

THE BLAIR LEGACY
HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS DEAD
BRITAIN LESS SAFE

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SUMMARY

Is there a causal link between British military intervention in the Muslim world and terrorism by Muslims in Britain? That is a vital question. After all, the Government is never done telling us that it is the first duty of government to keep us safe.

Yet, the Prime Minister cannot bring himself to admit the existence of such a link, even though the British intelligence services say:

“We judge that the conflict in Iraq has exacerbated the threat from international terrorism and will continue to have an impact in the long term. It has reinforced the determination of terrorists who were already committed to attacking the West and motivated others who were not.”

Blair cannot bring himself to admit that there is a causal link. For him to do so is to admit that his military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq, which he justified to counter alleged threats to Britain's security, have in reality made Britain less safe.

As for the threats to Britain's security, there were none, neither from al-Qaida in October 2001, nor from Saddam Hussein's Iraq in March 2003.

That is Blair's legacy. He has made Britain less safe by his military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq and, in the process, he has caused the deaths of nearly 200 British soldiers, and hundreds of thousands of Afghans and Iraqis.

That should be engraved on his tombstone.

This pamphlet traces Blair's deceit about the threats facing Britain in order to take us to war in Afghanistan and Iraq.

It also shows that Bush and Blair misrepresent the objective of al-Qaida, which is not about overthrowing “democracy and freedom” in the West, but about ending Western, especially British and American, interference in the Muslim world. It can be guaranteed that al-Qaida will not attack Sweden.

As Michael Scheuer, who was the first head of the CIA's al-Qaida desk, wrote in his book *Imperial Hubris: Why the West is losing the War on Terror*:

“...the greatest danger for Americans confronting the radical Islamist threat is to believe – at the urging of US leaders – that Muslims attack us for what we are and what we think rather than for what we do.

“Rhetorical political blustering ‘informs’ the public that Islamists are offended by the Western world's democratic freedoms, civil liberties, intermingling of genders, and separation of church and state. However, although aspects of the modern world may offend conservative Muslims, no Islamist leader has, for example, fomented jihad in order to destroy participatory democracy, the national association of credit unions, or coed universities...

“Al-Qaida's public statements condemn America's protection of corrupt Muslim regimes, unqualified support for Israel, the occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan, and a further litany of real-world grievances. Bin Laden's supporters thus identify their problem and believe its solution lies in war.”

If the West stops interfering in the Muslim world, then the al-Qaida threat to the West will disappear. It's as simple as that.

THE BLAIR LEGACY

HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS DEAD

BRITAIN LESS SAFE

“In the months after 7/7, we had a debate in Britain as to whether foreign policy in Iraq or Afghanistan had ‘caused’ the terrorism by inflaming Muslim opinion. The notion that removing two appalling dictatorships and replacing them with a UN backed process to democracy, with massive investment in reconstruction available if only the terrorism stopped, could in any justifiable sense ‘inflamm’ Muslim opinion when it was perfectly obvious that the Muslims in both countries wanted rid of both regimes and stand to gain enormously, if only they were allowed to, from their removal, is ludicrous. Yet a large part, even of non-Muslim opinion, essentially buys into that view.”

Those are the words of Prime Minister Blair speaking onboard HMS Albion in Plymouth on 12 January 2007, in what was billed as the 6th of his Our Nation’s Future lectures, this one on the role of the UK’s Armed Forces in the 21st century.¹

Note that the Prime Minister is careful not to deny that US/UK foreign policy towards Afghanistan and Iraq, and the military action that flowed from it, **has** inflamed Muslim opinion. Nor does he deny that the inflaming of Muslim opinion caused the bombings in London on 7 July 2005.

Of course, he believes that there was no justification for Muslims being inflamed by US/UK military action in Afghanistan and Iraq, since the action overthrew two “appalling dictatorships” and paved the way for democracy (he says). Apparently, instead of being inflamed by US/UK action, Muslims in Afghanistan and Iraq – and around the world – should have been grateful to him and President Bush.

