

**Populist Hype: The Permeable Veil of Iraqi Invasion in David Hare's
*Stuff Happens*****Gehan M. Anwar Deeb**

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*The aim of the present paper is to apply the sense of populist hype to the Iraqi-War play, *Stuff Happens* (2004) by David Hare, that provides live testimonies from journalism, political meetings, and press conferences, along with fictional narratives of indoor conversations regarding war decision-making. Hare's technique of mixing real and fictional narratives shows the contradictions between what is said and what is done. Utilizing a theoretical concept synthesis of Populist Hype by Glynos and Mondon (2016), Noam Chomsky (1992) and De Cleen et al (2018), this paper investigates how David Hare dramatizes real characters like Saddam Hussein, George Bush, Tony Blair, Donald Rumsfeld, Condoleezza Rice, Kufi Anan and De Villepin, focussing on Bush's strategies in manipulating the public opinion to wage war on Iraq. Using wordplay, horror and terror, the United Nations, the media, and spoken and concealed narratives, as well as stooping to conquer, Bush misled the public opinion into believing that the Iraqi war was launched against terrorism and for America's security. Hare also highlights the suffering of the marginalized and war victims who pay the cost/price of the foolish war decisions made by arrogant, untrustworthy politicians. Hare presents two contradictory worlds and narratives about the war to answer the question, "What is the expense of lies – personally and as a country?" The paper concludes that history is shaped in the hands of powerful countries via populist hype.*

Keywords: David Hare, Iraqi war, Populist hype, *Stuff Happens*

الضجيج الإعلامي وسياسة التضليل حول غزو العراق في مسرحية: "هذه الأشياء تحدث" لديفيد هير

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المستخلص

تتناقش هذه الورقة مدى خطورة التأثير على الرأي العام، والاستراتيجيات التي يستخدمها القادة السياسيون في توجيه رؤية الأحداث في حالة الحرب، وخاصة في حرب العراق التي بدأت في عام 2003 واستمرت قرابة العشر سنوات، وتناولها الأدب، حيث مزج المسرح بالسياسة في مسرحية هذه الأشياء تحدث لديفيد هير (2004) موضوع البحث في إطار نظرية جليانوس وموندون (2016)، التي تعكس تأثير الرأي العام على الديمقراطية السياسية كما يتضح في أربعة محاور فرعية: "سرقة المتعة"، وانعدام الثقة في السياسيين، والمهمشين، والكتابات المسيئة للإسلام. ويركز البحث على المحور الأخير كونه يمثل نقطة التقاء الأدب بالسياسة أو ما يعرف بالمسرح السياسي. يطرح ديفيد هير في مسرحيته هذه الأشياء تحدث استراتيجيات الرئيس الأمريكي جورج بوش في تضليل الرأي العام لشن الحرب على العراق آنذاك، والمتمثلة في توظيف أساليب للتلاعب بالألفاظ، والتناص، الرعب والإرهاب، التلويح بالأمم المتحدة، وسائل الإعلام، الروايات السرية والمعلنة، والكلام الزائف عن غزو العراق، وغيرها لترسيخ فكرة أن حرب العراق شنت ضد الإرهاب لحماية أمن أمريكا. كما يتطرق هير أيضا لمعاناة المهمشين وضحايا الحرب الذين يدفعون ثمن قرارات الحرب الحمقاء التي يتخذها قادة متعجرفون ليسوا محلًا للثقة و ذلك بتوظيف الدراما في تجسيد شخصيات واقعية مثل صدام حسين، وجورج بوش، وتوني بلير، ودونالد رامسفيلد، وكوندوليزا رايس، وكوفي عنان، ودي فيليان. كما تصور المسرحية كيف أن وسائل الإعلام لا تزال حتى الآن، وبعد انتهاء الحرب فعلياً، تضلل الناس بسرد بطولات الجنود الأميركيين الذين شاركوا في الحرب وتصويرهم كأبطال وليسوا ضحايا. هذا ويطرح هير في هذه المسرحية روايتين متناقضتين لطبيعة الحرب كمحاولة لتوضيح الضريبة الباهظة لأكاذيبها التي يتكدها الفرد والمجتمع على حد سواء.

الكلمات المفتاحية: حرب العراق، ديفيد هير، الضجيج الإعلامي، "هذه الأشياء تحدث"

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[ORCID ID.: 0000-0002-8040-7470](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8040-7470)**Introduction: Iraqi War Literature**

Under the guise of freedom, civilization and democracy, George W. Bush and Tony Blair administrations cunningly convinced the United Nations and the entire globe of the Legitimacy of the Iraqi-invasion in 2003. By far one of the most pressing issues of the 21st century, this invasion has been the core of both written and mediated literature. Examples are: Michael Moore's *Fahrenheit 9/11* (2004), David Hare's *Stuff Happens* (2004), James C. Strouse's *Grace is Gone* (2007), Paul Haggis' *In The Valley of Elah* (2007), Brian De Palma's *Redacted* (2007), and Kimberly Peirce's *Stop-Loss* (2008). In 2006, three pieces were introduced, including a revised version of David Hare's *Stuff Happens*, along with his play *The Vertical Hour*, and Caryl Churchill's *Drunk Enough to Say I Love*. Lately, Yussef El Guindi's *People of the Book* (2019) reflects the media's misleading portrayal of the patriotism of war participants who are received and remembered as heroes, not victims.

