

The Foreign Policy Centre



The European Think Tank with a Global Outlook

Stability and Democracy in Iraq

**Monday 27 September 2004
Labour Party Conference fringe event,
Brighton**

**Monday 4 October 2004
Conservative Party Conference
fringe event, Bournemouth**

Transcript

About the Foreign Policy Centre

The Foreign Policy Centre is a leading European think tank launched under the patronage of the British Prime Minister Tony Blair to develop a vision of a fair and rule-based world order. Through our research, publications and events, we aim to develop innovative policy ideas which promote:

- Effective multilateral solutions to global problems
- Democratic and well-governed states as the foundation of order and development
- Partnerships with the private sector to deliver public goods
- Support for progressive policy through effective public diplomacy
- Inclusive definitions of citizenship to underpin internationalist policies.

The Foreign Policy Centre has produced a range of **Publications** by key thinkers on world order, the role of non-state actors in policymaking, the future of Europe, international security and identity. These include *The Post-Modern State and the World Order* by Robert Cooper, *Network Europe* and *Public Diplomacy* by Mark Leonard, *NGOs Rights and Responsibilities* by Michael Edwards, *Trading Identities* by Wally Olins and *Third Generation Corporate Citizenship* by Simon Zadek.

The Centre runs a rich and varied **Events Programme** – a forum where representatives from NGOs, think-tanks, companies and government can interact with speakers who include Prime Ministers, Presidents, Nobel Prize laureates, global corporate leaders, activists, media executives and cultural entrepreneurs from around the world.

For more information please visit www.fpc.org.uk

About the Speakers:

Alan Duncan MP is Shadow Secretary of State for International Development and has served as Member of Parliament for Rutland and Melton since 1992. Previously, he was Shadow Secretary of State for Constitutional Affairs and has worked as a Shadow Health Minister, Shadow Trade and Industry Minister and Shadow Foreign Minister.

Sir Jeremy Greenstock GCMG was Britain's Special Representative for Iraq from 2003-2004 and its Permanent Representative to the United Nations from 1998 to 2003. He served in Britain's diplomatic service from 1969, holding posts in Dubai, Washington, Saudi Arabia and Paris. Sir Jeremy is now the Director of Ditchley Park, an international relations think tank based in Oxfordshire.

Professor Fred Halliday is Professor of International Relations at the London School of Economics. He is best-known for his work on Great Power relations, International Relations in the Middle East and on the causes and impact of International Revolutions. He has written many books on these themes including *Rethinking International Relations*, *Islam and the Myth of Confrontation*; *The Making of the Second Cold War*; *Arabia without Sultans*; and *Cold War, Third World*.

Sir Malcolm Rifkind is the Conservative candidate for Kensington and Chelsea for the forthcoming UK general election. He was elected as Conservative Member of Parliament for Edinburgh (Pentlands) from 1974, losing his seat 23 years later with the landslide which brought Labour to power in 1997. He served as Secretary of State for Scotland, Transport Minister, Defence Minister and Foreign Minister.

Andrew Tyrie MP is the Shadow Minister for Economic Affairs and MP for Chichester from 1997. He is the author of *Axis of Instability: America, Britain and The New World Order After Iraq*, which was published by The Foreign Policy Centre in 2003. Between 1992 and

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1997, he worked as a senior economist at the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

Eric Westropp CBE is a director of Control Risks Group and is currently responsible for their business in the Middle East and has operational oversight of the operations in Iraq. He was the Director of the Group's Response Services from 1987 to 2003. Before joining Control Risks, he served in the British Army, retiring with the rank of Brigadier.

Acknowledgements:

The Foreign Policy Centre would like to thank Control Risks Group for their sponsorship of the two fringe events and this publication. The FPC would also like to pay tribute to Alan Duncan MP, Sir Jeremy Greenstock GCMG, Professor Fred Halliday, Sir Malcolm Rifkind, Andrew Tyrie MP and Eric Westropp CBE for their lucid and interesting contributions. At the FPC, we are very grateful to Shairi Mathur, Jessie Zhang and Richard Jordan for transcribing the two events and Matthew Hulbert and Richard Jordan for preparing the publication for print.

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The 2004 Labour Party Conference fringe event, Brighton.

Rouzbeh Pirouz, Chairman, the Civility Programme, The Foreign Policy Centre:

Few issues on the foreign policy agenda are as topical and as pressing as Iraq, given the speed that things are happening there and the enormity of the potential consequences, and we have a very distinguished panel to talk about that today. I will set out a few things at the top to frame the discussion and to get our speakers to address these issues and then we will open up for any questions that we might have from the audience. I think we should keep the focus on the present and the future rather than the past. There are obviously very interesting discussions to be had, and I think many of us have already had them, about the origins of the war and its legality, but we would like to quieten those, if we can, for the purposes of this discussion and focus instead on three issues.

Firstly, what exactly is happening now in Iraq? We still seem to have somewhat imperfect intelligence about the nature of the insurgency, whether it is domestically-driven, whether it is foreign-driven and as a consequence of that, what will be the likely impact on the insurgency of either a renewed military presence or a withdrawal? Are we likely to see a calming of the insurgency if, in fact, the military presence of the US and the UK is reduced or is that likely to lead to some kind of fragmentation, a more complicated and potentially more problematic situation than the one we have right now? So the first thing is, what's happening right now?

The second theme is: where do we go from here? By we, I am talking in particular about the UK and also to some extent about the US and the EU. What are the options available to us? What should our view be vis-à-vis the upcoming elections? What should our position be regarding the interference, or the possible interference of countries like Iran and Syria? Do we stick with Allawi? How do we modulate our relations with the various factions in Iraq? And for all of

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that, how do we ensure that we have adequate domestic support to underpin the type of engagement that we are looking for?

A third and final theme is the prospect of democracy in Iraq. Just yesterday on the David Frost programme, the Prime Minister emphasised and reemphasised the importance of democracy in Iraq as a guarantor of stability and security back home and a critical component of the fight against terrorism. However, as we all know, the path to democracy in Iraq has been rather fraught and looking at this issue is quite critical. How quickly do we proceed? Do we go forward with the possibility of an imperfect election or do we put it on hold for the time being? Or do we risk de-legitimising democracy in Iraq if we don't do it properly?

Eric Westropp CBE, Director, Control Risks Group:

You could say that other speakers will be strategic and I will be tactical. My purpose is really to set the scene for discussion on the role of the private sector, and in particular the private security sector, in failed or failing states, and to talk about some of the lessons we have learnt in Iraq. In the United States, this is a very big topic. It hasn't been covered on this side of the Atlantic as much as in the States but I think it will be something that people will be talking about rather more because it's the first time that private security companies have been looking after the whole range of government, NGOs and commercial operations in a hostile environment, and presently, there are no real regulations to cover this.

I have to say that having worked in over 70 countries around the world in the last 20 years, of which most have been pretty unstable, Iraq is in a category of its own. The level of violence directed against government organisations, NGOs and the private sector is absolutely critical, particularly at the moment. Every day, the first thing people do before they move anywhere in Iraq is to sit down, discuss the intelligence, and deduce what might be a threat on that day. There are many days that they cannot do anything at all.

Iraq is a country where reconstruction is absolutely critical and despite this somewhat gloomy opening, the coalition is committed to this reconstruction. But although the armed forces are there, they cannot build roads, hospitals, and organisations and so on, or provide healthcare or medication. The private sector has to do that. In failed states, (and I will not call Iraq a failed state, but it is fast moving in that direction), and in states of great instability, it is absolutely critical to start rebuilding the infrastructure as quickly as possible. People must have confidence that their lives are going to improve, they must see some results and this, of course, in Iraq is a pretty obvious failure. We didn't manage to get it started as quickly as possible and quite frankly to operate efficiently now is extremely difficult. Not only do the health aspects and the crucial services have to operate, people have to have an operating police force, which they trust and which is fair. All of these things are made extremely difficult by the instability.

The role of the private sector in Iraq

For private sector companies to become involved, they require other things:

- The first thing is a business case. No company is going to operate in a place like Iraq if they are going to lose money.
- Secondly, they have to have parameters which aren't forever changing and which they can plan on.
- Thirdly, when they go to operate in various sites they have to be clear that those sites will be secure for their workers and that they can actually get the work done.

If you don't have those circumstances, you will still get the private sector, but what you will get is 'predator' companies. These are the sorts of Wild West type companies with irresponsible management that do not care about the safety of their workforce or about the local people, and who are not committed to reconstruction. Those companies will always go to a place like Iraq where there is money to be made and they do not mind what risks they take. To get the responsible investment in Iraq, corporations need the security support and the ability to do their work responsibly otherwise they will not invest in reconstruction projects.

These projects are generally comprised of the essential combination of government input, NGOs, humanitarian organisations and corporations. This starts to move towards the sort of things that others have talked about; the acceptance by the Iraqis of an improving situation, the abilities of the Iraqis themselves to take over their own future, and for the handover from foreign companies to the Iraqis as soon and as responsibly as the circumstances allow.

Working in Iraq

Control Risks Group has never armed people before in its history, but because of the extreme risk in Iraq, we decided that our employees had to carry weapons. This raises contentious issues.

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We are absolutely clear that we are not doing a military job. We are not a substitute for the military, we do not have the remit to do so, we do not have the weapons to do so and lastly, it would not be right. Our role is simply to enable our clients to go about their business, to look after them, to hopefully pre-empt dangers for them, and if those dangers occur, to actually extract them from dangerous situations.

Working with the local community

For this role we need support and contact with the local people. This is one of the aspects of having private security companies there, alongside ongoing military operations. As a company, our policy is to be as un-threatening and civilianised as possible and so we have what the guys on the ground call, 'a smiley-wavy policy'. An example of this, where it actually saved lives, was a particular team in Baghdad. Every day, they had to go down one of the most dangerous roads in the city. They could change their timings, but they could not change the route. On the corner of that road, leading down to one of the ministries, there is a news-seller. Every day, as that team drove the officials down the route, the team leader would wave at the news-seller and he would wave back. One day a few months ago, the news seller just went [motions slitting throat] like that across his neck. The team leader identified there was a problem, turned his team around. It later transpired that there was a bomb set up for that team down the road. Now, if they had been with weapons, sunglasses, and all the sort of paraphernalia of the military, they would never have been warned and they would have almost certainly lost their lives.

The lack of guiding principles

Iraq has raised really quite important questions and issues about security companies and the role they play in supporting reconstruction, not only in Iraq but also in future situations in today's world. There are estimated to be about 15,000 private security operators in Iraq. They are not a homogeneous group and there are no real guidelines as to how they should work. There is no linkage between each organisation and the authorities. These security

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companies do many things; some of them look after pipelines and some have very low profile jobs, like ours, looking after important individuals. But there is no real coordination between them and no real regulation. Our belief is that if there is not regulation, we should try and do things above and beyond the level that is expected of us. That's not necessarily everybody's reaction and there are a wide variety of standards. There are companies, which have been going for many years, and there are companies, which have been set up purely to take advantage of the situation in Iraq. So we are calling for regulation, and not only relating to Iraq because this sort of situation may well occur again.

To conclude, in all situations like Iraq, the private sector must be engaged in reconstruction as quickly as possible. That means they cannot wait for the situation to be made secure by the military or by the local police forces, which may not be adequate. That means business has to begin the reconstruction process often while the place is unstable and unsafe to help the population feel normality is returning, helping the situation to calm down. Private companies are going to need security support to allow them to do that. It is not the role of armies to try and protect commercial companies doing their work, so security companies are going to be in Iraq for sometime to come. It is also absolutely essential to maintain the independence and apolitical nature of international companies. They are not the agents of government power and so boundaries have to be maintained and defined. There must be a clear distinction between the job of the state, (that means both external and internal states), and the job of the private sector and the security companies operating in that private sector.

I will finish then by saying that private sector security is going to be required again to work within international programmes in all ranges of situations, which may encompass unstable or failed and failing states. Regulation is required and it is important that operators can operate with a level of maturity that will allow practitioners to engage properly with the local population and to work together with the institutions of state.

