

# **Axis of Anarchy: Britain, America and The New World Order after Iraq**

Andrew Tyrie

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Andrew Tyrie has been Conservative Member of Parliament for Chichester since May 1997. His publications include *A Cautionary Tale of EMU* (Centre for Policy Studies, 1991); *The Prospects for Public Spending* (Social Market Foundation, 1996); *Reforming the Lords: a Conservative Approach* (Conservative Policy Forum, 1998); *Leviathan at Large; the new regulator for the financial markets* (with Martin McElwee, Centre for Policy Studies, 2000); *Mr Blair's Poodle: an Agenda for reviving the House of Commons* (Centre for Policy Studies, 2000); *Back from the Brink* (Parliamentary Mainstream, 2001) and *Statism by Stealth: New Labour, new collectivism* (Centre for Policy Studies 2002).

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Peter Ainsworth MP, David Goodhart, Boris Johnson MP, Mark Leonard, John Maples MP, Martin McElwee, Archie Norman MP, Lord Skidelsky and Giles Taylor for many helpful comments on an earlier draft of this paper. I would particularly like to thank Tim Youngs, and the staff at the House of Commons Library, for their customary efficiency. Mrs Ann Marsh provided first class editorial support.

## FOREWORD

Will a war in Iraq lead to a new world order, or provoke anarchy? This question has dominated political discourse and fractured traditional alliances. Andrew Tyrie's thoughtful, searching and powerful essay on the tone of western foreign policy and the post-11 September re-ordering of the world makes an important contribution to these debates. The conservative position he stakes out – arguing that both the Blair and Bush doctrines of foreign policy are potentially destabilising in the longer term whatever the outcome of a possible conflict in Iraq – is a powerful one. We are both delighted to be working in partnership on such an important topic at a time when public opinion is clearly receptive to foreign policy debate.

For the Bow Group, this publication marks a return to the Group's study of foreign policy at a timely moment. Some of the most intensive diplomatic activity for over a decade has produced an environment that questions the sustainability of some of the assumptions behind recent western foreign policy. Projecting beyond simply the immediate question of policy towards Iraq, Tyrie asks whether foreign policy can breed stability when it operates outside the bounds of consensus. He also questions how similar American and UK foreign policy really is, and whether each has sufficiently adjusted to the world of asymmetric warfare and the threat we face.

For The Foreign Policy Centre, Tyrie's pamphlet follows in a series of works that reflect on the long-term consequences of 11 September. The Centre's collection of essays on Re-ordering the World tried to map out the contours of an internationalist political project, and Iraq: a new approach (published with the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace) showed how this ideal of a world community could be reconciled with realpolitik in the West's policy towards Iraq. While Tyrie's worldview – based on the primacy of non-intervention – is very different from that put forward in our other publications, we feel that the arguments he makes need to be understood and addressed. In this regard, it sits well alongside John Lloyd's pamphlet making the case for intervention.

By working together in this way, we hope that these ideas reach the broadest possible audience, whose attention they deserve.

Giles Taylor  
The Bow Group  
[www.bowgroup.org](http://www.bowgroup.org)

Mark Leonard  
The Foreign Policy Centre  
[www.fpc.org.uk](http://www.fpc.org.uk)

*The views expressed in this pamphlet remain those of the author.*

## INTRODUCTION

“Realism can be a very good thing: it all depends whether it means the abandonment of high ideals or of foolish expectations.”

Martin Wight<sup>i</sup>

Much ink has been spilt about the threat of militant Islam to international order. Not enough attention is being paid to another - the new challenge to that order from the West, particularly from America and to some extent from Britain. If we take at face value what George Bush and Tony Blair have been saying about the need for a new global order, they are making the world a more dangerous place to live in. Let us hope they don't mean what they say.

### A NEW THREAT TO GLOBAL ORDER

We all have a huge interest in orderly relations between states. The stability of the international system has at its core a mutual recognition of the legitimacy of other states to exist, to secure their frontiers and to maintain domestic law and order. The doctrine is highly developed in international law but its origin lies in a commonsense principle: don't invade my house; I won't intrude on yours.

For much of the Cold War years the Soviet Union articulated a rhetoric which rejected this neighbourly view of the world. Their explicit ultimate moral and practical purpose was to impose their notion of justice by spreading communism throughout the world. That meant undermining other states and exporting revolutionary communism.

It was Henry Kissinger's achievement to demonstrate to the Soviet Union that they had an interest in an international order based on mutual recognition of sovereign independence, including their own. Subsequent policy-makers and their teams, particularly Ronald Reagan's, built on it. Through détente, and the increasingly sophisticated rules and agreements which accompanied it, the West engaged with the Soviet Union to the point where they had a greater interest in recognising the rights of other states to exist than they did in seeking to undermine them. The Soviet Union, tentatively at first, joined the US in becoming multilateralist.

