

Getting the Story Straight:

Greg Sheridan in the Shifting Moral Sands of Iraq

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...There is a *core of faith* in the Bush administration...that the US-led coalition will prevail in Iraq. And I am sitting in the office of Optimism Central, here in the Pentagon where Paul Wolfowitz, the US Deputy Secretary of Defense, chief intellectual architect of the Iraq invasion and *high priest of the neo-conservatives*, sits.ⁱ

The reader is not told how Greg Sheridan was able to get so close the centre of American military power in April 2004. We may never know what strings were pulled in Washington by Bush-supporter and publisher of Sheridan's newspaper, Rupert Murdoch, or by Australian officials. However, Sheridan's exclusive interview again demonstrates the extraordinary access that the *Australian's* senior and trusted reporters have to the current US administration.

As the Foreign Editor for Rupert Murdoch's *Australian* newspaper, Greg Sheridan is a very powerful journalist, beholden to no one except perhaps his employer. This is not our description, it is the opening line of Sheridan's official biography on the *Australian's* website: 'the most influential foreign affairs analyst in Australian journalism'ⁱⁱ. The line was also used in an online flyer promoting Sheridan's appearance at an American-Australian Association function in New York on April 26 this yearⁱⁱⁱ. Sheridan was in the US at the time on an exchange program with the Centre for Strategic and International Studies in Washington DC.

Greg Sheridan is also a Catholic who, despite the 'sex scandals...the general disarray and the rampant tomfoolery' so graphically apparent in the modern Church, is 'still a believer'^{iv}. These influences – Rupert Murdoch and Christianity - on Greg Sheridan's intellectual and emotional perspectives might help to explain the highlighted language in the quote above. They might also explain the ideological consistency of positions he has

taken against so-called Islamic extremism in column after column of newsprint over the past three or four years.

Beyond these influences, Sheridan's brand of seculo-Christian-based morality also has much in common with that of the two neo-con leaders he so fervently admires and supports – John Howard and George W. Bush. It is well known now that the American military-political machine is dominated by the neo-cons, Wolfowitz, Cheney, Rice and Bush himself, all shrouded in a narrow Christian rhetoric, if not belief^v. Analyzing the ethics of President Bush, moral philosopher Peter Singer identifies him as America's 'most prominent moralist', saying: 'No other president in living memory has spoken so often about good and evil, right and wrong'^{vi}. Just as Singer dubs Bush (and his book) *The President of Good and Evil*, we might call Greg Sheridan Australia's most prominent journalist of good and evil. His columns are peppered with the language of moral absolutism and dichotomy - 'good vs. evil', 'right vs. wrong' and 'us vs. them'. These binary oppositions are the recurring emotional frames he uses to discuss the so-called 'war on terror' and the invasion of Iraq.

This essay traces the evolution (of if you prefer, the Immaculate Conception) of Greg Sheridan's public statements on international affairs since September 11, 2001, finding coherence in the moral epistemology that underpins his arguments. In a global media world dominated by news about the American-led 'war on terror', Sheridan has written extensively on the fall-out from September 11, the Bali bombings, Afghanistan, Iraq and terrorism more generally over this period. What becomes clear, when one looks closely at this oeuvre is that Sheridan is an ideologue, a crusader and an apologist for one of the most barbaric regimes on the planet and for the acolytes who, without question, back the war crimes and despotic violence that this regime visits on those who disagree with its religious fundamentalism and lust for world domination. In Sheridan's worldview it is also legitimate to vilify, denigrate and misrepresent your intellectual and political opponents, while maintaining your own position in the face of competing facts and analysis.

