

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED

# DANGEROUS ILLUSIONS

## George Bush's War with Reality

by AL GORE

**There is something deeply troubling to many Americans about President Bush's relationship to reason.** The President seems to disdain facts. He is incurious about new information that might produce a deeper understanding of the problems and policies he wrestles with.

What, precisely, does the President believe in so strongly that he insulates it from any logical challenge, or even debate? This is a crucially important question.

Some simply malign the president as not being smart enough. Others contend that he relies on religious faith in place of logical analysis. I reject both those cartoon images. President Bush is plenty smart. And while I have no doubt that his religious beliefs are genuine, I am convinced that the president's frequent departures from fact-based analysis have much more to do with right-wing ideology than with the Bible.

Most of the problems President Bush has created stem not from his strong belief in God, which I share, but rather from his belief in the infallibility of ultraconservative ideologues, who exalt the interests of the wealthy and powerful above those of the American people. This is

judicious study of discernible reality ... that's not the way the world really works anymore ... when we act, we create our own reality. And while you're studying that reality — judiciously, as you will — we'll act again, creating other new realities, which you can study too, and that's how things will sort out. We're history's actors, and you, all of you, will be left to study just what we do."

That is truly a dangerous illusion — an illusion produced in the minds of those who have come to believe that power makes them infallible.

As George Orwell said: "We are all capable of believing things which we know to be untrue ... and then, when we are finally proved wrong, impudently twisting the facts so as to show that we were right. Intellectually it is possible to carry on this process for a long time, until sooner or later these false beliefs bump up against reality — often on a battlefield."

**Which Brings Us To Iraq.** The President told us he was going to war because of "an imminent threat," but there was no such threat from Iraq. He assured us Iraq had

Security if he has a second term. And he is asserting that his planned diversion of \$2 trillion from the Social Security trust fund won't reduce benefits for seniors or raise payroll taxes. But these assertions are also demonstrably false.

Where global warming is concerned, President Bush has censored scientific reports from his own EPA warning us of danger, and has chosen instead to falsely reassure Americans that ExxonMobil's view is accurate instead: that we should do nothing to slow down the pollution of our atmosphere, even though climate scientists all over the world condemn the President's inaction.

**Bush's aversion to doubt is sometimes interpreted as proof of the strength of his convictions.** But in truth, it is nothing more than his refusal to even consider alternative opinions and conflicting evidence. The President ignores the warnings of his experts. He forbids any dissent. He is arrogantly out of touch with reality. He refuses to ever admit his mistakes. Which means that as long as he is our President, we are doomed to repeat them. It is beyond incompetence. It is recklessness that risks the safety and security of the American people.

How could a team so skilled in politics be so fumbling and incompetent when it comes to

policy? The truth is that the same insularity and zeal that makes him effective at smash mouth politics makes him terrible at governing. The Bush-Cheney administration is a rarity in American history, it is simultaneously dishonest and incompetent.

The essential cruelty of Bush's political sleight of hand is that he takes an astonishingly selfish and greedy collection of economic and political proposals and then cloaks them with a phony moral authority, thus misleading millions of Americans who have a deep and genuine desire to do good in the world. The Bush agenda, at its root, is one of the most radical efforts in all of American history to redistribute wealth and power from middle and lower income families to the right-wing elites who use Bush's presidency to enrich themselves.

George Bush has neutralized Congressional accountability by intimidating the Republican leadership and transforming his majority into a true rubber stamp, unlike any that has ever before existed in our history. He has appointed judges who help insulate him from accountability in the courts. He has sidestepped the press by refusing to conduct the public's business openly.

There is now only one center of Constitutional power capable of holding George W. Bush accountable. Only we, the voters, can take our country back.

Excerpted from a speech delivered by former Vice President Al Gore at Georgetown University on October 18, 2004. The full text of Mr. Gore's remarks is available at [www.moveonpac.org](http://www.moveonpac.org).

## "THE PRESIDENT REFUSES TO EVER ADMIT MISTAKES, WHICH DOOMS THE NATION TO REPEAT THEM."

the true source of George Bush's inflexibility. The love of power is the original sin of his presidency.

**The central tenets of the President's belief system are plain to see.** Government is inherently bad. The public interest is a dangerous myth. Treaties and international agreements are anathema. Regulation of business is suspect, and when unavoidable, should be entrusted to those being regulated.

This is why, for example, President Bush put the former chairman of Enron, Ken Lay, in charge of vetting appointees to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. It's why virtually all important EPA positions are filled by the former lawyers and lobbyists of industrial polluters. It is a total mingling of the agendas of large corporations with his own ostensibly public agenda. Their preferences are his policies, and his politics become their business.

And Bush's policies are formulated in secret, based on information hidden from the American people, in a process insulated from any meaningful participation by the public or even by Congress.

Perhaps most disturbing of all, the President's contempt for the rule of reason has led him to the genuinely dangerous illusion that reality itself is a commodity he can control.

A senior advisor to Bush recently told a writer for the *New York Times* that reporters like him live "in what we call the reality-based community," and denigrated such people for believing "that solutions emerge from your

weapons of mass destruction, but there were none. He claimed falsely that Saddam Hussein, who did not attack us, was linked to Osama bin Laden, who did.

The President guaranteed that America would not bear the burdens of war alone, yet we continue to suffer more than 90 percent of all non-Iraqi casualties, and our taxpayers bear more than 90 percent of the cost. He promised to give our soldiers all the equipment their commanders asked for, even as his own top general in Iraq was pleading unsuccessfully for enough equipment and body armor to protect his troops (according to the *Washington Post*).

Now the war in Iraq has become a recruiting bonanza for terrorists who use it as their most damning indictment of the United States and of U.S. policy. The massive casualties suffered by civilians, and the horrible TV footage of women and children being pulled from the rubble of their homes, has been a propaganda victory for Osama bin Laden beyond his wildest dreams.

Iraq is far from the only policy where the President has made bold assertions that differ radically from reality. In nearly every case, a flawed analysis was provided him by sources that had a direct interest, financial or otherwise, in adoption of the President's radical new policies.

At the top of this list, domestically, was Bush's tax cut for the wealthy. He asserted that it would go mainly to the middle class, and wouldn't lead to budget deficits or the loss of jobs. All three of these assertions turned out to be completely false. Now he wants to privatize Social