America was the world's leading multilateralist throughout the Cold War. The US did the world a huge service, not only by playing a crucial role in maintaining regional and global order, but providing the necessary stability to enable European and Japanese recovery and by laying the foundations for

---

<sup>i</sup> *Power Politics*, Leicester University, 1978.

western prosperity. We owe the Americans a great debt. However, in recent years, and particularly since 11 September, it has been America which has been challenging the multilateralist view of the world of which they were until recently the leading advocates.

George Bush is articulating the case for a new world order. This is underpinned by two new doctrines. The first is the doctrine of regime change: the removal by force, if necessary, of the leaders of rogue states. The second is the doctrine of pre-emptive military action: the view that in the case of rogue and failed states, military action may be taken even in the absence of a clear and imminent threat from those countries to America's interests, or those of her allies.

These doctrines are inherently destabilising of international relations. The notion that a pre-emptive strike may be undertaken without clear evidence of an imminent attack undermines the most basic principle of the relations between states - that military action can generally be justified only in self-defence. The doctrine of regime change is equally corrosive. For who should decide when a country's leadership must be changed?

Sooner or later, if persisted with, the language of pre-emption and regime change will be used by other countries to justify military action with which the West profoundly disagrees or which is against western interests. Perhaps this has begun. Vladimir Putin has already rehearsed President Bush's rhetoric in a speech to justify his recent bombing of Georgia and also further repression in Chechnya. The Foreign Ministry of North Korea has recently suggested that a pre-emptive strike by them may be justifiable. Such arguments will not be lost on the Chinese or Prime Minister Sharon, among others, either.

The roots of the new doctrines pre-date George Bush's presidency and partly lie in several speeches by Madeline Albright in which she divided the world's states into four categories, two of which were rogue and failed states.<sup>ii</sup> Likewise, when Madeline Albright pounded her fist on the table during the Kosovo crisis and said: "getting rid of Milosevic is my highest personal priority. I want him gone before I'm gone", she was unmistakably calling for regime change. A succession of apparent military successes - Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan - also contributed by bolstering US confidence. Nonetheless, it is only in the speeches of President Bush and his closest advisers that the strands of the new approach have been drawn together and described by them as a doctrine.

---

<sup>ii</sup> Address and Question and Answer Session before the Council on Foreign Relations New York, New York, 30 September 1997.

The emphasis of the new doctrine varies with the policy-maker articulating it, particularly between the unilateralist and nationalist rhetoric of Donald Rumsfeld and the democratic missionary zeal of Paul Wolfowitz, but no-one reading their speeches, together with those of Condoleezza Rice and President Bush himself, can be left in any doubt that a new doctrine has emerged. Regime change is a recurring theme and pre-emption was extensively discussed in last September's National Security strategy paper.<sup>iii</sup>

And what about Prime Minister Blair's view of the world? He has a new world order of his own in mind. It is at odds with most British post-war foreign policy and also with George Bush's world view. The Prime Minister has told us that he wants much greater intervention around the world to impose our notion of justice and freedom. For him globalisation means that anyone's internal conflict may affect everybody and therefore that interference may be justified in the affairs of other states, even military intervention in the internal affairs of other states. The first exposition of what one might call the Blair doctrine was delivered in a speech in an effort to justify intervention during the Kosovo crisis.<sup>iv</sup> A little over a year ago Mr Blair took his doctrine further and gave it a messianic flavour:

"This is a fight for freedom. And I want to make it a fight for justice too . . . justice to bring those same values of democracy and freedom to people around the world. . . . the economic and social freedom to develop their potential to the full . . . the starving, the wretched, the dispossessed, the ignorant, those living in wanton squalor, from the deserts of North Africa to the slums of Gaza, to the mountain ranges of Afghanistan: they are our cause. . . . The kaleidoscope [of the international order] has been shaken. The pieces are in flux . . . Before they [settle] let us reorder this world around us."<sup>v</sup>

That new international order is to be an order based on our values, secured by western economic, diplomatic and, in some cases, military strength. Mr Blair is saying, "Either adopt western values or we may be round to see you." – he is saying that we carry sticks as well as carrots. This is dangerous talk. In the contest between values in the world the West should not be neutral. Where broad based international support can be assembled there is a strong case for humanitarian intervention. But in cases where it cannot, if the West goes beyond persuasion and tries to reconstruct a new world order in its image, many countries in Africa, the Middle East and elsewhere around the world that do not share our values will feel threatened. Worse still, a smaller group of stronger countries will see an opportunity in the new policy to justify

---

<sup>iii</sup> *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, 17 September 2002.

<sup>iv</sup> Speech to the Chicago Economic Club, 22 April 1999.

<sup>v</sup> Speech to the Labour Party Conference, Brighton, 2 October 2001

action in the name of their own values, just as they already do in George Bush's unilateralism. If we continue to take unilateral military action in the name of western values, we will be treading the path not towards a new international order, but a new international anarchy. Shaking the kaleidoscope further, in the name of western values, will destabilise weaker countries who do not share our values and provide the opportunity for strong countries to justify actions we would otherwise condemn.

