

PM's foreign policy speech - third in a series of three

26 May 2006

There is a "hopeless mismatch" between the global challenges we face and the global institutions available to confront them, Tony Blair told an audience in the United States.

Speaking at Georgetown University, the PM reflected on what he called a "moment for reconciliation" for the world around an unifying agenda of justice and opportunity for all.

His speech was the third in a related series.

The first, in London, and the second, delivered in Australia, dealt with globalisation and the interdependence of nations and reflected on the biggest challenges facing the world in the 21st century.

- ["Global alliance for global values"](#)
- ["A clash about civilisations"](#)

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This is the third of my speeches on the challenges facing the international community. In the first, I argued that the global terrorism that menaces us, can only be defeated through pulling it up by its roots. We have to attack not just its methods but its ideas, its presumed and false sense of grievance against the West, its attempt to persuade us that it is we and not they who are responsible for its violence. In doing so, we should stand up for our own values, asserting that they are not Western but global values, whose spread is the surest guarantee of our future security. In the second speech, I argued that such values would only succeed, however, if they were seen to be fairly and even-handedly implemented; that this required a unifying agenda for global action, which was about more than the immediate security threat but was also about justice and opportunity for all.

In this speech, I contend that now is the moment for reconciliation in the international community around such an agenda and I outline some of the key policy priorities and reforms of the global institutions to make such an agenda happen.

Underlying all these arguments, is a world view. We all agree that the characteristic of the modern world is interdependence. We haven't yet thought through its consequences.

In Government, I realised this first at the time of the Asian financial crisis shortly after taking office. Within weeks, all of us who had been initially holding back, waiting for the market to correct itself, wondering how a market meltdown in Thailand could possibly destabilise our own economies, were coming together, agreeing packages to prevent contagion, supporting Brazil and others who looked like they might be the next to go. In the process every conventional doctrine about markets was amended to prevent catastrophe.

A year later, Kosovo happened and the spectre of ethnic cleansing returned to Europe. We put pressure on Milosevic. We threatened diplomatic action. We eventually took military action by air strikes. But it was only when, with considerable courage President Clinton

indicated - and it was only an indication - he might be prepared to use ground force, that suddenly Milosevic collapsed and the crisis was resolved.

What these two events taught me was that the rule book of international politics has been torn up. Interdependence - the fact of a crisis somewhere becoming a crisis everywhere - makes a mockery of traditional views of national interest. You can't have a coherent view of national interest today without a coherent view of the international community. Nations, even ones as large and powerful as the USA, are affected profoundly by world events; and not affected, in time or at the margins but at breakneck speed and fundamentally. Why is immigration the No.1 domestic policy issue in much of Europe and in the US today? What are the solutions? The answer is that globalisation is making mass migration a reality; and only global development will make it a manageable reality.

Which is the issue that has rocketed up the agenda of most political leaders in a way barely foreseen even 3 years back? Energy policy. China and India need energy to grow. The damage to the environment of carbon emissions is now accepted. It doesn't much matter whether the issue is approached through energy security or climate change, the fact is we need a framework, internationally agreed, through which the developing nations can grow, the wealthy countries maintain their standard of living and the environment be protected from disaster. And this is not a long-term issue - though its consequences are long-term. It is here and now.

The point is that in respect of any of these challenges, certain things stand out. They affect us all. They can only be effectively tackled together. And they require a pre-emptive and not simply reactive response.

Here is where it becomes very difficult. In the old days - I mean a few decades back - countries could wait, assess over time, even opt out - at least until everything was clear. We could act when we knew. Now we have to act on the basis of precaution.

What is more such action will often require intervention, far beyond our own boundaries. The terrorism we are fighting in Britain, wasn't born in Britain, though on 7th July last year it was British born terrorists that committed murder. The roots are in schools and training camps and indoctrination thousands of miles away, as well as in the towns and cities of modern Britain. The migration we experience is from Eastern Europe, and the poverty-stricken states of Africa and the solution to it lies there at its source not in the nation feeling its consequence.

