

# Iraq and World Order

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## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

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## INTRODUCTION

The war on terror has opened up new era in world affairs: but the outlines of the new are hazy. There is not just no new order: there is no agreement on what the order should be, or even if it is possible, or desirable.

But an attempt to construct a new order will have to be made. And it will have to be made at the same time as the confrontation with Iraq is the order of the day: for only if some new general principles can be glimpsed through the tumult which surrounds the particular case will there be longer term assent to a global system which might function justly. It is argued here that the scepticism and cynicism which fuels opposition to any intervention in Iraq is overdone, sometimes grossly so: but some scepticism as to war aims, as well as the never-redundant inquiry as to who benefits, is bound to be expressed and has to be answered.

Most of all, the doubt as to whether a confrontation with Iraq – even if necessary – is no more than a one-off operation with no larger structure of future world relationships in mind must be answered. The largest failure on the part of those states which argue for a last-resort invasion of Iraq – the US and the UK in the lead – would be to recoil from at least a sketch of the architecture they wish to have put in place beyond the struggle with Iraq, however it may go.

There can, however, be no return to the old verities. The international scene is too dynamic and troubled for a reassertion of national sovereignty, or of unilateralism on the part of any state, or of a multilateralism which achieves only stasis. The mix of challenges, dangers and outright horrors now presenting themselves demands new thinking and a willingness for radicalism: conservatism, whether on the part of governments or of electorates, is probably the most dangerous posture there is.

What follows argues a case for intervention in Iraq not based on the narrow arguments from self-defence which are most frequently put forward, but on the broader need for an international architecture capable of bearing the strains placed on it in the modern era. To begin with, it argues that a conservative approach to international affairs is no longer appropriate, because of the challenges that have emerged, or at least become clear, since the end of the partial stability of the Cold War. Firstly, the end of the Cold War both removed the disciplining structures of a binary confrontation and let loose an arsenal of deadly weapons and knowledge of how to make them – just at the time when advances in electronics, biology and chemistry were making weaponry more powerful and more portable. Secondly, the ending of superpower rivalry also removed much of the support which very poor states, especially in Africa, had enjoyed: and this hastened the collapse

of the weakest of these, a collapse which carries profound security threats. Within the former Soviet Union itself, states were created from former republics which had neither the experience, nor the elites, nor the resources to succeed, at least in the short term – and some of these remain in a semi-collapsed state. Thirdly, the growth of a desire to construct a new order on humanitarian and democratic/civil rights grounds was made possible by the unfreezing of the Cold War, and set a new paradigm for judging the actions, and inactions, of the major states. And finally, the emergence of the US as an unchallenged superpower for the foreseeable future presents a challenge to all – the US itself, its allies, the other major states of the world – to seek to turn that power towards the construction and support of an order in which all can have a stake.

The core of the case deployed here is that there will be a war in Iraq, as the American administration has made clear, but that the central question surrounding that war remains to be answered. That intervention will be judged on whether it is a one-off example designed to assure American imperial interests, or whether it is a police action fought in defence of a world order based on democracy and human rights. It is vital that it should be the latter, and in order to bring that about the Left must recognise the urgency of the case in Iraq and support intervention, but also recognise the urgency of the need for a broader framework on which to base international order and seek to bring that into being.

## **IRAQ, THE USA, AND THE PROGRESSIVE AGENDA**

Iraq offers difficulties and dangers enough to be on the top of any list of threats to the security of its neighbours and to the wider world. The roll-call of Iraqi sins is well known, and the multiple angles from which they have been presented have simply added to public cynicism, to the sense that Iraq is an intervention in search of a justification. It has without pretext invaded a neighbour, Kuwait: it developed biological and chemical weapons, and used the latter against its own population; it has sought, and is probably still seeking, to develop nuclear weaponry. The Ba’ath party which rules the state uses imprisonment, torture and murder in order to back a regime as totalitarian as any in the world.