Of course, the Prime Minister would try to argue that his foreign policy and America's are one and the same, but they are very different. The Prime Minister's new world order is internationalist, almost messianic, and draws on the rhetoric of human rights; America's is implicitly unilateralist and designed to facilitate the expression of US power. Both are at odds with the multilateralist view of the world espoused by most western countries for the past half a century, led by the US.

## **NO MORE THAN RHETORIC?**

There are two main objections to my concerns about the Blair, and particularly the Bush doctrines. The first - it may be objected - is that the rhetoric is just that and no more. Whatever the language the West's actions are still in practice based on the solid ground of international law and they reinforce international order. The second is the opposite of this view, that we are in uncharted territory with one new hyper-power and that a new international order built by it can both enhance our security and spread western values to most of the globe. Security and values can march happily together.

There is some evidence to support the first view. One could interpret the new doctrines as no more than rhetoric designed to bolster western and particularly US domestic opinion for military action which otherwise would be difficult to mobilise. This could help explain the contradictions between the Bush and Blair rhetoric: each is designed for its own market. George Bush's apparent unilateralist militarism reflects the enormous impact of 11 September on US public opinion. Tony Blair's messianic rhetoric is a response to greater hesitancy in British public opinion and especially in the parliamentary Labour Party about military action. Originally conceived to justify action over the Kosovo crisis, Mr Blair hopes to mobilise support in his own party against Saddam by rehearsing the same language of moral indignation that he deployed against Milosevic. With any luck, so the argument might go, other countries, with whom we must continue to do diplomatic business will understand that the Prime Minister's universalist interventionist rhetoric is only for domestic consumption. In which case the damage to international order wrought by it will be small. Likewise, so the argument goes, the rest of the international community should take account

of the transformation of domestic US attitudes as a consequence of 11 September, and interpret the President's rhetoric primarily as a means of managing it.

Evidence that there has been a gap between rhetoric and policy was provided by the international coalition which the West tried to build after 11 September. The West initially tried to work with states such as Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Pakistan, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Malaysia, China, Egypt and even Iran, whose human rights records are poor and whose regimes, in some cases, we find utterly repugnant. In doing so we were participating in a coalition of the current international order, not some putative one. We were putting the suppression of terrorism ahead of the imposition of any new world order.

Whatever the rhetoric, the immediate post-11 September diplomacy could be seen as coalition-building to uphold international legitimacy - the legitimacy that derives from the notion that only states have the right to use force in international society and the principle that states should not interfere in other states' affairs. The coalition's target was the terrorists, the revolutionaries and outlaws of international society, not states. Only if states harboured outlaws would they become targets.

Likewise, the West's military intervention in Afghanistan in the wake of 11 September, led by the Americans, did not need explanation by reference to a new doctrine. It was justifiable on grounds of customary international law as well as the self-defence provisions of the UN Charter,<sup>vi</sup> backed by two UN resolutions: America had been attacked, a major source of that attack lay with al-Qaida in Afghanistan and therefore America was justified in taking action to defend itself by responding against the regime which had harboured the terrorists.

The fact that the explanatory rhetoric – in President Bush's case an early outing for his rogue and failed states doctrine; in Prime Minister Blair's case much talk of the Taliban's atrocious human rights record – was not the main motive for military action may not matter so much. The important point is that legitimate action was taken in an effort to suppress a very real terrorist threat.

Iraq is another matter. There is less scope for ambiguity. If the West sticks at arguing that we are threatening military action because Iraq has been in breach of UN resolutions passed after the Gulf War a decade ago, such action could be justified on the grounds that it strengthened respect for international order. But what if we go beyond that? What if the West seeks to justify military action on pre-emptive grounds – arguing that military action is

---

<sup>vi</sup> Article 51.



necessary even though we cannot provide strong evidence of a threat to the West's interests? Or what if we seek to justify military action on the ground that Saddam's regime is abhorrent and should be changed?

These latter two arguments erode global stability. The same arguments will become the common currency of other countries to justify actions we abhor. The gap between the Blair and the Bush rhetoric, still blurred in the Afghan case, is also much clearer over Iraq. Prime Minister Blair is emphasising that his government is partly on a humanitarian crusade. He publishes details of Saddam's human rights abuses, even as part of dossiers billed as cataloguing weapons of mass destruction.<sup>vii</sup> George Bush, meanwhile, and particularly his advisers, are suggesting that their explicit purpose is to reorder the political landscape of the whole of the Middle East – a stark threat to 30 odd states there. Nonetheless, even in the Iraq case, some scope for ambiguity remains. It cannot be unequivocally stated that the US has discarded the existing order, at least not yet. It is true that the US has repeatedly said that it will act unilaterally whatever the UN says – summed up in the oft-repeated Bush/Rumsfeld phrase, a “coalition of the willing”. Nor did the Bush administration emphasise non-compliance with Resolution 687 as part of its new-found resolve to tackle Saddam. Regime change was to the fore.