What this means is that we have to act, not react; we have to do so on the basis of prediction not certainty; and such action will often, usually indeed, be outside of our own territory. And what all that means is: that this can't be done easily unless it is done on an agreed basis of principle, of values that are shared and fair. Common action only works when founded on common values.

Therefore, to meet effectively the challenge that faces us, we must fashion an international community that both embodies, and acts in pursuit of global values: liberty, democracy, tolerance, justice. These are the values we believe in. These are the values universally accepted across all nations, faiths and races, though not by all elements within them. These are values that can inspire and unify. So, how, at this moment in time, in an international community that has been riven, do we achieve such unity around such values?

Let us go back to the immediate issue: Iraq. We can argue forever about the merits of removing Saddam. Our opponents will say: you made terrorism worse and point to what is happening there. I believe differently. I believe this global terrorism will exploit any situation to further its cause. But I don't believe that its cause is truly to be found in any decision we

have taken. I believe its cause is an ideology, a world-view, derived from religious fanaticism and that had we taken no decisions at all to enrage it, would still have found provocation in our very existence. They disagree with our way of life, our values and in particular in our tolerance. They hate us but probably they hate those Muslims who believe in tolerance, even more, as apostates betraying the true faith.

They have come to Iraq because they see it as the battleground. The battle they are fighting is nothing to do with the liberation of Iraq, but its subjugation to their extremism.

I don't want to reopen past arguments. I want to advocate a new concord to displace the old contention.

It is three years since Saddam fell. It has been three years of strife and bloodshed. But it has also seen something remarkable. Despite it all, despite terror, sectarian violence, kidnapping and the exhibition of every ugly aspect of human nature, a democratic political process has grown. Last week, a new Government was formed. This Monday I visited it in Baghdad, I sat and talked with the leaders, chosen by the people, Sunni, Shia, Kurds, non-aligned, and heard from them not the jarring messages of warring factions but one simple, clear and united discourse. They want Iraq to be democratic. They want its people to be free. They want to tolerate difference and celebrate diversity. They want the rule of law not violence to determine their fate.

They were quite different from the Interim Government of 2004 or the Iraqi Transitional Government after the elections of January 2005.

This is a child of democracy struggling to be born. They and we, the international community, are the midwives.

You may not agree with original decision.

You may believe mistakes have been made.

You may even think how can it be worth the sacrifice.

But surely we must all accept this is a genuine attempt to run the race of liberty.

These are not stooges. Or placemen.

They believe in their country.

They believe in its capacity to be democratic.

They are fighting a struggle against the odds but they are fighting it.

And in their struggle is a symbol of a wider struggle.

Listen to what the new Prime Minister says and the new Government's programme.

Tell me where their vision differs from ours except that ours is based in experience and theirs in hope.

I came back from Iraq not less daunted by the responsibility on our shoulders to help them succeed. But I did come back inspired by their determination that they do indeed succeed.

This should be a moment of reconciliation not only in Iraq but in the international community. The war split the world. The struggle of Iraqis for democracy should unite it.

There was a moving moment when I was talking to the new Prime Minister in his office in Baghdad that he told me, with a smile, used to be the dining room of one of Saddam's sons. We were on our own with the interpreter. He leant across to me and said: "if we can change Iraq we can change this region and the world".

The terrorism that afflicts them is the same that afflicts us. Its roots are out there in the Middle East, in the brutal combination of secular dictatorship and religious extremism. Yet in every country of the region there are people, probably the majority, who are desperate for change. In Kuwait, as I boarded the plane for Iraq, they told me how they were planning elections for the first time with women voting. Across the Gulf States, in the Lebanon, in the steps, however difficult, Egypt is taking, in signs of change in nations as different as Jordan or Algeria, there are possibilities for progress.

These are the true voices of Muslim and Arab people, or more true than the voices of hate, with their poisonous propaganda that seeks to divide.