But beyond these points, there is a more fundamental case for war in Iraq: that its defiance of the international community threatens to scotch a nascent world order. In 1991, it was forced to agree to a series of resolutions, imposed by the UN Security Council, as a condition of ending the hostilities it provoked by its invasion of Kuwait. It has consistently ignored these, and in the nineties managed, with the assistance of members of the UN Security Council who wished to loosen sanctions, to end any weapons inspections. Today, after the re-imposition of a pro-active inspection regime backed by

threat of war, it has still not accounted for the chemical and biological weaponry that the inspectorate has known for four years it has, nor has it accepted that it must surrender its long-range missiles, nor has it allowed its scientists to freely talk to the inspectors. In the words of the statement by European leaders in Brussels on 18 February, "it continues to flout the will of the international community."

Iraq is not, for all that, a perfect case for the exercise of international force. No case is. North Korea, which may be a greater danger, cannot be confronted because of its possession of nuclear weaponry and its presumed willingness to use it *in extremis*: an excellent case for confronting Iraq before it is in the same position. Iraq was once supported by the main Western states, because Iran – with which it was in conflict in the eighties – was presumed to be a greater danger to Western interests: the charge of hypocrisy and double standards is easily made. An invasion of Iraq is as easily represented, by the swelling protest demonstrations against war, as an excuse to grab its large oil reserves, or as an opportunity for spreading 'US imperialism', or as a chance to de-fang an enemy of an Israeli state which the US protects but which (so the story goes) is itself the main source of Middle Eastern instability. This is not the place to refute propositions which (in my view) have little substance: the point is that they, together with a widespread dislike of initiating a war which will have many casualties, have fuelled a popular revulsion with which politicians have to deal.

If Iraq is not a perfect object for establishing order, the Bush administration is not a perfect subject. It came to power breathing unilateralist fumes: expressing a contempt for many of the entanglements which Europeans and others had come to see as necessary to the construction of a law-governed world. Suspicions of the Bush administration have not been confined to the Left: but, given the sharply ideological style of many of the cabinet's members and their advisors, the Left has expressed its opposition most vocally. Since George W Bush's contested victory over two years ago, the White House has been seen by many on the Left as packed with reactionary representatives of business (mainly oil) interests, uninterested in the multilateral institutions and projects to which the European Union states had increasingly committed themselves – in particular, the Kyoto Protocol on global warming and the development of an International Criminal Court. The Bush group saw intervention, and many multilateral projects, as "foreign affairs as social work", dismissing in that phrase the on/off stabs at global governance via intervention that President Clinton made during the nineties. The Bush administration seemed to wish, as far as possible, to assert a strong national-interest doctrine in US foreign policy – one best symbolised by the rapid development of a missile defence system which would seek to make the country invulnerable to attack.

One should be wary of caricature. The missile defence system had, after all, been a bipartisan position, and America's drift towards distrust of the UN, of the EU and of multilateral treaties went on while President Clinton was in office, and constrained his actions. There has, in fact, been much caricaturing of the present administration, and of the populist-conservative-evangelical style President Bush has affected. This is an age of caricature, where the boundaries between fictional, satirical and realist accounts of, above all, the actions of power tend to dissolve. But even allowing for distortion, there has been a large gulf between European policies and attitudes, broadly defined, and those of the new Republican administration. At root, that administration seemed unable or unwilling to acknowledge that US interests themselves demanded both multilateral engagements and consensual diplomacy: that though dominant in military weaponry, it needed willing allies to broker deals and ensure security; that though the most important economy, it was increasingly enmeshed in trading patterns and investment flows which were global and which required global regulation; and that though culturally powerful, it had to respect and encourage a diverse and argumentative world, or it would be seen as an oppressive hegemon.

Nor can it be pretended that the US' drive to war is wholly motivated by concern for the Iraqi people: no nation, contemplating such a project as invasion, is likely to be. Any democratic government will calculate electoral advantage: any economy, capitalist or not, will calculate economic gain; any leader will have emotional engagement, likely to be increased in President Bush's case by anger that Saddam attempted to have his father assassinated. The critical issue is what the outcome of a US-led attack would be: how far it can serve as a benchmark for a more just, rather than more dangerous, world, or at least a more just Middle East.