Yet the practice has not so far matched the rhetoric. The US - perhaps partly as a consequence of British persuasion, for which the Prime Minister may turn out to deserve much praise - has been operating largely through the UN. Resolution 1441 was the result. It papered over the cracks, not just of conflicting views in the Security Council, but also in the US administration and the Washington foreign policy elite about the most appropriate action to take against Iraq. The test - whether the US is prepared to act unilaterally or whether it has now bound itself into a multilateral process - is yet to come.

## **A NEW WORLD ORDER FOR A NEW HYPER-POWER?**

A second riposte to the view that the US is putting our security at risk by articulating a new international order is the opposite of the first - not that US and UK rhetoric disguises a well-trying and reliable foreign policy but that it provides an intelligent and radical response to changed global circumstances. The argument goes that, since the end of the Cold War the US has been in an unprecedentedly powerful position. There is now one hyper-power; the bi-polar or multi-polar worlds have gone. A new policy is needed and America is providing it.

---

<sup>vii</sup> *Iraq's Weapons of Mass Destruction: The Assessment of the British Government*, 24 September 2002.

The argument runs that a historic opportunity is available to the US to seize the moment and spread democracy throughout the world. The Middle East, the source of much instability and terrorism since the Second World War, is a good place to start. Behind the unilateralist rhetoric also lies a noble, if hopeful assumption: a more democratic world would also be more prosperous and more peaceful. Democracy restrains leaders' bellicosity. Prosperity grows with peace and contact with western economic ideas. As peoples' economic stakes in society increase so does the amount put at risk by war. Democracy is therefore a brake on militarism.

It is argued that the main effect of 11 September on US foreign policy was to end an internal US debate about whether isolationism – always a strong strand in domestic opinion and strongly articulated from time to time on Capitol Hill – could resume the ascendancy in foreign policy thinking it had enjoyed between the wars. By this argument the internationalists won out in Washington. But it has been at the expense of multilateralism, and rightly so.

It is held that the new doctrines, and the massive projection of US military and diplomatic power implied by them, will make the world a safer and more prosperous place for all of us. We can all benefit from the beneficence of a democratic hyper-power. Why, some policy makers may complain in their Washington offices, is much of the rest of the democratic world so reluctant to help? The US will even do most of the work. Surely, they argue, a US dominated empire in the Middle East and a European dominated sub-Saharan Africa will be better for their peoples, more stable and more peaceful than present arrangements. Some of the new policy's strongest advocates in Washington resent European diffidence: only cynicism, jealousy, hints of timidity bordering on appeasement, and a lack of imagination in an old world scarred by centuries of war, prevent the countries of Europe from embracing the new order.<sup>viii</sup>

There are many problems with this view, both practical and philosophical. It is worth examining at least three. By far the most important is that America is not powerful enough. Nor are her values shared by a sufficient number of other countries. The underlying premise about the relationship between democracy, peace and prosperity is also at best questionable.

America and the West will not be able to prevent other states flexing their muscles. Preponderant though the US is, she is not strong enough to impose her will, nor impose her values on the whole globe. It is true that the US can project power in an unprecedented manner and that her preponderance is greater than that of any other country in history in relation to its nearest rival.

---

<sup>viii</sup> Donald Rumsfeld's remarks at the recent NATO meeting reflect this mood. See 'France and Germany Round on Rumsfeld', *Financial Times*, 24 January 2003.

Reflecting this, at times the rhetoric of the most hawkish in the US administration seems to indicate a bid for ‘total security’ – a bid to ensure that no other country can hurt America or her interests.

Attempting this will prove to be a dangerous delusion. The US’s ability to project power is heavily constrained. The existence of nuclear weapons creates a form of equality of threat among the possessors which limits the ultimate expression of power – the annexation, imposition of suzerainty or coercion of other countries. If Saddam Hussein had a nuclear weapons capability, and a delivery mechanism able to hit a number of US cities, or those of her allies, US policy towards Iraq would be very different. The disparity of treatment of North Korea and Iraq illustrates the point. North Korea, although categorised by Washington as a rogue state, is being treated much more gingerly than Iraq. No massive US build up is attending the far more roguish behaviour by North Korea over the past decade than anything yet proven to have been perpetrated by Saddam. This has been noticed by others: the Iranian leadership was recently reported as saying that the lesson of different treatment of Iraq and North Korea was to acquire a nuclear weapons capacity. The presentational consequences of the disparity are also serious. As a senior US diplomat is reported as saying “We will be facing considerable scepticism on the question of how we can justify confrontation with Saddam when he is letting inspectors into the country, and a diplomatic solution with Kim when he’s just thrown them out”.<sup>ix</sup>

It is clear to the international community that the main reason for such inconsistent treatment is the fact that one is a nuclear power and the other is only an aspirant. As a result a strong and dangerous signal is inadvertently being sent to non nuclear powers, especially dictatorships, that a means of avoiding coercion is to acquire such weapons. It is very important to try to prevent Iraq, or other countries, from obtaining nuclear weapons. But, until there is clearer evidence that Iraq is close to obtaining them, the kind of military coercion being exercised over Iraq at the moment may precipitate a protective proliferation from small states.