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* **Eric Westropp** made a similar presentation to the fringe meeting at the Conservative Party conference in Bournemouth. This speech is therefore not repeated in the second half of the pamphlet.

Sir Jeremy Greenstock GCMG, Director, Ditchley Park:

I am very happy with the task that has been set; about where we are now and where we go from here. The past is another argument. The fourth theme that we have in the back of our minds but I think we cannot discuss, or at least I cannot discuss, is our sympathy for those who have been taken hostage, those who have been killed by terrorism, not least Kenneth Bigley and the agony that his family are going through. I will not comment on that because I do not want to undermine the slim chances that the government and others have of securing his release.

The Violence in Iraq

The situation is bad on the ground but it is not universally bad. It is not a lost prospect that we get through this transition period and that Iraqis create a new state for themselves that is better than the one that they had under Saddam Hussein and which is eventually stable. Whether it is eventually democratic is up to them. It is not for us to impose on Iraqis or any other country well away from us the nature of the political structures they take on, but I saw a huge amount of desire within the Iraqi population and their political leaders for government with the consent of the people, for the people having an opportunity to express their opinions on government. The transition period to the end of 2005 and perhaps into 2006 is meant to achieve that, and that is what Paul Bremer and I tried to design at the beginning of this year. The security situation is obviously the principal criterion against which Iraq is going to be judged as going right or going wrong. The political process is a good one and the economy is picking up at a low level of sophistication. Markets, traffic and business are all much higher than a year ago. There is no doubt in my mind that the job of foreigners in Iraq, now that Iraqis have taken over their own government, is to assist Iraq to raise the capability of the people to deliver stability, government with the consent of the people and a more flourishing economy.

Violence has taken over the headlines and violence is the biggest worry in everybody's daily life because we did not get a sufficient grip on the security vacuum after the end of the conflict in the weeks

after April 9th 2003. We are not going into the past, but we have to accept that analysis was poor of what was needed in the post-war period. Resources were put into the security sector in order to try to achieve the interplay that you need between security and a re-burgeoning economy. Without that, you do not get the people on your side to deal with security difficulties. However, this was not handled as well as it should have been in those early months. I sometimes put it like this; if, in your military strategy, you make sure that you have overwhelming force to deal with opposition when you go into conflict, why did people not decide to put in overwhelming resources to ensure the security situation, in a much more complex situation after the end of the conflict? That philosophy is just as compelling as the military one and I do not believe that was done, and I witnessed the difficulties on the ground that we were put in because it was not done in the early stages.

It is now going to be much more difficult to eradicate the violence from within the Iraqi community, violence which only holds strategic ground where it happens to be at any one moment. Likewise, the Iraqi security forces and the coalition forces also only hold the strategic ground which they happen to be present on at any one moment. It is what is happening elsewhere and it is the flexibility of either side to deal with the terrorists' presence, which is going to settle where this goes.

The Forthcoming Iraqi Elections

Here, I have to make a very important point to do with elections. Violence on the ground makes things difficult, wherever it is coming from, and there are more sources that we can analyse. It is the former regime still fighting their war, it is foreign terrorists coming in, it is criminality, which remains quite strong in some parts of Iraq, and it is Iraqis using violence within their own political spectrum, as with the militias following Muqtada al Sadr and there are others in the Sunni community, who are not attached to the Baathists or to the terrorists, but still feel because of their humiliation and their frustration that they need to use violence. These sources of violence will only be eradicated in Iraq if the vast majority of people have confidence in their government and join with them in helping to

eradicate it. We have seen examples of how this is necessary in other scenarios, very different scenarios: for instance in Northern Ireland. However, the determination of the people to get rid of violence in that mix is a very important aspect when violence is so easily used by a small number of people with highly lethal weaponry and when they have a propaganda advantage of immediate global publicity in everything they do. Elections are necessary to produce a government that is legitimate enough in the eyes of the people to be supported in their action against terrorism. That's when I think that those that say "perhaps we should be postponing elections" are not right – it is giving in to violence to delay elections, even if elections are going to be difficult to handle and to keep secure.

The Role of the UK

Where should the UK be in all of this? Well, I am one of those who said from the beginning, and I will go on saying, that we have to see this through. There are three important, perhaps increasingly powerful reasons why we should not cut and run from this scenario:

- One is that we are with an alliance and we make decisions with our allies including the Iraqis. If the Iraqis want us to leave, with their sovereign right, we would have to respond to their request to do so. I don't believe that that will happen because Iraqis are not yet fully capable of dealing with violence on their side.
- Second, the United Kingdom will certainly suffer in reputational terms and in influence terms if it cuts and run from something that it said it was going to do instead of seeing it through to the end.
- But third, we are out there in Iraq dealing with the frontline of terrorism and if we abandon that frontline, then terrorism is that much more motivated and will come closer to our own society at home if we do not deal with it where we found it as we have pledged to do. There is a job there to be done through that transition period, until Iraqis are capable of running their own security in the face of this violence and until that is done, we will be acting against our long-term interests if we do not stay the course. That, of course, is

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being heavily debated at the moment, but I think the arguments for staying rational, cool and steady on this, following up the immense courage, and bravery and generosity of those working on the ground, are very powerful. The British in the South must stay in Iraq, especially with the response they are getting from the community, until Iraqis are capable of getting through to the result which they are looking for from this process. Thank you.

Professor Fred Halliday, The London School of Economics:

I have to begin by saying that I am not a specialist on Iraq, but I have a long association with Iraq and the Iraqi opposition going back to my student days in the 1960s and much of what I have learned about the Arab world, for over forty years now, I have learnt from the Iraqis, for whom I have enormous respect. When I went to lecture in Iraq in 1980 at the Saddam Hussein College of Law and Politics, the head of the department greeted me with a big smile and said: "Welcome to Iraq. You know, I open the paper in the morning and I don't know if I'm going to be named our ambassador to the UN or if I've been sentenced to death and in either case, I won't know why" and he laughed, knowing that this was fate. An official adviser to Saddam, another close friend of mine, detested Saddam, and said that he ruined his life and his children's life.

However, they are also Iraqi patriots. This group of people have remained in Iraq and they are very critical of the Western role and of the mistakes made. They said in the run-up to the war that you must not disband the army, you must not de-Baathify and you must not bring in crooks like Chalabi. But whoever is in charge, and one of the problems is that we don't know who's in charge on the American side, didn't listen. Their message, and I spoke to one of them last week, was that al-Zarqawi and his friends are murderers. Al-Zarqawi is a sectarian who wants to kill not just Christians but also Shiites. Muqtada Al Sadr chopped to death a close friend of mine, who ran an important Iraqi foundation for many years in a mosque in Najaf last year. These people are not the future of Iraq.

One of the things that disturbs me about the current debate in this country is that we understand that there is a resistance in Iraq, but nobody knows who these people are. Let us agree that they are not mainly "foreign fighters" - that is propaganda. They are Iraqis in the main. Al-Zarqawi isn't, but many of them are. They are not the future of Iraq and they are not what most Iraqis want, even if they do not want continued American occupation either. Thus, my starting point and my finishing point about Iraq is that we must put the Iraqi people first. We've had Hutton, Gilligan, Dyke, all these people, but the key question now is 'What do the Iraqi people need?' My one sentence

view is they need to strengthen the political institutions and strengthen the political space. There are parties in Iraq that won't work with Allawi or the Americans and the British but who want politics. They do not want war, they do not want fighting, they do not want disruption and I think we have to do all we can to strengthen that space, and to keep the different parties, with their many different agendas, within politics.

The link between Europe and the Middle East

I want to begin by looking at the second point, which the chairman raised; the question of domestic support within the country, and I want to make three broad points that are very relevant to Iraq, they are very relevant to where we go from there. This Iraq issue has clearly been a major torpedo to Blair's reputation, from which he will never recover. It has also been a torpedo to Bush's reputation, whether or not he gets re-elected. However, it points to a much broader issue which is that the Middle East and Europe are inextricably linked and they have been for many decades, if not hundreds of years. Let's forget all the waffle about the Crusades. If you look at modern European politics, what is the most divisive issue in this country since the Second World War? It was Suez and especially our relations towards America during that crisis. The Americans opposed sanctions and within a week, the Crown collapsed and the Prime Minister was booted out. This was a very effective use of sanctions in 1956. The most divisive issue in France was the war with Algeria, which brought down the Fourth Republic. The biggest challenge Russia faced was Afghanistan. I do not think it was Afghanistan alone that brought down communism, but it was a major factor. Today, you have the Chechen war, which is poisoning Russian politics as a whole. If you look earlier on at Spanish politics, the collapse of the monarchy in the 1920s was inextricably linked to the war in Morocco. That's the past - we cannot escape the impact of the Middle East on us whether we go one way or the other; Fortress Europe or no Fortress Europe.

If you look at the United States, what was it that torpedoed Carter? It was the hostage crisis in Iran. Reagan nearly got done by Iraqis, he just got out of it by shuffling and smiling, but it did him a lot of

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damage. This issue has put foreign policy at the centre of the US election for the first time in more than a quarter of a century. The point I want to make about this is that neither the pro-war nor the anti-war, or whatever you want to call them, can extradite us from this involvement. Of course, this is duplicated now by another factor, which is the presence in Europe of major Islamic communities, who are here to stay, some of them Arab, with direct involvement in the Middle East, some of them South Asian, who are now adopting an interest in the Middle East. And yet what we see (witnessed in the last European elections), is the rise, in many, if not all countries, of populous, right-wing and in fact, anti-Muslim movements. The latest example of this was the Swiss referendum yesterday, in which they voted against giving Swiss nationality to third generation immigrants. Beat that in the 21st century; this from a country that only gave women the vote about 20 years ago, the so-called birthplace of democracy indeed!

This is compounded by certain European policies that are highly discriminatory against the Middle East. Firstly, there is the ludicrous attempt to keep Turkey out. Turkey has been part of Europe for a thousand years and will remain part of Europe. Indeed, I will argue that the greatest cataclysm in modern European politics, the outbreak of the First World War, was a direct result of Turkish rule in the Balkans, the rise of Serbian nationalism, and Ferdinand, taking the wrong turning and all that followed from that.

We have the French policy on the veil. I am against the veil. I love the statute, which encourages women to tear them off, but this must be done voluntarily and it is a matter of personal choice. The French Law is absolutely illegal under international law. It is also utter political folly and the French will go on paying a heavy price for it, whatever happens to these two French journalists in Iraq. Those who are responsible are the French leaders, who are also engaged in an utterly narcissistic debate on secularism as if they, the French, are the only people to have thought about secularism. Every country in Europe has thought about secularism, as have the Americans, and there should be a common policy on it. This Iraq crisis and the debate that we are having here about it are a part of that.

'One-eyed thinking' on security

Secondly, I want to say something, which I think, may be something that everyone in this room will disagree with. I think we are the prisoners of two forms of one-eyed thinking; on the one hand, you have the militaristic approach to Iraq and to the question of terrorism in general, which is espoused by Bush, by Putin, by Aznar, and by others. You cannot deal with armed insurrection (and we are facing a global armed insurrection, a low-key one) by military means alone, and if you do, you will be only stoking it. I entirely agree with the British Ambassador to Italy who said Sharon was the best recruiting sergeant for Bin Laden – he certainly is.

Audience Member: Bush, not Sharon.

No, I think he said Sharon. Or was it Bush? Well, both of them; two recruiting sergeants, we'll settle for that. We need to look at the political causes, the cultural causes and to realise that we are engaged for the long run, a decades-long debate with the Muslim world in which we have to be responsible. The most striking irresponsibility in this country in the last year, which far too few people kicked up a fuss about, was the outrageous behaviour of Robert Kilroy-Silk and the indulgence shown to Kilroy-Silk by the BBC, who gave him a massive pay-off. They should have chucked him and his cameras onto the street the moment he did it. This indulgence was also shown by politicians, including the Labour Party. I tried to beard one minister, whom I have known since I was a kid, on this issue, but he didn't want to know, he kept mumbling on about Kilroy-Silk's freedom of speech. I said to him, "this is the greatest international issue of the moment and if the Labour Party ducks it, which they did spectacularly, then they will pay a price," but he didn't want to know. It's another example of the rather good manners of New Labour when it comes to this agreement thing, but that's another story.