Because of these mixed motivations on the part of the American administration, the centre-left's contribution to this debate is an important one: because it is capable of bringing the US behind a progressive agenda in international affairs. It was from centre-left politics, especially from New Labour, that much of the thinking on the 'ethical dimension' in foreign policy was done. It is clear, now the heat has turned up dramatically, that it achieved a very limited constituency. It must renew the argument: with both greater force and greater rigour. That argument must recognise that, as well as the necessity of specifying ethical outcomes, the realities of power must be served: it must admit, as all practising politicians do, the need to compromise, manoeuvre and give assent to bad states of affairs in order to avoid worse. It must eschew absolutist moral cases in search of achievable better outcomes - better in terms of civil and human rights, security and economic development. It must be frank about the need to settle for lesser evils - even while still recognising them as evils.

If foreign policy and action can be used as a means of preventing tyranny, hard decisions which may result in deadly conflict must be made on the basis of reasonable judgements of what will be better for humanity in the longer run. Non-intervention, and an assertion of national interest, can be a powerful case: it seems to hold out a politics of enlightened self interest, which avoids distressing judgements on 'just' wars except when threats are so obvious and urgent that a national consensus can easily be rallied behind the use of force. But the world no longer, or rarely, produces such situations. Nor does such a posture take any account of humanitarian considerations. The genocide in Rwanda was a classic case where no other state's interests were threatened, except the neighbouring ones: yet indifference meant nearly one million dead.

The globalisation of business and finance, and of media and communications, have prompted a halting and partial globalisation of politics. The protest movements of the No-Global kind deploy themselves across the world against what they see as global evils. Poverty and the gross inequalities in income between peoples are now assessed globally, as well as nationally or regionally. The strategies and failings of the international financial institutions are now debated as part of a global politics, as are the initiatives, like debt relief, of the major governments. And terror itself is now globalised.

As David Held and Anthony McGrew put it in their *Globalisation/Anti-Globalisation*, "contemporary globalisation has not only triggered or reinforced the significant politicisation of a growing array of issue areas, but it has been accompanied by a growing array of institutionalised arenas and networks of political mobilisation, surveillance, decision making and regulatory activity which transcend national political jurisdictions. This has expanded enormously the capacity for and the scope of political activity and the exercise of political authority." In such a context, intervention loses its status as a choice of conscience, to be engaged in when it coincides with the national interest or at the most when it fails to clash with it. It is no longer simply optional, it is often now a necessity inevitably presented by global politics.

## **THE GLOBALISATION AND INDIVIDUALISATION OF TERROR**

That necessity flows from the changed security environment that has been sketched out by current debates on the nature of emerging threats. The entry costs into two crucial areas – communications and mass destruction weaponry – have been dramatically lowered. The internet and the mobile phone empower terrorist networks by, in the first place, allowing them to be

networks, and to function efficiently while leaders are in hiding, or on the run. These networks can, of course, be monitored: but the monitoring of communications in democratic societies is always, and rightly, contested as a breach of civil liberties; while the sheer volume of traffic means that the plucking out of unambiguously incriminating or warning signals is a hugely difficult task.

More ominously still, the miniaturization of weaponry, the advances in deadly chemicals, the availability of nuclear materials and know-how with the collapse of the Soviet Union has empowered terrorism and rogue/totalitarian states alike. Nuclear proliferation had seemed to be controlled immediately before and after the end of the Soviet Union, both because of agreements to evacuate nuclear missiles from Kazakhstan and Ukraine and centralise all nuclear weaponry in Russia, and because of the workings of the Nunn-Lugar act which rewarded the destruction of weaponry. That is no longer the case, and has not been for much of the nineties. Nuclear weaponry is now spreading, if not uncontrollably, at least in ways which approach the uncontrollable. Nuclear know-how is now on offer: as is weapons grade nuclear material.

International order based on the nearly 400-year old Westphalian model of sovereign nation-states is, in such conditions, at least gravely threatened. States can no longer claim a monopoly of violence: indeed, some states actively assist those who wish to individualize it, through their support for terrorism. Mutual deterrence, one of the main underpinnings of the Westphalian system (which was, of course, honoured many times in its breach), can no longer work. Super-empowered individuals themselves are very difficult to deter – the more so if, as more and more seems to be the case, they are resigned or even glad to die for the cause which they espouse.