Another major constraint on the projection of US power is the response it may provoke from those who fear they may have US and western values imposed on them. Some, particularly in the Islamic world, believe that their values are under threat from America. Such reactions and beliefs are the seed-bed of militant Islam. This is why, far from reducing the threat of terrorism, military action in Iraq may cause an increase in Islamic inspired terrorist activity.

---

<sup>ix</sup> Quoted in the *Sunday Telegraph*, 5 January 2003.

The conflict of values between militant Islam and the West cannot be won militarily. As many others have observed, it will be determined in the battle for the hearts and minds of moderate Moslem opinion, among our own Moslems in the West as well as in the Middle East and beyond. Nor is it likely that the battle to quell support by so-called 'rogue states' can be won purely militarily, either, although force can play a role. Where states articulate a universalist ideology as a justification for their actions, as the Soviet Union did for half a century, the best prospect for peace often lies more with persuading them of the benefits of participation in international society, buttressed by military containment of them, than by threatening their regimes with extinction.

International society today is not sustained by a highly developed common culture as was the almost entirely Christian European society of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries.<sup>x</sup> The most powerful glue of the looser and more global international society of today is the primordial desire of most states to survive, reflected in their need for mutual recognition and the consolidation of their sovereign independence. This is particularly true of 150 of the world's countries that have been in existence for only a few decades. Shaking that kaleidoscope by force will create a climate favourable to terrorism, especially so if done in the name of 'alien' western values.

Despite appearances to the contrary, America remains dependent, as all previous super powers have been, on the maintenance and management of regional balances of power. She cannot fully protect her ally Israel from the threat of attack from other states in the region. Nor can she fully protect Japan from a military threat from North Korea or China. America must balance forces, construct alliances and weigh interests, as super powers have always done.

America rightly castigates squeamishness in much of European culture about the use of force. The semi-neutrality of a number of West European states is an abdication of responsibility. Yet the self-imposed restraint of the Europeans, which derives from the still lingering trauma of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, is not unique to them. It has a counterpart in the United States - a residual reluctance, post Vietnam, to take casualties. Perhaps 11 September assuaged it somewhat. While it remains it is a further severe practical restraint on the projection of US power for which the encouragement of allies and the use of proxies are an inadequate substitute.

Underlying much of the rhetoric of the new Bush doctrines is another fundamental misconception, that western values, and particularly western democratic values, are inherently peaceful and that a fully democratic world

---

<sup>x</sup> See Headley Bull & A Watson, eds. *The Expansion of international society* (Oxford:Clarendon Press), 1984.

would abjure war. One senses that, not far away in some American policy makers' minds is the thought that if only "everyone was like us" there would be peace in the world. As Professor Adam Roberts has pointed out: "similar ethnocentric fantasies have informed Islamic, communist and other beguiling visions of world peace. All such fantasies can lead only too easily to attempts to impose the favoured system on benighted foreigners by force – regardless of the circumstances and sensibilities that made the undertaking hazardous." The notion that populist jingoism and democratically expressed nationalist resentments often cause and inflame wars seems to elude those who cling to such misconceptions.<sup>xi</sup>

Power politics is not absent between democracies, even mature ones. Democracies all over the world have found a readiness to fight at various times, often imposing their will on smaller countries. Arguably it is more difficult to sustain a long war in a democracy but it is unlikely to be less difficult to start one.

## **A MORE SECURE FOREIGN POLICY FOR THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY**

The US is in danger of overreaching itself. Iraq may mark that point; it could come later. Out of a curious mixture of a new vulnerability and a complacent and misplaced sense of supremacy a dangerous American foreign policy is being forged, and a more reliable and orderly foreign policy discarded. The awkward truth is that an overreaction in the US to 11 September may be responsible. Several things now need to be done.

The West, led by America, needs to return to a policy which recognises the paramouncy of stability and order in international society. This piece began by arguing that the new doctrines of Messrs Bush and Blair were making the world a less safe place. Other states are watching and listening; where the President and the Prime Minister lead others will follow. A world in which states can use pre-emptive action, can change the regimes of their neighbours and espouse a rhetoric to justify intervention in support of their value systems (whether Judaeo Christian, Islamic, Communist or whatever) will be a much more unstable place.

