Americans know that we actually already have ground troops fighting in both Iraq and Syria, despite Obama’s promise, repeated at least 16 times, that there would be no “boots on the ground” in this fight?

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It’s the one lesson the executive branch seems to have taken from Iraq more than any other: don’t debate going to war in the public. Besides the thousands of military “advisers” currently in Iraq, covert funding of rebels in Syria, and drone strikes across the Middle East, the Defense Department has a “specialized expeditionary targeting force” engaged in active combat missions in both Iraq and Syria.

How many troops are actively fighting? Well, they barely bother telling us any more. After a marine was killed over the weekend in Iraq, the US quietly announced more soldiers would soon be headed over to “consult” with the Iraqi government, but as NBC News reported: “The number of Marines being sent wasn’t disclosed.”

Congress seems to have learned similar lessons to the executive branch. Hundreds of congressmen may have been forever stained in history books by their Iraq war vote, but what they apparently learned was not to object to military conflict of which there is no real end in sight; instead, as with the Isis war, they now take the cowardly way out: don’t vote on it at all, and let the executive branch expand its ever-increasing war powers while attempting to avoid accountability at all costs.

And what about the media? Judy Miller lost her job at the New York Times, but many other reporters who pushed the Iraq war with faulty sources and false intelligence has only grown in influence. And while you can certainly argue the New York Times is more skeptical in its war reporting now (or are they?), the fearmongering about terrorism on television news is perhaps worse than it was in 2003 – when Dick Cheney would gleefully go on Meet the Press, his favorite stomping ground to deliver war propaganda to the public.

In a two-week period leading up to the initial airstrikes in the Isis war in 2014, the progressive media watchdog Fair did a study of the major cable and network news shows and found out of 205 guests, only 3% were against going to war with Isis. On the Sunday talkshows, ground zero

for DC conventional wisdom, exactly one out of 89 guests could be identified as “anti-war” when it came to the subject.

With the Iraq invasion 13 years behind us, one thing is for sure: you can turn on Sunday morning television and see an Iraq war advocate – whether it’s a politician or pundit or a journalist – eagerly explaining why we should throw ourselves into our next war and no one will blink an eye.