The present paper discusses David Hare's *Stuff Happens*, as an example of Populist Hype, on the grounds that some critics argue that the war was driven by populist rhetoric. Hare's play, *Stuff Happens*, is a response to the Iraqi War, presenting various viewpoints, including arguments for and against the attack on Iraq. It was modified for performance in 2006 after its debut in 2004. It mixes imagined secret conversations between the Bush and Blair administrations with exact replicas of actual speeches, meetings, and news appearances. Nicholas Hytner's production of *Stuff Happens* follows the public and private conversations held by the Bush administration, the main instigators of the war in Iraq, and Tony Blair's government. In the play, public characters such as George Bush, Colin Powell, Donald Rumsfeld, Dick Cheney, Condoleeza Rice, Tony Blair, Paul Wolfowitz, Alastair Campbell, and Jack Straw are referenced in reported remarks and meeting minutes. The

play incorporates information from the news media, official documents, dossiers, and statistical data. As interludes between the factual or reported, several figures deliver soliloquies to support various retroactive perspectives regarding the invasion. (Gupta 106)

The full cast was present at Hytner's National Theatre in London, which had a sizable stage, furniture pieces, actors reciting lines, and a light-marked focal point. The cast was positioned in a passageway that divided the crowd in the smaller Public Theatre in New York and led to the stage. The various audience viewpoints—from a distance or as the performance flows out into the audience area—reflected the historical truth being depicted. The stage's staginess was perceived as a contrast to the actual events being portrayed. The 'An Actor' offered connectivity by supplying details, presenting the character, mentioning the time and place, and even declaring gesture directions. Not only does 'An Actor' give “background information,” but he also gives the stage directions, so he “becomes the voice of theatre itself” (Gupta 109).

Theoretical Framework: Approach and Rationale

Populism is seen as an emancipatory social force that challenges established power structures. Additionally, the term has been used interchangeably with demagoguery and political opportunism. Populists adopt an "us versus them" perspective. In the United States, it dates back to the late 19th century, and since then it has been used to describe a variety of politicians, parties, and movements as a pejorative. Subsequently, in the 20th century, it was applied to liberal democracies, while in the 21st century, populism has been used to define left-wing, right-wing, and centrist movements opposing traditional parties. Politics reform is driven by populism used to channel irate voters' anger against fictitious adversaries. (Kindell and Demers). Following Donald Trump's victory in the 2016 presidential election and the UK's decision to leave the EU, populism was frequently a recurring American political issue and a popular term widely used by political commentators throughout the world.

The Populist Hype and The Concept of the 'theft of enjoyment' (Glynos & Mondon)

The overblown reaction to the populist wave has a political logic, independent of representational truth or falsehood, preempting the contestation of troublesome norms under liberal democratic regimes. The persistence of populist hype suggests that, in order to give it vitality and vigour, it might access strong emotive registers founded on societal aspirations and dreams. The political logic and narratives of the right-wing populist hype depend merely on "facts" since these fantasmatic

aspects provide ideological backing for policy solutions to perceived issues. Not only are facts discursively structured, but they are frequently also given a fantastical bent. (Glynos & Mondon 15)

Politicians and media have used the hyped response to populism “to conjure the image of an imminent threat to democracy.” This logic has been used to marginalize meaningful debate about democracy and reinforce alienating tendencies. The tenacity of populist hype indicates its ability to tap into “potent affective registers rooted in collective desires and fantasies structured around the idea of ‘theft of enjoyment’, giving it its energy and verve.” (Glynos & Mondon 3) This concept, derived from the psychoanalytic tradition, suggests that “each subject’s enjoyment, associated with the pleasures and pains of one’s way of life, is always already a reflexive enjoyment” influenced by how they “imagine others enjoying themselves.” This reflexivity can trigger various emotional responses, such as jealousy or outrage if others enjoy themselves excessively or at one's expense. The idea of 'theft of enjoyment' aims to capture the stakes in cases like left-wing populism and its coverage, as “we may experience our own enjoyment as 'stolen'.” (Glynos & Mondon 7-8). This idea can help us understand the character of threats and how they impact our enjoyment.

Right-wing populist hype is identified along with the norms that are at risk and how they are related to probable causes of people's experiences showing that individuals have limited influence over choices that will affect their life. This unhappiness is pervasive in liberal democracies and may be addressed by using political reasoning to either concentrate it more clearly or to reframe it. Radical right parties attract/gain support from disenchanted voters only in opposition. In contrast, parties in the incumbent government are more likely to be perceived as collaborators of established elites. They “can convincingly use the rhetorical figure of “the pure people” versus “the corrupt elite” and sell the frame of teaching the “top brass” a lesson” (Mudde 543 qtd. in Ziller & Schübel 6). Once in government, radical right parties tend to tone down their populist agitation and accommodate mainstream party politics.

Globalization limited national elite powers, allowing charismatic leadership to gain popularity. Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart connect economic and sociocultural grievances to explain the rise of populist movements in Western societies. The economic insecurity perspective suggests that events like globalization, China's membership in the World Trade Organization, and cheaper imports have led unsecured members of

society to seek populist leaders like Trump and Nigel Farage. The rise of populism is a reaction from white, uneducated, elderly men who feel marginalized by progressive values. Populist rhetoric and hostility towards immigrants, particularly Muslims, are common features.