But, he doesn’t deny that Muslims were actually inflamed or that this caused the bombings in London on 7

July 2005. How could he? He can hardly deny it when two of the bombers stated clearly in videos made prior to their deaths, that it was British intervention in the Muslim world that prompted their action.^{2/3} And when the intelligence services have stated:

“We judge that the conflict in Iraq has exacerbated the threat from international terrorism and will continue to have an impact in the long term. It has reinforced the determination of terrorists who were already committed to attacking the West and motivated others who were not.” (See Joint Intelligence Committee assessment from April 2005 entitled *International Terrorism: Impact of Iraq*, extracts from which were published in *The Sunday Times* on 2 April 2006.)⁴

And when, at the time he was speaking, the MI5 website continued to state:

“In recent years, Iraq has become a dominant issue for a range of extremist groups and individuals in the UK and Europe.”⁵

The MI5 website still says that today.

BLAIR'S LEGACY

The existence or otherwise of a causal link between British foreign policy towards the Muslim world and terrorism by Muslims in the British homeland is a vital question. After all, the Government is never done telling us that it is the first duty of government to keep us safe. Yet, the Prime Minister can't give a straight answer to this vital question in what purports to be a seminal discourse on the role of the UK's Armed Forces in the 21st century, in which he proposes that foreign military interventions – warfighting – continue to be the norm for Britain.

He can't give a straight answer because for him to admit the existence of a causal link is to admit that his military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq, which were ostensibly undertaken to counter threats to Britain's security, have in reality made Britons less safe at home and abroad. As for the threats to Britain's security, there were none, neither from al-Qaida in October 2001, nor from Saddam Hussein's Iraq in March 2003.

This is Blair's legacy: he has made Britain a less safe place by his completely unjustified military intervention in Afghanistan and Iraq and, in the process, he has caused the deaths of nearly 200 British soldiers, and hundreds of thousands of Afghans and Iraqis.

That should be engraved on his tombstone.

SWEDISH STATUS

The purpose of his speech on HMS Albion was to plead that his legacy be continued by his successor, to plead that UK Armed Forces continue to be warfighters and not mere peacekeepers. He told his audience:

“There are two types of nations similar to ours today. Those who do war fighting and peacekeeping and those who have, effectively, except in the most exceptional circumstances, retreated to the peacekeeping alone.”

And, surprise, surprise, his choice for Britain is:

“...for Armed Forces that are prepared to engage in this difficult, tough, challenging campaign, to be warfighters as well as peacekeepers; for a British foreign policy keeps our American alliance strong and is prepared to project hard as well as soft power; and for us as a nation to be as willing to fight terrorism and pay the cost of that fight wherever it may be...”

In other words, to go abroad to kill and be killed – warfighting is impossible at home, since no state will attack us, not least because we are nuclear-armed.

The awful alternative would be:

“...the Armed Forces relegated to an essentially peacekeeping role and Britain's reach, effect and influence qualitatively reduced.”

How could we hold our head up in the world if that happened? We, who, a hundred years ago, possessed an empire on which the sun never set, would be reduced to the status of Sweden – and we'd no longer be on al-Qaida's target list.

We could save a fortune on what is euphemistically called “defence” spending, that is, on maintaining a warfighting machine to engage in foreign wars. And we could also save a fortune on defence against the Muslim world's response to the application of our warfighting machine. MI5 could be abolished once and for all.

It is a win-win proposition. If we don't spend money and blood invading Muslim countries, we won't need to spend money protecting the British homeland from terrorism emanating from the Muslim world in response. And blood will not be spilled on our streets when the protection proves to be fallible.

True, this very cost effective counter-terrorism strategy wouldn't go down well in military circles, or in the boardrooms of manufacturers of arms and security equipment. But everybody can't be a winner.

NO THREAT FROM AL-QAIDA

The threat to Britain from al-Qaida in October 2001 was nil. The Prime Minister invented a threat to Britain from al-Qaida in order to justify attacking Afghanistan – which generated a threat to Britain from al-Qaida.

On 4 October 2001, a few days before the US/UK started bombing Afghanistan, the Government published a document entitled *Responsibility for the terrorist atrocities in the United States, 11 September 2001*. The original version of this is still on the Ministry of Defence website.⁶ But, as we will see, the Downing Street website⁷ has a version that has been significantly amended.

I was puzzled when I heard that the British Government was going to publish such a document. Why was the British Government publishing it, when the attack was against the US and on American soil? The answer became clear on reading the document. It has four conclusions. The first two are that bin Laden and al-Qaida 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 was that “the United Kingdom, and United Kingdom nationals are potential targets” for al-Qaida.