Order in international society is a value. The bedrock of order is the doctrine of non-interference and both President Bush's doctrines and Blairite salvationist rhetoric are threats to it. Pre-emption should not be used to justify the threat or use of force by the West in the absence of clear evidence of imminent aggression. The doctrine of regime change should not be used to

---

<sup>xi</sup> For an examination of both sides of this debate see *Liberal Peace, Liberal War*, John M Owen, Cornell University Press and Adam Roberts' review in *The Times Literary Supplement*, 6 November 1998.

justify military intervention, whether for humanitarian or other purposes, in the absence of broad-based support from the international community. This often, but not always, means the UN.

It is a sobering thought that the rhetoric of the past 18 months is bringing about a need for the West to restate that most elementary principle of international society – we will respect the integrity of other states as long as they do the same. This principle of co-existence implies the acceptance of basic rules of international behaviour – respect for the territorial integrity of other states, respect for international law and for boundaries to the legitimate use of force. These rules reflect the essential common interests which bind together a society of states.

The West has a huge interest in maximizing respect for such rules and mobilising consent for the existing international order implied by them. Where possible, we should seek to encourage compliance with international law through the United Nations. Of course, there will be exceptions. No state can afford to rely on the UN for approbation before taking action to defend itself from an imminent threat. The UN does not have a veto on the doctrine of self-help but respect for that doctrine requires any response to be proportionate.

Once a more stable framework - and one which gives greater scope for mobilising support from the whole of the international community - has been put at the heart of policy the priorities for western security can more effectively be addressed. At least three deserve a mention: the immediate threat from terrorism; the longer run dangers of nuclear proliferation; the global clash of value systems.

First, the growth of global terrorism is the clearest challenge to international order at the moment. It may turn out to be more pervasive and violent than any terrorist threat that we have seen in the past. The broadest possible coalition needs to be assembled against it, which will include many states whose values we do not share. The more that non-state violence is outlawed the more our security will be enhanced.

We need to be mindful that terrorism's very purpose is to destabilise and destroy international order. To achieve it all terrorists, and certainly bin Laden, depend upon an overreaction from their more powerful victims. Our security in the years ahead will depend on the extent to which we can build the widest possible coalition in the globe against the threat of non state violence represented by terrorists and against states who harbour them.

In the campaign against terrorism, on the evidence provided by our governments, Iraq is simply not our highest priority. Despite strenuous efforts to find one, no connection has been discovered between al-Qaida and Iraq.

Indeed, there is extreme mutual antipathy between secular Iraq and militant Islam – if bin Laden had set foot in Baghdad he would most likely have been shot. Nor, as far as we have been told, have extensive links recently been found between the Iraqi regime and other terrorists, excepting Palestine, in which to some degree most countries of the Middle East could be construed as complicit.

The Palestinian conflict, not Iraq, is the greatest threat and source of instability to western interests in the Middle East, and probably the greatest inspiration for international terrorism. It is to the resolution of that problem that the US should be directing all its diplomatic efforts if it wishes to bear down on anti-western terrorism emanating from the Middle East.

Second, the West's long-term focus needs to be on the greatest single threat to the security of the world – the proliferation of nuclear weapons. The larger the number of nuclear players the greater the risk of miscalculation by the authorities capable of making nuclear war, the greater the risk of accidental war and the greater the risk of such weapons falling into the hands of non-state actors. Much has already been done by the West to limit proliferation, especially after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Nonetheless, the enhanced security and prestige afforded by possession of nuclear weapons creates a huge incentive for some states to acquire them and suggests that any attempt to freeze the nuclear club at its existing membership is unlikely to be successful.

It is true that in most respects we have moved from a bi-polar world to a world of one hyper-power but the spread of nuclear weapons and the increasing likelihood of access to its technology, particularly to deliver such weapons over longer distances, creates a multi polarity of nuclear threat. It also fosters the growth of regional nuclear balances of power, posing a profound challenge to the international community. The Cold War may have ended but we are still in the age of nuclear deterrence.

It will not be easy to prevent further proliferation. There are limits to the extent to which aspirants in a nuclear club can be coerced into abandoning their projects, as the spread of a nuclear capability to the Indian subcontinent has recently illustrated. A surgical strike, such as that which retarded the Iraqi nuclear programme in 1981 and which preserved Israel's regional nuclear monopoly, was not a serious western option with respect to India and Pakistan. Such action may be appropriate in Iraq but, as yet, the evidence that the Iraqi regime is on the threshold of a nuclear capacity has not been forthcoming. Other methods of preventing the spread will also be less than watertight. Neither attempts physically to restrict the export of the technology, scientists or fissile material, nor economic bribery will be enough to

counterweigh the geo-strategic benefits that motivate some aspirant nuclear powers.

In addition to the above the West needs a foreign policy which can assuage the perceived need of some countries to obtain such weapons. The more that western policy can enhance the security and sense of sovereign independence of some of these countries the more likely it is that they will seek to play a role in and benefit from engagement in the international community, reducing their incentive to obtain the technology. As already pointed out, the coercion implied by America's new doctrines may push some countries in the other direction, encouraging proliferation as a source of protection from threats.

