

**THE BLOG****Media Meta Mania**

By Marty Kaplan

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Now that the battle of narratives has been joined, the danger for progressives is being seduced by the super-story. The media love meta. For them, it's sexy to speculate about a pre-emptive pardon, but it's wonky to actually investigate a pre-emptive war. It's juicy to wonder whether Rove's lawyer's strategy — turning still-under-investigation into Karl's Good Day — will succeed, but it's tedious to connect the dots between Berlusconi and Bolton, or Cheney and Chalabi, or Libby's five counts and America's 2000 casualties.

On the morning of the indictment, W gave a speech about the war in Iraq. He repeated his BizarroWorld response to the charge that the invasion of Iraq created a breeding ground for terrorism, saying to applause that 9/11 happened before the invasion, didn't it, heh-heh? The cable networks carried the speech for a while, but then they blew it off — first MSNBC, then CNN and even FOX. The anchors made the meta-point that what Bush was doing was *creating the appearance* of being focused on the nation's business, and then they went back to handicapping the prosecutor's charges. No military, foreign policy or counter-terrorism types were on hand to challenge Bush's conduct of the war and its aftermath. No politicians hit the airwaves to counter his case that this is Cold War II. Why bother? The media think revealing Bush's motives is what journalism is. Truth-squadding his actual case for war? Puhleeze.

This is what the media do. And when they make the effort to back up and look at the big picture, what they say is that this prosecution is at heart about the rationale for the war. That's it; no more. They expect a Peabody just for making the observation. What's missing is a real examination of that rationale. What gets lost is that there is a real war still going on, with real people still being killed and wounded every day.

This is a golden moment for mobilizing opposition to that war. Meta-observations about motives and strategies are seductive, but irrelevant. This is the time for elected Democrats to say they were wrong, and that the country was wrong, because we were lied to; it's a time to demand an exit strategy, and to formulate one. The end of this war: *that's* the narrative we should be fighting about. Everything else is just filler between Ditech ads.