This was based on two statements by bin Laden (see Paragraph 22). First, the declaration of war against the US military presence in Saudi Arabia from August 1996, which talks about the “aggression, iniquity and injustice imposed” on the Muslim world “by the Zionist-Crusader alliance and their collaborators”. Second, the fatwa issued in February 1998, which calls 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".

On the basis of these, the following conclusion was drawn:

"Although US targets are Al Qaida's priority, it also explicitly threatens the United States' allies. References to 'Zionist-Crusader alliance and their collaborators', and to 'Satan's US troops and the devil's supporters allying with them' are references which unquestionably include the United Kingdom." (Paragraph 24)

That was a doubtful conclusion, since Britain isn't mentioned in either of the two statements by bin Laden. But it was the best that could be done on 4 October 2001, when the document was published, to "prove" that Britain was under threat from al-Qaida.

Nine days later, on 13 October 2001, more evidence came to hand that Britain was under threat from al-Qaida, when bin Laden declared Blair one of the "arch-criminals from among the Zionists and Crusaders" and warned Muslims in Britain not to travel in aircraft and not to live in tower blocks. No doubt about it: after 13 October 2001, Britain was definitely under threat from al-Qaida.

It is true that between 4 October 2001, when the original document was published, and 13 October 2001 when bin Laden made his threat, Britain attacked Afghanistan alongside the US on 7 October 2001 – which conceivably provoked bin Laden's threat on 13 October 2001. Nevertheless, the Government added this explicit threat from bin Laden, uttered after the attack began, to the document used to justify the attack.

Paragraph 24 of the amended document on the Downing Street website⁷ now reads:

"Although US targets are Al Qaida's priority, it also explicitly threatens the United States' allies. References to 'Zionist-Crusader alliance and their collaborators', and to 'Satan's US troops and the devil's supporters allying with them' are references which unquestionably include the United Kingdom. This is confirmed by more specific references in a broadcast of 13 October, during which Bin Laden's spokesman said: 'Al Qaida declares that Bush Sr, Bush Jr, Clinton, Blair and Sharon are the arch-criminals from among the Zionists and Crusaders... Al Qaida stresses that the blood of those killed will not go to waste, God willing, until we punish these criminals... We also say and advise the Muslims in the United States and Britain... not to travel by plane. We also advise them not to live in high-rise buildings and towers.'"

Readers are not told that the "confirmation" of al-Qaida's threat to Britain arrived after Britain attacked Afghanistan.

By attacking Afghanistan on the pretext that Britain

was under threat from al-Qaida, the Prime Minister succeeded in getting Britain on to al-Qaida's target list.

NO THREAT FROM IRAQ

The threat to Britain from Saddam Hussein's Iraq in March 2003 was nil. Today, the present Foreign Secretary, Margaret Beckett, denies that the Prime Minister ever said that Saddam Hussein's Iraq was a threat to Britain. She told listeners to BBC Radio 4's *Today* on 19 December 2006 that what the Prime Minister said at the time was merely that Saddam Hussein "was a threat to his region and that he had the ambition to be a threat to the wider world".

That is simply untrue: time after time in the 12 months leading up to the invasion, the Prime Minister left no doubt that, in his opinion, Saddam Hussein's Iraq was a threat to Britain. And that's what he told the House of Commons on 18 March 2003 when he was seeking to persuade it to vote for military action against Iraq. The peroration to his speech on that occasion was as follows:

"Saddam Hussein is a tyrant who tortures and murders his own people. He poses a threat to the safety and stability of the Middle East, and he is in complete breach of his obligations to the United Nations and to the international community. However, the main reason why we will be voting for the motion is that it is in the British national interest. *Saddam Hussein has the means, the mentality and the motive to pose a direct threat to our national security* [my emphasis]. That is why we will be voting tonight to do the right thing by our troops and the British people."⁸

In fact, in the period before the invasion, the Government believed that Saddam Hussein's Iraq wasn't threatening its neighbours, let alone Britain. We know this thanks to Margaret Beckett's predecessor as Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw. He said it to a private meeting on Iraq chaired by the Prime Minister on 23 July 2002, the minutes of which were published in the *Sunday Times* on 1 May 2005. They record him telling the meeting:⁹

"It seemed clear that Bush had made up his mind to take military action, even if the timing was not yet decided. *But the case was thin. Saddam was not threatening his neighbours* [my emphasis], and his WMD capability was less than that of Libya, North Korea or Iran."