They need our support. In Iraq, of course, people want to gain full control of their own destiny. The MNF should leave as soon as the Government wishes us. As the Prime Minister said we need an objective timetable. By that he means one that is conditions-based ie as Iraqi capability is built up. But don't be in any doubt. No-one, but no-one I spoke to, from whatever quarter, wanted us to leave precipitately. An arbitrary timetable ie without conditions being right, would be seen for what it would be: weakness.

Here is where we have to change radically our mindset. At present, when we are shown pictures of carnage in Iraq, much of our own opinion sees that as a failure, as a reason for leaving. Surely it is a reason for persevering and succeeding. What is the purpose of the terrorism in Iraq? It is to destroy the prospect of democratic progress. In doing so, they hope to deal us a mortal blow. They know victory for them in Iraq is defeat not just for Iraqi democracy but for democratic values everywhere.

So they kill our soldiers even though our forces - with incredible heroism and dedication - are and have been in Iraq for three years with full United Nations support and are there now with the free consent of Iraq's first ever fully democratic Government. They kill ordinary Iraqis for wanting to join the police or build the country or just for being of one religious persuasion not another. Theirs is a strategy drenched in the blood of the innocent.

Should their determination to do evil eclipse our desire to do good? By all means debate the tactics and strategy of how we succeed. But I ask: how can we possibly, in the face of such a struggle, so critical to our own values, not see it through and do so with renewed vigour and confidence? If Iraqis can show their faith in democracy by voting for it, shouldn't we show ours by supporting them in it?

By "we" I don't mean the countries of the MNF, I mean the entire international community.

Doing so would signal a dramatic step of reconciliation.

There are two "ifs".

"If" the international community could see the struggle for security in Iraq as part of the wider global struggle against terrorism. And "if", we would commit the same energy, engagement and raw political emotion to the rest of the agenda which preoccupies the world at large.

Throughout the past years, ever since I saw 9/11 change the world, I have believed that the greatest danger is that global politics divides into "hard" and "soft". The "hard" get after the terrorists. The "soft" campaign against poverty. The divide is dangerous because interdependence makes all these issues just that: interdependent.

The answer to terrorism is the universal application of global values. The answer to poverty is the same. Without progress - in democracy and in prosperity - security is at risk. Without security, progress falters.

That is why the struggle for global values has to be applied not selectively, but to a global agenda.

The agenda is there. It is largely agreed. But it needs passion as well as policy.

We must act on global poverty, most of all in Africa. We have a plan that last year's G8 agreed. Each aspect is important: aid, cancelling debt, education, tackling disease, especially HIV/Aids, governance, conflict resolution.

We must act on climate change. The G8 +5 process, whose next meeting is in Mexico in October, offers a way forward, building on Kyoto, which can involve America, China and India.

We must deliver an ambitious world trade round, for the poorest nations but also for ourselves.

In each of these areas, there are powerful reflections of nation's interests but also vital tests of commitment to global values. If we believe in justice, how can we let 30,000 children a day die preventably? If we believe in our responsibility to the generations that come after us, how can we be, knowingly, indifferent to the degradation of the planet we live on?

How can we have a global trading system based on unfair trade?

Indeed, even in respect of that part of the agenda that naturally preoccupies my country and yours, there is a breadth we must address.

Earlier I described the fledgling movement toward democracy across the Middle East. As I said, I believe success in Iraq has an importance far beyond the borders of Iraq.

But I would put it higher than this. I now think that we need a far more concentrated and concerted strategy across the whole region. The United States rightly began this with its Broader Middle East Initiative. However, the more I examine this issue, the more convinced I am, that to protect our future, we need to help them to theirs. For example, I don't believe we will be secure unless Iran changes. I emphasise I am not saying, we should impose change. I am simply saying the greater freedom and democracy which, I have no doubt, most Iranians want, is something we need. There is a choice being played out in the region: to be partners with the wider world; or to be defined in opposition to it. If Iran leads the latter camp, the results will be felt by us all. The most effective way of avoiding that is to encourage and support all nations and people in the region who share our belief that freedom is the best route to peace and prosperity. This cannot and should not be the responsibility of the United States alone. The EU, in particular, needs to be fully engaged. But country by country, in every way we can, with every means we can properly deploy, the international community should be the champions of those who want change there. And wherever those who strive for that freedom are in danger, we should be at their side.

