

# Labour & Trade Union Review

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## The War In Tony's Head

### Parliamentary Resisters

### Would Removing Bin Laden Make A Difference?

### The War & The UN

## Britain's Bit Part In The War

At the time of writing, Afghanistan has been attacked for 28 days. Britain has contributed to the assault on just two of those days, the first day—7th October—and four days later on 11th October. On those occasions, American Tomahawk Cruise missiles were fired from two British submarines in the Arabian Sea, perhaps ten or twelve missiles were fired on each occasion. To put this into perspective, the US has dropped over three thousand bombs on Afghanistan in the past four weeks.

To be fair, Britain has made other contributions. The RAF has helped out in air-to-air refuelling, flying American Lockheed Tristar tankers, and they have also flown reconnaissance missions in Canberra aircraft, which were made in Britain about fifty years ago. And 200 marines are staying on in the Middle East after the exercise in Oman, though it may be weeks, if not months, before they go to war.

(The Government would have preferred to keep more marines out there. But, since the Sultan of Oman wouldn't let his fiefdom be used as the jumping off point for aggression against a fellow Muslim state, those remaining are having to stay onboard ship, which restricts the number that can remain.)

In his *Observer* column on 28th October, Nick Cohen described the British contribution to the war on Afghanistan as "ornamental". He is not wrong.

But you would never guess from the British media that Britain has only got this tiny bit part in the American war on Afghanistan. Sometimes, you could be forgiven for assuming that it has the lead role. The minutiae of the war are discussed on television as if it was something to do with us, as if the British Government had some say in strategy or even day-to-



day tactics. It hasn't. Britain has signed up for America's war, and America will decide the strategy and tactics in America's war, including the use of cluster bombs and carpet-bombing—and whether Iraq is attacked as well.

**A Major Player?**

The Prime Minister has taken the lead in promoting the fantasy that Britain is a major player in this world, and in this war. When he set out his plans for re-ordering the world at the Labour Party conference on 2nd October, the United States didn't figure in them. He was going to do it all on his own, it appeared. It is as if we were at the start of the 20th century rather than the 21st and the last hundred years of history hadn't happened.

Since 11th September, he has been jettisoning about the world putting together an unprecedented coalition against "terrorism", or so we are told. It is a fantasy, but it is a fantasy which he gives every sign of believing—and is widely believed across the political spectrum and in the media in Britain. America pays lip service to the fantasy and to Blair's part in creating it, but proceeds to make practical bilateral arrangements with states by a judicious mixture of threats, arm-twisting and bribery, as only the greatest economic and military power in the world can do. Britain can't do that any more, even when it has a Prime Minister with legendary persuasive powers, so he might as well have stayed at home.

From the outset Blair has been determined to get Britain into war alongside the Americans. On 11th September, he told us that this was not just an attack on America but an attack on the free and democratic world (as if the people who flew the aircraft into the twin towers objected so vehemently to our electing our government that they were prepared to commit suicide in protest).

He laid great emphasis on the "hundreds" of British nationals killed in the World Trade Center—the largest death toll Britain had ever suffered in a terrorist act, he said—and he went to New York (along with Cherie and her hairdresser) to attend a memorial service for them. It was really an attack on Britain too, and Britain must stand

shoulder to shoulder with America. Now that the estimated number of British who died in the World Trade Center is 80, little or nothing is heard of them.

**Britain Under Threat?**

A few days before the bombing began, the Government published a document entitled "Responsibility for the terrorist atrocities in the United States, 11 September 2001". I was puzzled when I heard that the British Government was going to publish such a document. Why was the British Government doing it, and not the American? The atrocities took place on American soil and were being investigated by the FBI, which along with the CIA was bound to be the source of the "evidence" about who was responsible. So what business was it of the British Government?

The answer became clear on reading the document. It has four conclusions. The first two are that Bin Laden and al-Qaeda were responsible for the attacks and that they are capable of mounting further attacks. The third is the reason why the document was published: it is that Britain and British nationals are potential targets for Bin Laden and al-Qaeda.

The evidence presented for the first two conclusions is entirely circumstantial. No evidence is at all presented connecting those responsible to al-Qaeda—it is merely asserted that "at least three of them have already been positively identified as associates of al-Qaeda" (para 61). (It doesn't add to the document's credibility that the Government doesn't know exactly how many have been positively identified as associates of al-Qaeda.) The key reason for concluding that Bin Laden and al-Qaeda were responsible is that "no other organisation has both the motivation and the capability to carry out attacks like those of the 11 September" (para 69).

The third conclusion—that Britain and British nationals are also under threat—is based on even flimsier evidence, derived entirely from past threats by Bin Laden. On 12th October 1996, he said:

"The people of Islam have suffered from aggression, iniquity and injustice imposed by the Zionist-Crusader alliance and their collaborators... It is the duty now on every tribe in the Arabian

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peninsula to fight jihad and cleanse the land from these Crusader occupiers. Their wealth is booty to those who kill them."

In February 1998, he said:

"We—with God's help—call on every Muslim who believes in God and wishes to be rewarded to comply with God's order to kill Americans and plunder their money whenever and wherever they find it. We also call on Muslims... to launch the raid on Satan's US troops and the devil's supporters allying with them, and to displace those who are behind them."

The Government concludes that the references to "Zionist-Crusader alliance and their collaborators" and to "Satan's US troops and the devil's supporters allying with them" unquestionably include the United Kingdom (para 24).

**Concluded on back page**

**Against The Iron Consensus: Parliamentary Opposition to the War**

To date, there have been five debates in the House of Commons on the 11th September attacks on the US and their consequences. These have all been "adjournment" debates without a specific motion before the House endorsing Government policy. Voting against the adjournment of the House was the only way of expressing opposition.

On 1st November thirteen MPs—eleven Labour (Diane Abbott, Jeremy Corbyn, Tam Dalyell, George Galloway, Lynne Jones, Robert Marshall-Andrews, Adam Price, Angus Robertson, Alan Simpson, Michael Weir and Mike Wood) and two Welsh Nationalist (Elfyn Llwyd and Hywel Williams)—voted against the adjournment. Labour MPs, Paul Marsden and Kerry Pollard acted as tellers, so they too can be counted amongst this small band who stood out against what George Galloway called as "the iron consensus of the three Front Benches".

We reproduce below extracts from speeches by the opposition from the debate on 18 October—by Tam Dalyell, Peter Kilfoyle, George Galloway and Bob Marshall-Andrews. The debate was opened for the Government by the Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw.

Kilfoyle is not one of the usual suspects—he was the hammer of Militant as a Labour Party regional official in North-West in the 80s and proposed Tony Blair for the Labour Party leadership in the '90s. He made the interesting observation that those who insist that Bin Laden must be tried in New York cannot object to Ariel Sharon being tried in the Lebanon.

We end with an interesting speech by a Conservative MP, which is almost

a contradiction in terms these days, from the debate on 1st November. His name is Andrew Tyrie. He is a rare phenomenon—a right-wing anti-imperialist—and his speech contains a very effective denunciation of Tony Blair's messianic scheme for re-ordering the world. As he says, it amounts to saying: "Either adopt western values or we may be round to see you".

**Mr Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow):** To be frank, in 39 years I have never heard so much cosy self-delusion as has been uttered by those on the Front Benches during this debate. What on earth do we mean by "carefully calibrated reactions"? The truth is that there will be massacres of civilians and that these events will go on and on.

We talk about "effective military action". What on earth is effective about dropping bombs from 30,000 ft, trying to attack the heartland of bin Laden, which is almost certainly tunnels, at high altitude? It is sheer cant to pretend that after nine days we are involved in effective military action.

The Foreign Secretary tells us that there is no alternative, but there is an alternative: it is to do something on the intelligence front, to follow every lead in the background to the atrocity. Some of us simply do not believe that the atrocities against Manhattan and the Pentagon were in any way honed or finalised in some cave in Afghanistan. The truth is that they were honed and finalised much nearer home - in western Europe, in Hamburg, Harburg, London and Leicester, and in the United States itself. What is being done to follow up the leads to those who were actually involved in committing the crimes? ...

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**Mr Peter Kilfoyle (Liverpool, Walton):** ... It is in the context of that constructive candour that I want to respond to some of the points made by the Foreign Secretary. He referred to the overwhelming evidence of the involvement of Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda. I do not doubt that they are terrible people, guilty of terrible crimes, and that there is evidence against them, but the truth is that the document placed in the Library contained conclusions, not evidence. As I recall, there was a caveat on the top saying that it would not stand up to scrutiny in a court of law. ...