The Journalist of Good and Evil

Despite Sheridan's protestations that the 'war on terror' is not a war against Islam or a clash of civilizations^{vii}, his columns in recent years have repeatedly cast the world within a frame of good and evil. On one level, this reflects the pervasiveness of a post-Cold War *terrorism* news frame in contemporary mainstream media reporting^{viii}. In its moral simplicity, this interpretive prism is reminiscent of the old Cold War news frame, which dramatized superpower rivalries and pitted East against West, or capitalism against communism^{ix}. With the 'reds' somehow purged from under the bed, bomb-wielding Islamic fundamentalists have emerged as the new scourge of the modern world. As Christopher Kremmer notes:

Media reporting on the war on terror is riddled with the simplistic notion that this is a battle between innately good, wise, Western, liberal, democratic paragons and dark-skinned, bearded, fanatical, evildoers.^x

The concept of demonizing the Other in order to define and reproduce a positive self-image, both personally and culturally, has reached widespread academic acceptance, particularly through the writings of Edward Said. However, what is interesting about the terror news frame, and particularly Sheridan's invocation of it, is the Christian ethic implicit in depicting the 'war on terror' as a fight against evil. For example, post-Bali Sheridan has made numerous references to '*evil*':

- 'the *evil* men who murdered our people and others in Bali'^{xi};
- 'Hezbollah, and its *evil* dealings with the fallen regime of Saddam Hussein'^{xii};
- 'the *evil* and the danger represented by JI and its affiliates'^{xiii};
- 'the pure *evil* that was communism'^{xiv};
- 'the *evil* which the US and its coalition partners are fighting in Iraq'^{xv};
- an '*evil* moment in the relationship between Islam and the West'^{xvi}.

In this respect Sheridan has a lot in common with President Bush, who famously coined the term 'axis of evil' to bizarrely unite the otherwise disparate states of Iraq, Iran and North Korea. In critiquing George W. Bush's ethics, philosopher Peter Singer notes:

Bush often talks of 'the evil ones' and even occasionally of those who are 'servants of evil'. He urges us to 'call evil by its name', to 'fight evil' and tells us

that out of evil will come good. This language comes straight out of apocalyptic Christianity.^{xvii}

The urgency with which Sheridan demands action against the ‘existential threat’ of terrorism^{xviii} is further reminiscent of the Christian prophesy that a dramatic rise of evil will precede the triumph of God’s forces before the second coming of Christ. Sheridan’s frequent references to ‘evil men’, his strident support for military action in Afghanistan and Iraq, his identification with the ‘good guys’^{xix} and his childlike reverence for America as it ‘spreads its all-powerful wings’^{xx} suggest a similar apocalyptic concern with the struggle between God’s benevolent forces and their satanic enemies.

War of survival in a God-chosen land

This concern with the battle between good and evil was most apparent after the 2002 Bali bombings, which obviously struck an emotional chord with Sheridan. On the first day of the *Australian’s* coverage of the blasts, he dubbed them the work of ‘evil men’ who specifically targeted Australians^{xxi}. Three days later he had deduced a motive behind the evil, bizarrely proclaiming, ‘They hate us for our oddly persistent goodness’^{xxii}. In his later writings, Sheridan chides the ‘self obsessed’ liberal intellectuals who focus too much on failings of the West in analysing the causes of terrorism, instead of getting inside the mind of the terrorists^{xxiii}. Responding to this supposed lack of analysis, Sheridan has obviously styled himself as a homegrown terror expert. Yet simple recourse to the fact that they are ‘evil men’ who hate us for our goodness not only reduces the analysis to moral essentialism, it closes off debate about the structural causes of terrorism, like Western imperialism and the injustices inherent in global capitalism. Implicit in Sheridan’s moral frame is the simple argument that if terror is the result of evil, what can be done but stamp it out with military force – it’s all ‘they’ understand.

