



The truth, however, is that the only problem Republicans ever had with George W. Bush was his low approval rating. They always loved his policies and his governing style — and they want them back. In recent weeks, G.O.P. leaders have come out for a complete return to the Bush agenda, including tax breaks for the rich and financial deregulation.

They've even resurrected the plan to cut future Social Security benefits.

But they have a problem: how can they embrace President Bush's policies, given his record? After all, Mr. Bush's two signature initiatives were tax cuts and the invasion of Iraq; both, in the eyes of the public, were abject failures. Tax cuts never yielded the promised prosperity, but along with other policies — especially the unfunded war in Iraq — they converted a budget surplus into a persistent deficit.

Meanwhile, the W.M.D. we invaded Iraq to eliminate turned out not to exist, and by 2008 a majority of the public believed not just that the invasion was a mistake but that the Bush administration deliberately misled the nation into war. What's a Republican to do?

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