

Blair says he 'can't regret' decision to back war in Iraq

George Parker

Tony Blair, the former British prime minister, says today that he "can't regret" the decision to back the war in Iraq but, in his long-awaited memoirs, he admits that he failed to imagine the horror that would follow the invasion in 2003.

Mr Blair's account of his decade as British premier,

A Journey, includes a long defence of his motives but does not include an apology, an omission that will enrage many UK critics. "I can't say sorry in words; I can only hope to redeem something from the tragedy of death, in the actions of a life, my life, that continues still," he says.

Mr Blair is far more popular in the US than in his home country and he will be in Washington today as the book is published, attending a White House dinner in his role as a Middle East peace envoy.

The book's publication came as President Barack Obama last night declared the formal end of US combat operations in Iraq. "It is not going to be a victory lap. It is not going to be self-congratulatory," he said ahead of the speech.

Mr Blair will make his first public appearance to promote the book in Britain on September 8, a book signing likely to be attended by protesters and high security.

Although Mr Blair defends the decision to invade Iraq, he writes of his "anguish" over the deaths that ensued, saying he thinks about the victims "every day of my life".

He adds: "I can say that never did I guess the nightmare that unfolded, and that too is part of the responsibility."

Mr Blair took three years to write his memoirs – using a fountain pen – a task he undertook in conjunction with his role in the Middle East, charity work and running a burgeoning and lucrative consultancy business.

His absence from the British political scene since he left Downing St in 2007 has hardly diminished the resentment felt by many in the UK, who believe he took the country to war in Iraq under false pretences.

Much of the domestic focus on the book will be on Mr Blair's account of his fraught relationship with Gordon Brown, his finance minister, who plotted for a decade to take over the reins at Number 10.

Mr Blair gets his own back on his former next-door neighbour, claiming Mr Brown lost the British election on May 6 because he "abandoned" the modernising ambition of New Labour.

Fonte: Financial Times, London, Sep.1st 2010, World, online.