By April 2004, Greg Sheridan was taking care to distance himself from George W. Bush’s ‘uncharacteristic slip of briefly using the term crusade’^{xxiv}, describing it as a term full of ‘menacing historical overtones of religious war for Muslims’. Previously he had not been so wary of ascribing motives of ‘purely religious hostility’ to what he describes as ‘Islamist extremists’, such as al Qa’ida and the Muslim Brotherhood. In responding to

this hostility, Sheridan's writing reveals a distinctive tone of pious duty in the call to arms against Islamic terror. For example, in an early post-Bali piece, *This nation we love must face the threat, and fight*, Sheridan speaks of facing the 'existential threat' of terrorism and the need to fight for justice:

As we bury our dead we must know that it is right to demand justice and to determine to prevail in the broader war on terror.^{xxv}

It also becomes clear in this article that Sheridan's righteousness is linked to a patriotism borne of faith. He writes:

I love it (Australia) because, of all the nations on earth, it's mine. I feel about it exactly as I feel about my family - of all the families in the world, *God* chose this one for me to be part of and look after. So, too, he chose this nation for me and I accepted his choice.^{xxvi}

The language here of a God-chosen land has almost a Zionist flavour. Thus when 'Terror hit home'^{xxvii} on October 12, 2002, it was obvious that evil had taken root in Sheridan's promised land, justifying and demanding a 'war of survival'^{xxviii}.

Yet despite the religious overtones here, Sheridan argues that the war on terror is not, as some have suggested, a war between civilizations (the seculo-Christian West versus Islam). Rather, it is a war within the Islamic world between moderates and extremists. He cites Anthony Cordesman of the Centre for Strategic and International Studies in Washington DC^{xxix} and paraphrases his argument that the motives of the 'extremists' is to 'create an unbridgeable gap between the West and moderate Islam so that the extremists can claim political leadership in the Islamic community on the basis of their anti-Western posture'^{xxx}.

This is a very convenient position for Sheridan to take as it completely absolves the 'moderate' West of any responsibility for creating the 'unbridgeable gap' that currently exists in the Middle East between the Israeli and Arab regimes. A gap in part created by such war crimes as the assassination of Palestinian religious and political leaders by Israel with the full, if covert, support of Washington and the illegal invasion and occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq on false pretences. It also conveniently ignores the crucial role of the American and Pakistani security intelligence services in the initial

formation of ‘extremist’ Islamic organizations such as the Taliban in Afghanistan^{xxx1}.

Like Howard and Bush, Greg Sheridan continues to parrot the absurdity that Israel is the only democracy in the region and that by ‘stabilising’ Iraq, it will create the conditions for other Arabic regimes to embrace the market and ‘democracy’.

Perhaps the logic is too blinding for such an eminent analyst of foreign affairs, but it seems all too simple: where is the democracy in Israel? On the one hand, Iraq was a dictatorship with limited electoral participation under Saddam Hussein. People were regularly beaten, tortured and killed to maintain the regime, but Iraq under Saddam did not have stockpiles of WMDs. Compare this to Israel, which has a limited parliamentary system under the effective dictatorship of Ariel Sharon. People are regularly beaten, tortured and killed to maintain the Zionist regime which is illegally occupying land, and Israel *does* have stockpiled WMDs.

The neo-con intellectual

Advances in word-processing technology open interesting new possibilities: an infinite number of monkeys given an infinite number of typewriters probably couldn’t write Hamlet, but it can’t be beyond the bounds of possibility for a piece of software preprogrammed with the Liberal Party’s playbook to reproduce the thoughts of some of Australia’s right-wing commentators.^{xxxii}

Dennis Glover’s interesting little book, *Orwell’s Australia: from cold war to culture wars*, provides some useful insights into the coterie of senior newspaper journalists to which Greg Sheridan belongs. It is a group that shares an ideological commitment and whose members:

...see it as their duty to shield their favored politicians and promote their political causes while stabbing at their opponents from close range...today they are overwhelmingly on the side of the conservatives, supporting the Prime Minister’s culture crusade. Orwellian language is their forte, and Orwell would immediately have recognized their vices.^{xxxiii}