The Foreign Secretary repudiated the notion that bin Laden and his accomplices could be arraigned before an international court. There are learned Members, both Government and Opposition, who will raise these matters



with far more eloquence and knowledge than I could ever hope to have, but a question occurred to me: if we accept that the only effective way of dealing with Osama bin Laden is to apprehend him, if that is possible, and arraign him before an American court, where does that leave Muslim public opinion as regards Sharon?

Would the Lebanon be justified in demanding that Ariel Sharon be arraigned before a Lebanese court for the events in Shatila and Sabra? We are talking about international terrorism. I agree with the Foreign Secretary that the International Criminal Court will not have retrospective jurisdiction, but could Cambodia or Chile arraign Henry Kissinger on charges of international terrorism? I ask because that is the history that has informed the Muslim view. ...

**Mr George Galloway (Glasgow, Kelvin):** ... The right hon. Member for Horsham (Mr Maude), who is not in his place, made a fine and thoughtful speech. The Conservative party must be well off indeed if such a man can be on their Back Benches. However, in praising his speech I take issue with a fundamental error that he made.

The right hon. Gentleman was right to describe his visit to Ground Zero in the awesome way that he did. He was right to talk about the sight, the taste and the smell of what he found there. He was wrong, however, to say that the crime committed on 11 September was of a dimension that has never been seen before. I submit that that error of analysis leads us to the current juncture and is intrinsic to the weakness of our position internationally.

No one could have said that if they had walked with me through the ruins of Beirut in 1982 where, for week after week, General Sharon reduced an Arab capital city to ashes. He presided over a massacre in two Palestinian refugee camps the like of which had not been seen since the second world war. The stench of dead men, women and children pervaded the whole of the western part of the city of Beirut. The terror instilled by the fragmentation and phosphorus bombs, the fuel-air explosives, the napalm and the butchery in the camps remains a potent factor in the lives of the Lebanese and Palestinian people to this day, almost 20 years later.

I accept that the right hon. Member for Horsham believed what he said to be true. That is the point. It is because what happened in America is being invested with so much more value and horror than equally horrific things that have happened in Arab and Muslim countries that our position is so weak and difficult internationally.

I was not going to mention this, but as the Foreign Secretary scolded us so in his rather schoolmasterly way in his opening comments, may I say that there are no supporters of the Taliban or bin Laden on our side of the argument? In fact, the only supporters of the Taliban are in the Government's coalition. It contains the only countries which, until a few days ago - and, in one case, until now - maintain diplomatic relations with the Taliban and with the Arab Afghans, to whom I shall return, who are the core problem in this conflict.

The American and British Governments invented the Taliban. I do not say that to score points, although that is irresistible for those of who stood in the Chamber and bored the House stiff with warnings of the dark night that would ensue under those holy warriors - those freedom fighters - whom the American and British Governments were arming, financing and training. After all, bin Laden's guards were trained in what can only be described as a terrorist training camp near Fort William by the Special Air Service of the British Army. So there are no supporters of the Taliban or bin Laden among my right hon. and hon. Friends.

To sketch out a simplistic argument saying that there is no alternative, as was done from the Dispatch Box today, is a grave error. In politics, there is seldom only one alternative. There is seldom no other way to skin a cat than the way advanced by the Government.

I rise to speak against the iron consensus of the three Front Benches. It is clear that they have their forces here this evening behind their position. I hope that they are not fooling themselves that their voters and supporters do not feel great unease about and considerable opposition to the course on which they have embarked.

After all, even if the opinion polls are correct, my friends and I speak for

about 10 million people in this country. They are Labour and Liberal Democrat voters and, judging by my postbag, they are also Conservative voters. ...

Neither should the Government believe - this is an even more serious error - that the support of juntas, potentates and western-dependent leaders for their course of action represents opinion in the countries that are under the heel of those juntas, potentates and dictatorships. I have heard hon. Members on both sides of the House this evening praise someone called President Musharraf. He appointed himself as President. He is a military dictator who seized power and imprisoned for life the elected Prime Minister of Pakistan.

As was stated admirably clearly by one hon. Member on the Opposition Benches, 83% of the people of Pakistan entirely oppose the policy of the self-appointed President of Pakistan and yet he has been praised here for his courage. Courage in what? In usurping power from the elected Government and ramming through a policy that is opposed by 83% of the people he governs? Apart from the questionable morality of that policy, it is hardly a stable basis for a coalition.

If this conflict stretches, as it seems it must, through a difficult winter, with large numbers of casualties through hunger and for other reasons, there is a real danger that Pakistan will be tipped into what I would call a Talibanisation of its politics. I do not need to remind the House that that Talibanised Pakistan would be a nuclear-armed Pakistan.

That is the truth. We have assembled in a coalition for "enduring freedom" some of the least free countries in the world. It is their lack of freedom that contributes to the swamp of grievance and injustice that is felt by many in the Islamic world - a swamp from which the monstrous mutations who created the havoc and destruction on 11 September came. ...

The poorest country in the world, Afghanistan, is being bombarded 24 hours a day, with a brief pause in a mockery of religious acknowledgement during the daylight hours of Friday. There has been a 10-day round-the-clock, massive bombardment of a country

which before the conflict started was best described as being on the verge of the stone age.

I was in a debate in Trinity college, Dublin, on Thursday with a very brave woman - Marie Colvin, who is a supporter of the war and a journalist on that most doveish newspaper *The Sunday Times*, whose eye was gouged out in Sri Lanka recently. A heroic war correspondent, she ridiculed the idea that we are bombing military targets in Afghanistan and was in a good position to do so as someone who has spent many weeks there. She ridiculed the idea that we would be attacking command and control centres at Kabul airport, as the Defence Secretary said in his press conference the other day. She laughed at that, saying, "I've been in Kabul airport and the airport building is practically a mud hut that can only receive incoming phone calls". That area is being bombed, we are told, again and again. She ridiculed the idea that Afghanistan could have enough military targets for even one day's bombing, never mind 10, 20, 30 or 40, or that one could bomb Afghanistan round the clock and not be killing large numbers of innocent Afghan civilians.

This will be my final point, as many hon. Members wish to speak. This war is being waged on the wrong target. The attack on 11 September has nothing to do with the Afghan people. None of the terrorists who attacked America were Afghans. As my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr Dalyell) said, the attack was planned from European and North American bases.

The Afghan people have been hijacked by the Afghan Arab formations of extremists, paid for by Saudi Arabia during the war against the Najibullah Government, armed with American weapons and, as I said, even trained in our own country. It is the Afghan Arab terrorists who flew out of that swamp of grievance that I talked about. It is not that the Taliban are shielding bin Laden: it is the other way around. Bin Laden's forces are the only organised force in the whole country with money and with the logistical ability to run themselves as a quasi state, so to pound mercilessly the civilian population of Afghanistan is morally grotesque.

To expect to keep international opinion on one's side with the equivalent

of Mike Tyson in a ring with a five-year-old child, beating it mercilessly round after round, is ridiculous beyond words.

**Mr Robert Marshall-Andrews (Medway):** There are, one perceives, three leaders in the world who believe that the bombing of Afghanistan - including the bombing of the pitiful remains of its infrastructure and the death of hundreds, perhaps thousands of civilians - is in the interests of their cause and should be a part of their strategy. Those three leaders are first, of course, the President of the United States; secondly, the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom and perhaps those in NATO who support him; and thirdly, Osama bin Laden himself.

No one should doubt that that psychotic international criminal knows full well - no doubt, it is part of his plan - that with every single bomb that drops on Afghan soil and every cluster bomb and bunker buster that is dropped on a defenceless enemy from 30,000 ft, we sow the dragon's teeth. As in classical mythology, from that soil will emerge not our warriors, but warriors who will fight for Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda and whose numbers will multiply. Above all, they will be armed with the hatred of the United States which brought them into being. That fact is not lost on our fragile and uneasy allies and neighbours in Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, who know and have said that the words and actions of the so-called coalition and America have proved collectively to be the biggest recruiting tent for terrorism since 11 September that one could possibly dread.

We began by announcing a war, first, on terrorism. That is an absurdity, as one cannot make war on an abstract noun, although it is possible to make war on most types of syntax, as has occurred since 11 September. As one cannot make war on abstract noun, we were told that we were at war with Osama bin Laden, which endows him with the precise status that he seeks. From being a criminal, he has become a warrior, and he will move on to become a martyr. Having said that we were at war, we then waged it. It is difficult to describe the black pessimism that came over people like myself and many Labour Members when we learned of the method that was going to be employed - large-scale bombing from 30,000 ft. Such bombing creates a precise

equation; it removes risk from combatants in the air and imposes it on civilians on the ground.