This contrasts with liberal democratic understandings of politics, that is based on differences and need to be represented through political parties. Populist rhetoric often simplifies political contestation, leading to aggressive adversarial traits and incivility. Populist leaders frequently employ rhetoric that incites rage, spreads conspiracies, encourages mistrust of experts, fosters nationalism, and demonizes outsiders. (History.com Editors). Mobilizations require a clear articulation of a powerful emotive message. Explaining why it is that ordinary people are suffering needs to be translated into clear, perhaps even simplistic, terms to resonate. Populist leaders also often portray themselves as outsiders who are separate from the "elite", using vulgar language to be like "one of the boys" to add to their populist appeal.

Noam Chomsky argues that because of scientific advancements, a gap has been created over the course of the last decades "between public knowledge and those owned and operated by dominant elites," resulting in "greater control and great power over individuals" (2). Keeping the public in ignorance and mediocrity is another strategy that promotes complacency with mediocrity, by encouraging the public "to believe that the fact is fashionable to be stupid, vulgar, and uneducated." Self-blame strengthens by letting individuals "blame for their misfortune," out of "the failure of their intelligence, their abilities, or their efforts" (Chomsky 2).

By the early 1990s, populism became a regular feature in Western democracies due to changing government perceptions and media focus on sensationalism and scandals. Improved education of the populace, since the 1960s, has led to a sceptical attitude towards mainstream politicians and governing groups. Politicians faced television interviews, and news media shifted from interviewing accredited experts to interviewing individuals on the street.

The Concept of a Populist Political Ideology.

In their article "Critical research on populism: Nine rules of engagement," Benjamin De Cleen et al (2018) explores the essential role of populism in the current political context, media and academia. They define the concept of 'populist hype' in politics, as a form of reason that "represents the people," constructed as an underdog against "an illegitimate elite" (651). Their approach offers advantages, such as separating nativist and populist dimensions in political discourses like the UKIP, Trump, and the Front National. It also emphasizes the need to

engage with rhetoric about populism and focus on its usage, anti-populism, and hype. De Cleen et al do not regard populist politics as "a symptomatic effect of extra-political developments," but rather affected by "political choices" and "ideologies of actors" that appeal to 'the people', 'the elite' and 'the crises,' interpreting them in light of "social, economic and cultural aspects of a conjuncture." The momentary stability in these constructs is "the product of a discursive struggle," as these interpretations are "contestable." (651-52) Populists may appeal to the people, but they do not necessarily represent the illegitimate elite.

[P]opulists can rely on a wide range of labels to posit themselves as the representatives of the underdog (the 'down group') against the powerful (the 'up-group'). Common constructions often pit 'the ordinary people', 'the little man', 'the common man' and 'the man in the street' as the down-group against an up-group: 'the establishment', 'the political caste' or 'the regime'. (De Cleen et al. 562).

There are several commonly associated terms with "populism that populism is *not*," i.e., that are not present in populism. These include a "popular style of talking, acting or looking like 'ordinary people'"; demagoguery or opportunism; political outsider, the radical right, nationalism, and authoritarianism. (De Cleen et al. 563).

Populism emerged in North Africa in the 20th century, with political leaders like Gamal Abdel Nasser and Muammar Gaddafi influencing the movement. However, it gained popularity in the Middle East during the early 21st century and became an integral part of mainstream politics in representative democracies. Populists have increasingly used social media to bypass mainstream media and directly approach their target audiences. Traditional media, acting as 'gatekeepers', filter messages through journalistic norms, while social media allows a direct linkage between political actors and potential audiences.

1-The Populist Appeal of Political Leaders: Charisma and Oversimplification

Relying on their personal charisma and their ability to oversimplify issues, political leaders can undermine the balances crucial for a healthy democratic system. Populism is corrosive of civic culture, pluralism, and respect for opponents, but it is bad for democracy and should be guarded against. Populists may initially gain popularity by tapping into the concerns of the people, but their simplistic approach to governance can lead to policies that are detrimental in the long run. Citizens should critically evaluate populist leaders and their proposals, ensuring that democratic principles and institutions are upheld.

Charismatic political figures also depend on their experience and personal relations in convincing people to take their part. In *Stuff Happens*, Prime Minister Tony Blair promises to support Bush in the Iraq war depending on his good relations with other nations: “Internationally - well, in Europe, in Russia, I can help. I think I can chip in with a good deal of personal persuasion - with Chirac, with Putin. My relationships are excellent. One of the advantages of being a bit longer in office... Knowing the people. Knowing the personalities. I have a history, remember? Sierra Leone ... Kosovo”. (Hare 40).