This one-eyed thinking on the security issue is matched by the one-eyed thinking of the no-war people; they have no policy for Iraq, they have no policy for the Muslim world. You can't run away from this issue, and I think it would be the height of irresponsibility to run away

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from the needs of the Iraqi people. One further point is that we owe a debt to the Iraqis because we kept Saddam in power for thirty-five years directly or indirectly. We gave him intelligence, we gave him credit, the French gave him nuclear facilities and made a lot of money out of it, and many Iraqis feel quite rightly that since we kept him there all that time, we should be blamed for that. To say now that we don't care what happens in Iraq, let alone soft-soaping Muqtada al Sadr and al-Zarqawi, is, to my mind, an absolute outrage.

What can we do?

I have three general points. First of all, we have to see this in regional terms. I've said this before and I'll say it again. The great winner of all of this is Iran. The Iranians think that they have won. The Americans got rid of the Taliban for them in Afghanistan and now they've got rid of Saddam in Iraq, and Iraq has now fallen into their lap. As one very senior UN official said to me recently, Iran is the real occupying power in Iraq, not the Americans. They can go where they want, they have their network, they have their security people and they will dictate the long-term in Iraq. If we are going to get a settled future in Iraq, beyond the political institution-building that we have talked about, as well as the security situation, there has to be the involvement of Iran, Turkey, Syria and Saudi Arabia in the ongoing policy process. Therefore, picking a fight now with Iran about nuclear weapons or Lebanon is the height of folly if you want to have peace in Iraq.

Secondly, we have to work politically for solutions to the major ethnic conflicts which are fuelling the broader dispute between ourselves and the Middle East. We all know what they are; Kashmir, Kurdistan, Chechnya, and Palestine. Again, the neglect of Palestine by the United States and very culpably by Britain, particularly in the Prime Minister's press conference with Bush, when he was last in the US, has only made things worse. Unless and until we get a settlement in Palestine, the overall situation in the Middle East and the recruiting of people to Bin Laden's forces will continue. It is folly to think anything else. I was recently in Lebanon. I spent two days with Hezbollah. They seemed to like me, but that's because they don't

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like the theory of the clash of civilisations. They're very anti-Huntingdon, but that's for reasons of their own, actually to do with the fact that they don't like Sunnis. I came away, having not focused on Lebanon before, with the very strong impression that these people were extremely serious, that what the Israelis said was true, that they do have people in Palestine and that they are sending in weapons. They took me right down to the frontline – Israel was as far away as that door – they said “it took the Israelis 22 years to drive us out of here, it might take us another 40 to drive them out of there but we're going to do it.” Given that they now have hundreds of intermediate-range, Iranian-made missiles that can hit every city in Israel, this is a very worrying situation. So, first is the search for regional settlement, second is to build for political solutions, including in Chechnya. You get the same nonsense in Chechnya that you do in Palestine. There's no-one to talk to, we can't reach a deal. I firmly believe there was a possibility of a Palestine settlement in the 1990s, and it was wrecked by idiots on both sides. Shame on the lot of them. There was also a possibility of a settlement in Chechnya as well, at least until the hardliners arrived in Moscow in 1996.

Thirdly, I think we have to stick with the building of political institutions in Iraq. I am against deadlines for the withdrawal of troops. I think this is just a cover for saying that we should run away. And without making a comparison – the last time that this happened in the Middle East was in 1948 in Palestine and we simply bolted - look what happened. It was an utterly irresponsible thing to do. That was under domestic pressure as it is now. Nobody could have foreseen the consequences but the result has been 50 or more years of Arab-Israeli war. As far as the UK is concerned, I think we have to face the problem that modern democracies, not just this one, but every one in Western Europe and the US, are not good at discussing issues of international peace and security because most people just don't want to know. The more bombs, and the more hostages, and the more Ken Bigleys, the less people want to know, and that is a very human response, but a very dangerous one.

I am not happy that I have come to Brighton for a week where they want to keep Iraq off the agenda and just discuss domestic issues.

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International peace and security, apart from being my job and paying my wages, is an inescapable part of all our lives and it is our job to keep that at the front of the agenda and to get people to think about it and to avoid the two forms of self-thinking. One is the 'bomb-'em, nuke-'em' brigade, which is Bush, Putin and Aznar and the other is the 'let's run away, no-war' brigade. The world isn't like that, but we need to make more arguments of that kind. The final point that I would make, as a member of the Advisory Council of this distinguished Centre, is that if people in power want the advice of experts, then they should treat them a bit better and listen occasionally, which they don't!

Question and Answer Session

Rouzbeh Pirouz: I know a lot of people have questions, and the idea is to take questions in groups of three, and then allow the panel to answer them so that we can keep track.

Mark Leonard, The Foreign Policy Centre: On the point about dates and deadlines, I have just come back from the US and for a long time, a lot of people have been arguing that setting a deadline isn't necessarily about running away from Iraq, but it is about trying to change the dynamic to make it absolutely clear that we are there for the Iraqi people and their elected representatives, rather than because it is part of an imperial mission. Does anyone on the panel think that's a bad argument? By actually setting a deadline, would this force us to face up to these issues and to renegotiate them publicly, which is what the Iraqis are calling for, rather than us talking in very vague terms about being there for no longer than is absolutely necessary?

Unidentified Speaker from the Hampstead and Highgate Labour Party: Fred Halliday noted that Spanish imperialism in Morocco did bad things for the Spanish monarchy; British imperialism in Egypt did bad things for the British government whilst French imperialism in Algeria did bad things for the Fourth Republic. Yet, here we are again 'teaching the Iraqis how to run a civilised state.' So there is every reason to suppose it will be a failure and I welcome that failure, and every democrat should, because the foreign oppressors in Iraq are the Anglo-Americans and out with them tomorrow.

Unidentified Speaker: I only have one question. 5.5m Palestinian refugees have been living for 57 years in Jordan; in Syria; in Gaza; in the West Bank; in Brighton and the rest of Europe and they are being completely and utterly ignored. Now we are going from one invasion to another invasion. You are mixing up Sharon and Bush. You are accusing the Palestinians of all sorts of things – one of them is that we do not have a leader; we do not have a leadership. 5.5 million Palestinian refugees and they will be causing problems until

the day that there are no more of them as refugees. Ethnic cleansing will never work. The same in Iraq - it will not work. All the troubles will come to this place, your home soon, and it will be very bad.

Rouzbeh Pirouz: Amid all of that sound and fury, we can draw out a few things which are interesting for the panel. One of course was Mark's point, which I think is quite relevant, about the dynamics here. One of the most disturbing things about the dynamics in Iraq if you take a look at the opinion surveys that have been done is that there is a relatively large number of Iraqis before the invasion, who viewed this whole exercise as something akin to liberation. It was liberation with caveats but nonetheless, they thought they were better off. Increasingly, those opinion polls are showing that Iraqis view the occupation as some form of imperialism and of course, that has potentially very negative implications. I think this issue of the dynamics is quite relevant and whether in fact, a pull-out will change the dynamics or not, one of the interesting things is that many of the attacks recently have been not only against American military troops and so on, but also against Iraqi security, the Iraqi National Guard, and people becoming Iraqi policemen. The question is whether the pull-out will change the dynamics or whether the attacks on the Iraqi security and governmental elements will continue. So I think that this is one thing we want to address.

I think the second question was really about whether our attempt at interfering, even if we might think we are trying to help out, may actually end up hurting matters rather than helping matters.

Finally, of course, there are very direct linkages between the Iraq issue and the Arab-Israel conflict, the Palestinians. There are issues to do with public opinion in the Arab world and how the Iraq conflict is linked in the consciousness of Arab public opinion to the plight of the Palestinians. So those are three themes to put to the panel, and I will start with Sir Jeremy.

Sir Jeremy Greenstock: I think that we should set a deadline in terms of principle, but not in terms of a date. To set it in terms of a date is dangerous because you do not know what you will have achieved or not achieved, or what Iraq will have achieved by that

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date. Two things though need to be made clear, by those that are helping Iraq, or who are saying that they are helping Iraq. The first is that we will not stay a moment longer than the Iraqis in charge want us to stay, and I would hope increasingly through this transition period that the Iraqis in charge will be the Iraqis that the Iraqi people want to be in charge.

Second, we should not stay a moment longer than is necessary to grow the Iraqi capacity to do these things for themselves. If you are looking for a date, you would need to say that we will stay with the assistance that is necessary in security and financial terms through the transitional period that we hope to set, then we should rapidly withdraw so long as we are not requested by the Iraqi government to stay. That would be fine, but an earlier date than that would simply motivate the people who are inimical to UK interests. As to whether withdrawal earlier than that would help or hurt, there is no doubt that the foreign forces on the ground are a target, but as Rouzbeh has just said, they are not the only target. This is becoming an internal civil conflict; it is not a classic civil war, but there are violent people trying to dissuade other Iraqis from looking for power – and that has to be sorted out by the kind of Iraqis that we want to see in power at the end of the transitional period, those who will look for stability and the consent of the people.

As for Palestine, although it was irrelevant to our discussion, *it is* relevant that Palestine has not been dealt with in full justice in the international community up to this point and Tony Blair did make a *huge* effort with President Bush to make sure that Palestine was addressed in parallel with Iraq and to some extent in the last year, has been let down by the Americans. Palestine is indirectly relevant, but of course, Palestine is a huge issue in its own right.

Eric Westropp: I come slightly off the back of my topic. I think one should remember that investment in civil reconstruction is also part of the coalition presence there and I think it would be difficult to set a deadline before the Iraqis themselves can set a deadline, without imperiling the actual reconstruction work that is going on with the support of the coalition at the moment. From my point of view, I would support entirely a deadline in principle, I would support that

one has to have enough Iraqi involvement in setting a deadline to make it work and I think it would be very premature now to set a deadline when so much of the actual reconstruction work for Iraq and the money for it is supported from outside the country.

Rouzbeh Pirouz: Fred, let me put a very direct question to you, building on what Mark Leonard said. It appears now that there is something wrong with the dynamics in Iraq. I think there is almost (besides Western politicians running for re-election) some sort of consensus on the downward spiral. So how do we change the dynamics?

Fred Halliday: I am an academic most of the time and one of the first things we do in academia is to go comparative. So let us look at other major conflicts in the world in the last 50 years and see how they ended. They are very often ended with multilateral, international conferences, in which the relevant internal parties were present and also very important, the interests of external parties. You think of Indochina in the 1950s, you think of Afghanistan in the 1980s, you think of the Balkans and so forth. It seems to me that the termination of the British and American presence in Iraq, which has been desired by everybody, has to take place in a multilateral context; it cannot just take place in the context of when the Iraqi government says, not least because however it is elected, its legitimacy will be contested. But this means in the first place that it must be a conference which involves the major neighbouring states – I am very conscious that we are talking about Iraq here and Saddam's regime; we actually have in this room someone from Iraq, we have someone from Kuwait and we have someone from Iran. These people know more than the rest of us what Iraq was capable of and what it could do in the future.

I think there should be an international conference and Bush did actually propose one the other day. The problem is that he made an offer to Iran and the other side of his Iranian policy was going in the opposite direction and we have seen this inconsistency in regard to Iran all along. They get Iranians in when there is trouble on the ground but then they start denouncing them in a press conference. I think the way to get the Americans and the British out of Iraq is to

build Iraqi political institutions, including those that Iraqis do not want. Secondly, you have to get the Iranians, Turks, Syrians and the Saudis involved because one of the very dangerous dynamics, in the end far more important than the American or British fate in Iraq, is the Sunni-Shia conflict, which is being fuelled all the time by this war. You have al-Zarqawi on the one hand killing Shiites, you have the Iranians saying that they are not going to compromise with the Sunnis. We were getting archaic Shiite propaganda from the Iranian delegation in London a few weeks ago – they were over the moon, they thought everything was going their way. Some people tried to point out to them that it wasn't going to be that easy but there has to be a regional context and it seems to me those are the two things to get the troops out. However, it has to be negotiated, as it was with the Russians in Afghanistan, as it was with the French in Indochina, as it was with the Americans in Indochina, although you can have deadlocks.