Furthermore, to the extent that American unilateralism over Iraq creates fissures between the existing nuclear powers it will also increase the risk of proliferation. For it is an uncomfortable fact that most of the smaller nuclear states obtained their capacity, not entirely by their independent efforts, but with covert support from Security Council members, for example China's from the USSR; Israel's partly from France.<sup>xii</sup>

Third, the 'clash of global values' needs much more careful management. Other states should be reassured that they will not be attacked nor their regimes undermined, for failure to conform to western values. Persuasion, not threats of coercion, will be the tool used to convince other states of the rectitude of democratic structures and of the benefits of free enterprise society. Only just over a decade ago half a continent embraced western values and shrugged off communism, not primarily as a consequence of a military threat but as a result of a victory at the level of ideas. A number of states, in the dock for their human rights record, are noticing that the US's attachment to individual freedom is being compromised by the denial of access of al-Qaida suspects, held in Guantanamo Bay and elsewhere, to any judicial process and by allegations that a number of them may even have been removed to countries so that they can be tortured. To the extent that these allegations are substantiated they will undermine the credibility of the values that the West is seeking to export.

Furthermore, once the case for humanitarian intervention has been widely proclaimed, as it was by the Prime Minister over Afghanistan, it is important to make every effort to deliver on our promises. A British presence reduced to three hundred soldiers in Kabul, and a country largely controlled by tribal warlords scarcely more respectful of human rights than the Taliban, is not

---

<sup>xii</sup> For more detail on WMD capabilities and the provenance of the nuclear capacity of several states, see the Federation of American Scientists web site at <http://www.fas.org/nuke/guide/index.html>.



consistent with the Prime Minister's nation-building rhetoric at the time of the invasion, nor with his emotive promise that 'this time we [the West] will not walk away'.<sup>xiii</sup> All the same, such glaring anomalies are more relevant for UK domestic opinion than they are corrosive of western foreign policy. The Blair doctrine's strategic significance will count for little unless it infects US policy-makers and, as already pointed out, the two are intellectually incompatible. By far the greater threat to our long-term security comes from the Bush doctrine.

Much of the strategy advocated in this paper - largely the strategy of successive US Presidencies since the war - is antithetical to the new foreign policy espoused by parts of the US administration. The new policy could stimulate, rather than suppress terrorism. The crucial distinction, of great value for order in international society, between state and non-state violence is not sufficiently drawn. Proliferation may be inadvertently encouraged. The castigation of countries which do not share western values may be seen by some on the receiving end as cultural imperialism and will render the policy of persuasion and engagement suggested here more difficult.

How might the approach outlined inform policy towards Iraq? On the evidence in the public domain at the moment, the impending war against Iraq appears to be disproportionate to the threat.<sup>xiv</sup> To the extent that this view is sustained it will weaken respect for international law and international order. In the early stages of the current Iraq crisis it appeared that the US administration was not attentive to the legal case for action and dismissive of the United Nations' role. The US's subsequent return to Resolution 687 has not fully expunged that impression.

The case against the pre-11 September policy of containment has not been made – an imminent threat has not been demonstrated. In its absence the risks to western interests attending military action become particularly important in assessing the overall costs and benefits of military action.

It is worth considering the likely effects of an invasion by reference to the three challenges for western policy just enumerated: terrorism, nuclear proliferation and the contest of values. It is by no means clear that military action furthers western policy on any of these. Islamic terrorism may be provoked more than it is suppressed. Some states may perceive a need or opportunity for protective proliferation; western values may be perceived as a

---

<sup>xiii</sup> The Prime Minister used similar language a number of times. See *Hansard* 14 November 2001, col 864.

<sup>xiv</sup> On proportionality see Yoram Dinstein, *War, Aggression and Self-Defence* (Third Edition), Cambridge University Press, 2001, pp 208-212.

threat, making it more difficult to persuade some states of the benefits of participation in the international community.

Nor has the argumentation adequately distinguished between different types of threat. It is disingenuous to seek to roll together chemical, biological and nuclear weapons into the single 'omnibus' of weapons of mass destruction. The threat from nuclear proliferation is of an altogether greater magnitude than the other two. Nor is the logic of weapons of mass destruction even-handedly deployed – it is widely reported that, for example, Israel, Syria and Egypt have chemical and biological weapons, yet they are being recruited as part of the alliance against Iraq. Nor is it yet clear what 'regime change' means with respect to Iraq. Initially, it was held to require the expulsion of Saddam. For a few weeks late last year it was clarified by the State Department that the removal of weapons of mass destruction constituted regime change, even if Saddam remained in power. Recently, regime change appears to be reverting to its original meaning - Saddam must go.<sup>xv</sup>

It is in the interests of all leaderships, and particularly those of democracies, that military action should command a measure of popular support, both within countries and between those in alliance. It therefore weakens our security that western domestic opinion, in Europe and the US, can conclude from the failure to win the argument over Iraq that the US has ulterior motives. Some now believe, probably wrongly, that the real motive for US foreign policy is oil. Others, more plausibly, sense that it is at least partly 'unfinished business' from the last Gulf War, inspired by a small group of the President's closest advisers.