That is precisely what we did in those dark 78 days in Kosovo, to which I shall return in a moment. The black pessimism that we all felt grew when we learned about the enlistment of the Northern Alliance. Again, the memory of Kosovo overshadowed us - something which my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Kelvin (Mr Galloway), in one of his great speeches in the House, described as the dirty dozen. We who remember Kosovo recall the poisonous embrace of the Kosovo Liberation Army. As my hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr Clapham) pointed out, it has been discovered that 90% of our heroin comes from Afghanistan, but we could have told people a long time ago that it is brokered, moved and laundered by the KLA, our friends in the south, and it always has been.

I want to say one or two things about Kosovo, which has been employed as a shining example of military intervention and success. As a rewriting of history, that is as depressing as the present war. The operation in Kosovo was a humanitarian disaster of epic proportions, largely of our own making. When the treaty of Rambouillet broke down, we decided to bomb a helpless, defenceless and mainly civilian target from 30,000 ft - the same method is being used now. After we started the bombing, we created 500,000 refugees, who were driven from Kosovo by the unleashing of the Serb army; they saw the tracer trails of aircraft and cruise missiles which passed over their heads on the way to Belgrade. The prejudice and anger of centuries was then unleashed.

While all that was happening - as the Albanians in Kosovo were the subject of a murderous assault - three tanks of the Serbian army were destroyed and we were lied to day after day about the degradation of that army. While those Albanians suffered, the largest army force mustered by the west and NATO stood on the borders in Macedonia and did precisely nothing. That is why those of us who remember Kosovo so well blanch at the idea that it is being held up as an example for the current war. We perceive that, as sure as can be, history is



repeating itself and that we will see bombing for days and days from 30,000 feet while no intervention whatever is made to save those whom it is affecting.

I do not want to be entirely condemnatory and I certainly wish to be constructive. I should like to make a suggestion that I have already put to my right hon. Friends the Foreign Secretary and the Prime Minister on the action that we should now take, in addition to the cessation of bombing. We must create an international criminal court - a body that would be more important than the sum of its parts. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary was not being disingenuous when he said that we did not have an international foreign court. Of course, we need 60 members to set up the international foreign court to which he referred and, unhappily, one of the reasons why we cannot do so is the opposition of the United States.

I am referring not to that court, however, but to one that is comparable to those that were established in The Hague in order to deal with the atrocities in the Balkans and in Arusha in order to deal with Rwanda. It is precisely that sort of court that should be set up now, so that we can signal to the world that we expect and desire a judicial end to the conflict. It is asked why Osama bin Laden should not be tried in America. I can think of a very large number of reasons why it would be highly undesirable for him to be tried by a jury in that country. There are many reasons why that could not happen, and I very much doubt that the Americans wish or hope that it does so.

However, one cannot walk two ways in a conflict such as this. We are told that the attacks were an assault not on America, but on civilisation. For what it is worth, I and many others accept that analysis, but as an assault was made on the international community, it is to that community that the criminal who is responsible should be answerable. No one would doubt that the international court should have an American president. Of course, it should also include Islamic jurists, so that we can say to the Islamic world "This man will be tried in a court of fairness and justice".

Having established the court, we must get the criminal, and I am not suggesting that that will be easy. I have

known criminal courts of one sort or another for a very long time and from both sides of the fence. Nobody knows better than me how difficult it is to obtain, track down and arrest dangerous criminals. None the less, we must do it, and it will not be done by bombing civilian targets from 30,000 feet.

If I were asked how we should go into Afghanistan or wherever bin Laden is and get him out - I am surprised that nobody has intervened to ask me that question - I would have to answer that I did not know. Unlike an uncomfortably large number of my colleagues, I am not a duvet or eiderdown general. My military training was cursory and utterly useless, but I accept that, as we are reliably informed, we have the finest armed forces in the world. This work is what they are for. It will be hard and there will be military casualties, but nobody begins to suggest that the task should not be undertaken.

If we do not go down that road, but continue into the spring the bombing of civilians from 30,000 ft, day after day and month after month, the international support that we have will disappear like the Afghan snows. If that happens, we can stop parroting the idea that we are not at war with Islam, as Islam will be at war with us.

**Mr. Andrew Tyrie (Chichester):** ... I should like to make several suggestions to the Government on the conduct of the diplomacy and handling of Muslim opinion over the next few crucial weeks. At the heart of the west's strategy is a dilemma: while military activity in Afghanistan may succeed in eliminating al-Qaeda in an organised form, at the same time it may generate sympathies in parts of the Muslim world which could make terrorism more likely. Worse, it could destabilise Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, and make it more difficult to protect western interests there. It could make a settlement in Palestine even more difficult to reach. That crisis has been the source of so much of the sympathy for terrorism, however misguided it is.

The truth is that we are not engaged in a war on terrorism. Inasmuch as the language of war is appropriate, the outcome will be decided by a battle for the hearts and minds of Muslim opinion. Are we confident that our action in Afghanistan, particularly if it becomes

prolonged, will not create the conditions for more extremism? That is the heart of the matter. ...

The Prime Minister wants much greater intervention around the world to impose our notion of justice and freedom. He says that globalisation means that anyone's internal conflict may affect everybody and that that justifies interference, even military intervention. It is worth quoting exactly what he said at Brighton:

"This is a fight for freedom. And I want to make it a fight for justice too . . . justice to bring those same values of democracy and freedom to people around the world. And I mean freedom, not only in the narrow sense of personal liberty but in the broader sense of each individual having the economic and social freedom to develop their potential to the full . . . the starving, the wretched, the dispossessed, the ignorant, those living in wanton squalor, from the deserts of North Africa to the slums of Gaza, to the mountain ranges of Afghanistan: they are our cause."

In case we had not thoroughly got the message, he continued, "The kaleidoscope" - he means of the international order - "has been shaken. The pieces are in flux . . . Before they [settle] let us reorder this world around us."

That new international order is to be an order based on our values, secured by western economic, diplomatic and, in some cases, military strength. The great danger of such talk is that, to the ears of leaders of many countries in the world and particularly to the very ears that the west has been bending in the name of the coalition against terrorism, that will sound very unappealing - even threatening to the stability of their societies.

We are saying: "Either adopt western values or we may be round to see you". We are saying that we carry sticks as well as carrots. Let me make my position clear: the west can and should be a huge force for good in the world. I share the Prime Minister's values, but if the west goes beyond persuasion, and acts of humanitarian intervention, and tries to reconstruct a new world order in

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## Would The Removal Of Bin Laden Make Any Difference?

David Morrison

*Q: Do you need to get bin Laden to succeed or is driving him out good enough?*

*A: My attitude is if he were gone tomorrow the same problem would exist. He's got a whole bunch of lieutenants that have been trained and they've got bank accounts all over and they've got cells in 50 or 60 countries. Would you want to stop him? Sure. Would you want to stop the rest of his lieutenants? You bet. But I don't get up every morning and say that's the end, the goal and the end point of this thing. I think that would be a big mistake. Furthermore, the al Qaeda is just one of the networks.*

That answer was given by US Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld, in the course of an interview with the editorial board of USA Today on 24 October. The full text of the interview is available at the time of writing on the USA Today's website.

Later in the interview he was asked the following:

*Q: The president said that one of his goals was to get bin Laden dead or alive. ... Are you confident that you will achieve that goal?*

*A: Well, it is a very difficult thing to do. It's a big world. There are lots of countries. He's got a lot of money, he's got a lot of people who support him, and I just don't know whether we'll be successful. Clearly, it would be highly desirable to find him and stop him and his key people and there are a lot of them. We're not looking for one person. We're looking for a whole crowd. And that's our intent and our intention.*

So, the man who is running the US military campaign says that getting Bin Laden dead or alive is not important since if he were gone tomorrow the same

problem—the al-Qaeda network in 50 or 60 countries across the world outside Afghanistan—would continue to exist. Not only that, he says that it's next to impossible to get Bin Laden anyway, not least because he may leave Afghanistan.

Of course, this is merely stating the obvious. Al-Qaeda would continue to function and threaten America without Bin Laden. It would also continue to exist without a safe haven in Afghanistan. It is not a hierarchical organisation with Bin Laden as supreme commander and sole source of military genius. Conceivably, a dead bin Laden or a bin Laden on trial in New York would be an even greater inspiration to potential recruits to the network than one hidden in Afghanistan.

As for the likelihood of laying hands on Bin Laden, Afghanistan may not have much in the way of natural cover, but it is nearly twice the size of Germany (about 650,000 sq km compared with 350,000 sq km).