Rouzbeh Pirouz: We do in fact have an Iraqi voice here and I think we should hear from her and there's also a question in the back and at the front.

Huda Jawad, The Foreign Policy Centre: Although I find it interesting that people are sympathetic to the plight of Iraqis, I find it sometimes patronising that people assume that we want the British and the Americans out, without getting them to complete their jobs. So although I am sympathetic to your sentiments, I find it quite ignorant to say that everyone should depart and leave Iraq as it is at the moment. I also think that it's sometimes opportunistic to confuse and to exploit the Palestinian situation to make excuses for pulling out of Iraq. Nevertheless, my question is what does the panel think are the implications if the deadline for the election is not met?

John Audley, The German Marshall Fund, Washington D.C: You mention the expenditure of money and I wonder if you considered that the United States would be having second thoughts, given the amount of money that we have spent. There has been a lot of debate in the US about the privatisation of security but not very much in this country, so would it be possible to have a discussion regarding the privatisation of certain aspects of security?

Unidentified Speaker: It seems to be the consensus of the panel and the general wish of the Blair doctrine to install democracy in Iraq. Given the Shia is the dominant socio-religious group, then democracy will undoubtedly make them the dominant power, which I think we mentioned before about the expanded Iranian influence in the area. My question is how long will we talk about installing democracy in Iraq while simultaneously postponing real democracy when the outcome will be against British and American interests by expanding this Iranian influence?

Rouzbeh Pirouz: I think that those are all very interesting points. Huda quite rightly reminds us that assumptions about what people in these countries may or may not be thinking is dangerous and one has to be very careful of falling into traps and of assuming that people may want a certain thing when such issues are quite nuanced. It does go to the issue of how we can regain legitimacy in Iraq, which is essential. I think, Eric, we had a question that is right up your alley about the privatisation of security services and I'll let you deal with that. Finally, this critical issue of democracy – what do we mean by democracy? Do we mean that it produces outcomes that we are happy with or are we willing to go with democracy come hell or high water, which is becoming increasingly relevant in Iraq? So we'll go to Eric first on this one and we can get the security services out of the way and then we can deal with the other two, which are probably somewhat bigger issues.

Eric Westropp: In the last years, there hasn't been the level of debate in this country that there has been in the United States. One of the aspects which brought the private sector to public notice in the United States was the very tragic murders of private security people that took place earlier in the year. These were very public and were covered extensively by the American media. This follows on from what I have already said about the non-homogenous nature of the industry, the different perceptions perhaps between America and here about what the industry is about. For example, there is a quite obvious distinction, when you see different security companies operating in Iraq, between the methodology of the US-based companies and that of the European-based companies. On the

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American side, there is more emphasis on the private military companies; on this side of the Atlantic, there are private security companies. There are big differences between the two – the private military company arms itself and looks very like the military, whereas the security companies are very low-profile and are trying to be as civilian as possible. Where you have the background that the private military companies have in the [United] States, it does raise a debate because they do look like the military and act like the military. This becomes a debate about whether this is something that the state should be handling or the private sector.

My answer to your question is that the debate has been different because of the types of services provided and the perception of the industries. What it highlights is that we need to have a common understanding going forward of regulation for this industry and a clear definition of what really is the prerogative of government and government forces and what is the prerogative of private security companies. One thing, which is absolutely certain, is because of the way the world is and the proliferation of this type of problem, that governments are not going to be able to, and nor should they, spend the sorts of resources necessary to look after international companies who are helping in reconstruction in states that are pre- or post-conflict. These companies are going to need support but it is not the role of armies to provide that support. Therefore, the private security companies are going to have to provide that support – at the moment, there is no real understanding or regulation of where the line should be drawn and this was actually the crux at the end of my talk, which is what we need to establish now.

Rouzbeh Pirouz: Let me turn to Sir Jeremy and Fred about this issue of democracy. It is one of the somewhat uncomfortable issues to think about what happens if we follow through with democracy and it doesn't quite produce the rosy outcomes that some people were imagining. Does that mean that we shouldn't go through with it or we shouldn't follow through with it to the very end of the line? What do we actually mean by democracy and are we willing to take the bumps?

Sir Jeremy Greenstock: The most important thing for any state looking for some kind of democracy is that it should be able to change its government through the wishes of the people. You do not know that democracy or anything like it has been established with any stability until you have gone through two or three elections. The long-term change in Iraq will take many years before you can be confident that governments can be changed without violence and through the wishes of the people. Alternatively, it will go in another direction and we will lapse back into another autocracy, which the Iraqis have to be quite careful about. They don't want it too hot or too cold in Iraq. It is the first elections that we are engaged in at the moment and Huda asked about the timing of the first set of elections designed for the transitional period. It is a very nasty decision because they will be violent at whatever stage of the process they wish. Unfortunately, we will not eradicate violence and yet we cannot allow violence to dictate better circumstances for the eradication of violence to be delayed. There needs to be credibility in the government for the people to work with government to eradicate violence and therefore, we will have to take the Iraqi leadership at its word when it says it wants elections early and support them even if there is going to be some violence because that is the way, in the end, to eradicate violence.

To delay it just makes it more difficult the later you leave it, so there is going to have to be courage in setting these elections. They could be delayed if the organisation or the arrangements for the elections need more time, but I would say they have to be held in the first half of 2005. It's up to the Iraqi leadership. As for the results of the elections in this period, it is nothing to do with the Americans or the UK. It is to do with the Iraqis. If the religious Shia come into government because that is the result of the election, we live with that and we wait to see if they govern the Iraqi people to the satisfaction of the Iraqi people. If they don't, they will be thrown out by the next election. But if that is what Iraqis vote, even in an imperfect election, we must go through with that and I do not want to hear from either Washington or London that there is any favour for one party or another, for secular over religious, for Sunni over Shiite, or whatever. Set up the circumstances, as Fred has said, help set up the political institutions and let them get on with it.

Rouzbeh Pirouz: Fred, from the detached perspective of academia, are we serious about democracy in Iraq? There have been fits and starts – some people have been a bit discouraged by the selection of Allawi, a former Baathist for example. What is your view on this?

Fred Halliday: I very much agree with the points that Jeremy made. It is an academic point as well as a political one, and it can be abused, but it is that democracy takes a very long time. We do ourselves and the rest of the world no service when we say that we have been democratic for 200 or 300 years. It's rubbish. No women had the vote before the First World War and most males didn't have the vote before the First World War. 'One person, one vote' in Northern Ireland took until the 1960s or even later before it worked. In the US, millions of people were disenfranchised until the 1970s and the Swiss only gave women the vote a couple of decades ago in every canton and so on. These things take a long time; the American approach that you can suddenly install a democracy or just simply assess it by an election is nonsense. That then puts an emphasis on building the institutions and building the culture. There have been some very successful and striking cases of democracy. People have been voted out, as Sir Jeremy said, of which India is the most striking example. I well remember having an argument with one of the Baathist leaders in Baghdad. He said, "We can't have democracy here, we're a developing country"

"Well, what about India?" I countered.

He replied, "India? Have you been to India? They have cows in the middle of the street in their capital city with lackeys. We will never allow this".

Then, he went on to justify torture; "Amnesty International is absolutely right – we are torturing and killing innocent people, but it is the only way to rule in Iraq". To many people in the street, this is pure Baathist and fascist spiel but without any apology whatsoever. The point is that attitudes, institutions and, above all, trust, take a long time.

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That having been said, I think one of the great achievements of Saddam was to destroy national parties in Iraq. There were national parties, there were nationalistic parties, there was a Communist party, and, in a part of the world where we all look at indo-ethnic conflict, Arab-Israeli, Kurdish and Turkish, the history of Kurdish-Arab political cooperation in Iraq over many decades is very, very striking. If you want to find cases of what I call old-fashioned nationalism, and what they call on the continent, inter-nationalism, the Kurdish-Arab cooperation in Iraq to this day has a certain relevance, not least an organisation, which the press does not draw much attention to, but is a significant factor in Iraq. The only national party left is the Communist party, which is active and is present in this government, overtly and covertly, and it is one of the main institutions working with its eyes open to make this political process work.

I also want to say something about the issue of Shiism. This is used in a very generic way, as shorthand, and people don't have time, including Iraqis, to study this issue carefully. But Shiism is not a single political doctrine and not a single political bloc. There have been enormous debates over the last fifty years, in Iran, in Iraq and, to a certain extent, in Lebanon, among Shiite thinkers about what kind of political form they would want to have. There are as many questions as there were answers between Canada, the US and Western Europe – there are enormous different varieties. There are two things I want to say.

Firstly, very few Iraqis want an Islamic Republic – they do not want this institution because they see what happens in Iran. Grand Ayllatoah Ali Sistani is an Iranian and he has seen what has happened in Iran, and he doesn't want it, he is very clear about that.

Secondly, what happened when the Baathists came to power is that a huge debate took place among Shiites in Iraq about what form of modern politics they should espouse and, lo and behold, there were three camps. There was more or less a socialist camp, there was a liberal camp and there was an authoritarian, nationalist camp among the Shiites and they were not that enthusiastic about an Islamic government. Muqtada Al Sadr emerges and excels as an

opportunist politician; this stuff in the mosque was just theatre. That was why he did it and he held the world to ransom for seventeen days and got his own city; he wasn't trying to defeat the Americans; it was just theatre and he succeeded, with help from the Islamic guards in Iraq by the way. He emerges out of a very interesting and a very, very educated debate and...they are thinking about these things. Now in Iraq, there is not a Shiite answer, there are lots of different Shiite ideas, there are lots of intellectuals writing about this. There are not all that many that reject Western thought; there are many who are engaged with it, who study, for example, terrorism, the rights of women and so on. It is an open question what will come out of it, but the power of the Shiites has caused alarm among the Sunnis and al-Zarqawi is the mouthpiece of that alarm in its most extreme form.

It would be much more profitable for people in the outside world, not the British, who are useless at this, but others who have genuine experience of federalism and evolution and constitutional solutions, if they would sit with Iraqis and try and come up with a solution. I am glad to say that my colleague, Brendan O'Leary, who spent twenty years working with Mo Mowlam and others to try to get a new constitution in Northern Ireland and who is one of the intellectual fathers of the Agreement, has been sitting in Iraq for the last year advising the Iraqis on constitutional matters and getting the place to work. So we are not dealing with a closed mental system; we are dealing with something more subtle here.

Unidentified Speaker: I cannot quite avoid the impression that the level of discussion of this panel has been slightly complacent and partly that is because I attended a meeting last night in which the discussion was about what might be the effects of a Bush re-election and let me just pick up one example of this, in relation to what was said about Iran. Iran is a fairly unhappy situation. In my mind, the Iranians would be fair in saying "we are surrounded by Americans, to the East in Afghanistan, to the West in Iraq." At the moment, the feeling is probably that the Americans won't invade even if Bush wins but what they might do is use the Israelis as proxies to bomb some of the nuclear installations. That is the level of discourse of what is going on, and last night's panel picked that up independently

and talked about that as an anxiety. Would any of you like to comment on that?

Unidentified Speaker: I wanted the panel to address just briefly the position that the Secretary-General, Kofi Annan is in, trying to fulfil the expectations of Iraqis and the Americans and the British to put staff in to try to organise this election and the pressure that he's under from his own security departments and the lack of security for his people there. Sir Jeremy, your comment that perhaps the arrangements for the elections could slip six months is an indication that you think pragmatically that Prime Minister's Allawi's assertion that it is a drop-dead date for elections will not hold.

Unidentified Speaker: I just wondered to what extent you feel that if the rebuilding in Iraq is being held up and not going ahead as well as it might, that this may be due to lack of support from other countries? How much of that lack of support is there really and how much is that due to Mr Bush and Mr Blair's consistent proclamation about how brilliantly everything has gone?

Unidentified Speaker: This is a question aimed at Fred. What do you think that we could actually be doing practically to give support, for instance, to the Iraqi Federation of Trade Unions?