The advance of technology in this area cannot be underestimated. An air force, half a century ago, was required to do substantial damage to a city. In the intervening half century, it would have required ballistic missiles. Presently, it takes a man with a suitcase. “Violence”, says Joseph Nye, former Assistant Secretary of Defence, now Dean of the Kennedy School at Harvard, “is now democratized. War has been privatized. Terrorists can operate much more easily, do much more damage, than at any time since terrorism began.” John Gray, in a forthcoming book, *Al Qaeda and What it Means to be Modern*, argues that the terrorist group is both technically and politically sophisticated. It is able to plan and execute complex strategies of destruction, and to calculate the effect of these acts – or of abstaining from these acts – on populations and leaderships. Osama bin Laden is a Fabian terrorist – as, indeed, all successful terrorists must be. Like the IRA and other older terrorist groups, he is likely now to understand the pay-offs from patience and from waiting, and knows how vulnerable are governments to

shifts in public mood, to anger directed at them for restrictions in liberties and to public revulsion from perceived 'overreaction'.

Technology would not, indeed, be decisive unless linked to a psychological state, on the part of terrorists or terror states, which is Nazi-like in its instrumentalism. The extremist version of Islamism proposed by Al Qaeda and its supporters place all infidels – including many Muslims – in a category of those who may legitimately be killed, thus erasing even the nominal line which is observed between fighters and civilians in past wars. Further, their demands are unassuageable: no programme of reform, or aid, can answer a hatred so total as that which Al Qaeda uses as its rallying call to the Muslim masses.

Terror is deeply embedded into the processes of globalisation in all manner of planned and unplanned ways. This is why the old state system cannot cope with it. Terrorist states and groups, speaking in the name of radical Islamism or of anti-Americanism or anti-Zionism, now threaten western states for being what they are and for what they do – democratic, secular, materialistic and protective of a global order. That threat is how they interpret 'their own destinies'. It makes it difficult to stay out of wars.

## **COLLAPSING STATES, TERRORIST STATES AND THE LIMITS OF SOVEREIGNTY**

The technological advances which have put mass destruction in the hands of small groups or individuals have become familiar. The mobilization of tanks and army units round London's main international airport at Heathrow in mid February was assumed to be against such a threat: several newspapers pictured a lone rocketeer peeking out, launcher on shoulder, from behind bushes on the airport flight path.

Such groups and individuals need somewhere to base themselves; to accumulate weaponry; to launder money; to train and relax. The most obvious place for these activities is in a state where the authorities do not bother terrorists: and these are likely to be either countries which approve of terrorists, and sponsor them: or states which have 'failed' – that is, where the central government's mandate, insofar as it has one, is limited to the capital or part of it, or to one group or tribe – and the rest of the state is at various kinds of war or chaos.

The current and growing preoccupation with failed, or collapsed, states proceeds from our post 9/11 security concerns. "States were collapsing in Africa from the end of the 1980s", says Karin von Hippel, a scholar in the security department at King's College London, "and no-one cared too much

about it.” The African states, few of them robust, were prone to collapse as they ceased to be subsidised proxies in a cold war between the Western and the Soviet blocs. In a speech dedicated to the subject of failed states last September, the UK Foreign Secretary Jack Straw said that “in certain isolated pockets of the world, the consequences of the end of the Cold War were catastrophic...the bargain between the major powers and their client states unravelled: this had a particularly pronounced impact on Africa.”

Sub-Saharan Africa is still the home of those states which have most comprehensively collapsed – above all others, Somalia is a mere cartographic expression including two breakaway states and a ‘government’ which cannot even control all of the capital, Mogadishu. Yet it is not the only region of the world in which states are collapsing: in Latin America, in South East Asia and in the area covered by the former Soviet Union, states show the mix of components which are likely to push them towards collapse and failure.

What are these elements? How do we tell when a state is failing? The most reliable indicator is those states which are among the poorest – those at the bottom of the World Bank’s ‘LICUS’ list (‘Low Income Countries Under Stress’) – a designation made over a year ago as a means of focussing attention and new forms of assistance on the worst of all possible states in the world. (See Appendix 1 for list.)

The writer Robert Kaplan, in his influential book *The Coming Anarchy*, draws from extensive travel the lesson that food and water scarcity, burgeoning population growth and increase in conflicts will increase the numbers of collapsing/collapsed states, and render the world more and more insecure and the rich West more and more embattled. For him, state failure produces “Future wars [which] will be those of communal survival, aggravated or, in many cases, caused by environmental scarcity. These wars will be sub-national, meaning that it will be hard for states and local governments to protect their own citizens physically. This is how many states will ultimately die. As state power fades – and with it the state’s ability to help weaker groups within society, not to mention other states – peoples and cultures around the world will be thrown back upon their own strengths and weaknesses, with fewer equalizing mechanisms to protect them.”