This poses a fundamental question: why are America and Britain making war on Afghanistan if the primary war aim is (a) unimportant, and (b) unlikely to be achieved? Why have they bombed Afghanistan unceasingly for four weeks and killed hundreds of Afghani civilians to no purpose?

On her visit to Pakistan recently, Clare Short opposed a bombing pause for humanitarian reasons by saying:

"We have to dismantle the Bin Laden al-Qaeda network, otherwise it will hit again and deliberately kill innocent people." (*Guardian*, 18th October).

There is a fundamental problem with this as a strategy: the al-Qaeda network

is not in Afghanistan.

Media reports of a Defence Department press conference on 25th October suggested that Rumsfeld withdrew, or at least qualified, his remarks that Bin Laden might never be killed or captured. In fact, he did not (as the transcript of the press conference on the Defence Department website shows). He said they were doing everything that was humanly possible to get him, but asked if the success of the mission was dependent on getting him, he refused to say it was. And he did not deny that the "problem" is the al-Qaeda network across the world, which would continue to exist even if Bin Laden were killed or captured.

### Not A Wise Move

The US government knows that their problem is the al-Qaeda network and knows that a punitive assault on Afghanistan is not going to solve it. In an unguarded moment the US Defense Secretary has blurted out the awful truth.

But there is no indication that they recognise that bombing a poor Muslim country continuously for a month with no end in sight is bound to make their problem dramatically worse. Afghanistan has now been added to Palestine, Iraq and the presence of US troops in Saudi Arabia as an object of Muslim grievance against America and an inspiration for potential recruits to al-Qaeda.

To reduce the risk of a repetition of the events of 11th September or of something worse, those grievances need to be addressed to reduce the supply of recruits, and there needs to be worldwide police action against the existing network. Adding to the list of Muslim grievances by bombing Afghanistan is not a wise move on America's part: the very most it can achieve in Afghanistan



is to cut off the head of al-Qaeda but in the process the body will be greatly invigorated.

Successful police action is next to impossible without the active support of the Muslim world, and not least of Saudi Arabia where most of the recruits come from. After the shock of the events of 11th September that co-operation might have been forthcoming, but after the assault on Afghanistan co-operation from the Muslim world will be minimal or non-existent.

#### Limited Help

Rumsfeld has been careful not to make getting Bin Laden dead or alive the measure by which the success of military action in Afghanistan would be judged. But it isn't clear what will constitute success in the eyes of the US Government, and define the point at which military action stops. Ideally the US wants a stable and pliant government in Afghanistan, which doesn't provide a haven for members of al-Qaeda. But it doesn't seem to be prepared to commit hundreds of thousands of ground troops to conquer and occupy the country as a means to that end.

In any case it is doubtful if this would be possible logistically. The media keep on blathering about the unprecedented coalition against terrorism. But the real story is the limited nature of the help which states in the region, who are nominally in the coalition, have been prepared to give the US for military operations against Afghanistan (and you can be sure that the US has been putting all sorts of pressure on them).

At the present time only a few states are offering any assistance. Pakistan was coerced into allowing overflying rights for missiles and aircraft from ships in the Arabian Sea and from Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean. It has also allowed two isolated airfields to be used for limited purposes: as a base for search and rescue helicopters and for the refuelling of helicopters en route from ships in the Arabian Sea to Afghanistan on attack missions. But there are very few US military personnel on Pakistani soil, and there is no prospect of a large US ground force entering Afghanistan from Pakistan and being supplied via Pakistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, in

the north, seems to be offering assistance on similar terms.

#### Taliban Collapse?

My impression is that the US started bombing in the expectation that the Taliban regime would collapse within a short time, and that installing a friendly government would be easy. At a Defense Department press conference on 24th October, after two weeks of bombing, Rear Admiral Stufflebeem, expressed surprise that the Taliban hadn't given up by then. He said: "I am a bit surprised at how doggedly they're [the Taliban] are hanging on to their—to power; I think that's the way to put it. For Mullah Omar to not see the inevitability of what will happen surprises me." (see Defense Department website).

Were the US military really operating on the assumption that the Taliban were going to collapse after two weeks bombing? It is difficult to avoid that conclusion, since the Admiral is a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. But it was an extraordinarily foolish admission for him to make in public.

The Admiral made his remarks on 24th October. On the night of 19/20th October two sizeable groups of US special forces went into Afghanistan. Their mission was said to be gathering intelligence (computer disks, for example, I heard a Defense Department spokesman say !!). At the time I had the impression that their main mission was to provide television pictures to show the American public that something was being done. Be that as it may, the missions were said to be a great success even though it was said that a search and rescue helicopter had crashed in Pakistan with the loss of two lives. However, there have been persistent reports that one of the missions had to be aborted because of Taliban fire. Could this be what brought it home to the US military that the Taliban weren't a spent force? It is difficult to believe it was a coincidence that a couple of days later the US started to give air support to the so-called Northern Alliance.

#### Provisional Government

In reality, the Northern Alliance consists of three groups, which are ethnically distinct and geographically separate and are as likely to fight one another as to fight the Taliban. One is

Usbek, another Tajik, and the third, Hazara. If the US now has a plan for changing the governance of Afghanistan, it seems to be to give air support to these disparate groups against the Taliban. Whether some or all of them are prepared to fight for America against the Taliban remains to be seen. Every day since the bombing began, the Western journalists in their midst have reported that they are going to attack in a day or two, but at the time of writing no significant attack has occurred.

Efforts seem to be going on behind the scenes to put together a provisional government. But this is mired by the fact that the surrounding states have separate client groups. Thus Pakistan has no time for the Northern Alliance, which is being armed and supplied by Russia as well as America. And even if some provisional government is put together, there remains the enormous task of making it writ run throughout the country—and of killing or capturing Bin Laden and his associates.

The Taliban captured Kabul in September 1996. For the next two years, the US regarded them as an organisation with which business could be done. The most important business in the offing was oil and gas pipelines from the Caspian basin through Afghanistan to the Pakistan coast, a route much to be preferred in American eyes to the alternatives through Russia or Iran. The US oil company Unocal brought Taliban leaders to Houston, Texas, to discuss the project and offered to pay them handsomely for the oil and gas transported. It wasn't until December 1998, four months after the US embassies in East Africa were bombed (and Cruise missiles were fired at Afghanistan in retaliation), that the project was finally abandoned by Unocal. No doubt the US government would like to see it revived.

And no doubt Russia and Iran have other opinions, which may complicate the US's task of establishing a stable and pliant government in Afghanistan. •

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Kevin Brady

## Parliamentary Diary

#### Expedient Morality

Tam Dalyell spoke for many of us in the Parliamentary debate on the 'war on terrorism' on 16th October when he said, "To be frank, in 39 years I have never heard so much cosy self-delusion as has been uttered by those on the Front Benches during this debate. What on earth do we mean by 'carefully calibrated reactions'? The truth is that there will be massacres of civilians and that these events will go on and on. We talk about 'effective military action'. What on earth is effective about dropping bombs from 30,000 ft, trying to attack the heartland of bin Laden, which is almost certainly tunnels, at high altitude? It is sheer cant to pretend that after nine days we are involved in effective military action".

Now, after four weeks of military action there is little sign of it being effective, i.e., achieving its aims. We are constantly told that the immediate aims of the 'war'—Defence Secretary Geoff Hoon reiterated them on 16th October—are "to bring those guilty of perpetrating the attacks on 11th September to account; to ensure that Osama bin Laden and the al-Qaeda network are never able to pose a threat again; and to ensure that Afghanistan no longer harbours and sustains international terrorism or terrorists". None of these aims have been achieved or are anywhere near to being achieved.

The coalition—in effect the USA and Britain—have said from the start that it would be a long haul and, in the odd moment of frankness, have even admitted that the military action may not achieve all of its aims. The military action appears to consist exclusively of bombing, although it is reported that British and American troops are now on the ground but not yet engaged in direct action with the Taliban's forces. Bombing always kills civilians and is a particularly cowardly form of attack,

and yet it has the support of the overwhelming majority of Labour MPs. Many of them express concern about civilian deaths, but argue that the military action is justified. One wonders how many civilian deaths it will take before they begin to question the justness of the bombing of Afghanistan.

