Discovering Empire

As the body bags slowly trickle home again, many Americans are thinking long and hard about our military's role in the rest of the world. Bush sold us a war based on protecting our nation from weapons of mass destruction, and on spreading the values of freedom and democracy to the Middle East. Of course, many of us understood that the war was really about oil companies, defense contractors, and profits. The weapons fears were based on crude fabrications, and it is becoming ever clearer that the Iraqis don't want our our "values" at the point of a gun.

The Iraq War has awakened an interest in understanding not only this latest American invasion of a foreign nation, but also the role our military has played in the rest of the world over the last several decades.

What we are learning is that Iraq has been in country's gun sights since the 1980's when invasion plans were first drawn up. But even before that, the US ruthlessly toppled elected leaders in the region, replacing them with kings and dictators willing to let US companies control oil reserves.

What we are coming to understand is that Bush's brand of empire, without global allies and heedless of economic consequences both at home and abroad, differs from previous administrations' in its recklessness blatancy, rather than in its imperial intent. The invasion of Iraq has prompted Americans at long last to discover their empire, the lies upon which it has been built, and the staggering human costs which are its consequence.

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