They would be hugely empowered and encouraged if we were able to offer hope on Israel and Palestine. At so many levels, this is critical: for ordinary Israelis and Palestinians, of course, who suffer the depredations of the conflict. But far wider than that, this is a dispute which casts a shadow over all attempts at reconciliation. Under its cover, global terrorism recruits. Because of its darkness, moderate Muslim opinion is put on the defensive. And shut out is any enlightened sensible view of what we in the West really stand for and believe in.

The frustrating thing is that whatever people say, everyone knows the following: the state of Israel is here to stay; the Palestinian people aren't going to disappear; and the only possible solution is two states, side by side. In fact, when President Bush became the first US President openly to articulate this, everyone more or less accepted it. The problem we have had in Northern Ireland is that there has never been agreement on the basic nature of the final outcome, one part wanting Union with the UK, the other with the Republic of Ireland. Nonetheless we have achieved extraordinary progress, by relentless working at it through every stop and start. In the case of Israel and Palestine, we do now have agreement as to the basic nature of the settlement: two states. Yes, there are innumerable difficult aspects, not least Jerusalem and of course a negotiation about territory; but the constitutional outcome is essentially agreed.

There is only one way through. Clear acceptance by Hamas that the two-state solution is the only one; a renunciation of all violence; and then a move back into the Road Map, with a speeded up pathway to final status negotiations. It will require heavy engagement by the US and the Quartet. But there is not a better time than now, to break out of what is otherwise a continuing descent into despair.

The scale of this agenda is enormous. It means that today's leaders of nations must analyse, cope with, deal with, a vast array of international problems as well as the myriad of challenges thrown up by each of our systems of healthcare, pensions, welfare, law and order. Except that, these problems are no longer simply international. They intrude into domestic politics. There is globalisation in politics, too.

All of the issues raised today, require immense focus, commitment and drive to get things done. Increasingly, there is a hopeless mismatch between the global challenges we face and the global institutions to confront them. After the Second World War, people realised that there needed to be a new international institutional architecture. In this new era, in the early 21st century, we need to renew it.

I want to make some tentative suggestions for change.

First, the UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan, has done an extraordinary job in often near impossible circumstances. He has also proposed reforms of the UN that should certainly be done.

But a Security Council which has France as a permanent member but not Germany, Britain but not Japan, China but not India to say nothing of the absence of proper representation from Latin America or Africa, cannot be legitimate in the modern world. I used to think this problem was intractable. The competing interests are so strong. But I am now sure we need reform. If necessary let us agree some form of interim change that can be a bridge to a future settlement. But we need to get it done.

We should give the UNSG new powers: over the appointments in the Secretariat - it is absurd they have to be voted on, one by one, in the General Assembly; and over how the resources of the UN are spent. We should streamline radically the humanitarian and development operations so that the UN can act effectively as one agency in country: single

UN offices, with one leader, one country plan and one budget. There is even a case for establishing one humanitarian agency that allows for better prediction of an impending crisis; for swifter action to remedy it; and sees the different aspects, from short-term relief to longer term development as linked not distinct.

We should also strengthen the UNSG's powers to propose action to the Security Council for the resolution of long-standing disputes; and encourage him in doing so.