Some are simply confused. Clare Short highlighted this confusion in the 8th October debate when she said, "It must be a focused and just war with no civilian casualties... (but) sometimes, regrettably, it is necessary—as it is in this case—but it is a necessary evil and we should always try to minimise the number of people hurt in the process." This was the day after Britain and America started bombing from 30,000 ft, from where it is impossible to avoid civilian casualties. Since then, of course, it has been reported that hundreds of innocent Afghans, including a mother and seven children in one family, have been killed. And yet Short and the rest of new Labour stand shoulder to shoulder with Blair and Bush.

The handful of Labour MPs who have challenged this were described as 'appeasers' by Hilary Armstrong and Adam Ingram. Armstrong, who entered Parliament courtesy of nepotism in Labour's north-east heartland—her father previously held her North West Durham seat—lists the environment and world development among her political interests. These sit rather oddly alongside her support for the bombing. Perhaps Afghanistan is not on her list of countries in need of development. But development is what it will need if it is not to harbour or sustain international terrorism or terrorists, and it will not come cheap.

The economic cost will be enormous, but it can be met. On the other hand, the political cost could prove impossible to meet. Labour Minister have repeatedly said that the people of

Afghanistan must be allowed to elect its government. But what happens if they elect a government of which the Americans disapprove? To avoid this conundrum, will America have a direct role in the establishment of political structures prior to any election, as it has in a number of other countries? And how will this square with their claim that the 'war' is being waged in defence of democracy? We need to be very careful when America claims to be defending democracy.

It is clearly the intention of Britain and America that the Taliban are to have no political role in Afghanistan's future. But if it is to have no role in harbouring or sustaining terrorism or terrorists, it will have to be wiped out entirely. This cannot be done by bombing alone, and will require the deployment of ground troops on a huge scale; but it will result in the deaths of hundreds, if not thousands of British and American lives. The Taliban have the stomach for a bloody battle as, presumably, do the British and American military. Whether the British and American public have remains to be seen. My guess is that public opinion, which is currently supportive, will change if there are significant numbers of allied deaths. Which is why Blair is not focusing on the battle for public morale.

Most MPs assume that the military action against the Taliban will make the world a safer place. It may of course make it more dangerous, especially if military action is extended to other countries; and that appears to be the intention of hawks like Geoff Hoon, who told MPs on 8th October that "Military action against terrorism has only just begun. We and all our allies and partners are determined to root out terrorism wherever we find it". It looks as though the world can expect an uncomfortable existence for some time to come.

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# Authorised Terrorism

Gwydion M. Williams examines the alternative tactics of appeasement, engagement or playing by agreed rules

The influence of the USA has increased, is increasing and ought to be diminished.

Mr Blair wants us to be horrified by acts of unauthorised terrorism, such as September 11th, but not authorised terrorism, which the USA has retained as an instrument of policy. And no connection is to be made between unauthorised terrorism happening now, and exactly the same people practicing authorised terrorism a few years before.

There is still time for the USA to switch back to the UN framework of agreed International Law, rather than each US president making it up as he goes along. The USA has been able to evade or ignore the UN, which cannot be relied upon to serve the interests of the US Overclass. Instead they use a series of US-defined and US-dominated clubs: NATO, NAFTA, APEC, the World Bank & IMF, but, above all, the G7/G8. If this goes on, the present fight with bin Laden and the Taliban will be just a beginning.

The culture that produced bin Laden is the United States of America. As a favoured son in a rich Yemeni family flourishing in Saudi Arabia, he was one thing. As a CIA ally in Afghanistan he became something else; but he is not yet ready to be treated as 'war surplus' when the USA no longer needed his kind.

We are supposed to make a huge distinction between terrorist acts applied to poor or middling people with US approval, and the same thing applied by the USA to its victims. But even in Britain, people see that there is no real difference. Burning buildings in Baghdad, Belgrade or Manhattan are much of a muchness.

It is unfair to blame Arab-Muslim culture, when the West has repeatedly interfered to discredit, or smash,

traditional arrangements, and also to defeat home-grown radicalism. The Ottoman Empire under the Young Turks was functional and capable of development, but the West roused up an Arab Revolt while also intending to cheat them all along. Then, when Arabs did get their act together through Nasserite secular culture and socialism, this, too, was sabotaged, and religious extremism encouraged.

Western Imperialism knocked over the secular controls in Islamic states and left the religious authorities free-wheeling. In the Cold War the West's short-term calculations led them to favour Islamic opposition to secular regimes—without thought as to what this particular djinn would do once let out of the bottle of traditional Islamic controls.

I don't see Islam as a truly global force. Muslims have spread, with the general intermingling of world populations. But Islam has made very little progress into non-Muslim populations, except in Black Africa. What has emerged instead is a highly Americanised version of Islam. And that's what makes it so dangerous. Nihilism as a natural response to globalism. The privatisation of terror is part of a trend.

The bin Laden version of Islam seems to have acquired the rootless self-righteousness that is typical of the USA. Islam always has had its own extremes, but with a sense of territory and honour. This has been destroyed in a few places and is being stretched thin in many other places. The Arabian subjects of the Saudi dynasty seem highly discontented, and find the US presence disruptive.

The USA has continuously sanctioned and sanctified the idea of personal vengeance, carried through

regardless of law. Law is fetishised, but also evaded.

September 11th was not an attack on how the US governs itself, but on what it does to other countries. This has included knocking down democratic regimes when it suited them—coups in Greece and Chile, coup and mass murder in Indonesia, threats of a coup in Italy if the Communists had ever been included. And with the Cold War over, the USA's 'Cash Crusaders' have destabilised a lot of places. They even tried unsuccessfully to replace a successful secular regime in pluralist Malaysia with a variant of Islamic extremism that was willing to accommodate Globalisation.

Islam, Judaism, Hinduism and Buddhism accept that other religions have a valid, if inferior, version of the Divine Vision. Muslims suppose that bad Muslims will go to Hell whereas good Christians etc. will go to some secondary but eminently enjoyable suburb of Heaven. Only Christianity traditionally regarded all other religions as works of the Devil.

The Christian heritage of intolerance has now been translated into legal and economic forms: a 'Cash Crusade'. Religion is to be reduced to the status of a hobby; you can believe what you choose so long as you obey the narrow range of globalised legal and economic forms. Not, indeed, that they can deliver what they promise. Even without rival cultural values, the US and its imitators generate a lot of internal violence—remember McVeigh?

The violence of 1914-18 and 1939-45, which 'mysteriously' ended previously bouts of speculative globalisation, is not puzzling at all. It's a predictable response to the tensions built up by a subversive, seductive and asocial market, in which superior

production that does not lead to better happier lives, but instead splits the world into well-paid overstressed people and the impoverished unemployed.

Happiness could loosely be seen as the difference between what you get and what you were expecting. Bread and cheese is delightful when you were expecting to go hungry, an insult when you were expecting a banquet. Advertising is the foe of happiness since it is always raising expectations beyond what can possibly be met for the bulk of the population. The same is true of gambling and get-rich schemes and many other aspects of modern life.

As well as being told to uphold the beauties and splendours of Globalisation, opponents of the war are called 'appeasers'. But demands for peace have gone alongside demands for proper UN control and for some impartial tribunal to try bin Laden; and insistence on sticking to the rules, whereas the appeasers of the 1930s junked existing rules in a vain quest for peace.

The appeasement of Nazi Germany came on top of an earlier 'enagement' through the Versailles Treaty. Trying to create modern states out of a set of unstable and overlapping nationalities in Eastern Europe was bound to lead to trouble. It was also done in a partisan way, not according to popular opinion but with a desire to punish and humiliate Germany, Austria and Hungary. The Sudetenland was majority-German, and a rather larger Hungary would have left fewer discontented minorities who suddenly found themselves living as unwanted guests in what was defined as someone else's national territory.

The first and worst error with Germany was to junk the apparent guarantees which the German Social Democrats had relied on when they made peace. Germany was losing the war, yet far from defeated. The Social Democrats bravely, yet unwisely, accepted the substance of defeat in the belief that it would not then be 'woe to the conquered'. Promises were made, that should not have been made if they were not going to be honoured. Germany would have collapsed in a few months anyway, but there would have been no feeling of betrayal and so probably no Nazi movement.

After World War Two, when Germany had behaved far worse, there was the Cold War with the Soviet Union and Germans were deemed innocent for the duration. Some people never did accept this, which is fair enough. What is not fair at all is the way in which a vast amount of extra German guilt was suddenly 'discovered' once Germany was reunified and committed to Western values.

International Law as a real and independent system would be a fine thing. International Law as a cover for arbitrary US actions is something else. It is not a question of approving of the Taliban, but of saying that they have legal rights which have been ignored.