Kaplan’s pessimism is not wholly borne out by what has happened in the half-dozen years since he wrote of anarchy arriving. States like Uganda, Ghana and Rwanda have stabilised, if precariously. Interventions in Cambodia, East Timor, Bosnia, Kosovo and most recently Afghanistan have brought large measures of improvements – in security, in living standards and in political culture. The former Yugoslav state of Macedonia, feared to be

itself collapsing into inter-ethnic conflict, was saved from (probably) doing so by a robust intervention from European Union states.

But very large problems remain. “The problem with going in before there is a collapse”, says Robert Cooper, Director-General for External Affairs at the European Union, “is that there is rarely any very apparent crisis, and thus to get people to agree to an intervention is very hard.” Nor, five years after Tony Blair asked for them as the most urgent issue on the international agenda, are there agreed rules on intervention and on preventing state collapse. Gareth Evans, former Australian Foreign Minister and now head of the Brussels-based International Crisis Group, says that “you see the beginnings of an agreement that sovereignty can’t be used as a shield against abuse of a state’s own people. But there’s no acceptance yet of the commitments that might involve.”

Failed states are a malign companion to terrorist-totalitarian states, like Iraq. The one deliberately fosters terror: the other cannot help but be the home to it. No new order can ignore the existence and activities of both: especially one grounded in humanitarian concerns, since the first victims of totalitarianism and of collapse are the peoples of the countries concerned. Both have led to a reconsideration of the nature of sovereignty: perhaps the most vexed, long-term, question on the international policy agenda today. For those who wish to return to a more or less pure Westphalian system, it is easily dismissed as a false trail, down which wise leaders should not venture. For those who wish to put some flesh on the bones of an order concerned with human and civil rights, it is the largest problem on the horizon: yet it also offers the opportunity to define a world system in which human rights and the observation of mutual respect within as well as between countries can become a more precisely defined and more widely observed component of international relations – indeed, would begin to reconfigure these relationships.

## **A RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT**

The response to this large problem has been spirited, but sporadic and has tended to be confined to the senior ranks of the UN, of western governments and of some NGOs. Most are willing to acknowledge that the world has become more interdependent, that the ‘CNN effect’ of images of suffering creates constituencies – albeit temporary – of concern and pressure; and that the power to stop horrors should translate, at least sometime, into the will and action to stop them.

But the protests of 15 February showed how little supported is the strategy which has become known as ‘liberal imperialism’: that is, intervention in other states for purposes described as humanitarian. Yet collapsed states often

benefit from intervention, and suffer from its lack. Nearly 1m people were slaughtered in the Rwandan genocide, in full knowledge of the powerful states who might have stopped most or at least some of it. Since the government was carrying out the slaughter, it would not have invited interveners in: thus intervention would have been an invasion, probably with substantial bloodshed.

It is worth dwelling a little on the story of Rwanda, since it is so tragically clear. In her stunning narrative on post-war genocides, *A Problem from Hell*, Samantha Power writes of the Canadian General Romeo Dallaire, who commanded the UN force that, years after, he still cannot “understand how the major powers (North American and European) could have sent troops to the region with a genocide under way, extracted their civilian personnel and soldiers and stranded the people of Rwanda.” Dallaire, who suffered a prolonged breakdown, wrote in a letter two years ago that there was no medication or therapy which could help “a soldier suffering from this new generation of peacekeeping injury (sustained from being present)...where humanitarianism is being destroyed and the innocent are being literally trampled into the ground.”

There was no foreign intervention to stop it. None of the Europeans felt able to. The US had, a year before the Rwandan massacres, sustained a humiliating defeat in Somalia, scuttling from the collapsed state after 18 Rangers and special forces had been killed, a helicopter pilot captured and a Ranger's body dragged through the streets of Mogadishu. Because it was a signatory to the UN Genocide Convention which mandated intervention when a genocide was taking place, the US administration (and everyone else) took refuge in semantics, legalisms and feigned ignorance to avoid using the term.