Charismatic political figures believe strongly in the idea that they are divinely chosen for the sake of their nations. They keep talking about faith and religion so that people can be convinced by whatever they say. They mostly use religious documentary diction in order to veil their policies by legacy. In her *Memoir from Women's Prison*, Nawal El Sadawy refers to what President Anwar Sadat always describes himself as a “faithful man” (El Saadawi, 1986). By the same token, at the beginning of *Stuff Happens*, George Bush claims to use authority and religion for his own gain, claiming that his Christian faith drives him to engage in war. He addresses his people saying:

My faith frees me. Frees me to put the problem of the moment in proper perspective. Frees me to make decisions which others might not like. Frees me to enjoy life and not worry about what comes next... I am here because of the power of prayer... I feel like God wants me to run for president. I can't explain it, but I sense my country is going to need me. Something is going to happen and at that time my country is going to need me. I know it won't be easy, on me or on my family, but God wants me to do it. (Hare 9-10)

Again, when he visits Camp David, Bush prays: “Oh God... hold us in Your hand, make us wise, give us wisdom, that we may surely do good. In thy name” (Hare 18). The actor/commentator notes that Bush: “has used the word "evil" in 319 separate speeches since becoming President”. On June 4, 2003, after the end of the war, George Bush still repeated the same religious phrases he kept uttering all the time. He tells the Palestinian Prime Minister: “God told me to strike Al Qaeda and I struck them, and then He instructed me to strike at Saddam, which I did.” (Hare 119) To the same effect, Sirwah adds that Bush: “appeals to religion as an untouchable area to both cover and defend his motives as a dictator. That is why he is always shown as listening out for his men rather than explaining himself to them.” (77)

Politically speaking, populist movements and parties are sometimes headed by charismatic or powerful figures or leaders who often “present themselves as the savior of the people,” who make “personal sacrifices” for their advantage, (Albertazzi and McDonnell (2008, 4) exploiting the grievances and frustrations of the masses. Bush turns from speaking personally to collectively in the name of America as the saviour of the whole world: “I will not wait on events, while dangers gather. I will not stand by as peril draws closer and closer. History has called America and our allies to action. Steadfast in our purpose, we now press on. We have known freedom's price. We have shown freedom's power. And in this great conflict, my fellow Americans, we will see freedom's victory.” (Hare 33)

Consequently, those leaders refuse the idea of protest. They think that this supposed blessing gifted to them by God immunises them against opposition. Hence, they turn out to be dictators. Bush adds: “I'm the commander - see, I don't need to explain. I don't need to explain why I say things. That's the interesting thing about being president. Maybe somebody needs to explain to me why they say something. But I don't feel like I owe anybody an explanation” (Hare 10). Even in crucial and fatal affairs, Bush seems to be dictator and wanted to be seen as the only decision-maker: “It's me that'll make the decision. I'll make the decision. I'm the president.” (Hare 40).

Beside the charismatic characters of the political figures, they tend to oversimplify everything whether dangerous or fatal, especially when confronted by the public. From the very beginning of the play, even in the title itself, *Stuff Happens*, David Hare shows how Rumsfeld, the former Secretary of American Defense, tries to oversimplify the issue of war as just “happens”. The title of the play is driven from Rumsfeld’s speech replying a journalist’s question regarding the pillaging and blundering that ensued after the American invasion of Baghdad:

JOURNALIST: What's your response, sir? Mr. Secretary, how do you respond to the news of looting and pillaging in Baghdad?

RUMSFELD: I've seen the pictures. I've seen those pictures. I could take pictures in any city in America. Think what's happened in our cities when we've had riots, and problems, and looting. Stuff happens! (Hare 3)

Even before the Iraqi war in 2003, Hare looks back in anger to the same Iraq during the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. Sirwah clarifies:

In the beginning of the 1990’s, coercive diplomacy has been employed by George Bush the senior against Iraq to both

liberate Kuwait from its invasion and remove Saddam Husein (public politics). The failure of this strategy led to the US's gaining support from the UN for war when it has become inevitable... Since the "American invasion" liberated Kuwait but could not remove Hussein's regime, Bush the junior plans to invade Iraq in 2003 to achieve what his father could not (Sirwah 73-5).

As a verbatim drama/theatre, Hare employs the character of Powell as an eye-witness of both the Vietnam wars (Chiến tranh Việt Nam) and Iraqi wars to ensure the bloody history of the United States all over the world. In addition to being one of the most charismatic characters, as will be mentioned later, Powell also creates dramatic balance by being introduced as a contrast to the violent politicians. Powell wishes that the leaders would listen to him to avoid themselves, their countries and the rest of the dangerous consequences of wars, but no one listens. As a war man, Powell wishes that war is to be the last choice because he knows well that the public is the first to pay the bloody cost of wars: "After Vietnam, many in my generation vowed when our turn came to call the shorts, we could not quietly acquiesce in half-hearted warfare for half-baked reasons. Politicians start wars; soldiers fight and die in them. ... War should be the politics of last resort." (Hare 4).

Actually, much information about Powell and the other characters is given by commentators who play the role of the chorus in ancient drama or the narrators or the asides speech, and whom Hare did not name, but only called "Actors". Since he

cannot change the exact roles done in real life by the real politicians of his own history play, Hare depicts them as accurately as he can (except the very rare cases of the imagined scenes of what happened behind closed doors) and provides whatever information he wants about them through the roles of the narrator-actors introducing them. He further adds nameless fictional characters to his drama just to achieve some sort of equilibrium by presenting different objective views through them. (Sirwah 78).

Such actors allude also to the conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinians and show how the United States has a figure in every pie. Of course, the United States seeks only for the fortunes of the region, regardless of the safety and freedom of the Palestinians. Powell, who is in constant contrast to the American policy, faces Bush and his administration with the reality of their interest in the fortunes of the

Middle East reminding them of their shameful attitude regarding Palestine and how they use it as a threat to the other countries:

POWELL: On the ground there's a conflict. Left to himself, Sharon's instincts are always to ratchet up the conflict - and always by military means. If we disengage, the risk is, we unleash Sharon. The consequences of that will be dire for the Palestinians.