Glover^{xxxiv} neatly draws a comparison between the ‘Newspeak’ of George Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty Four* - with its ‘imprecision that justified political barbarism’ and ‘ugly

political sound bites that expressed the orthodoxy' of Oceania's ruling class - to the 'duckspeak' that has 'infected much of Australia's contemporary political commentary'. A few pages further into this argument and Glover^{xxxv} notes that many conservative commentators have expressed sympathy for the ideas of George Orwell, but he argues that their work represents 'at best an ossification of Orwell's ideas, reduced to a cliché...they represent everything he detested'. Greg Sheridan is a master of 'duckspeak'—the art of saying something loaded with codes and meaning, without actually proving a point, or relying on the relevant factual analysis to create true believers. As Glover notes:

If the speaker or writer can use Duckspeak without hesitation or embarrassment and the listener or reader can take it without twitching or reaching for a revolver, they are believers in the true faith.^{xxxvi}

John Howard is clearly one of Greg Sheridan's 'favored politicians'. We don't have to dig very far into the bedrock of Sheridan's duckspeak to find evidence of his fervent support for Howard and his 'stabbing' at opponents such as Labor leader Mark Latham. For example, one week after the Bali bombings, Sheridan gives Howard's handling of relations with Indonesia a near perfect score:

In this respect the Government has performed exceptionally well this week. Howard's tone and substance have been as close to perfect as you could get in this type of crisis.^{xxxvii}

Over the next 12 months, Sheridan followed Howard's line so closely that a bad week for Howard symbolized a bad week for the war in July 2003, when terror suspect Al-Ghozi escaped from a Philippines jail: 'This has been a landmark bad week in the war on terror, symbolized by John Howard's difficult tour around Asia'^{xxxviii}. A couple of months later, when Howard proffered a muted objection to what he saw as soft punishment for the alleged spiritual leader of Jemaah Islamiah, the Indonesian Islamist (in duckspeak 'extremist') group that eventually took responsibility for the Bali bombings, Sheridan said he was '*admirably* and correctly restrained in expressing disappointment at the lightness of the four-year sentence given to Abu Bakar Bashir'^{xxxix}.

Even as Sheridan was lambasting Australia's woefully under-funded intelligence capabilities after the Bali bombings, he was quick to shield Howard from blame,

proffering: ‘None of this is a criticism of the Howard Government’^{xli}. And, as if the conservative Howard government needed defense against critical voices in a country where Rupert Murdoch’s conservative newspaper empire controls two thirds of the metropolitan daily newspaper market and over 75% of the lucrative Sunday market^{xlii}, Sheridan took up the fight against so-called ‘liberal’ intellectuals who ‘should realize it is possible that a thing can be true even if Howard says it is true’^{xlii}. In March 2004, when public criticism of the ongoing debacle in Iraq was again mounting, Sheridan launched a scathing attack against the ABC’s *Radio National*, *Media Watch* and, for its treatment of Howard, *Lateline*:

While all the perfidies of George W. Bush, all the wickedness of John Howard, all the agonies of the fallen angel Tony Blair are nightly excoriated on *Lateline*, can you remember the last time the program took a look at what motivates al-Qa’ida?^{xliii}

This was in the week following the bombing of railway stations and trains in Madrid, and Greg Sheridan took up the argument that an amorphous ‘left-wing’ intelligentsia in Australia was acting as a form of fifth column for ‘terrorists’. Sheridan has adopted the shrill neo-con and peculiarly American rhetoric of using the term ‘liberal’ to describe a political position that he disagrees with (usually someone more rational or left-wing and often both). But the use of this term is not always consistent and its application to individuals or arguments is open to whatever interpretation suits Sheridan’s purpose. A good example of this is the opinion piece, *Writing off unreliable memoir*, in which Sheridan^{xliv} quotes favorably an article by ‘the liberal foreign affairs columnist’ Tom Friedman in the *New York Times*. The reason this usually suspect ‘liberal’ is praised by Sheridan is that his column was critical of the Spanish government’s decision to withdraw its troops from Iraq. Sheridan described this decision, taken only a few days after Madrid had been rocked by bombing attacks that killed over 200 people, as a ‘victory’ for al-Qa’ida: ‘a victory for bombs over solidarity among the democracies’. Then the real purpose behind the five paragraph of praise for Friedman’s argument becomes apparent: ‘Everything Friedman says about the Spanish Socialists applies with equal force to [Labor leader] Mark Latham... Labor under Latham has weakened its position, apparently in response to the bombing [in Madrid]’^{xlv}.