Presumably, Straw was expressing his honest opinion on that occasion and genuinely believed that Saddam Hussein's Iraq posed no threat to its neighbours, let alone Britain. But a few months earlier, on 12 March 2002, he had told the House of Commons:

"The Iraqi regime represents a severe threat to international and regional security as a result of its continued development of weapons of mass destruction... many Arab leaders whom I have

met express, privately if not publicly, the gravest possible concern about the threat that the Iraqi regime has posed and continues to pose to the stability of the region...”¹⁰

Presumably, he was lying on that occasion. Or did the threat diminish dramatically in the following months? In which case, perhaps he should have informed the House of Commons of the dramatically diminished threat.

CARNE ROSS

Carne Ross was a Foreign Office civil servant, who from December 1997 until June 2002 was First Secretary in the UK Mission to the United Nations in New York. There, he was responsible for Iraq policy, including policy on sanctions, weapons inspections and liaison with UNSCOM and later UNMOVIC. Few people were better placed to know the detail of official British policy towards Iraq in that period. Recently, his submission to the Butler inquiry, written in June 2004, has been published by the Commons Foreign Affairs Select Committee. He resigned from the Foreign Office after giving evidence to the Butler inquiry.

One section of his submission entitled *The Alleged Threat* describes the prevailing view in the Foreign Office on Iraq at that time – which was that it possessed little in the way of “weapons of mass destruction” and posed no threat to Britain or British interests. That flatly contradicts what the Prime Minister told us in the year before he sent British troops to kill and be killed in Iraq.

This section reads as follows:

“I read the available UK and US intelligence on Iraq every working day for the four and a half years of my posting. This daily briefing would often comprise a thick folder of material, both humint and sigint. I also talked often and at length about Iraq’s WMD to the international experts who comprised the inspectors of UNSCOM/UNMOVIC, whose views I would report to London. In addition, I was on many occasions asked to offer views in contribution to Cabinet Office assessments, including the famous WMD dossier (whose preparation began some time before my departure in June 2002).

“During my posting, *at no time did HMG [Her Majesty’s Government] assess that Iraq’s WMD (or any other capability) posed a threat to the UK or its interests* [my emphasis]. On the contrary, it was the commonly-held view among the officials dealing with Iraq that any threat had been effectively contained. I remember on several occasions the UK team stating this view in terms during our discussions with the US (who agreed). (At the same time, we would frequently argue, when the US raised the subject, that “régime change” was inadvisable, primarily on the grounds that Iraq would collapse into chaos.)

“Any assessment of threat has to include both

capabilities and intent. Iraq’s capabilities in WMD were moot: many of the UN’s weapons inspectors (who, contrary to popular depiction, were impressive and professional) would tell me that they believed Iraq had no significant materiel. With the exception of some unaccounted-for Scud missiles, there was no intelligence evidence of significant holdings of CW, BW or nuclear material. Aerial or satellite surveillance was unable to get under the roofs of Iraqi facilities. We therefore had to rely on inherently unreliable human sources (who, for obvious reasons, were prone to exaggerate).

“Without substantial evidence of current holdings of WMD, the key concern we pursued was that Iraq had not provided any convincing or coherent account of its past holdings. When I was briefed in London at the end of 1997 in preparation for my posting, I was told that we did not believe that Iraq had any significant WMD. The key argument therefore to maintain sanctions was that Iraq had failed to provide convincing evidence of destruction of its past stocks.

“Iraq’s ability to launch a WMD or any form of attack was very limited. There were approx 12 or so unaccounted-for Scud missiles; Iraq’s airforce was depleted to the point of total ineffectiveness; its army was but a pale shadow of its earlier might; there was no evidence of any connection between Iraq and any terrorist organisation that might have planned an attack using Iraqi WMD (I do not recall any occasion when the question of a terrorist connection was even raised in UK/US discussions or UK internal debates).

“There was moreover no intelligence or assessment during my time in the job that Iraq had any intention to launch an attack against its neighbours or the UK or US. I had many conversations with diplomats representing Iraq’s neighbours. With the exception of the Israelis, none expressed any concern that they might be attacked. Instead, their concern was that sanctions, which they and we viewed as an effective means to contain Iraq, were being delegitimised by evidence of their damaging humanitarian effect.