Where is the proof of bin Laden's guilt? It may well be that an impartial tribunal would agree he was responsible for the deeds of men who looked to him for guidance and who were probably funded by his agents. But for now, the USA prefers to sit on the evidence and enact a kind of global lynch law in which accusation is the same as proof.

This is not one of Bush Junior's personal failings, but typical of the whole US mentality. Built around a sanctified constitution full of 18th century delusions, the USA could not have become a major military and industrial power without evading those restrictions. Perhaps it should have remained a poor-but-happy rural arcadia with minimal government—but it didn't. And given the way it developed, it became of necessity a law-evading society.

Note also, a refusal to extradite suspects has been accepted in the case of Saudi Arabia. They have been failing to do anything about people whom the USA considers guilty of terrorist acts. But bombing oil-rich Saudis is not an option, only poor and unwanted Afghans are treated in this way.

"Talks continued until just days before the Sept. 11 attacks, and Taliban representatives repeatedly suggested they would hand over bin Laden if their conditions were met, sources close to the discussions said.

"Throughout the years, however, State Department officials refused to

soften their demand that bin Laden face trial in the U.S. justice system. It also remained murky whether the Taliban envoys, representing at least one division of the fractious Islamic movement, could actually deliver on their promises." (*Washington Post*, October 29, 2001)

But outside of the U.S. justice system, could one be sure that bin Laden would be found guilty? Propaganda intended to encourage terrorism is not the same as actual terrorism. British law needed specific statutes about 'incitement to hatred', because no one can be held legally responsible for a crime they were not involved in, even if they helped create the mood which allowed the crime to happen. The same is true of most judicial systems, and only a US court could be trusted to deliver the desired verdict. (Just as blacks accused of crimes against whites were commonly found guilty, and whites accused of crimes against blacks commonly found not guilty, a solid rule before the 1960s and there is a strong bias even nowadays.)

A global law imposing draconian punishments against 'incitement to terrorist acts' would also be a problem, though, since it could be applied against all sorts of people.

The evidence linking bin Laden to World Trade Centre massacres is weaker than that linking Henry Kissinger to the Chilean coup—or various other US notables to numerous war crimes and crimes against peace and democracy. The Taliban demand for proper evidence and a neutral court is valid. The USA however wants to impose its own judgement, i.e., International Law for foreigners, but never applying to US citizens. Nor even to US enemies whose guilt is not wholly clear.

Supposing bin Laden turned himself over to some neutral country with an agreement for a fair trial before some tribunal the USA could not fix? It might be his best move, given that we've already had the provocative US bombings in Afghanistan.

Bombing does work, of course. And not just when the USA does it.

The IRA's Brighton bombing back in 1984 broke the will of Norman Tebbit.



He came close to death, his wife was left permanently injured and Tebbit later withdrew from serious politics. The one man who could have continued the Thatcherite agenda has been reduced to malignant sniping from the sidelines. Thatcher, too, got knocked off course, opting for an Anglo-Irish agreement that conceded that Ulster was not really British.

The mainstream IRA can congratulate themselves on a terrorist job well done, and terrorist aims imposed on Britain with considerable US pressure in favour of Republican aims. The matter has almost been forgotten now, except perhaps by other terrorists when they assess their chances of eventual success.

Of course, from a US viewpoint, British and the Irish are on the same level of the pyramid and thus the US role is to mediate, not punish. A 'revolt of Islam' is something else.

Since the 1980s, we have had the globalisation of a rather corrupt culture that has a strong Christian content. The World Trade Centre was a highly visible expression of the forces that hijacked the Western financial system. Keynesianism was a rising tide that mostly did 'lift all boats', in the name of economic freedom, it was turned into a turbulent torrent that can sink or exalt almost at random, favouring a mix of luck, strength, cleverness and ruthlessness.

Globalisation is Limited-Sovereignty Globalisation. The world must be thrown open to money, but unwanted labour from poor countries is constrained by national barriers. The world does not owe you a living, but you are forbidden to make a living disconnected from the rest of the world.

It's not quite Imperialism. In the Philippines, the US endorsed the unconstitutional removal of a President who'd been too favourable to the Philippines poor. It's a standard tactic, cripple imperfect democracies and you lay them open to commercial exploitation. But always they remain sovereign nations, so that their poor stay squalidly in place while the rich world helps itself to their cleverest, best educated and most dynamic people.

What the West currently offers is a shallow culture, lusting after money with a quasi-religious fervour. We are drenched in a low-level exposure to sex, which is then diverted onto consumer products (few of which will satisfy the yearnings that have been aroused). But in the interests of morality, our governments also insist on interfering with actual sex, and in making noisy complaints about its private depiction in pornography or its commercial expression in prostitution.

The new-born capitalist system of the 1980s doesn't have a name, at least no name that would distinguish it from dozens of other completely different systems that are also called 'capitalist'. So I'll call it 'Punk Capitalism', since it came into the world in the same era as Punk Rock and Punk Fashion. (The foul-mouthed radicalism of some of those characters was insignificant, since they had no positive vision of the world. Modern-minded people in the power elites don't mind if you bad-mouth the Queen, just so long as you are respectful of money.)

Punk Capitalism has the typical punk feature of rather disliking itself, but being bitterly opposed to any realistic alternative. Thatcher caught the mood when she said 'there is no alternative', and many people before me have noted the parallels. Lots of those who had grown up in the 1960s slid quite easily from the 'Alternative Society' to 'There Is No Alternative', even as they made profitable moral and economic choices that they didn't want to admit to.

Even though 'Punk Capitalism' hasn't worked well even on its home ground, there is a messianic determination to impose it on everyone. Especially on societies that have now adapted nicely to what the West managed to impose on them a few decades back.

The Keynesian semi-capitalist system sought to impose a common standard but also accepted a duty to look after people. It had something of the Wellsian vision, hoping to process everyone into an identical citizen of a world state. Punk Capitalism also seeks to impose a common standard—a worse system even by the crude measurement of growth in GNP. But also flatly denies

any duty to look after people. They are expected to look after themselves, but forbidden to do it their way. They must run their own affairs, but only in a manner that the West approves of. And when this fails, 'authorised terrorists' may be set against the misbehaving regime—as in Angola and Mozambique, and with the Contras and whole regiments of torturers and mass-killers trained at the US 'School Of The Americas'.

And if even this fails, the US air force can come in as the ultimate 'authorised terrorists'. Talk of 'precision strikes' has been just talk, whether in Baghdad, Belgrade or Afghanistan. The Gulf War did at least include the defeat of the Iraqi army, the Serbian army was barely scratched by the Kosovo campaign, but accepted defeat after numerous 'accidental' strikes on non-military targets.

The Taliban so far seem not to have got any weaker. Stronger, if anything, so that they turn away armed volunteers. Damage is being done to ordinary Afghans, with such weapons as 'Cluster bombs': a misleading term, since they are air-dropped landmines, there is nothing selective about them.

Outside of the USA, no one is much impressed by the difference between authorised and unauthorised terrorism. Vengeance for September 11th was fair enough, but only if it had been specific and well-targeted. Which the Afghan War most clearly is not.

#### Announcement

**Open meetings of the Bevin Society / Labour & Trade Union Review are held the first Wednesday of every month. The next meeting is on December 5th**

*Topic: Issue of the day*

**7.30 pm Printers Room, Red Rose Club, Seven Sisters Rd, Finsbury Park**

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**All Welcome**

## Is The War Authorised By The U.N.?

David Morrison

The British Government has been trying to give the impression that the bombing of Afghanistan is a UN operation, or at least an operation that has specific UN Security Council approval. It is neither.

Yet, Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw, always justifies it with reference to UN Security Council resolution 1368 of 12th September. And in a Channel 4 debate on the war on 27th October, the Foreign Office Minister, Ben Bradshaw, expressed annoyance that the war was being portrayed as a British and American operation when in fact it was a UN operation authorised by Security Council resolution.

This, as we shall see, is nonsense. Why the British Government continues to proffer this justification is a mystery, when there is a far more plausible justification in international law, namely, that the US is exercising its right to self-defence under Article 51 of the UN Charter and the UK is assisting.

The UN Security Council has passed two resolutions, numbers 1368 and 1373, on the events of 11th September.

#### Resolution 1373

Resolution 1373, passed on 28th September, is concerned with police action against "terrorism" (which is not defined) and with co-operation between member states for that purpose. It has got draconian implications for political refugees, but nowhere does it authorise armed action against Afghanistan or any other state.

It establishes a committee of the Security Council (chaired by the UK) to monitor its implementation and obliges all UN members to report to the committee within 30 days on the steps they have taken to implement its

provisions. The UK Ambassador to the UN, Sir Jeremy Greenstock, explained to the BBC's War Report on 28th October that the business of the committee was to rewrite the domestic legislation of every state in this world in order to combat "terrorism".