Utilitarian duckspeak

Today too the enemy is clear. It is not the Iraqi people. It is Saddam Hussein's cruel and murderous regime, its deadly weapons of mass destruction and the support it gives to international terrorism.^{xlvi}

All war is terrible and should be treated with reverence and awe because it involves the disposition of human beings. But some wars are necessary. They are not only just but constitute the lesser evil of all available alternatives.^{xlvii}

These are perfect examples of the Orwellian 'duckspeak' that Dennis Glover wrote about. At the start of the Iraq invasion in March 2003 Sheridan was firmly committed to the duckspeak that Iraq posed a threat because there was an identified link between the regime, terrorists and WMDs. At the same time, to treat war with 'reverence and awe' is to accept its horrors as some form of divine penance. The 'disposition of human beings' means wasted lives, horrible deaths, destruction and massive amounts of suffering for millions of people. What 'available alternatives' did the American regime even attempt over Iraq? At every turn they opposed and blocked efforts to prevent the war. We now also know that the pretext for war was based on lies and deliberate distortions, in particular about WMDs. In what sense was the illegal invasion of Iraq necessary? Sheridan's reference to necessary wars and 'lesser evil' invokes a type of utilitarianism that is evident in his claim that 'Labels don't matter - only results count'^{xlviii}. He argues:

The Iraq invasion is going to be judged on its results. Only specialists will worry about its legitimacy if the outcome is a stable Iraq that represents its citizens' human rights much better than Saddam did.^{xlix}

The implication is that the body count of Iraqi civilians (collateral damage) and the torture of prisoners in Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay will be vindicated by a 'favorable' outcome in Iraq. Supposedly this means democracy, however one of the main fallacies in the idea of a war against an abstract concept like terror is that there is no way of determining when it's over. As Ninan Koshy asks in a recent book, 'When will this War on Terror end? How will it end?'¹ Similarly, Peter Singer raises doubts about the utilitarian calculations behind the war on terror and the invasion of Iraq, pointing to the

‘virtual certainty that war will bring great suffering, without any comparable assurance that it will have the desired good consequences.’^{li}

The utilitarian arguments for war, which Sheridan shares with Bush in referring to a ‘lesser evil’, are an appeal to realpolitik sensibilities among conservative readers. Their (false) pragmatism should be read as a cover for the more contentious Christian morality that we have already shown underlies Sheridan’s support for the religio-imperialist war on terror.

Where are the WMDs? Whose truth is really true?

Three months before the US invasion of Iraq, in the aftermath of the Bali bombings, Sheridan was leveraging on public emotion to make a domestic justification for invading Iraq by naturalising the dubious link between Saddam and Al-Qa’ida:

It is nonsense to suggest this tragedy shows we should concentrate on the war on terror and ignore Iraq. Gruesome as these terrorist outrages are, imagine what they would be like if they involved weapons of mass destruction. Iraq remains the most likely source of WMDs for al-Qa’ida.^{lii}

And again:

This week John Anderson told the Australian parliament what we all really know but try not to face, that there is a connection between terrorism and rogue nations with weapons of mass destruction.^{liii}

At the outset of the Iraq war, when things seemed to be rosy for the invading powers, Greg Sheridan was certain that WMDs would be found in Iraq and his language reflected this belief. A year later, Sheridan’s soaring rhetoric took on a deflated tone as he was ‘Mugged by Reality’^{liv} when evidence of the US torture of Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib prison came to light. But he had already been forced to grapple with the uncomfortable reality that the Weapons of Mass Destruction he used to justify his support for the war had not been found. It is here that Sheridan’s backpedaling in the shifting sands of Iraq sink his leaden argument for war an expose its true seculo-religious colors.