As often in the decade of the nineties, the decade of humanitarian interventions, humanitarianism was hostage to political realities – which held the politicians, including the idealists, hostage, too. Which Western family would be proud to have a son die for Rwanda? In the end – a long end, after 800,000 Rwandans had been murdered, tortured, raped, deprived of limbs, blinded and traumatised in 100 days – the Rwandan Patriotic Front, which had invaded from neighbouring Uganda where many Tutsis had taken refuge from pogroms inspired by the numerically and politically dominant Hutus, seized Kigali and chased the Hutu extremists into exile. In a brief visit to Rwanda in March 1998 (he did not leave the little airport), President Clinton said that “all over the world there were people like me sitting in offices, day after day, who did not appreciate the depth and the speed with which you were being engulfed by this unimaginable terror.” Yet it was imaginable: we have fed ourselves to the moral brim on images of the Holocaust; have had TV pictures of every massacre since.

The failure to intervene in Rwanda, and the tardiness to act effectively to stop war in Bosnia (especially by the Europeans, whose neighbourhood it is), were partly responsible for the war with Serbia over the latter's invasion of Kosovo. It also helped stimulate discussion on what has been a constant theme of international/United Nations debate in the 1990s – the justification for intervention. Of the major states who see their foreign policy in global terms – the US (naturally in a division of its own), China, France, Britain and Russia – only Britain and the US have seriously proposed a new 'ethic' for intervention, and the US only fitfully, under Bill Clinton. Both China and Russia see international affairs in hyper-realist terms: though 11 September may have seen some loosening in a previously rigid mind set, the formal positions remain a deep hostility to legitimising interventions which they continue to see as threats to their own sovereignty and freedom of action – Russia, in the former Soviet states which surround it and whose instability it part tries to control, part causes: and China, because of its occupation of Tibet and its desire to occupy Taiwan.

In an essay on 'The Ethics and Politics of Humanitarian Intervention', the Harvard Professor of Government Stanley Hoffman located three trends responsible for an erosion of the idea of sovereignty, or the Westphalian principle. First was economic interdependence, a trend very well understood in the European Community, but "re-enforced by the establishment of international institutions whose role is to constrain that operational sovereignty, or whose rules of decision mark that passage from sovereignty-as-independence to pooled sovereignty: the euro, environmental institutions, the IMF, the World Trade Organisation...." The second trend was evident during the cold war, and resulted from the imposition, with varying degrees of force and persuasion, of the dominant power in each bloc imposing its "view of the proper domestic order" on all the others. And third, a variety of movements and events – the delegitimisation of colonialism, the declaration that apartheid in South Africa was a threat to world peace, the atrocities of the Second World War – all awakened an increasing concern for human rights, considered as a legitimate matter for international action (to be somehow conciliated with the norm of sovereignty).

The first and last of these (the second no longer operates) strengthened in the nineties – especially the latter. As UN Secretary-Generals, both Boutros Boutros-Gali and Kofi Annan have been pro-interventionists – the latter in particular arguing, in a famous lecture at Ditchley Park in 1998, that "the UN Charter protects the sovereignty of peoples. It was never meant as a license for governments to trample on human rights and human dignity. Sovereignty implies responsibility, not just power." This theme, of responsibility, has been taken up in a report presented to the UN Security Council in 2001, drafted by a group chaired by the former Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans and the UN's special adviser on Africa Mohamed Sahnoun. The report, called

pointedly *The Responsibility to Protect*, proposes that a state may lose its sovereignty once it manifestly and blatantly fails in its responsibility to protect its own people – as both collapsed states, like Somalia, and totalitarian states, like Iraq, do.

Evans and Sahnoun were very clear that the UN needed to enforce this responsibility, or lose respect and status. Writing in the journal *Foreign Affairs* (November/December 2002) they said that “if the [UN Security] Council...fail[s] to act and a military intervention by an ad-hoc coalition or individual state follows and respects all the necessary threshold and precautionary criteria – and if that intervention succeeds and is seen by the world to have succeeded – this outcome may have enduringly serious consequences for the stature of the UN itself. This is essentially what happened with the NATO intervention in Kosovo. The UN cannot afford to drop the ball too often on that scale.”