BUSH: Well, maybe that's what's needed. Maybe that's the best way to get things back in balance. (There's a silence)

BUSH: You know, sometimes in my experience, a real show of strength by just one side can clarify things. It can make things really clear. (Hare 12)

2-Populism and Reactionary Populism

Populism is an ideology of politics that claims to place the interests of “the people” in contrast against those of “the elite.” In other words, populism is a political style or approach that mobilizes mass movements against ruling powers, advocating for ordinary people. The term “populism” was first used in the 1960s by social scientists in Western nations as a self-description in various contexts. It is described by some US historians as public participation in political decision-making. Additionally, populism is a way for a corrupt elite to be separated from those who are good and virtuous, arguing that the people have been harmed by their ruling leaders and hence change is needed. Populism is a term that exists in both democracies and authoritarian regimes. There are debates about the relationship between populism and democracy, with some viewing it as an intrinsic danger or a necessary component of democratic contestation. Populists, often referred to as “true democrats,” believe that populism allows electorates to avoid disapproving administrations via the ballot box, a fundamental value for a state to qualify as democratic. In his writings, Ernesto Laclau, who was influenced by politics in Latin America, suggests that populism demands a strong mobilization by appealing to the needs and interests of the populace rather than the elites.

The character of Powell in *Stuff Happens*, represents the voice of the public. He is the only character in the play to speak about people’s rights. By the end of Act One, Powell pleads for both Bush and Rice to reconsider waging war on Iraq for the sake of the public people. He urges them to ask the UN for a resolution: “I’m going to remind you, sir. 64% of the American public favour this. So long as it’s with the support of the international community. Without that support, the figure drops to 33”

(Hare 44). As a war man, Powell knows that people pay the bloody costs of wars more than anyone else: “Maybe because my whole life has been in the army I'm less impressed than some people by the use of force. I see it for what it is” (Hare 45). Powell had enough courage to face Bush and his administration with the fact that most politicians make wrong decisions due to their lack of actual experiences and their dependence on theories only, “Sometimes I think all the trouble in the world is caused by intellectuals who have an "idea." They have some idea of action with no possible regard for its consequences.” (Hare 48). Powell insists after all on the rights of people, simply because America is “still a republic, not an empire” (Hare 48-49). Powell is farsighted enough to predict the consequences of war and to think about human relationships:

No-one giving a damn about the reality. Ten times more excitement about going in than there is about how the hell we get out! ...We invade Iraq, the whole region can be destabilized. Friends of ours like Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan - all going to be put in danger... If you go into Iraq, you're going to be the proud owner of 25 million people. Their lives. All their hopes and aspirations. All their problems. Has anyone begun to think about that? I want my country to be less arrogant... Three thousand of our citizens died. (Hare 53)

For all these reasons, DE Villepin knows the influence of Powell and tries to convince him by flattery (using the tactic of “Going to the public as a little child”) to support the war, but in vain: “More popular than your own president? Virtually the only uncontested hero in America. It's a shame, isn't it, when you're that popular not to use your popularity? Put it to good purpose? Put it to purposes for the benefit of all” (Hare 72-73). Bush also uses the same strategy of flattery with Powell in order to convince him to present a speech at the UN to support America's war decision: “Lot of people, not just in this country, abroad as well, think very highly of you, Colin. I know that. They admire you.” (Hare 75). Actually, Powell went to the UN to present the US government's case for ‘imminent threat.’ That was Powell's ‘Adlai Stevenson moment.’ Within diplomatic circles, this incident is known as ‘the Powell buy-in.’ Powell has never been satisfied with what he himself said, but as a politician, he should obey the presidential orders. This inner conflict pushes him strongly to resign from the administration at the next election. Not only Powell who resigned after the end of the Iraqi war. In the words of Yuko Hori:

[I]n 2007, Tony Blair left the post of the British Prime Minister partly due to his responsibility for mishandling the Iraq War. In

2008, the presidency of George W. Bush drew to a close, and the election campaign for the next presidency took place. The whole world was particularly excited about this campaign because of the possibility of Barack Obama being elected the first black President of the USA. Finally Obama won the election and declared his intention to end the Iraq War in his official website "The Change We Need": "Immediately upon taking office, Obama will give his Secretary of Defense and military commanders a new mission in Iraq: successfully ending the war (Hori 94).

Reactionary Populism increases especially after Iraq proves to be innocent. The voice of the public all over the world gets stronger and angrier. A saleswoman in Saks Fifth Avenue bitterly cries: "Somebody steals your handbag, so you kill their second cousin, on the grounds they live close...Saudi Arabia is financing Al Qaeda. Iran, Lebanon and Syria are known to shelter terrorists. North Korea is developing a nuclear weapons programme. All these you leave alone. No, you go to war with the one place in the region admitted to have no connection with terrorism." (Hare 92-93). Besides, some nations begin to attack America and stop supporting it. France is the first to announce this situation:

DE VILLEPIN: We believe today that nothing justifies military interventions. Military action is a dead end. Nothing justifies an American adventure. Nothing! Nothing!

JOURNALIST: Will France use its veto in the case of any new resolution?

DE VILLEPIN: France is a permanent member of the Security Council. It will shoulder all of its responsibilities faithful to all the principles it has. (Hare 97).