Greg Sheridan was a constant and loyal disseminator of the line that the Baghdad regime had WMDs and was prepared to use them. The fact that they hadn’t been used early in

the 2003 conflict was put down to the efficiency of the coalition forces in deploying ‘its vast intelligence strength’ (‘without the presence of coalition forces it could have used WMDs easily’); and to Saddam Hussein’s rational thinking (‘Use of chemical weapons would therefore be little short of a suicide gesture’)^{lv}. But by the end of the first year of the Iraq crusade, when the weapons were proving more elusive than ever, Sheridan became increasingly befuddled and formed a coalition of the surprised inside his columns to share the embarrassment. Chief among Sheridan’s tame sources was the former hotshot Australian ambassador-turned-analyst Martin Indyk, who he lauded as ‘impartial’ because Indyk was a Clinton man^{lvi}. Sheridan was ‘refreshed’ by the fact that this impartial observer was also wrong on the nukes and nerve gas:

Refreshingly, if disconcertingly, Indyk admits that he, like everyone else, just does not know what happened to Hussein's WMDs and why none of them can be discovered.^{lvii}

At first, Sheridan remained steadfast in his support for Howard and his mates in the ‘coalition of the willing’, maintaining they never deliberately deceived the public:

On the big things – such as Saddam Hussein’s weapons of mass destruction – Bush, Blair and Howard have told us the truth.^{lviii}

When a parliamentary inquiry cleared John Howard of deception in March 2004, Sheridan took solace and tried to close off debate on this uncomfortable subject, saying the report ‘puts the Iraq issue to bed’^{lix}. He concluded that the failure to find WMDs was not an intelligence failing or an act of political deception by Bush, Blair or Howard. Rather it was Saddam Hussein’s fault for telling us he had WMDs:

The only world leader who practised big deception over this issue was thus Saddam... It was Saddam who intentionally convinced the world that he had WMDs so the coalition had to act on that assumption.^{lx}

This remarkable statement would draw accolades from even the most professional of duck speakers. Yet if Sheridan had so much faith in the veracity of Saddam’s word, why did he not believe his protestations in the lead-up to *Shock and Awe* that his weapons were gone? Sheridan’s obfuscation of the issue by blaming Saddam rather than ASIO,

ONA, MI6 and the CIA for the intelligence failure is desperate sophistry at its worst and most laughable.

Yet despite Sheridan's claim that the parliamentary report 'puts the Iraq issue to bed'^{lxix}, his apparent unease about the missing weapons leads him to call for an explanation. He says it is 'not good enough' that neither Bush, Blair or Howard have offered a grand narrative on WMDs, even though he agrees that 'electorates no longer care about this issue'^{lxxii}. Interestingly, Sheridan revokes his earlier self-assumed authority to decide whether Iraq possessed WMDs, saying on May 20 this year: 'These questions deserve to be answered and they cannot be answered by newspaper columnists or the speculations of former officials'^{lxxiii}. Compare this with Sheridan's certainty, on day two of the war, that he could answer these questions about Saddam's WMDs: 'He certainly has biological weapons... he certainly has chemical weapons, which he has used before'^{lxxiv}.

Sheridan obviously felt qualified to make determinations about Iraq's weapons capabilities and intentions in the lead-up to war. Yet when it became apparent he was wrong, it was not up to a newspaper columnist to explain: 'The governments, which by definition have more information than anyone else, should tell us in some detail what happened with the WMDs'^{lxxv}.

The great irony, though, is not that Sheridan passes the buck when he gets it wrong on WMDs. It's that he moves the goalposts so that WMDs are no longer the real reason for going to war. He decides that it was about regime change and altering the face of Arab politics in order to address the root causes of terrorism:

The war in Iraq really does confront the roots of terrorism because it offers some hope of breaking the relentlessly destructive paradigm of modern Arab politics.^{lxxvi}

Sheridan throws his weight behind Howard's neo-conservative argument that 'Iraq is the front line in the war on terror' because 'If Iraq becomes a democracy... the terrorists know they have lost'^{lxxvii}.