## ON THE MARGIN

In the polarities of much present discussion, peaceniks are represented by hawks as appeasers and hawks by peaceniks as imperialists. The true arguments are on margins: where a recognition of the threat and evil of the Iraqi regime is held in common, but the advantages and possibilities of an intervention against a regime which has flouted UN resolutions, invaded a neighbouring state and practised extensive repression against its own people are set against an assessment that confronting it with military force will make matters worse for the people of Iraq, and/or worse for the Middle East. On this debate, both sides could turn out to be right. No historical parallels, no amount of specialised or expert knowledge, no quantity of advance planning or military preparedness, can predict or ensure success in war and after, or predict or avoid a debacle. We do know, however, that a war has already started: that it is being fought, against the main western states, under the banner of radical Islamism; that its goal is the creation of religious-totalitarian states. We should do radical Islamism the service of recognising its seriousness: and that it will not be diverted or placated by not invading Iraq, or by any other abstention from action.

The case for confronting an Iraqi regime which does not comply with the inspection regime put in place by the UN does not depend on the discovery of a cache of chemical or biological weapons, or on conclusive proof of links with Al Qaeda. The first is unlikely soon: the second may be unlikely always, since there may not be any strong links (there is circumstantial evidence of some contacts). That the first has been presented as possible and the second as conclusive have been major mistakes in presentation. Another mistake, of a different kind, was the unacknowledged use in a UK dossier on Iraq of a 12-year old doctoral thesis.

The extraordinary fact is that these blunders or miscalculations have been put on the same moral level as the humanitarian atrocities committed by Saddam. A claim frequently made is that, by seeking to defend the unproven or by disseminating a document whose provenance is doubtful, the governments of the US and the UK have forfeited 'trust' and that this justifies, of itself, opposition to war. A rough parallel would be to have seen Churchill, in 1940, as a man too compromised by his anti-Labour past to be worthy of support in the struggle against the Nazis, and thus to remain neutral between them. Weak arguments and faulty dossiers are bad. A totalitarian regime which commits crimes against humanity is something other than bad.

But the centre left does have to improve its arguments. It must insist that, if an invasion of Iraq comes to be necessary though failure of its leadership to honour the terms of its surrender in 1991, the reasons for the invasion and the conduct of the intervening powers after that invasion must accord with a concept of global order. This means, in the first place, a commitment for long-term, expensive involvement in the affairs – governance, economy, human rights, and international relations – of another country. A group of UN members presently ensure the security of, seek to construct democracy and the institutions of civil society in, and give humanitarian and other aid to Bosnia, Kosovo and Afghanistan – to the immense benefit of all of these places, none of whose ruling elites see their main problem as being enfolded into a US empire (the first two are likely to be enfolded into the EU: they hope). These are exemplars of what is now emerging, in part by default, as a template for a new order. The responsibility of those who argue for this order to take a more definite shape is to seek to ensure these commitments – and future ones, as in Iraq – are maintained. To lose interest, cut resources and slide out would be to condemn these regions to renewed warfare and repression. But that is only the beginning.

## **THE POSSIBILITY OF A NEW ORDER**

The United States, spurred on by its position as pre-eminent victim of new global threats, has grasped the dangers inherent in a globalised world. The Bush Administration's National Security Strategy demonstrated that much. The United States will act against Iraq, but the important question is what form that action will take. Will it be allowed to be the unilateralist assertion of a right of imperial self-defence, or will it be a creative moment in the history of state relations, similar to the Bretton-Woods agreements following the Second World War.

That question will depend on whether the United States is engaged by the rest of the world, and on whether it can be persuaded to pursue the right response. In order to convince America that multilateral interventionism and

the 'responsibility to protect' are feasible and effective measures that meet the dangers it sees so clearly, the international community must assure the US that it, too, recognises those dangers by intervening in Iraq if Iraq does not show a willingness to disarm.

The threat, and potential tragedy, of this situation is that if the US isn't convinced that a multilateral route, and a new world order, are feasible then it will act alone. If it does so, it will be unable to convince the world that it is interested in long-term law rather than simply short-term order. A national-interest response to new threats will be insufficient, and will exacerbate existing security dilemmas. For the new order necessary to effectively respond to current threats to be successful, it must demonstrate its efficacy in Iraq, and to three audiences: to deter future defiant dictators and proliferators, to convince the US that it can enhance its national security through a multi-lateral framework, and to convince Europe and the rest of the world that responding to these threats won't take the form of the US throwing its weight around, but instead be a sustainable era of activist international law.