Throughout America's century of global ascendancy she has been a source of global conservatism, recognising the value of order in international society and mindful of the risks to it, and to the West, inherent in the projection of power. Some might say too much so, particularly for most of the first half of the last century.

The US foreign policy and academic establishment has tested the post war policy consensus many times. There have been strong calls for isolationism, particularly from Capitol Hill and, in the late 1940s, for the unilateral deployment of nuclear power. Briefly in 1954 the US appeared to discard containment for John Foster Dulles's doctrine of 'massive retaliation'. Global Salvationists, human rights theorists and Wilsonian utopians have all done their best to shake the consensus. President Bush's presidency is not the first to be influenced by those making the case for a new international order but

---

<sup>xv</sup> The Foreign Secretary has not always been abreast of the latest interpretation. See *Hansard* 7 November 2002, cols 440 and 451.

he is the first, at least for any length of time, to place a new order at the centre of policy making.

America's restraint has been an exception to a characteristic of dominant powers. Many of them justified the exercise of their might by recourse to revolutionary doctrines: revolutionary France in the Napoleonic Wars and Soviet Russia being two salient examples. As an Atlanticist I do not doubt that America's heart is in the right place. Their open society values are ours and not comparable to Napoleon's dictatorship or communism's totalitarianism. Yet it is doubtful whether America realises how unsettling her new rhetoric sounds to the international community.

We must try to convince the US administration that pre-emptive military intervention and regime change can never become accepted doctrines of the international community. They are inherently revolutionary in scope, even if inspired by – to western eyes – benign objectives. The rhetoric alone, even if not matched by action, is destabilising. In the absence of solidarity in the international community about their implementation they amount to a breach of the contract of coexistence between states. These doctrines will always be seen to be the policy of the strong, resented by the weak and exploited by those who can get away with it.

As America's oldest ally, and as one of the few countries in the world willing and able to deploy power, the British government should be playing a leading role in encouraging the United States to find safer ground on which to construct its contribution to global order. The leadership we need now from the Prime Minister is not merely that of interlocutor between the US and a few churlish, and instinctively anti-American, European governments. It is the leadership of a sustained diplomatic initiative to bring the US back to the fundamental principles of international relations which have informed US foreign policy since the war. The Iraq crisis and a likely war may or may not lead to unintended and unpleasant consequences for the West. There are too many imponderables to judge. Ultimately, the West should and probably will unite behind the US because, even if the majority of leaders disagree with the policy, the damage to the Atlantic Alliance of doing otherwise could be too great. But that will not be the end of the matter. Far more serious than any immediate consequences will be the repercussions in the international community of America's doctrinal justification for policy.

## OTHER PUBLICATIONS FROM THE FOREIGN POLICY CENTRE

### **IRAQ: THE CASE FOR INTERVENTION**

By John Lloyd

John Lloyd argues that it is important to back up an interventionist rule-based vision for foreign policy with political will and military capabilities. He argues that there is a genuine resolve for a new world order and conservative attachments to the status quo will be counter-productive and lead to instability.

### **IRAQ: A NEW APPROACH**

Carnegie Endowment for International Peace with The Foreign Policy Centre.

### **REORDERING THE WORLD: The Long-Term Implications of 11 September**

By Mark Leonard (ed.), Ehud Barak, Ulrich Beck, Tony Blair, Fernando Cardoso, Malcolm Chalmers, Robert Cooper, Fred Halliday, David Held, Mary Kaldor, Kanan Makiya, Joseph Nye, Amartya Sen, Jack Straw and Fareed Zakaria.

**Details of The Foreign Policy Centre's previous publications can be found at [www.fpc.org.uk](http://www.fpc.org.uk). Alternatively, they can be ordered from Central Books on 0845 458 9910.**

## **BOW GROUP RESEARCH**

### ***Ending Road Rationing: Refining the Transport Market***

*By Mark Nicholson & Mark Wheatley – March 2003*

Looking at the tough decisions required to resolve the UK's growing transport dilemma, the paper argues for an end to the government monopoly on transport infrastructure development and a fresh look at taxation.

### ***Labour's corrosive 'dumbing down' of education***

*By Rt. Hon. Iain Duncan Smith MP*

A keynote speech given at The Bow Group's Annual Dinner on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2003, developing the themes of Conservative education policy.

### ***The Ideas Book for London***

*Edited by Giles Taylor*

As the Group's major publication from Autumn 2002, *The Ideas Book for London* tackles issues in punchy fashion, the book sets out innovative ideas for London's second Mayor.

**The Bow Group now posts all policy papers and policy briefs on its website, [www.bowgroup.org](http://www.bowgroup.org). Please contact The Bow Group, 1A Heath Hurst Road, London NW3 2RU to order hard copies.**