Though he didn't specifically say so, this is bound to include legislation on political asylum and extradition, since paragraph 3(g) of the resolution calls upon all member states to:

*"Ensure, in conformity with international law, that refugee status is not abused by the perpetrators, organisers or facilitators of terrorist acts, and that claims of political motivation are not recognised as grounds for refusing requests for the extradition of alleged terrorists"*

#### Resolution 1368

Resolution 1368 passed on 12th September reads as follows:

##### *The Security Council,*

*Reaffirming the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations,*

*Determined to combat by all means threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts,*

*Recognising the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence in accordance with the Charter,*

*1. Unambiguously condemns in the strongest terms the horrifying terrorist attacks which took place on 11 September 2001 in New York, Washington, D.C. and Pennsylvania and regards such acts, like any act of international terrorism, as a threat to international peace and security;*

*2. Expresses its deepest sympathy and condolences to the victims and their families and to the people and Government of the United States of America;*

*3. Calls on all States to work together urgently to bring to justice the perpetrators, organisers and sponsors of these terrorist attacks and stresses that those responsible for*

*aiding, supporting or harbouring the perpetrators, organisers and sponsors of these acts will be held accountable;*

*4. Calls also on the international community to redouble their efforts to prevent and suppress terrorist acts including by increased cooperation and full implementation of the relevant international anti-terrorist conventions and Security Council resolutions, in particular resolution 1269 (1999) of 19 October 1999;*

*5. Expresses its readiness to take all necessary steps to respond to the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, and to combat all forms of terrorism, in accordance with its responsibilities under the Charter of the United Nations;*

*6. Decides to remain seized of the matter.*

On several occasions I have heard Jack Straw refer to the phrase "to take all necessary steps" in paragraph 5 as authorising military action in Afghanistan, as if it gives the US a free hand to take any action it sees fit, which it plainly does not. Paragraph 5 doesn't commit the Security Council to any action, armed or otherwise, let alone licence the US to do what it likes.

I have also heard it said that the second clause of paragraph 3, which "stresses that those responsible for aiding, supporting or harbouring the perpetrators, organisers and sponsors of these acts will be held accountable", makes armed action against Afghanistan legal, since it "harbours" Bin Laden and al-Qaeda. But where is armed action against anybody authorised? Not in paragraph 3, nor anywhere else in the resolution.

More fundamentally, the Security Council can only authorise the use of force by a so-called Chapter VII resolution—and resolution 1368 is not a Chapter VII resolution.

Chapter VII of the UN Charter, which comprises Articles 39 to 51, prescribes how the Security Council should take "action with respect to threats to the peace, breaches of the peace, and acts of aggression". Article 39 allows the Security Council to "determine the existence of any threat to the peace, breach of the peace, or act of aggression" and to "make recommendations, or decide what measures shall be taken in accordance with Articles 41 and 42, to maintain or restore international peace



and security". Article 41 allows the UN to take measures not involving the use of armed force; Article 42 allows the use of military force "should the Security Council consider that measures provided for in Article 41 would be inadequate or have proved to be inadequate".

Resolutions authorising the use of armed force must invoke Chapter VII, normally by including the clause: "Acting under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations". Resolution 1368 does not, so a priori it cannot authorise the use of armed force, and cannot therefore be regarded as giving authority for the US and the UK to bomb Afghanistan. Why the British Government keeps saying that it does is a mystery.

#### Article 51

By contrast, the US merely claims that it is exercising its right to self-defence provided for under Article 51 of the UN Charter in attacking Afghanistan. Article 51 reads as follows:

*"Nothing in the present Charter shall impair the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence if an armed attack occurs against a Member of the United Nations, until the Security Council has taken measures necessary to maintain international peace and security. Measures taken by Members in the exercise of this right of self-defence shall be immediately reported to the Security Council and shall not in any way affect the authority and responsibility of the Security Council under the present Charter to take at any time such action as it deems necessary in order to maintain or restore international peace and security."*

Obviously, when the UN Charter was drawn up, it was envisaged that any armed attack on a UN member would be by another state. Under Article 51, military action taken against that state in response is unequivocally legal in international law.

Whether the attack on the US on 11th September, carried out by a non-state organisation, constitutes an armed attack against which the US has a right of self-defence under Article 51 is a different matter. By including a reference to the right of self-defence in the preamble to resolution 1368, the Security Council has given the US the green light

to make that assumption. But even if one assumes that the US has a right of self-defence, there remains the tricky question of which state or states, if any, is it legal for the US to take military action against in response, without further endorsement of the Security Council. Resolution 1368 has nothing to say on this crucial matter.

#### Report By US

Action taken by a member state under Article 51 must be reported immediately to the Security Council. To that end, the US Ambassador to the UN, John Negroponte, wrote to the President of the Security Council on 7 October, the day the bombing began, in the following terms:

*"In accordance with Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, I wish, on behalf of my Government, to report that the United States of America, together with other States, has initiated actions in the exercise of its inherent right of individual and collective self-defence following armed attacks that were carried out against the United States on September 11, 2001."*

*"... Since September 11, my Government has obtained clear and compelling information that the al-Qaeda organisation, which is supported by the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, had a central role in the attacks. There is still much we do not know. Our inquiry is in its early stages. We may find that our self-defence requires further actions with respect to other organisations and other States. [my emphasis]"*

*"The attacks on September 11, 2001, and the ongoing threat to the United States and its nationals posed by the al-Qaeda organisation have been made possible by the decision of the Taliban regime to allow the parts of Afghanistan that it controls to be used by this organisation as a base of operation. Despite every effort by the United States and the international community, the Taliban regime has refused to change its policy. From the territory of Afghanistan, the al-Qaeda organisation continues to train and support agents of terror who attack innocent people throughout the world and target United States nationals and interests in the United States and abroad."*

*"In response to these attacks, and*

*in accordance with the inherent right of individual and collective self-defence, United States armed forces have initiated actions designed to prevent and deter further attacks on the United States. These actions include measures against al-Qaeda terrorist training camps and military installations of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. ..."*

The sentence emphasised above, with its implication that Iraq and other states may also be subject to US self-defence, is a source of embarrassment to the British Government. Is Tony Blair standing "shoulder to shoulder" with George Bush on this? Significantly, the equivalent letter from the UK Government does not reserve the right to extend self-defence to "other organisations and other States".

#### Report By UK?

It is not absolutely clear that it was necessary under Article 51 for the UK to report to the Security Council independently of the US. In the House of Commons on 8 October, questioned by Alex Salmond about whether the UK had made a report and whether it would be published like the US report, the Defence Secretary, Geoff Hoon, thought not:

*"This is a coalition operation and I have no doubt that, for technical legal purposes, we are covered by the notification that the United States has given."*

He said that despite the fact that, according to the Foreign Office, a letter was sent in the UK's name on 7th October, the previous day. Geoff Hoon said that in the course of opening a debate on the war. In a speech during the debate Alex Salmond referred to the US report, and specifically to the US reserving the right to attack states other than Afghanistan, and repeated his earlier inquiry to Geoff Hoon about a UK report. At this point, Clare Short, who was due to close the debate, intervened to say that she had a copy in her hand.

A few hours later, when she was closing the debate, Alex Salmond tried for a third time to find out if the UK agreed with the US that other states might have to be attacked and whether the UK's letter reserved the right to do so. Clare Short gave the following

ambiguous reply:

*"I agree with his point ... that we must not widen the objectives of the campaign. It must be a focused and just war with no civilian casualties [!]. We must keep the global coalition together and go after those who perpetrated the monstrous acts in the United States of America. We must not look for all trails that need to be corrected over time."*

The final sentence is a heroic attempt to sit on the fence about attacking states other than Afghanistan.

There is something fishy about the UK's report to the Security Council. Is it conceivable that a senior minister was unaware of its existence when he stood up in the House of Commons to defend the Government's bombing of Afghanistan along with the US? Could it be that the report did not exist at the beginning of the debate and was concocted during it, not least to avoid being seen to be standing "shoulder to shoulder" with the US in reserving the right to attack other states?

#### Report By UK

My suspicion about this report has been fuelled by my difficulty in getting a copy of it and the nature of the copy I eventually got. Whereas the US letter is readily available on a US Government website, the UK letter is not on the Foreign Office website. When I rang the Foreign Office to ask for a copy to be e-mailed to me, a copy wasn't available in electronic form. A paper copy was sent to me, which consisted of a single A4 sheet unheaded and undated, and with a gap in the middle as if something had been erased, and a note to say that the UK Charge d'Affaires at the UN had sent this to the Security Council on 7th October.

