

PLAYING THE IMPERIAL GAME:  
THE MINDSET BEHIND THE ATTACK ON IRAQ

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The United States' intervention in Iraq is but one example of a tradition of US foreign policy that has followed, rather than led, the corporate agenda. Preemptive military action is an extreme example but is among a number of strategic interventions including economic pressure, bypassing international legal constraints, and overthrowing legitimate, democratically elected governments for the purpose of market expansion. The most aggressive military actions are particularly expressed in ideological terms such as the desire to make the world a better place, one with democratic elections and the benefits of free trade. However, a more accurate description of the end goal of this strategy is to create an environment amenable to global corporate interests. We set the events of the Iraq war in the context of a strategic mindset of game theory that permits coercive actions and removes moral constraints in the selection of actions. We show how the Bush/Cheney administration went beyond the caveats of game theory by attempting to change the agreed-upon rules of the game at its own discretion.

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The one hundred-year legacy of petro-imperialism in Iraq, and particularly the history of the relationship between the United States and Iraq, has been shielded from public view. The history reveals a mindset wherein the goals of freedom and democracy are clearly subservient to the calculations of corporate and military interests in a competitive game. We attempt here to cast light upon the thought pattern that enables the prominence of these competitive assumptions. The assumptions are consistent with the tenets of *realpolitik*, but a view of game-theory precepts can help to clarify the rationalizations used for some distinctly amoral moves. The ubiquitous use of gaming concepts to describe conflicts has offered US government authorities a way to frame its war