“I quizzed my colleagues in the FCO and MOD working on Iraq on several occasions about the threat assessment in the run-up to the war. None told me that any new evidence had emerged to change our assessment; what had changed was the government’s determination to present available evidence in a different light. I discussed this at some length with David Kelly in late 2002, who agreed that the Number 10 WMD dossier was overstated.”¹¹

This is powerful evidence of the Prime Minister’s deceit in order to persuade the public and Parliament to support military intervention in Iraq.

PETER RICKETTS

Lest it be thought that Carne Ross was a rogue element in the Foreign Office with a personal axe to grind, let us look at a memo from Peter Ricketts, the Political Director of the Foreign Office, to his political master, Jack Straw, on 22 March 2002. This came into the public domain in September 2004.¹² It backs up what Ross says in his submission.

In it, Ricketts takes it for granted that that Britain will be taking military action alongside the US to overthrow Saddam Hussein, but worries that the lack of a demonstrable threat from Iraq will make it difficult to convince the British Parliament and public that it is worth risking the lives of British troops. Nowhere in the memo is the disarmament of Iraq mentioned as the objective of British policy towards Iraq.

Ricketts writes that there are “two real problems” in supporting Bush’s objective of regime change in Iraq:

“First, the THREAT. The truth is that what has changed is not the pace of Saddam Hussein’s WMD programmes, but our tolerance of them post-11 September...

“But even the best survey of Iraq’s WMD programmes will not show much advance in recent years on the nuclear, missile or CW/BW fronts: the programmes are extremely worrying but have not, as far as we know, been stepped up.

“US scrambling to establish a link between Iraq and al-Qa’eda is so far frankly unconvincing.

“To get public and Parliamentary support for military options we have to be convincing that

- the threat is so serious/imminent that it is worth sending our troops to die for;
- it is qualitatively different from the threat posed by other proliferators who are closer to achieving nuclear capability (including Iran).”

(Ricketts’ second “problem” is what he describes as the “END STATE” – what will happen after the regime is overthrown.)

WMD “GOOFY”, SAYS COLIN POWELL

Apropos of Iraq’s “weapons of mass destruction”, a meeting took place in the White House in early 1991, just before the first Gulf War, to discuss the likely impact of Iraq’s “weapons of mass destruction” during the expected military action. Amongst those present were Colin Powell, then head of the US military, and his boss Dick Cheney, then US Defense Secretary. Also present was Richard Clarke, later President Clinton’s counter-terrorism chief, who had been given the job of developing a policy for dealing with these weapons in the expected conflict.

Prompted by Cheney to present his views on Iraq’s “weapons of mass destruction”, Powell said, as recorded by Clarke in his book *Against All Enemies*:

“I just think chemical weapons are goofy...

Chemical weapons will just slow us down a little. We will batten up the tanks and drive through. I don’t think Saddam will use biological weapons because they are not really suited for the battlefield. They take too long. Besides all of this shit can literally blow back on you. And nuclear, I don’t think he has nuclear.” (page 162)

After the Gulf War, UN inspectors (and Iraq itself) destroyed most of its stock of chemical and biological weapons stock and its manufacturing capability. Yet, 12 years later, we were led to believe, by Powell and others, that Iraq’s “weapons of mass destruction” were so militarily significant that Iraq had to be invaded and the regime overthrown.

HUMANITARIAN INTERVENTION?

Today, the pre-invasion cheerleaders for war are silent about Iraq’s “weapons of mass destruction”, and about the threat to Britain from Saddam Hussein’s Iraq because of its alleged possession of them. Today, the few people who are still prepared to justify the invasion present it as a humanitarian intervention to overthrow an “appalling dictatorship”, as the Prime Minister did in his lecture on HMS Albion.

When I hear the Prime Minister justify the invasion in those terms, I always remember his telling the House of Commons on 25 February 2003 that he would be content to have Saddam Hussein’s “appalling dictatorship” remain in place, if only it would disarm. I quote:

“I detest his regime – I hope most people do – but even now, he could save it by complying with the UN’s demand. Even now, we are prepared to go the extra step to achieve disarmament peacefully.”¹³

Of course, he could have been lying to the House of Commons on that occasion. He could have been committed to military action to overthrow Saddam Hussein’s regime, come what may. After all, Sir David Manning, his Foreign Policy adviser, had told Condoleezza Rice a year earlier that he would not budge in his support for regime change, and Manning wasn’t dismissed for misrepresenting his views to the US administration. See Manning’s memo to him on 14 March 2002.¹⁴

FIGHTING AL-QAIDA

Over time, the Prime Minister’s justification for continued military intervention in Iraq has merged with that of President Bush – and has merged with that for Afghanistan.