Rouzbeh Pirouz: A good question to end on at a Labour Party conference! But let's start with Sir Jeremy and this issue of the UN. It is a very relevant issue obviously because it is very unlikely that we could have elections that have a semblance of legitimacy if they are not being run by the UN or an international organisation. Are we in a position to do that and how do we pull it off effectively? That links into this issue of whether we are doing enough to get international support and whether our attitudes, or the attitude of the political leaders, are effectively impeding that.

Sir Jeremy Greenstock: It would be wonderful if the UN could be on the ground in much greater strength and I know that the Secretary-General wants that to happen in principle. The difficulty is that the UN will then be the first targets of violence. They succeeded in blowing up Sergio de Mello and his team in August last year and

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they will go for them again and the staff of the UN do not want to be put, as most of them see it, in danger on the ground because the US and the UK did things, and they then have to reap the consequences. There is no doubt that the UN would run the elections better than any other international institution and we want them there on the ground. It doesn't mean to say that elections cannot be held if the UN doesn't manage to put in a team on the ground. Although I said "within the first half of next year," I did not say elections should be delayed and I think that Iyad Allawi is aiming to hold those elections as soon as possible next year in terms of the arrangements and the security situation but it may slip from the transitional date of end-January.

On the wider question of should there be more international support and whether we have turned everybody off, I think there are certain countries that would have been quite comfortable, have been quite comfortable, in staying just out of reach of the need to contribute in Iraq whatever happened - and Iraqis notice it. They know that we haven't done everything right, they know that they want to get rid of the coalition forces eventually, but they resent the fact that some countries that were capable of helping them have not lifted a finger to do so and so it gives rise to this perception of Bush and Blair and policy. There is still a lot of grit in international relationships, but there is reluctance, frankly, to take on something that is in everyone's interest throughout the globe in making sure that Iraq doesn't become another dark place from which violence is practiced. I think people need to put aside the past and contribute to where we are now, helping Iraq and its people to achieve something better than might otherwise be the case.

Rouzbeh Pirouz: Fred, are we doing enough to support Iraqi civil society as opposed to just top-down stuff?

Fred Halliday: I think the question is very important in raising the issue of trade unions and focus groups and of media groups and locality groups in Iraq, of which there is a long history. When I think back to this conference twenty years ago, there was a group in this country, the Committee against Oppression and Dictatorship in Iraq, and it is interesting to see who were the sponsors of it. Jack Straw

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was on it, Neil Kinnock was working on it, Glenys Kinnock, and all these people were a lot more prominent in that campaign...and the realisation that there were in Iraq, going way back, political institutions of the modern kind and much more modern than many other countries. This was a country, like Iran, that had modern politics, which was then destroyed by dictatorship. It wasn't somewhere coming out of the Middle Ages or somewhere like Saudi Arabia, which had no history of civil society. Many of those people have gone back to try and make it work. We should support them financially; we should support them with technical advice on issues, like I said to a man in Spain last week, "you have experience of three things; abolishing capital punishment, federalism and democratising the army." Those three things are very relevant to Iraq today and that kind of advice is useful. We must respect Iraqis, we must listen to them.

There are 100,000 Iraqis in this country but very few people talk to them. It's not that they are of one mind and not as if they have all the answers. They are thinking they're going back, they are investing, and they are on mobile phones. If you talk to Iraqis here, they are in touch with their country every day. We should talk to the different political parties; we should draw into the debate, if not through official British representatives in Baghdad who they want to talk to, then through conferences here, those Iraqis who are nationalists, who reject violence but also reject the Allawis and the Chalabis of this world. That is not to say that Allawi and Chalabi are the same thing; they're not. I know both of them and I have a lot more time for Allawi than I do for Chalabi.

I think that there is a lot that can be done on the basis of respect and keeping politics open and getting away from these theory-types that somehow say that this is a medieval country. I dislike intensely the use of three words that have come to dominate the public debate; the word 'barbarian', the word, 'extremist' and the word 'fanatic'. These are dustbin words; they do not say anything. If there are barbarians, let's look at the history of Europe in the last hundred years; let's not get arrogant here. To a number, we supported Saddam. Let's also remember something that's been completely whitened out of the debate on terrorism, which is that we created Bin

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Laden. Maggie Thatcher and Ronald Reagan are the illegitimate parents of Osama Bin Laden. Let's get this out in the open; we funded these guys. It wasn't medieval Islam or the Arab land; it was 'us'. We, in the Cold War, created these people and a little bit of modesty and a little bit of respect would help.

The ending is up to the Iraqis. The fundamental complacencies are well taken on both counts. Iraq could well go completely wrong; it could become more than a black hole or a vast volcano that will affect everywhere. In the end though, if there isn't going to be an Anglo-American solution, there will be an Iranian solution. This is what will happen one way or the other if the black hole explodes and the consequences of that will be bad.

Then we come to the other point, the Palestine point. This is coming to the boil again and the Iranian nuclear issue, the fact that Iranians have missiles in Lebanon (which can hit Israel) and they will use them if they are attacked, means that things will get much worse. The only solution, and this is Sir Jeremy's job, is diplomacy. Bush is not thinking of diplomacy and I do want to argue the point that the policy of the Americans in Iraq since the fall of Saddam has been catastrophic; a whole series of things has gone wrong and we know the list, including most importantly in recent months and to this day, that there's no-one in charge. Who's making all the decisions? Some Commander in a town in Fallujah. Some guy who's going to 'take out' a house about which you have some ridiculous intelligence. Somebody else says something to the Iranians and Rumsfeld says something else. There's no-one in charge; the top man is useless, we all know that he's not up to the job, but he's going to get re-elected. Rumsfeld and his people are all over the place. The military on the ground are incompetent and there is widespread torture at Abu Ghraib. I come back to respect: this story about Abu Ghraib is not a story about anti-Muslim pressures...it is simply contempt for ordinary people; it is imperialism and if we have a lesson to draw from this, it has to be respect. It means you can listen although you can disagree. You can disagree with Sir Stanley about banning alcohol and driving out the Christians or whatever, but you have to listen and take it from there: people have not listened.

My favourite story is Bremer who, by all accounts, from the Iraqis who have met him, is quite a nice guy, but he went to see the head of the KGB, whose father is a famous Kurdish leader and his photograph was on the wall. Bremer came in and said, "Who is this guy?" It's like walking into the American Embassy and seeing George Washington and saying, "Who's this guy in the wig?" or seeing the Queen and saying, "What's this woman in the dark coat?" I mean, he didn't know anything. I think in a way there is an intellectual relationship and back in this country, we have Iraqis here, let's have our debate but not focus on Gilligan, Hutton and everything, let's talk to these people.

Rouzbeh Pirouz: It's interesting that Fred says that. The American academic and former official who was actually in Iraq, Larry Diamond, says that one of the keys to success for democratisation is modesty and respect and understanding and, of course that is a key element of what we need to do in Iraq if we are going to succeed with this very difficult process. I promised the panel one last crack, which has got to be brief because I think we are way over our allotted time and I know that a lot of people have now come in, but I'll go in reverse order to the way we did it initially and perhaps we could take a minute or a minute and a half. Fred?

Fred Halliday: We must complete the work that so many Iraqis, Arabs and Kurds have given their lives for, which is to build a democratic and independent Iraq. We must complete the work of Sergio De Mello and his colleagues, who were blown up for trying to create the necessary political will in Iraq and who were the victims of idiots on both sides.

Eric Westropp: I'd like to add one final vignette. Political support and intractability is one thing, but we actually look after, in Iraq, seven different governments and fifteen different corporate nationalities. It only needs the security situation to improve a little bit more on the ground so that the reconstruction provided by these nationalities and such corporations will blossom enormously.

Sir Jeremy Greenstock: This can be done. As the lady said earlier, the reporting you see and the headlines are not what is going on in the whole of Iraq. At the moment, I am concerned that we don't yet see a leader for a unified Iraq coming through. There is going to be a question of leadership, taking the Iraqi people through to something that preserves their integrity and their unity and, at the moment, we can only see the need for coalitions of Iraqis. They have to get through a transitional period to the point when there is a united Iraqi leadership to take Iraq into the next phase. It isn't there yet and therefore, we have to put it in the various localities, and the elections may well have to be managed in the local areas, rather than as a massive central unified operation. There are enough Iraqis there who want this to go right and who want to be properly led and for this to work if we give them the tools to do it. Don't believe that this is going steadily downhill; it is going to go up and down until the Iraqis decide where they want this to come out, but they do need a classic leadership of unity before they finally make it.

Rouzbeh Pirouz: Thank you very much indeed. A mildly hopeful note that I think all of us will be happy to go away with. I thank you all for coming; I commend to you the Civility programme at The Foreign Policy Centre, which focuses on many of the issues that we have talked about today and reform in the Middle East. Thank you again to the panel.

**The 2004 Conservative Party Conference fringe event,
Bournemouth**

Mark Leonard, Director, The Foreign Policy Centre:

The Foreign Policy Centre was set up five years ago by the British Prime Minister Tony Blair. We were set up to come up with fresh thoughts and innovative solutions to global problems; and I don't think there is an issue which has had a bigger impact on the nature of international relations since we were founded than Iraq. There is probably no bigger issue for at least a generation in terms of the impact on public debates about foreign policy, political costs for various different leaders and above all, about perceptions of the United Kingdom. It is an issue which really split the country into many parties. During the crisis, we were very pleased to publish a whole series of arguments arguing both for and against the intervention including a best selling pamphlet by Andrew Tyrie called *The Axis of Instability*, which argued very strongly against the war.

But we have now got to a situation where what happens in Iraq will have huge consequences in terms of the rules of international relations in the future. The purpose of this fringe is not really to go over the arguments for or against, but to try and look at how we move forward. Therefore, the title of the Fringe has two aspects to it, **Stability and Democracy in Iraq**, and I'm hoping that the speakers will discuss both of these issues.

I think the first is diagnosing what the situation on the ground is like at the moment – is it a civil war? Is it a war of occupation? Is it as bad as the media argue that it is going to be? It is important to think about what sort of solutions and what steps the British government and its allies should be taking over the next few months and years with the run-up to the election, if we are going to extricate ourselves from the extremely tricky situation in Iraq both for Iraqi people and also for the British government and the troops. These are pretty big questions and I am thrilled that we have such a distinguished panel to debate them.

Sir Malcolm Rifkind, Conservative candidate for Kensington and Chelsea:

Chairman, Ladies and Gentleman, thank you very much for inviting me this evening. The subject of Iraq is of course a pretty sombre subject but if I may begin with just one lighter note. One of the most splendid memories I have of the Gulf War in 1991 when Saddam Hussein was being thrown out of Kuwait, was driving north of Edinburgh, and there was a little village in Edinburgh called an unusual name, the Crook of Devon. As you entered the village, somebody had put on the sign at the entrance to the village, which said 'Crook of Devon, twinned with the fief of Baghdad.' Sadly, that did not appear a year or so ago so it has been lost to posterity. Now, the chairman quite sensibly has said that we shouldn't spend our time looking to the past but at looking actually where we are now and where we are going from here.

I have to begin by saying that "if we wanted to go to Baghdad, I wouldn't start from here!" It's important that you know where I stand on this so I am not going to be someone who would normally disapprove of war with a just cause. I supported the conflict in Afghanistan and I supported the Gulf War with virtually no reservations at all. My starting position is that I happen to think that the war on Iraq was unnecessary, the wrong war at the wrong place and at the wrong time, but I am not going to go into the reasons for that at this moment.

The doctrine of pre-emption in international relations

I want to firstly identify two factors which have happened but which have long-term consequences and then say a few things about the current situation in Iraq. If we look at what lessons can be learnt from the war, I'd draw attention to two in particular. First of all, there was a very important step made by President Bush before the war itself when he developed what was called the doctrine of pre-emption, which was that you don't wait until you are attacked in the modern world. If you have reason to believe you are going to be attacked, it is entirely justified to go in first and thereby remove someone who is going to be a threat either to yourself or to your

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allies. This doctrine of pre-emption was seen as a very major statement by the US administration.