Moreover, Tony Blair is directly confronted by a mother who stands in protest for the use of force: "I lost my only child in the World Trade Center. I can't describe to you how I will feel for the rest of my life. They killed 3,000 innocent victims. How many innocent victims are you and Mr Bush going to kill when there's no justification? Mr Blair, don't do it. Don't do it!" (Hare 109).

3-Populist Rhetoric and Media Framing:

Media populism involves the use of mass media by politicians to mobilize support. The media has exposed controversial leaders for commercial reasons; one example is the \$5 billion in free publicity that Donald Trump received throughout. In addition to being criticized for their propensity for melodrama, sensationalism, and conflict, tabloids are frequently labeled as venues for populist politics. Using slogans, clichés,

and metaphors to influence customer perception and impose views is known as mass media framing. Consumer impression and political assessment are influenced by this media spin or witty deception. In today's media-driven environment, populism flourishes because it grabs people's attention and uses well-worn themes. Populist leaders attract followers by operating outside of the political system, appealing to emotions, exploiting commonplace occurrences, rejecting politically acceptable stances, and defining the opponent clearly. By using this strategy, their dialectic arguments are strengthened, making them the only or primary alternative.

In this regard, politicians used five effective means during the Iraqi wars. Firstly, the use of Forceful *Persuasion and Coercive Diplomacy*. In order to convince the world and the public of the legality of the Iraq war, Bush and Blair sought the approval of The UN. Blair convinced Bush that for Britain to share in this war, and for the whole world to support the Iraqi invasion, the UN should support first: "Any invasion of Iraq without UN support is going to be in breach of international law... I would want that action to be unarguably legitimate. I want it to have authority" (73). In fact, the main point and the reality of this attitude is best expressed by De Villepin's words: "There's all the difference in the world between coming to the UN with the aim of getting Saddam to disarm through peaceful means, and coming to the UN in order simply to get a stamp of approval for an invasion." (Hare 73).

America makes the best of a bad job in seeking the help of the UK. If Iraqi government is proved to be guilty, the United State is to be thanked and honoured. If Iraq proves to be disarmed, the UK is to be blamed. The American administration will be saved in both cases:

CHENEY: Yes, we'll go through the UN. We go to the UN. We walk right in that glass door. Yes, we're supporting the UN. "What, us? Sure, we support the UN." But all the time we're asking the question: "Can the UN deliver?" (There is a silence)
BUSH: I think it's good. This way it's not about us. It's about them. That's good. We put the monkey on Kofi Annan's back. (Hare 57).

Secondly, speaking less is another media strategy. When faced and surrounded by journalists in a press conference, Both Bush and Blair do not tell much. They speak generally about the war, saying it is just a "regime change [that] sounds a lot more civil". They express concern about the future of Iraq and the removal of Saddam Hussein. Bush suggests that they "should be a little less direct and be a little more

nuanced” (Hare 43). This approach is seen as a way to maintain a positive image and ensure the future of the country.

Thirdly, political leaders depend on media to provide people with written and visual documents and intelligence services so as to impress them more. Tony Blair speaks to Campbell and others: “Just the facts. Spelt out - very simply, very clearly, about the dangers of Iraq developing and using their weapons of mass destruction... An actual piece of paper. Photos, facts. Something you can read, something you can actually look at. Hold” (Hare 24).

Fourthly, Politicians pay more attention to addressing youth for they are the future of any nation. In his speech on September 17, 2002, during the graduation ceremony at the US Military Academy at West Point, Bush addressed the youth by introducing a new concept in the International Law, namely “the doctrine of the pre-emptive strike”:

For much of the last century, America's defense relied on Cold War doctrines of deterrence and containment. But new threats require new thinking... We cannot defend America by hoping for the best. If we wait for threats to fully materialize we will have waited too long. We are in a conflict between good and evil, and America will call evil by its name. By confronting evil and lawless regimes, we do not create a problem, we reveal a problem. And we will lead the world in opposing it. (Hare 46).

Fifthly, politicians depend greatly on the use of “wordplay” to have things both ways. In this regard, three examples are provided here. The first occurs when De Villepin presents France’s attitude before Powell and other British and French diplomats playing on the use of the plural form of the word, “resolutions” as used in Bush’s speech days before. Negroponte tries to convince him that it is just a technical glitch, but in vain:

DE VILLEPIN: France won't consider a first resolution which contains any kind of hidden trigger, any mechanism which might trigger war. The French are genuinely delighted to help the United States if your purpose is, indeed, disarmament. Nothing would make us happier. If you have a second purpose - to licence an attack - to seek international cover for an American invasion - then no. We deal with a new situation only when and as disarmament is shown not to occur... *If you remember, your own president referred to "resolutions" in the plural.* (Italics mine):

NEGROPONTE: You know perfectly well: When the president said he was going to "bring forward resolutions" what he meant was "resolution." Single.

DE VILLEPIN: He used the plural.

LEVITTE: It's a pity that's not what he said.

NEGROPONTE: He was improvising. He had to improvise. The machine went down and he did very well to say anything at all! (Hare 75)

The second situation occurs during the brief meeting between Hans Blix and the Vice-President's office at the White House playing on the use of the "and/or". The French maintain that Iraq's potential material violation of the resolution will result in dire consequences as shown by the following:

LEVITTE: A false declaration "*and*" a general failure to cooperate.

AN ACTOR: The Americans prefer:

NEGROPONTE: A false declaration "*or*" a general failure to cooperate.