From the outset, Bush presented US military intervention in Iraq as part of the “war on terror” against al-Qaida, the perpetrators of 9/11. Thus, for example, in a broadcast to the nation on 17 March 2003, he declared:

“The [Iraqi] regime . . . has aided, trained and

harbored terrorists, including operatives of al Qaida.”¹⁵

And in his *Mission Accomplished* speech, aboard the USS Abraham Lincoln, on 1 May 2003, he declared:¹⁶

“The liberation of Iraq is a crucial advance in the campaign against terror. We’ve removed an ally of al Qaida, and cut off a source of terrorist funding. And this much is certain: no terrorist network will gain weapons of mass destruction from the Iraqi regime, because the regime is no more.”

Pre-invasion, Blair had a more measured approach: unlike Bush, he never went as far as to say that Saddam Hussein had aided al-Qaida. However, a major part of his case for taking military action against Iraq was that there was “a real and present danger” that chemical and biological weapons would find their way from Iraq to al-Qaida or associated groups. For example, when the House of Commons voted for the invasion on 18 March 2003, he said:

“The key today is stability and order. The threat is chaos and disorder – and there are two begetters of chaos: tyrannical regimes with weapons of mass destruction and extreme terrorist groups who profess a perverted and false view of Islam...

“Those two threats have, of course, different motives and different origins, but they share one basic common view: they detest the freedom, democracy and tolerance that are the hallmarks of our way of life. At the moment, I accept fully that the association between the two is loose—but it is hardening. The possibility of the two coming together – of terrorist groups in possession of weapons of mass destruction or even of a so-called dirty radiological bomb – is now, in my judgment, a real and present danger to Britain and its national security.”¹⁷

(He didn’t tell the House of Commons that a few weeks earlier he had read a Joint Intelligence Committee assessment that said that “in the event of imminent regime collapse there would be a risk of transfer of such [chemical and biological] material, whether or not as a deliberate Iraqi regime policy” (see paragraph 126 of the Intelligence & Security Committee (ISC) report published in September 2003.¹⁸ It must have slipped his mind.)

But today there is no significant difference between Bush and Blair in how they characterise their mission in Iraq: it is part of the “war on terror”, with the US/UK combating al-Qaida terrorism that is opposing the flowering of democracy in Iraq, and, they say, in Afghanistan. Blair’s lecture on HMS Albion conflates the missions in Iraq and Afghanistan, and he doesn’t mention the Shia/Sunni conflict in Iraq, which their destruction of the Ba’athist state has unleashed, since it doesn’t fit into this picture.

To an extent, Blair’s shift in characterisation is warranted, since the great Bush/Blair success in Iraq has been to transform what was an al-Qaida free zone under Saddam Hussein into a region where al-Qaida flourishes, in the Sunni areas at least. Bush and Blair have turned an al-Qaida free zone into “a terrorist haven”, at a cost of more than 3,000 US/UK (and hundreds of thousands of Iraqi) lives and well over \$300 billion dollars. And al-Qaida has played a part in stoking the Shia/Sunni conflict.

The supreme irony is that, in order to work up domestic support for his unprovoked attack on Iraq, Bush pretended that Iraq under Saddam Hussein was a haven for al-Qaida – when it wasn’t – in order to justify an attack on Iraq that has made it into a haven for al-Qaida, which he now says is a threat to US homeland security – which is why, he says, the US cannot now leave Iraq.

WHY AL-QAIDA FIGHTS

There wasn’t a threat to Britain from al-Qaida in 2001 before Blair’s military intervention alongside the US in Afghanistan. That threat has been magnified many fold by the invasion of Iraq. But al-Qaida’s objective is not of the kind portrayed by Blair and others. It has no ambition to change Western society, as Blair keeps on saying. This is clear from the many public statements by bin Laden and his associates. Its objective is to end Western intervention in the Muslim world, and in that objective al-Qaida has the support of the vast majority of Muslims.