Having removed WMDs from the core of his argument for war, Sheridan comes back to the Christian moral framework that suffuses his thinking and concludes that the war was a success because, 'Hussein was an evil tyrant, and his removal is good for Iraq and the Middle East.'^{lxxviii}. Since evil is an absolute rather than relative concept, the task of God's

forces, when the conflict is framed as a battle between good and evil, is to root out this evil like a weed. Sheridan's justification for war makes sense in this context. Even if the pre-emptive strike was both illegal under international law and the threat falsely conceived because there were no WMDs, the war becomes a success within the religious-moral frame because, with Saddam deposed, it has reduced the net power of 'evil' on earth.

Conclusion

Therefore, despite Sheridan's secular appeals to self-defense in claiming the war on terror is a battle for survival, his argument is founded more on misplaced and conservative Christian ethics than on geo-political realism. His frequent references to 'evil'; 'good guys'; the 'existential threat' of terror; and to his God-chosen land reveal his seculo-Christian worldview. While his backpedaling on weapons of mass destruction is hypocritical, it doesn't disrupt the core of his faith in the war against terror and its frontline in Iraq. This is because for Sheridan it is a moral war between good and evil, with a (utilitarian) moral imperative to maximize good and minimize evil in the world. Be this as it may, it would be interesting for Sheridan to reflect on the teachings of Paul in his bible:

Do not repay anyone evil for evil... Be not overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.^{lxi}

Or Jesus, from his Sermon on the Mount:

Do not resist one who is evil. But if any one strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.^{lxx}

Do the people of Afghanistan and Iraq feel overcome with good?

Perhaps they can take heart from this wonderful piece of duckspeak from Dubya himself in a May 2003 speech, the one declaring the war in Iraq was over:

We have more work to do in Iraq. A free Iraq, a peaceful Iraq will help change an area of the world that needs peace and freedom. A peaceful Iraq and a free Iraq is part of our campaign to rid the world of terror. And that's why the thugs in Iraq still resist us, because they can't stand the thought of free societies. They understand what freedom means. See, free nations are peaceful nations. Free nations don't attack each other. Free nations don't develop weapons of mass

destruction. There will be a free and peaceful Iraq. What's taking place in Iraq is the evolution of a society, to be democratic in nation — nature, a society in which the people are better off.

As for Greg Sheridan, we doubt very much that he will resale from his chosen path. After all, where else can you go when you are publicly lauded as Australia's most influential foreign affairs analyst? It's duckspeak that got him there, the quacking out of bureaucratic lines and official lies to keep the propaganda machine rolling. As George Orwell noted in his famous article, *Politics and the English language*, political writing is usually no more than propaganda:

In our time it is broadly true that political writing is bad writing. Where it is not true, it will generally be found that the writer is some kind of rebel, expressing his private opinions and not a "party line." Orthodoxy, of whatever color, seems to demand a lifeless, imitative style...When one watches some tired hack on the platform mechanically repeating the familiar phrases -- *bestial, atrocities, iron heel, bloodstained tyranny, free peoples of the world, stand shoulder to shoulder* - one often has a curious feeling that one is not watching a live human being but some kind of dummy: a feeling which suddenly becomes stronger at moments when the light catches the speaker's spectacles and turns them into blank discs which seem to have no eyes behind them... If the speech he is making is one that he is accustomed to make over and over again, he may be almost unconscious of what he is saying, as one is when one utters the responses in church. And this reduced state of consciousness, if not indispensable, is at any rate favorable to political conformity.^{lxxi}

Quack, quack!

Finally, Orwell would almost certainly have regarded Sheridan as a 'Blimp'^{lxxii}, a fulminating member of the militaristic and imperialist middle class intelligentsia wedded to glorified notions of Empire, loyalty and morality. This wouldn't be such a bad thing if the Australian press and the Murdoch papers in particular, were open to dissenting voices, but unfortunately they're not. Sheridan is one of a whole phalanx of conservative and neo-con columnists at the *Australian* and there are others just like him at all the other quality papers. Don't even get us started on the *Daily Terror*!