Second, **the World Bank and IMF**. These institutions together play an important role in global stability and prosperity. **There is a case, as has been argued before, for merger. But in any event, there is certainly a powerful case for reform.**

The IMF, and the international monetary and financial committee chaired by Britain's Gordon Brown, is developing plans for change. To fulfil its role in ensuring the stability of the international monetary and financial system, the IMF must focus on surveillance, both of individual countries and the wider system, that is independent of political influence. **It also must become more representative of emerging economic powers and give greater voice to developing countries. The World Bank must remain focussed on fighting world poverty.**

Finally, reform, including to appointments and administration, is needed to make the Executive Board more effective.

Third, there is a strong argument for establishing a multilateral system for "safe enrichment" for nuclear energy.

The IAEA would oversee an international bank of uranium to ensure a reliable fuel supply for countries utilising nuclear power without the need for everyone to own their own fuel cycle.

Fourth, the G8 now regularly meets as the G8 +5. That should be the norm.

Finally, **we need a UN Environment Organisation**, commensurate with the importance the issue now has on the international agenda.

I do not, for a second, under-estimate the hazardous task of achieving these changes. But I am sure it is time to make them.

I want to take one example as a test case: Sudan. There are hundreds of thousands who have died. The dispute between different groups has every dimension of strife in it: ethnic, religious, territorial. If it gets even worse, the knock-on consequences will stretch across the middle belt of Africa and beyond. And we have watched it, with intermittent bursts of activity, for the past two years. The seeds of it were, of course, sown years before that.

This is not a condemnation of world leaders. On the contrary, most of us have devoted what time we can and are doing so now. But in reality, we can't do it all. What it needs is an empowered international actor; the capacity to intervene militarily; and a properly orchestrated humanitarian response. And we needed all of it, from the beginning.

Leaders should do more. But it's the system itself that is at fault, not because of indolence but because of time. Occasionally I look at our international institutions and think as I do about our welfare state: the structures of 1946 trying to meet the challenges of 2006.

What's the obstacle? It is that in creating more effective multilateral institutions, individual nations yield up some of their own independence. This is a hard thing to swallow. Let me be blunt. **Powerful nations want more effective multilateral institutions - when they think those**

institutions will do their will. What they fear is effective multilateral institutions that do their own will.

But the danger of leaving things as they are, is ad hoc coalitions for action that stir massive controversy about legitimacy; or paralysis in the face of crisis.

No amount of institutional change will ever work unless the most powerful make it work. The EU doesn't move forward unless its leading countries agree. That is the reality of power; size; economic, military, political weight.

But if there is a common basis for working - agreed aims and purposes - then no matter how powerful, countries gain from being able to sub-contract problems that on their own they cannot solve. Their national self-interest becomes delivered through effective communal action.

Today, after all the turmoil and disagreement of the past few years, there is a real opportunity to bring us together. We all of us face the common security threat of global terrorism; we all of us depend on a healthy global financial system; all of us, at least in time, will feel the consequences of the poverty of millions living in a world of plenty; we all of us know that secure and clean energy is a common priority. All of us have an interest in stability and a fear of chaos. That's the impact of interdependence.

Above all, though in too many countries and in too many ways, global values are not followed, there is no dissent about their desirability. From the moment the Afghans came out and voted in their first ever election, the myth that democracy was a Western concept, was exploded. The Governments of the world do not all believe in freedom. But the people of the world do.

In my nine years as Prime Minister I have not become more cynical about idealism. I have simply become more persuaded that the distinction between a foreign policy driven by values and one driven by interests, is obviously wrong. Globalisation begets interdependence. Interdependence begets the necessity of a common value system to make it work. In other words, the idealism becomes the real politik. None of that will eliminate the setbacks, fallings short, inconsistencies and hypocrisies that come with practical decision-making in a harsh world. But it does mean that the best of the human spirit, that which, throughout the ages, has pushed the progress of humanity along, is also the best hope for the world's future. Our values are our guide.

To make it so, however, we have to be prepared to think sooner and act quicker in defence of those values - progressive pre-emption, if you will. There is an agenda for it, waiting to be gathered and capable of uniting a world once divided. There wouldn't be a better moment for it.

Source: <http://www.number10.gov.uk/output/Page9549.asp>