I have always taken the view that there are circumstances when it is right to have a pre-emptive strike. If you have very hard evidence that you are about to be attacked, you don't wait until it has happened before you respond. You don't wait until Pearl Harbour has been bombed or 9/11, so in theory, the doctrine of pre-emption doesn't sound too unreasonable. However, I was also once told that logic was the art of doing wrong with confidence. You have got to be very, very careful indeed and I think that the significance of the controversy over weapons of mass destruction and the fact that there weren't any and they haven't been found shows the danger of a doctrine of pre-emption.

There are two other problems with this doctrine. Firstly, if the United States has the right to take pre-emptive action against another country that it perceives to be a threat, then every other country has got a similar right. Under law, whatever right the United States has must be the same for every other member of the United Nations, all 191 of them. However, it becomes quite a dangerous world if it becomes established that you can attack countries that have not yet attacked you. Secondly, if circumstances do exist when you can perceive such a threat and you are ready to attack a country that hasn't already attacked you, the evidence must be very powerful. It must be unqualified and you must be able to demonstrate to a sceptical world, preferably before the war or at the very least after it, why that war was necessary.

This is the significance of the failure to find the weapons of mass destruction. The fact that there were no such weapons, whether or not people believe or didn't believe the intelligence, shows how dangerous it is to launch a war based on very doubtful intelligence information. Therefore, assuming that the purpose of going to war is as it was stated, then the failure to find these weapons demonstrates the danger of such an approach if it was to become a normal part of international relations.

The politicisation of intelligence

The second preliminary point I want to make is that I think one of the most foolish, dangerous and terrible things that our own Prime Minister did in relation to this war, was the politicisation of the intelligence services. As the Chairman mentioned, I served as Defence Secretary and Foreign Secretary. This means that for five years every day, I received intelligence reports from the secret services. I am not allowed to tell you what was in them, but I can assure you that hardly a day passed when these intelligence reports were not highly qualified. They said that this is the information we have received, but we want to make it clear to ministers that we cannot guarantee the reliability of it. Some of the information comes from defectors, some of the information comes from people with their own political agenda and some people who wanted to give the impression that they were viable agents even invented the information. There were normally all sorts of qualifications. What Mr Blair did by producing the dodgy dossier, was to force the intelligence agencies to produce a document in their name in order to give the Prime Minister and his colleagues a character reference. That was unforgivable, because they are civil servants, and it is not their job to prove the government's case on an issue that divides the nation. They should have declined to participate. If the government wants to put out its own document in the Prime Minister's name, that's its business. However, this politicisation, which has never been done by any previous Labour or Conservative government, and I suspect will never be done again, is one of the greatest failings that Blair has to answer for.

Where do we go from here?

Having said that, where do we go from here? The reality is, as we all painfully recognise, that the war has been fought. Iraq is still, at the moment, an occupied country although it has its own government. There is an insurgency and I believe that the action of the Spanish government when it took over in withdrawing all its troops in days or weeks was profoundly irresponsible and foolish. The simple harsh fact is, that if the Iraqi people are to have any prospect for stability and security over the months and years to come, then it is

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necessary for this transition to be managed in such a way that the new Iraqi government is given breathing space in which to build up its own armed forces, its own security forces, and its own police services, in order thereby to create conditions of stability and security in Iraq.

If the United States, the United Kingdom and other countries were simply to announce they were withdrawing their troops because it has all proved too terrible, that would mean two things. First of all, it would mean anarchy within Iraq. We would have warlords and internal civil war throughout the country because there is no effective central government in many of the regions and provinces. The problem is more acute than that though. The truth is that the *very existence* of Iraq as a single state would be thrown into jeopardy. The Kurds in the North would like to go for full independence. The Shia in the South around Basra are already pressing for greater autonomy, and the Iranians across the border are trying to foment that dissatisfaction, because that's where the oil fields are and they would like to divorce the oil fields from the rest of Iraq. So, if you have the collapse of Iraq into a complete hotchpotch of many principalities, into a failed state like Afghanistan or Somalia, I think you really would have permanent instability and a permanent area of recruitment for terrorism and so forth.

That is one of the tragedies of the whole Iraq war. Saddam Hussein was utterly ghastly, but we were not operating within Iraq until now with the internal anarchy where terrorists get the opportunity to advance their nasty and evil objectives. Therefore, in my judgement, it is now crucial that for months and years, even longer than that, to have a strong international military presence. The problem, the paradox, is that in the eyes of many Iraqis the reason why they have some sympathy for the insurgents is because the occupying force is not a truly international force, comprised of essentially the Americans, the British and relatively few others. It is Western, European troops occupying their country coming from a different culture, with a different set of political values whom they have been taught for many years to oppose. There is hardly an Arab in the Middle East who has not been taught to loathe the West not just in Iraq but in Saudi Arabia and Jordan and Syria. These governments

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may be pro-Western, but public opinion has not been for very many years.

We are left with the paradox that particularly American but also British troops are necessary in Iraq to provide security and stability and to also give the Iraqi army time to form. However, it is the very existence of American troops, which is humiliating in the eyes of many Iraqis. This gives the insurgents, the terrorists and their friends opportunities to recruit in a way that they might not otherwise.

A possible solution

How do we square the circle? Can we square the circle? I think we can in one particular way. It seems to me that if we want to reduce the impression that Iraq is still an occupied country, while accepting that President Bush and the White House are still the ultimate power, then you have to have greater internationalisation of the foreign military presence in Iraq. What this means more than anything is the need to get major contingents from other Arab and Islamic countries. You need to be able to have Jordanian troops, Syrian troops, Saudi troops, Egyptian troops or whoever, because these would be far more acceptable to many Iraqis and demonstrate that this is not simply an American or Western imposition on their country. Instead, this would be an opportunity to create stability until the new Iraqi government can take over and elections can produce the right results. We are not going to get these contingents from other Arab or Islamic countries unless the United Nations is brought far more into it.

I know the United Nations are dirty words in America, and that for various reasons it is unlikely, if not inconceivable, that this side of the presidential elections President Bush or even Senator Kerry is going to be attracted by such an approach. But, in my humble opinion, you are not going to get the defeat of the insurgency on a long-term basis until ordinary Iraqis feel that they are not under the occupation of American and British troops alone. They may be willing to accept a greater international presence, but it has to be an international presence from the region of which they are a part. That means including major contributions from other Arab countries. That

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is not going to happen unless the United Nations or the Security Council gives authority to such an occupation. If President Bush, and for that matter, Mr Blair, cannot contemplate such a policy now or in the next two or three months then I fear that in a year from now, eighteen months from now, we are going to be forced into such a solution. I hope I am wrong. It may all work out beautifully, the insurgency may be defeated, elections may be held, and a full free and democratic Iraq may emerge. I will be astonished though if it happens. I don't believe in fairy tales and I don't believe in them in the Middle East or anywhere else. It's not that Iraq is any worse than anywhere else, it is simply that you are dealing with a country with a different culture, with a different history, where the development of democratic institutions will happen one day but it's going to take a lot, lot longer than the current assumptions either in the White House or Downing Street appear to assume.

So I conclude Mr Chairman, by saying that I do have optimism for the long-term in Iraq but it seems to me that we have to square the circle. How can we involve American and British troops and support the Iraqi government without it seeming like an American or British occupation of an Arab country? This requires a more international military force, which will only be deliverable if there was a greater United Nations involvement. I think Britain, as a permanent member of the Security Council, ought to be able to make an important contribution towards changing the climate of opinion that makes that possible. Many thanks.

Andrew Tyrie MP, Shadow Minister for Economic Affairs:

The first thing I want to say is that for me, the decision to vote for the amendment that said that the case for war had not been made and to abstain on the final vote were the most difficult decisions in my seven years in Parliament. I am a strong Atlanticist. I have an American step-grandfather and I've been going to America since I was a very small boy. I believe that the defence of this country is inconceivable in the absence of a close relationship with the United States. Their security almost entirely is our security. However, on this issue, I fundamentally disagreed with what the Bush administration had done, triggered by what I saw as an overreaction to September 11th and some misguided policy-makers surrounding President Bush.

I want to try and address three questions which are slightly different from the ones on the title but not far away. I think these are things that people want to know.

- How bad is the blunder?
- How can we extricate ourselves, which is what Sir Malcolm was talking about in the second half of his speech
- What foreign policy can best suppress terrorism?

After all, Iraq was triggered by a terrorist assault.

Casualties of the Iraq War

First of all, how bad is it? I think it looks very bad at the moment. Terrorism is on the rise, there is a risk of civil war, there is a risk of regional destabilisation with both Iran and Turkey perhaps playing a very important role, but I am not altogether pessimistic. Elections may create some legitimacy. We must consider what were the wider objectives of those who took us to war, and why did they think it was a good idea? The answers to that, I think, are twofold:

- First, that it would assist with the resolution to the Palestinian question because it would take Hezbollah out of the picture. Hezbollah was being funded and helped by Syria, which was being assisted by Iraq.

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- Secondly, we were told that this might trigger the democratisation of the Middle East and that you might get domino democracy. I fear that it's more likely that we will have domino terrorism rather than domino democracy as a consequence of the invasion, but I don't think that is really the full price of the miscalculation. I think it is very important that we have clear in our minds exactly what is being put at risk. It is not just in the Middle East that the full risk is to be borne, but much more widely.

The biggest single casualty of this war has been trust in our political leaderships. It is a collapse of trust so bad that I worry that if this Prime Minister comes before the House of Commons a second time and says "I cannot tell you exactly what the threat is, but there is a threat and I am telling you I need your support to deploy troops in defence of this country," that he cannot be sure that he will get that support either from the House, or from the country. That leaves Britain in a weakened position. It has weakened our security in a serious and potentially dangerous way. A potential aggressor will perceive that weakness, when the bargaining process takes place, for example, in those eyeball-to-eyeball contacts that occur before conflict, and indeed that took place in some respects between Saddam Hussein and the West before the war.

The second huge casualty of this war, far greater than anything to do with the Middle East, is that we have damaged greatly the Atlantic alliance. The divisions in the West are very serious as a consequence. The root cause of those divisions is not what happened, but the arguments used to justify the war, and I completely agree with Malcolm when he said that the notion of a pre-emptive war is an extremely dangerous one; he cited one very important reason, which is how other countries will use this language and this doctrine. Indeed, they are already doing it. China has already articulated (using the very words of George Bush) a position on regime change and pre-emption and has already referred to the possible case for the need for regime change in Taiwan. The North Korean foreign affairs spokesman talked about the need for a pre-emptive strike on South Korea, again using the same language. The Russians have been using this language to justify adventurous

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policies in the Caucasus: Putin made a speech in which he extracted large chunks from a speech given by Dick Cheney to justify military action in Georgia. The plain fact is that the idea of pre-emption, the notion of pre-emptive and regime change justified wars, is inherently a revolutionary doctrine in international society and it ultimately will be a recipe for anarchy.

The second reason why this is such a dangerous doctrine is that it would be a spur to the proliferation of nuclear weapons. Small countries which do not share Western interests will compare Iraq to North Korea. North Korea has the nuclear capability, it has the capacity to harm Western interests in Asia very badly, and they are a far worse case in many respects than Iraq, at all levels. And yet they, of course, have not been attacked and invaded because they have nuclear weapons. The lesson that small countries will take is that the best way to protect itself from a pre-emptive strike or the threat of regime change may be to get a nuclear weapon. That worries me very much.

The third reason why I think pre-emption and regime change have been so pernicious is that the West, including the United States, is simply not powerful enough to take this policy to its logical conclusion. Iraq has vividly exposed the limits of American power and that exposure has made us all the losers. We are all beneficiaries of the fact that America appears strong because they are our greatest protector. When they look weak, we are also weakened. The US, although clearly a superpower in relation to other countries, is now exposed as not being a superpower in relation to the key challenges facing us. That worries me very much too.