AN ACTOR: *The dispute over this single word lasts five days* (Hare 83)

Of course, America prefers 'or' to 'and,' because the first means that there are two criteria for war, but 'and' means there is only one. It is not a question of fighting terrorism, as often alleged by the US President Bush, who is prepared to "hit Iraq much the same way that a drunk will hit a bottle--to satisfy his thirst for power and oil" (Hare 78). He wants to wage war against Iraq on the least grounds. For him, only one proof against Iraq is enough to justify the war choice. This wordplay goes on even after everyone accepts the word 'and.' "Immediately afterwards, the American and French brief the press, giving contradictory readings of the same document" (Hare 81).

The third example occurs towards the end of the play when French President Chirac uses the word "Tonight" in his statement to the UN: "My position is that whatever the circumstances France will vote "no," because she considers tonight that there are no grounds for waging war" (Hare 111). Such a usage of the word enables him to be always open to argument, should the situation change. The choice of the word is cunningly debated by other politicians:

CAMPBELL: Chirac's given us what we need.

BLAIR: Do you really think so? Do you really think we can use it?

CAMPBELL: Of course we can use it.

CAMPBELL: The second resolution's dead! It's dead. And what's wonderful is, it isn't even our fault.

BLAIR: But he did say "tonight"! Of course he said "tonight"! But he also said "Whatever the circumstances."

CAMPBELL: Of course he said "tonight"! Of course he said "tonight"! But he also said "Whatever the circumstances." (Hare 112)

Mass media framing is not only used by the Americans but also by the Iraqis. In order to prove that Iraq is a country devoid of weapons of mass destruction, the Iraqi General Hassam Hummad Amin has a photo call where he “sets out a table with twelve thousand pages of documents for the world's press to photograph... Piled on a table are 43 spiral-bound volumes of documents, containing 12,159 pages, 6 folders, 12 CD-ROMs.” (Hare 86)

AN ACTOR: Saddam Hussein makes a statement on Iraqi television:

SADDAM H (speaks in Arabic, a translator renders it in English): We apologize to God about any act which has angered him in the past, and that was held against us and we apologize to the Kuwaitis on the same basis. (Hare 86)

In the 1992 documentary film "Manufacturing Consent Noam Chomsky and the Media – Feature Film," Noam Chomsky identifies ten media manipulation strategies to control the population. These strategies include distraction, making up problems, deferring, becoming childish, relying more on emotion than reflection, and enhancing self-blame. Distraction tactics "divert public attention from important issues and changes determined by political and economic elites" (Chomsky 1). Problem-creating and offering solutions create reactions in the audience, such as intensifying urban violence or creating an economic crisis to justify social rights and dismantling public services. Gradual acceptance and deferring enable the public to become accustomed to change. (Chomsky 1)

The Iraq War is the best example of creating problems strategy. The whole story begins with a large aerial photograph illustrating Iraq and Saddam Hussein as a real danger to the region. Bush asks his administration members to examine a photograph well. Although the photo shows only a railroad, tracks, trucks and a water-cooler, they all insist on one conclusion: “This might well be a plant which produces either chemical or biological materials for weapons manufacture”. (Hare 13). As usual, O'Neill tries to dissuade them, but in vain. He shouts nervously: “I can see. But, to be frank, with you, I've seen an awful lot of

factories around the world that look an awful lot like this. What's the evidence, what's the evidence of what this factory's producing?" (Hare 13)

Powell's questions are not answered, as they are not meant to be answered, but rather, to draw everyone's attention to the fact that oil and the colonial desire are the main reasons for Iraq's invasion. His questions are highlighted more by the thorny questions of the British Journalist, who, like Powell, stands as a voice of objectivity. In a long dramatic monologue, this journalist asks more than twenty crucial questions, of which some are quoted below:

How obscene it is, *how* decadent, continually to give our attention not to the liberation, not to the people freed, but to the relentless archaic discussion of the manner of the liberation. *Was* it lawful? *Was* it not? *How* was it done? *What* were the details of its doing? *Whose* views were over-ridden? *Whose* views condoned? *Do* I like the people who did it? *Are* they my kind of people? Hey - *are* they stupider than me? *How* spoiled, *how* indulged we are to discuss the manner... *What* is the word for those who claim to love democracy and yet who will not fight to extend democracy to Arabs as well? (Hare 15)

The last question is rather satiric: "What is the word for those who claim to love democracy and yet who will not fight to extend democracy to Arabs as well? A people hitherto oppressed are now free. This is the story. No other story obtains" (Hare 16). The question summarizes the whole true story of the Iraq war putting the West-East conflict at the core of the selected drama. The same sarcastic question is raised earlier in the play by Rumsfeld: "I'd always worried about politicians who spent most of their time getting ready to be something as opposed to doing something" (Hare 16). All these questions by the Americans themselves, the British and the Arabs, refer to the hypocrisy and double identity of the American administrations.