In this situation, the pivotal factors for the long-term success or failure of an Iraqi war will be the way that that war is prosecuted, and the actions which accompany and follow it. There is a large chance that a US-led invasion will be successful relatively quickly, and that a regime change will be welcomed by most Iraqis. It is therefore widely accepted that the largest immediate problems are likely to be those of post-war Iraq, where a very extensive engagement and the cooperation of the major states and the UN and other agencies and NGOs will be essential over a long period to hold out a strong hope of success for Iraq as a thriving and stable state. Secondly, it is clear that the effects of the intervention on the rest of the Middle East are crucial: proponents of war see the Iraqi intervention as the harbinger of a more general democratisation, and as an opening to a further effort to settle the Israel-Palestine issue, this time in more lasting fashion. Many therefore see it as incumbent on the states which do make the intervention – if it is made – to establish a rule in Iraq which is both efficient and just, and to then follow through with a renewed effort to bring agreement between Israelis and Palestinians in order to realise the potential of a transformative moment.

But those who insist upon these two corollaries of war – commitment to reconstruction and to a just settlement in Israel/Palestine – are merely advocating, piecemeal, elements which are a part of a broader agenda. It is in fact necessary to follow up an intervention in Iraq based on the case laid out in this article not just with steps toward democracy and respect for justice, human rights and international law in the Middle East, but with a commitment to a rule-governed order that must apply globally if it is to be a sufficient response to global problems.

By placing this intervention in a broader context, it will be possible to construct a wider coalition for action. As long as the debate is conducted in terms of threats alone, the gulf in perceptions across the Atlantic will mean that many people are left unimpressed by arguments for intervention. The West must set out a positive agenda based on democracy, human rights and the rule of law – and so re-establish a sense of shared goals in the West, and beyond. The bare bones of a future world order should include the following commitments:

- to orderly and peaceful relations between states;
- to increased efforts to alleviate poverty and disease on the basis of reciprocal pledges: from the donor states, to augment aid, and from the recipients, to use it for the ends for which it is intended;
- to protect, on the part of governments, the security of all citizens of a given polity: where that cannot be guaranteed, or is deliberately being flouted because of repression or war conducted by the government against a part of the population, the issue becomes a cause of concern at the UN and is considered as to whether intervention might be warranted;
- to agreement being reached by the major states of the world, East and West, North and South, on the basic principles of a global system of security, and the basic requirements for intervention in the case of its breakdown. This would, in the words of Robert Cooper, “aim to bring order and organisation but rest...on the voluntary principle.”

There is no guarantee of success in any of this: but nor is there any route of retreat to a position of stability in the fastness of our nation states. Our security no longer lies within their borders; though where it does lie will take a journey to discover.

## APPENDIX ONE: 'LOW INCOME COUNTRIES UNDER STRESS'<sup>i</sup>

Afghanistan	Kirgyz Republic
Angola	Kiribati
Azerbaijan	Lao PDR
Bangladesh	Liberia
Bolivia	Mali
Burundi	Moldova
Cambodia	Mongolia
Cameroon	Myanmar
Central African Republic	Nicaragua
Chad	Niger
Comoros	Nigeria
Cote d'Ivoire	Sao Tome and Principe
Democratic Republic of Congo	Sierra Leone
Republic of Congo	Solomon Islands
Djibouti	Somalia
Eritrea	Sudan
Ethiopia	Tajikistan
The Gambia	Togo
Georgia	Tonga
Guinea	Uzbekistan
Guinea-Bissau	Vanuatu
Guyana	Republic of Yemen
Haiti	Federal Republic of Yugoslavia
Indonesia	Zimbabwe
Kenya	

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<sup>i</sup> Source: World Bank 'Country Policy and Institutional Assessment: 2001 results for IDA Countries'. Available from <http://www1.worldbank.org/operations/licus>. Those countries defined as 'under stress' include the bottom three quintiles and the four countries where rating was impossible: Afghanistan, Myanmar, Liberia and Somalia.

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