I think that there is a great deal of rebuilding to do. The US administration, and particularly parts of the Washington foreign policy establishment, has got this very firmly on board. Don't think for a moment that there is not a vigorous debate, very similar to the one we are already having in this room, going on in Washington. It is occurring amongst the Republicans and so it is not just a Democrat versus Republican debate. Policies are being modified and the search for partners has already begun in the administration to try

and internationalise the solution. There is much less stridency, even during the elections, than there was a year ago, from George Bush on these issues.

What can be done and what foreign policy best suppresses terrorism?

I think there are a number of things that can be done and I want, in the concluding part of what I want to say, to go through four or five things that I think may be done to help. Again, Malcolm talked about the paradox of the presence of Western troops, simultaneously providing the essential bedrock of security but also being the stone in the shoe that makes it so difficult for anybody to try and govern Iraq because they will appear to be propping up a puppet regime. Malcolm did not put it like that, but that was the point he was alluding to. I think, and I throw this out as a thought because I'm not close to the policy-making, that one way of recreating an element of legitimacy for any elected Iraqi regime after January next year is for that government to agree a timetable for withdrawal of its troops, even if it is some distance hence, to demonstrate that there is a process whereby the Americans will leave the area. I believe that a large part of the rebellion is an Islamic rebellion against the West in the Middle East and has a territorial origin. We are somehow on *their* soil, we are in *their* way, and we are on *their* patch. Getting out, or demonstrating that we are going to get out, will send an important signal, but we can't get out while the security situation is so terrible. That is our catch-22.

A second basic point is that in dealing with terrorism, the battle will be won or lost primarily in the hearts and minds of moderate Muslim opinion at home and abroad. That has many implications for the restraint in the use of force. We were right to go into Afghanistan and, in my view, we were wrong to go into Iraq. It would help if we were able to express our doubts now more vigorously than we did before. The clearest expression of more even-handedness with respect to the Islamic community and thereby winning over those moderate hearts and minds in the Muslim community is, of course, Palestine, something Malcolm did not talk about.

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While it appears that Israel has unqualified support for any action in Palestine, any American statement claiming also to be working for, and trying to assist Muslim communities in the Middle East, will simply not be believed. I think that a return to progress towards a settlement of the Palestinian question, is a prerequisite, necessary but not sufficient, for a long-term solution to terrorism. The acid test of whether America really has changed policy or not, will be whether they are prepared to criticise the Israeli government publicly.

A fourth thing that I think we can do, which Malcolm also alluded to, is the need to go in search of allies. We need to internationalise the problem and the solution. Malcolm spoke about allies in the Middle East, but we have a particular role in making sure that the Germans and the French grasp that the problems that America and Britain are now facing in Iraq are also their problems. Their security is at risk in the Middle East, as well as ours.

Our problem is that the Atlantic alliance is more difficult to manage because of the difference of perceptions. Whereas the United States fundamentally perceives itself to be at war, Europe fundamentally perceives itself to be at peace. This difference of perception needs very careful management. Another thing that I strongly support, which the British specifically can do, and are doing, is to play a role in engaging countries which, for various logical and historical reasons, the United States are not engaged with, particularly Syria and Iran. It is very important that this work persists. We must form as wide as possible a coalition with any country that rejects terrorism, even if we don't necessarily support other aspects of that regime. The broadest possible coalition is the only means by which we can suppress terrorism.

Two more things I think we can do. I've alluded to one, which is to reject the doctrine of regime change, and along with it, the doctrine of pre-emption. Alongside that, I think there is scope now for the British to articulate much more clearly the criteria which we believe in the 21st century should govern the use of force in international society. We need to restate the doctrine of non-interference: don't invade my house if I don't invade yours. We need to restate the

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need to respect for sovereign independence and the primacy of international law. We need to restate the criteria under which we would be prepared to go to war on humanitarian grounds, basically in circumstances only where a broad based consensus in the international community can be found. We must be mindful that one man's freedom fight is another man's invasion.

So to conclude, how big was this blunder? I don't know. The worst case was that it could be another Suez, which bound together Nasser's anti-capitalist and anti-Western instincts with Arab nationalism. The most dangerous thing that can happen out of this conflict in the Middle East, is that the Iraq war succeeds in binding together Arab nationalism with Islamic fundamentalism. That would be a potent and dangerous combination. But it's not all black; there is a lot of good news. We are not in a war of civilisations as some of the more fanciful academics tell us, but neither do we have just a few tiny little pockets of terrorism. The overwhelming majority of the international community do have a massive and shared interest in bringing us towards a solution. Most of the West is realising that US interests are also their interests in this conflict, and the US has itself pulled back, in some ways, from implementing the rhetoric of regime change and pre-emptive action. These are some of the ingredients for the restoration of a Western partnership and, if carefully managed, I think the rest of the world will start to find its trust in it being restored.

I end with one further thought. Even if the administrations in Washington and London recognise all these points, and change policy accordingly, I just wonder whether Mr Blair and Mr Bush as individuals, will carry the credibility in the international community required to give it full effect. It may be that we need to change the administration in order to deliver a long-term stabilised international community and put us on the road to peace in the Middle East.

* At the end of Andrew Tyrie's presentation, **Eric Westropp**, Director of the Control Risks Group, made a speech which was similar to the one which he made at the Labour Party Conference a week earlier and which can be found on page 9 of this pamphlet.

Alan Duncan MP, Shadow Secretary of State for International Development:

You have been listening for an hour so all I want to do is put a couple of conceptual thoughts into your head to spark your thinking about what is an increasingly difficult and dangerous world. You've had expert speakers before me, I heard what Andrew said, I heard what Eric said and I think would know what Malcolm would have said as he has been saying so eloquently on the radio, in a consistent way over the last year. I want to talk about two things under two brief headings – the morality of Western conduct and the nature of terrorism. Unless these two things are understood and can be brought together, the world is going to become a more dangerous and difficult place. Much of what I want to say about morality has been touched on by Andrew and I imagine also by Malcolm, and it is this.

The morality of the West's conduct

Has the West been *justified* in what it has done? What are the consequences for the Western world if what has been done *cannot* be justified? We knew when the Argentineans invaded the Falklands there was a clear case of invasion. We knew when Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait there was a clear case of invasion. There was a clear *casus belli*, which, in any moral calculus, could be understood. What has happened over the last year or more is that that calculus has required a new assessment; and what it did was it said that there is a risk that something is going to happen and therefore we are entitled to pre-empt what might happen by attacking a country before it does. Essentially, George Bush and Tony Blair said that there is a risk from biological and chemical weapons and potentially in the long-term, nuclear weapons can be developed and they can spread. If that were true then I think we can all say in our heart of hearts there was justification in taking some measure of pre-emptive action against Saddam Hussein. But for us as Conservatives in Opposition without our own information we had to take that on trust. We were told absolutely categorically that there was a risk. We took it on trust and I think we've been betrayed.

As Andrew rightly points out, this may have severe consequences further down the line. *There were no weapons of mass destruction.* Now, if there were no weapons of mass destruction, were there other justifications for invading Iraq? In my view, any kind of moral justification for wanting to see Saddam Hussein removed is in the same way I would love to see Kim Jong Il removed and Robert Mugabe removed. It is not the same thing as giving us the right to go and do it. The consequence we now face is that for future action the integrity of the West has been polluted and polluted very severely and very dangerously. That will somehow have to be retrieved. But let me look at what I think is actually the more important issue, the nature of terrorism.

The nature of terrorism

I get very angry when I hear George Bush talk incessantly about the “War on Terror”. There is no such thing as the War on Terror in the simplistic way he describes. Terrorism is a hydra-headed, multifaceted phenomenon which requires a very grown up and responsible reaction. The fact is it is not just a single, simple phenomenon. It arises from a cauldron of all sorts of coincident forces – we have the unresolved dispute between Arabs and Israelis which makes all Muslims feel that America, in particular, acts with double standards. Put in a crude cartoon way, Saddam Hussein invades Kuwait, America sends an army, Israel occupies Palestine and they send them a cheque. Unduly simplistic, but that’s what they think. It is mixed up in the fact that there is massive social change on broadly the peninsula of the Arab world where nearly 50% of most countries’ populations are aged between 18 and 22, which is creating massive economic pressure to know how they can have a job, be educated and somehow have some kind of hope.

We have the phenomenon of anti-Americanism. America, in my view, is never going to have a responsible foreign policy until it understands the origins and consequences of anti-American feeling. When I was at Harvard 20 years ago, Leonid Brezinski said, “America will never have a responsible foreign policy till it learns to lose its obsession with Cuba.” Well I think the modern equivalent of that is the nature of anti-Americanism in the wider world, which is a

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force, and I regret it, for so much evil conduct. So it is tied up in that and the fact that Osama Bin Laden, *the main terrorist in the world*, and the main enemy wants to get rid of the Al-Saud regime in Saudi Arabia and get rid of any kind of American presence in the Arab and Muslim world altogether. Now all of this is in a bubbling pot and it cannot be treated by a simplistic view which just says that this is a war on terror. It's far more complicated than that. And that is why I think that Andrew hit on a very important point. Invading Afghanistan was right when the Taliban regime was absolutely coincident with the main force for terror which was Osama Bin Laden. But if by invading Iraq and doing so without justification those two are combined, we've actually made the world a much more dangerous place and compounded and complicated the war against terror which had until that point a much clearer focus. Perhaps the biggest mistake in the post-World war world was Bill Clinton chucking Osama Bin Laden out of Sudan in 1996 and not popping him off. I think in putting those two thoughts into your head, I hope that you can just realise that actually terrorism is not a simple phenomenon, that morality of Western conduct is not simple either and that probably the world is more dangerous than it was a year ago when our main objectives and wishes were that it would be safer.

Question and Answer Session

Mark Leyton, Kensington and Chelsea: Thank you to the panel for speaking so eloquently. Today I've been thinking about where the solution is. I know about the wrongs and rights and why we shouldn't go to war and so forth, but how can we actually solve it now? The elements which I keep thinking about during the night and stuff is why did this happen? Why did 9/11 happen? And why was the West punched in the face with 9/11? It wasn't that my reaction was to punch them back or anything; it was, what have we done wrong? I think that needs to be analysed, whether it is Bin Ladens or other terrorist groups somewhere in the world: why they do hate us? We have to do that self analysis issue. Secondly, regarding the insurgents in any village in Iraq, what do they actually want? Although we are putting this foreign policy through, and we are trying to give people security and democracy, we need to include all these different groups. Whether that is just inviting statements from them, inviting them to give us a statement, it comes down to dialogue, it comes down to...I hate to say, but we never negotiate. Let's try and hear what they want to say. Our lives are at risk so let us not be stubborn in our view. Regarding the reconstruction issue, it would be nice if we can actually include as many Iraqis in that as possible. What is happening is that we are doing all that private sector stuff and Western things which they don't like. You get the police recruiting lines blown up the whole time because that is the only way Iraqis have of earning money for their families, so they actually get pulled into the system.

Councillor Khalib Hussein, Berry North, Lancashire: I want to look at the issue of Iraq and to see how it is actually affecting us as the Conservative party. During the Leicester South by-election, I was asked by the party to assist in the campaigning and I was sent to an area which was predominantly British Muslim. I went to members of the community, knocked on doors, spoke to people, and I was trying to sell our Conservative candidate. But it was one of the most difficult things to do, because the average British Muslims feel that the Conservative party is synonymous with Tony Blair and the

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Labour Party. Yet what I've heard from Sir Malcolm Rifkind and what I've heard from Alan Duncan and other panellists is that actually, our viewpoint, our policy on Iraq is inherently different to that of Blair, but we have not been able to get this message across to British Muslims. Yet, the Liberal Democrats have been able to do so, and have gained comparatively more electoral success than us. Sir Malcolm, how do we get the message across?

Betty Keller: My point of view is addressed to Andrew and to Alan. I would just like to say that Israel is the only democracy in the Middle East and they have to live in secure borders and defend themselves. They are being attacked recently with rockets and suicide bombers. How are they supposed to react? I do not think you can link the Israeli/Palestinian problem with what has happened in Iraq. I think Syria has a lot to answer for what's going on and the European Union. The money from the European Union is going to fund a lot of these suicide bombers. They have a lot to answer for as well.