Wordplay and hypocrisy are the keys of President Bush's character, particularly in his approach to the Israel/Palestine conflict. "He formally abandons the so-called road map and gives Israel permission to implement a plan of its own, with no representation or right of negotiation offered to Palestinians." Additionally, in response to Hamas's victory in the Palestinian election, Bush argues that while he supports democracy, this does not mean supporting "governments that get elected as a result of democracy" (Hare 31)

Going to the public as a little child is another tactic that tends to adopt an infantilizing tone, using speech, argument, and intonation close

to children's weaknesses. The emotional aspect is used more than reflection, causing a short circuit on rational analysis and allowing the unconscious to implant "ideas, desires, fears, anxieties, compulsions, or induce behaviors." (Chomsky 2) Planting fears is mostly used by the United States in the sense of "Beat the dog before the lion". In a meeting with Bush, Blair, Powell and others, Rice plans to use the Afghanistan/Taliban conflict as a demonstration model to threaten other countries like Iraq and Iran: "Oh I see. That's what happens... We want to send a message to countries which are considering actions hostile to the United States" (Hare 20). In another meeting, Bush clarifies that Afghanistan is just the beginning: "Saddam has to be dealt with. My view is, we're moving into the second phase. We did Afghanistan. Now we move on. The second phase." (36).

4- Orientalism: Old Wine in a New Bottle

Falsifying Facts is a significant feature of populist hype. The Iraqi War, which began in 2003, was controversial and led to widespread protests worldwide. "The premise was that since the Iraqis (Orientals) are ignorant of self-government and are lack liberty, it is best that they are invaded for their own good." (Salih et al 60). The same quote parallels the tenth strategy of Noam Chomsky: "getting to know individuals better than they know themselves". President Bush falsifies facts to invade Iraq for his own interests, namely, the colonial desire and oil. He pretends to wage war against terror, immorality and dictatorship. In a famous speech to the press, Bush declares: "the Prime Minister and I, of course, talked about Iraq. We both recognize the danger of man who's willing to kill his own people harboring and developing Weapons of mass destruction. This guy, Saddam Hussein, is a leader who gases his own people." (Hare 43)

In another speech, Bush goes on his lies ensuring that Iraq threatens the security of the world and hence, it should be controlled: "States like these, and their terrorist allies, constitute an axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world. By seeking weapons of mass destruction, these regimes pose a grave and growing danger" (Hare 45). Events proved that all the American suppositions and accusations turned to lies. But the question here is: Do politicians know they're lying? The answer is put by David Hare himself in an interview with James Graham, "Politicians don't think in those terms. They think: this is the case I have to put—almost like a QC— whatever I privately feel" (qtd. in Amer 667). One of the American politicians confesses the lies of the political leaders concerning Iraqi war, in front of Bush, Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, Paul Wolfowitz and others:

A dictator was removed. Reasons were offered for that removal which have proved, with hindsight, not to be justified. Weapons believed to exist turned out not to exist. A flawless military victory was compromised by sloppy Pentagon planning for peace. Practices evolved on the ground of which all decent people are bitterly ashamed. (Hare 89)

Actually, President Bush paved the way for such invasion much earlier, maybe on September 11th, 2001, when he declared war against terrorism:

Terrorism against our nation will not stand... The United States will hunt down and punish those responsible for these cowardly acts. Freedom itself was attacked this morning by a faceless coward. And freedom will be defended... We will make no distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbour them. ... I want you all to understand that we are at war, and we will stay at war until this is done. Nothing else matter. Everything is available for the pursuit of this war. Any barriers in your way, they're gone. Any money you need, you have it. This is our only agenda (Hare 95).

In fact, wars become Bush's own agenda which is gazed by the concept of "us versus them", the same traditional Orientalism but in the new form of "Free World". The West always thinks that they are superior to the East and should control them. The traditional Orientalism represented by land invasion/occupation was replaced by mental and emotional manipulation. The new colonial concept of controlling the East is best summarized by the idea of freeing them. In *Stuff Happens*, Tony Blair states: "This is not a battle between the United States of America and terrorism, but between the free and democratic world and terrorism. We stand shoulder to shoulder with our American friends. We will not rest until this evil is driven from the world." (Hare 39).

In another situation, he ensures: "The West has the right - no more than a right, a responsibility - to intervene against regimes which are committing offences against their own citizens. It's simple humanity. At some point we're all going to have to articulate a new code" (Hare 42) In a meeting with political leaders, Wolfowitz declares:

We're talking a corrupt dictatorship, run by a man who oppresses his own people and thumbs his nose at American power. We're talking about going in and establishing democracy. This is a country which is now very brittle. It will break very easily. It's sitting there, waiting to fall. This is something we can do with very little effort. For a minimum

expenditure of effort, we can get maximum result. Take out Saddam and we blow fresh air into the Middle East. (Hare 20).

For sorrow, in the name of freedom and democracy, the United States plans to control the Middle East, beginning with Iraq. Iraq is just an example, a beginning and the rest to come, perhaps!

Conclusion

Many studies have tackled the Iraqi wars, in general, and David Hare's *Stuff Happens*, in particular, from different perspectives, but none of these studies, to the best of the researchers' knowledge, has discussed it from the populist hype's view. Hence, the current study's subject broadens and expands the area of the research problem. The term populism has skyrocketed since 2017 when it has become the 'word of the year', according to *The Cambridge Dictionary*. In this context, the present paper develops two sections. The first is the theoretical part where the researchers provide different definitions and concepts of the term. Drawing on the first section, the second depicts some examples/situations from David Hare's *Stuff Happens* to direct the attention to the argument that populism is now understood as a political and analytical concept rather than as a separate political movement. The paper concludes that populism has become a phenomenon defining the current age and many ages to come.

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