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- ⁱ Greg Sheridan, 'In the Lair of the Wolf,' *Weekend Australian*, 17-18 April 2004.
- ⁱⁱ 'Greg Sheridan Biography' [Internet] *Australian*, 12 February 2003 (cited 13 June 2004); available from http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/common/story_page/0,5744,5974632%255E25378,00.html.
- ⁱⁱⁱ *Luncheon: Mr. Greg Sheridan* [Internet] American Australian Association, 12 June 2004 (cited 13 June 2004); available from <http://www.americanaustralian.org/calendar/dview.php?action=details&evId=246&currYear=2004&currMonth=4>.
- ^{iv} Greg Sheridan, *Cities of the Hot Zone: A Southeast Asian Adventure*, Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, 2003, p.43.
- ^v Robert Manne, 'Iraq Doomed, Once the Neo-Cons Won the White House Battle,' *Sydney Morning Herald*, 31 May 2004.
- ^{vi} Peter Singer, *The President of Good and Evil: The Ethics of George W. Bush*, Text Publishing, Melbourne, 2004, p.1.
- ^{vii} Greg Sheridan, 'Danger of the Extreme,' *Weekend Australian*, 10-11 April 2004.
- ^{viii} Martin Hirst & Robert Schütze, 'Allies Down Under? *The Australian* at War and the "Big Lie",' in *Global Media Go to War: Role of News and Entertainment Media During the 2003 Iraq War*, ed. Ralph D. Berenger, Marquette Books, Spokane, WA, 2004; Pippa Norris, Montague Kern, & Marion R. Just, *Framing Terrorism: The News Media, the Government, and the Public*, Routledge, New York, 2003.
- ^{ix} Anthony C. Giffard, 'International Agencies and Global Issues: The Decline of the Cold War News Frame,' in *The Global Dynamics of News: Studies in International News Coverage and News Agendas*, ed. Abbas & Kavoori Malek, Anandam P., *Contemporary Studies in International Political Communication*, Ablex Publishing Corporation, Stamford, 2000, p.389.
- ^x Christopher Kremmer, *Reporting the 'War on Terror'* [Internet] (Australian Centre for Independent Journalism, 8 October 2002 [cited 21/10/2002); available from <http://journalism.uts.edu.au/acij/forums/2002forum1.html>.
- ^{xi} Greg Sheridan, 'This Nation We Love Must Face the Threat, and Fight,' *Australian*, 17 October 2002.
- ^{xii} Greg Sheridan, 'The Power of One,' *Weekend Australian*, 26 April 2003.
- ^{xiii} Greg Sheridan, 'JI an Enemy of the Indonesian People,' *Australian*, 6 August 2003.
- ^{xiv} Greg Sheridan, 'An Insult to Our Original Boatpeople,' *Australian*, 6 November 2003.
- ^{xv} Greg Sheridan, 'This Should Make the World of Difference,' *Australian*, 15 December 2003.
- ^{xvi} Sheridan, 'Danger of the Extreme.'
- ^{xvii} Singer, *The President of Good and Evil: The Ethics of George W. Bush*, pp.245-6.
- ^{xviii} Sheridan, 'This Nation We Love Must Face the Threat, and Fight.'
- ^{xix} Greg Sheridan, 'Elation after Big Week for 'Good Guys',' *Weekend Australian*, 16-17 August 2003; Sheridan, 'This Should Make the World of Difference.'
- ^{xx} Sheridan, 'The Power of One.'
- ^{xxi} Greg Sheridan, 'A Threat We Ignore at Our Peril,' *Australian*, 14 October 2002.
- ^{xxii} Sheridan, 'This Nation We Love Must Face the Threat, and Fight.'
- ^{xxiii} Greg Sheridan, 'Curiosity Won't Kill These Cats,' *Australian*, 18 March 2004.

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