My expectation was that the letter would state that the UK was assisting the US in its self-defence. Article 51 allows "collective" self-defence, so if it is legal for the US to bomb Afghanistan in response to the events of 11th September, it is legal for the UK to assist. But at times the letter seems to be trying to claim that the UK is acting in its own self-defence. It begins as follows:

*"In accordance with Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, I wish on behalf of my government to report that the United Kingdom has military*

*assets engaged in operations against targets we know to be involved in the operation of terror against the United States of America, the United Kingdom and other countries around the world, as part of a wider international effort."*

*"These forces have now been employed in exercise of the inherent right of individual and collective self-defence, recognised in Article 51, following the terrorist outrage of 11 September, to avert the continuing threat of attacks from the same source. My government presented information to the United Kingdom Parliament on 4 October which showed that Usama Bin Laden and his al-Qaeda terrorist organisation have the capability to execute major terrorist attacks, claimed credit for past attacks on United States targets, and have been engaged in a concerted campaign against the United States and its allies. One of their stated aims is the murder of US citizens and attacks on the United States' allies."*

So, according to the Government, al-Qaeda is waging a terrorist campaign against the UK and the UK is responding by bombing targets in Afghanistan "involved in the operation of terror" against it. And while it is not explicitly stated, the sense of the first paragraph is that the UK is claiming an Article 51 self-defence justification for doing so.

#### Why This Fantasy?

Why the Government has engaged in this fantasy is a mystery, when the obvious justification for attacking Afghanistan is that they are assisting in US self-defence. As we have seen, in public the usual justification is not self-defence at all, but that the action has been authorised by Security Council resolution 1373, when it manifestly hasn't been.

Of course, had the US and the UK sought Security Council approval for an attack Afghanistan if Bin Laden wasn't handed over, it is very likely that it would have been forthcoming, since it is unlikely that either France or Russia or China would have vetoed it after the events of 11th September. But the US didn't want that, since the UN would then be in charge of the campaign at least nominally and the US would not have an absolutely free hand to prosecute it. The US was never going to volunteer to have

its hands tied.

There is an implication in Article 51 that the right to act in self-defence does not last indefinitely, but only "until the Security Council has taken measures necessary to maintain international peace and security" (to quote from the first sentence). That seems to be saying that, whereas a state has the right to defend itself in the immediate aftermath of an attack, responsibility should then be handed over to the Security Council. Could this be why the British Government keeps insisting that it has got Security Council approval for its action in Afghanistan?

#### NATO

From an early stage it has been clear that NATO is not going to be involved as an organisation in the US government's "war on terrorism". This, despite the fact within hours of the attack the NATO Council had met and, for the first time in its history, had invoked Article 5 of its Charter, and expressed its willingness to rush to the aid of the US.

To be precise, the invoking of Article 5 on 12th September was conditional on it being "determined that this attack was directed from abroad against the United States" (NATO Press Statement). It wasn't until 2nd October that Lord Robertson announced that it had been so determined, following a briefing to the NATO Council by Frank Taylor, US State Department Co-ordinator for Counter-terrorism, who told them that Osama Bin Laden and al-Qaeda were responsible.

Lord Robertson held a press conference to announce the historic news that Article 5 had been invoked and that the US could now rely on the full support of its 18 NATO allies in the campaign against terrorism. That was, near enough, NATO's only contribution to the campaign.

It had already been determined by the US that there was not going to be a NATO operation against Afghanistan like the bombing of Yugoslavia in 1999. The US was not going to have its freedom of action limited by the other NATO members, as happened then when it was prevented from bombing the targets it wished in Yugoslavia.



**Leader concluded from p. 2**

Do they? Surely, the "Zionist-Crusader alliance" refers to Israel and America and "their collaborators" are the rulers of Saudi Arabia? And isn't the "devil's supporters" also a reference to the rulers of Saudi Arabia?

Be that as it may, on the basis of this, the document concludes that "the United Kingdom, and United Kingdom nationals are potential targets" of al-Qaeda. That is another fantasy. Why would al-Qaeda waste resources in attacking Britain? On the face of it, volunteering to stand shoulder to shoulder to America might be thought to increase the chances of being Britain attacked. But, that wouldn't be a sensible thing for al-Qaeda to do, since it would provide America with a weapon to beat its allies into line, and to suppress dissent in allied states against American action in Afghanistan and elsewhere.

It is strange that the Government seems to feel the need to convince the British people that they too are under threat, that we are standing shoulder to shoulder with America out of self-interest. This was also evident in Britain's letter to the Security Council on 7th October formally reporting that it had gone to war with Afghanistan: it is ambiguously phrased so that it can be interpreted as saying either that we are acting in our own self-defence or else that we are assisting America with its

**UN: Concluded from p. 15**

This emerged—it was not announced as such—after a NATO meeting in Brussels on 25th September, attended by the US Deputy Defence Secretary, Paul Wolfowitz. In advance, the story leaked to the press was that he was coming over to present evidence that the Bin Laden organisation was responsible and set out a plan for military action, which NATO would be invited to undertake. He did neither. The next day it became clear that there wasn't going to be a NATO operation as such, but the US would seek assistance on a bilateral basis from other NATO members as and when it saw fit.

NATO as an organisation is contributing one military asset to the war effort: at the request of the US, five

self-defence.

(The fourth conclusion of the document is that "Bin Laden and al-Qaeda were able to commit the atrocities of 11th September because of their close alliance with the Taliban régime". This is simply asserted. Of course, evidence is presented that Bin Laden and al-Qaeda operate freely in Afghanistan, but that does not prove that the facilities provided by the Taliban were essential for carrying out the attacks of 11th September. After all, the essential training was purchased in America.)

**Bomber Short**

No comment in Britain's part in America's war should fail to mention Clare Short's contribution.

She has been a staunch defender of the present mode of government in Pakistan and its self-appointed president, General Musharraf. The two previous administrations in Pakistan were "corrupt" democracies, she said (on Jonathan Dimbleby's programme one Sunday). General Musharraf had rescued Pakistan from that and had shown courage in the present crisis. She is not alone in praising the General for his courage (which is shorthand for going against the popular will in Pakistan) but she is alone in openly espousing dictatorship over democracy.

From now on, also, there can be no doubt that Clare is worthy of her sobriquet

Airborne Warning & Control Systems (AWACS) aircraft have been deployed to the US for "homeland" defence. These are part of a NATO asset consisting of 17 Boeing aircraft, normally based in Germany, and manned by integrated crews from 12 NATO nations (not including UK and France). Since they are American systems mounted on American aircraft, they are really going home.

**Concluded from p. 6**

its image, many countries in Africa, the middle east and elsewhere around the world that do not share our values will feel threatened. If we do that, we will be treading the path towards not a new international order, but a new international anarchy, for we have neither the military capacity nor the political

"Bomber" Short. Before the bombing started, she appeared to be against it for humanitarian reasons. After the bombing started, at a time when the trucking of aid into Afghanistan had ceased because of it, she said there would be a bombing pause (in an interview with *The Big Issue* on 8th October). The same day, she told the House of Commons: "It must be a focused and just war with no civilian casualties". There have been tens if not hundreds of civilian casualties, nevertheless, she remains in government and has become a propagandist for bombing without ceasing.

In Pakistan on 17th October, she rounded on the aid agencies for asking for a bombing pause so that aid could be trucked in and distributed before winter sets in, accusing them of being "emotional". She stated categorically that the transport of aid would not be limited by the bombing. Does anybody seriously believe that? Even if roads and bridges have not been damaged, it is not credible that truck drivers are as willing to drive with the prospect of bombs falling on them.

The bombing campaign must go on, she said, because: "We have to dismantle the Bin Laden al-Qaeda network, otherwise it will hit again and deliberately kill innocent people." (*Guardian*, 18th October). She doesn't seem to understand that dropping bombs on Afghanistan will not eliminate the network in Britain or America. •

will to make western values the values of the whole globe.

Now of all times, when we need to deploy military force in an effort to bring greater security to our citizens, is not the moment to shake up the kaleidoscope further. It is not the moment to frighten the leaders of other countries who do not share our values. Commenting on the Prime Minister's speeches, *The Economist* said: "The only plausible explanation of Mr. Blair's planet transforming is that 'the poor man has let the war against terrorism go to his head'."

Over the top perhaps, but I fervently hope that he puts away his dangerous messianic rhetoric.