Unknown Speaker: I think the gentleman at the front said that we were not getting our message across. Unfortunately for him, I think that the speakers, distinguished as they are, are not actually representing Conservative policies. I know that we are trying to shift our ground now slightly. As we have seen, electorally, our position has been disastrous, but it has to be respected that the Conservative Party policy as we went into war was that we were fully on side. I think that that was a big mistake, and arguably our single biggest political mistake, but we can't do anything about that now. What I wanted to ask was that given we have done so badly on the Iraq issue, because we have not really stuck to traditional Conservative policy in terms of looking after British interests, how does the Conservative Party go on from here? How can we sell ourselves now as a party sensitive to Muslim interests, sensitive to the Arab world, when we were so conspicuously supporters of George Bush?

Sir Malcolm Rifkind: The war on Iraq was one of these issues which divided all political parties. Therefore, there were official policies, and there were individuals who departed from those official policies from the very beginning. But I think to be fair to the then

Shadow Cabinet under Iain Duncan Smith, it took a position of principle. They knew it wasn't going to win them any votes, but you know, in politics, we are often told by the public "we want our politicians to do what they believe in, not just to oppose for the sake of opposing". And I think under Iain Duncan Smith, the party decided that it wanted to give support to the United States' position, and therefore did not disagree with the fundamentals of government strategy. The point that I think we are entitled to make now, even those people who supported the war, a year and a half ago, is that they were misled by Tony Blair – just like the British public were misled. You assume that the government of the day, when it produces what it calls "reliable intelligence information" knows what they are talking about. If they say they are satisfied that there are weapons of mass destruction, that there could be weapons launched in 45 minutes against British bases in Cyprus, and other claims of that kind, you assume that that is reliable information. So I think the Conservative Party is perfectly entitled to say, as can the public, Blair misled Parliament, he misled the nation, and we fought a war on a false prospectus. It's not easy for the Conservative Party, but I think the position it took then, even though I disagreed with it, was a position of principle, and based on what people genuinely felt was the right thing to do at that time.

Alan Duncan: The unresolved dispute between Arabs and the Israelis is absolutely inextricable from the wider opinion of the Muslim world and it is folly to pretend otherwise. If you want peace in Israel, the only way to get that is to stop them occupying the West Bank and Gaza. If Israel is a democracy, then they also have to behave like one. I totally agree that they are being attacked, but the fundamental moral problem is the occupation by Israel of a country that is not theirs. There are townships of thirty thousand people, five storey buildings, settler-only motorways and it is an international disgrace. The problem Israel has is actually, because it is a democracy, and has to keep coalitions together, that it is finding it very, very difficult to take the action that is necessary to withdraw even now from Gaza, and in future from the West Bank. The only way you are going to see peace in Israel is to have a Palestine next door to it, which can live as a viable country next door to a secure Israel.

Andrew Tyrie: I largely agree with what Alan said; it doesn't really matter what the facts are. In the minds of the overwhelming majority of Muslim opinion, including moderate Muslim opinion, and educated Muslim opinion in the Middle East, most people perceive Israel's actions there to be illegitimate and an occupation. If that is the case, it will be extremely difficult to find any form of wider settlement to create a formal settlement in the Middle East without solving that issue. Of course, Israel has a right to defend itself. What we have to ask is whether the actions they are taking are proportionate? They are a democracy, and have to be judged by higher standards. Those higher standards they are judged by make it tough for Israel to implement policy, but that is their price of being a democracy, *and* just about the only democracy in the Middle East. If America and the West, particularly with American leadership, abdicate from all efforts to try and guide Israeli foreign policy, they too will be tarred by the same brush. They will be perceived as complete intruders. They will be seen as the instruments of what the Palestinians perceive and what the Arabs perceive as Israeli oppression. So the Americans have to make some movement with Israel to demonstrate that they want to try and find a path to peace. At the moment, it doesn't look like that. It looks like oppression.

Sir Malcolm Rifkind: One point: I agree that Arab and Muslim opinion towards America in particular, and the West in general, is covered by the Israeli-Palestinian issue, and I agree that Israel should withdraw from the West Bank and from Gaza and allow a Palestinian state to be created. Where I have a slightly different emphasis is that I believe that even if that actually were to happen, many of the other crises in the Middle East would continue because they have their roots in other problems. The war between Iran and Iraq, the desire of Bin Laden to get the Americans out of Saudi Arabia, the problems of Lebanon, the other problems in the Kurdish region all have their origins and they have got nothing to do with Israel and Palestine. So it would be misleading to give the impression that somehow, the Middle East would become a haven of stability and moderation if Israel and Palestinian were settled. It would help substantially, and I hope it happens, but sadly that, by itself, would only be one factor that would lead to normality.

Unknown Speaker from Iran: I agree with many things that the panel have talked about. But one of the things is that everybody is neglecting fundamentalism, which is the greatest threat in Middle Eastern Countries. Many people talk about Islam. I think mixing Islam and not differentiating between Islam and fundamentalism is wrong and that is something we should always keep in mind. The problem in Iraq is, as Sir Malcolm Rifkind said, that if we have a multinational force, something like Israel, Egypt and other countries, I don't think it will solve the problem.

Christopher Haslam, Kensington and Chelsea: When you were referring to 'rogue' companies, working in Iraq, do you think that Mr Bigley was working for one of those companies?

Unidentified Speaker: Can I just follow up a point the gentleman made over here about trust? When we went into Iraq, it seems to me that there was a large body of public opinion that was sceptical for reasons that Sir Malcolm outlined from the perspective of its legitimacy, when we should have gone to the United Nations, as well as the security case and the threat. The problem we face from a private perspective is not only that we supported the war, but we did it unequivocally. The question I have is in terms of what we now say. We cannot really say that we were misled, because it seems to me that if we say that, we either appear naïve or we appear disingenuous. So I just wondered as a party, what is the line that we should now take with the current situation?

Unidentified Speaker, a serving MP: What we should be attacking the Blair-Bush axis on is their failure before going to war to have a reconstruction plan. They had no idea at all of how to reconstruct Iraq after the war. My question to the panel is, the wording this evening is democracy; is democracy possible in Iraq? Because if it is not, how are we going to give them a powerful enough army to stop the increasingly powerful nuclear state of Iran simply walking in when the Americans walk out?

Unknown Speaker, Party Member from Kensington & Chelsea: I wanted to say that Alan Duncan's speech is the message the Conservative party needs to put forward. I think the problem we've had, and I'm speaking as a member for the last eight years, is that we have not had that message in the public. Secondly, the thing I wanted to ask is why are we not attacking the government and Blair on the hypocrisy for invading countries like Iraq under Saddam Hussein, while at the moment over 10,000 people are dying in Sudan every month? No-one has attacked him on that issue. No one has done anything about this issue.

Alan Duncan: It is very difficult to link a humanitarian problem like Sudan with the moral issues of the invasion of Iraq. It is very difficult to play the politics of linking one with the other, and probably ill-advised. In terms of the question, which is spot-on, Conservatives look to the future, but we learn from the past. One of the great things we should have learnt from the past was the historic difficulty of holding Iraq together, and governing it in any circumstance. It's almost an artificial country. Churchill was party to putting it together and you have Kurds and Shia and it's very difficult to hold it together. The lesson from the past, Arnold Wilson, 1913, and so it goes on, should have been that if you are going to invade it, you should bloody well work out what you're going to do afterwards. I think Clare Short was culpable. I think that Tony Blair was culpable. It has meant that they made, as I am sure that you would agree, some fundamental mistakes. They disbanded all of the police and the army instead of keeping some modicum or fabric of workable civic society in place. They just disbanded the lot and took away their dosh. The one thing you want when you've just been invaded is a bit of money to feed your kids. When you just take that and sweep it away, you foment the difficulties you have created. I think that the lessons of history were not learnt and they were not implemented and this has compounded the problems which we are now facing. So there again, I think the Conservatives are very good at looking at history, and being practical in the way we do it, whereas Clare Short and others were not, and it is a tragedy. But we've got to stay in there and see it through, but in terms of governing the country, in my humble opinion, it is going to take a decade to get it settled.

Andrew Tyrie: I agree with all of that and I will not repeat it. I will try to pick up on one or two points which Alan hasn't already more or less dealt with. Policy-wise, we were misled. The party was misled. When a Prime Minister comes down to the House of Commons and he says "the country is threatened, I cannot tell you exactly how that threat will come, but I'm telling you I've got information, which I cannot divulge to you, that this country is under threat", you have got to back your leader. The country is being put at risk. It is very, very difficult to oppose your Prime Minister in those circumstances. So I understand why many Conservatives did not oppose the war. But that is not true of part of the party's leadership. It has to be admitted that part of the leadership strongly supported the neo-conservative rhetoric. They were not arguing the case for war on the basis of a threat, but were interested in regime change, whether or not there was a threat. Indeed, that was George Bush's explicit pitch for the war. That is what has been so corrosive right around the world of attitudes towards America and is one of the roots of the current dislike of America. But I'll give you one more, and that is that people are jealous of America, because they are successful, and they feel humiliated by America's success. We shouldn't for a moment start running down America. America is a huge force for good in the world, and they are extremely valuable and important to us and to our way of life in Europe. But nor should we be afraid to make the kind of criticisms and reservations about American policy that have been heard in this room today and that has got to be said much more clearly and loudly across the Atlantic if we're going to get back to a more stable situation.

I want to make two more very, very quick points. First of all, if we want to get on with the Muslim community, one thing we have certainly to do is open up and maintain serious negotiations with Turkey for entry into the EU. We have to demonstrate that we can work with a moderate Muslim society. That is a crucial signal, which we have to send to the whole of the global Muslim community.

Second, I think Alan began to say there is one other crucial aspect of morality that has not been raised today and that is that we went in, saying our values are better than this guy's values - he chops people up before breakfast, he keeps them in the fridge or whatever

ghastly things he may have done to people, and he has jails full of political prisoners. But that is why Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay are so damaging. The whole of the Muslim community in the Middle East knows all about Guantanamo Bay and Abu Ghraib. It is not, of course, that the atrocities there are remotely as serious as what was done by Saddam Hussein and by his people, but it has nevertheless damaged us. We have to be prepared, like Israel, to act and judge ourselves by the highest standards and we have let ourselves down in that regard. That has also damaged us and that is going to take years to repair as well.

Eric Westropp: I will answer a couple of quick questions together. On the subject of whether Ken Bigley was working for a rogue company, there is no confirmation there at all and I have no reason to believe that that was the case. To tie a couple of things together, the gentleman here was asking about Iraqisation earlier on, and I entirely support what Alan said. We are actually being attacked at the moment by those people who were disbanded – the police, the military and so on. They have the weapons, they have the ability and the main ambushes that are being set up around Iraq are set up by those people who have military skills and have no means of support. This has been a disastrous situation.

I would support what everyone else says that this will all take time. The objective for us all in Iraq is that though we may be employing large numbers of ex-patriots at the moment, we are handing over to the Iraqis as quickly as we possibly can. It has to be done responsibly however. Finally, the gentleman asked, is democracy possible? Now looking again from the internal and the worms-eye view if you like, whether democracy is possible is probably not quite the question, the question at the moment is whether the Iraqi people are going to be able to elect a leader and a government which they themselves would support. This, I think everybody has to realise, may not turn out to be a democratic government in the way we understand democratic governments, but it will be a regime elected by the people of Iraq. What all of us now working in Iraq are trying to achieve is to at least enable circumstances to be favourable enough for elections to take place in January or early in the New Year for the beginning of that process. I do believe that the process is possible,

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that elections may not be complete but they may have to be in stages. Iraqi people will be able to elect their own leaders, but whether those will turn out exactly as the Western world would wish is another matter. The West would have to accept the leadership of the people who are elected by the Iraqi people, even if they are not in our eyes, a democracy.

Mark Leonard: Thank you very much. I particularly would like to thank the four speakers for giving us such a wonderful overview of the situation. This is not a topic which is going to go away or be resolved anytime soon and hopefully we can stay in touch with you over the next year or so as we carry on publishing things and doing events on this topic, to try and work our way forward. I would like to thank you all for coming and very warmly thank the speakers again.

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