Michael Scheuer worked for the CIA for 22 years, and was the first head of its al-Qaida desk, serving in this capacity for two years. While still working for the CIA, he wrote a book entitled *Imperial Hubris: Why the West is losing the War on Terror*, which was published in 2004. His view of what al-Qaida is about, as summarised in this book, is as follows:

“...the greatest danger for Americans confronting the radical Islamist threat is to believe – at the urging of US leaders – that Muslims attack us for what we are and what we think rather than for what we do.

“Rhetorical political blustering ‘informs’ the public that Islamists are offended by the Western world’s democratic freedoms, civil liberties, intermingling of genders, and separation of church and state. However, although aspects of the modern world may offend conservative Muslims, no Islamist leader has, for example, fomented jihad in order to destroy participatory democracy, the national association of credit unions, or coed universities...

“Al-Qaida’s public statements condemn America’s protection of corrupt Muslim regimes, unqualified support for Israel, the occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan, and a further litany of real-world grievances. Bin Laden’s supporters thus

identify their problem and believe its solution lies in war.

"[Scheuer] contends they will go to any length, not to destroy our secular, democratic way of life, but to deter what they view as specific attacks on their lands, their communities and their religion. Unless US leaders recognize this fact and adjust their policies abroad accordingly, even moderate Muslims will be radicalized into supporting bin Laden's anti-Western offensive."

BIN LADEN SPEAKS

Now let us look at a few of bin Laden's public statements.

He first came to public attention with his declaration of war against the US military presence in Saudi Arabia issued in August 1996 (see, for example, 19). Its central theme is that "the people of Islam have suffered from aggression, iniquity and injustice imposed by the Zionist-Crusader alliance and their collaborators" and says:

"It is a duty now on every tribe in the Arab Peninsula to fight jihad in the cause of Allah and to cleanse the land from those occupiers."

The only demand made of the US and its allies is that they go home. There is nothing about how they should live their lives at home.

Likewise in another fatwa from February 1998, which says:

"...the killing of Americans and their civilian and military allies is a religious duty for each and every Muslim to be carried out in whichever country they are until Al Aksa mosque [in Jerusalem] has been liberated from their grasp and until their armies have left Muslim lands."

Again, there is nothing in it about destroying our way of life in the West.

More recently, in a video message broadcast on al-Jazeera on 1 November 2004 just before the US presidential election (transcript at 20), he addressed the American people and explained why America was attacked on 9/11 and what Americans must do in order to avoid another attack. The message begins:

"People of America this talk of mine is for you and concerns the ideal way to prevent another Manhattan, and deals with the war and its causes and results.

"Before I begin, I say to you that security is an indispensable pillar of human life and that free men do not forfeit their security, contrary to Bush's claim that we hate freedom.

"If so, then let him explain to us why we don't strike, for example, Sweden. And we know that freedom-haters don't possess defiant spirits like those of the 19 – may Allah have mercy on them.

"No, we fight because we are free men who don't sleep under oppression. We want to restore

freedom to our nation, just as you lay waste to our nation. So shall we lay waste to yours.

"No one except a dumb thief plays with the security of others and then makes himself believe he will be secure. Whereas thinking people, when disaster strikes, make it their priority to look for its causes, in order to prevent it happening again.

"But I am amazed at you. Even though we are in the fourth year after the events of September 11th, Bush is still engaged in distortion, deception and hiding from you the real causes. And thus, the reasons are still there for a repeat of what occurred."

His final words to the American people were:

"In conclusion, I tell you in truth, that your security is not in the hands of Kerry, nor Bush, nor al-Qaida. No. Your security is in your own hands. And every state that doesn't play with our security has automatically guaranteed its own security."

The message is clear: leave the Muslim world alone and you will be left alone. That's why Sweden is safe from al-Qaida.

AL-ZAWAHIRI SPEAKS

On 29 November 2004, a video tape by Ayman al-Zawahiri was broadcast on al-Jazeera. The Associated Press report on it began:

"In a video tape aired Monday, Osama bin Laden's top lieutenant vowed to continue fighting the United States until Washington changed its policies."²¹

It was prepared before the US presidential elections, of which it said:

"The results of the elections do not matter for us. Vote whoever you want, Bush, Kerry or the devil himself. This does not concern us. What concerns us is to purge our land from the aggressors."

It concluded:

"Either you choose to treat us with respect and based on an exchange of interests ... or we will continue to fight you until you change your policies."

Another audio tape from al-Zawahiri entitled *The Correct Equation* was posted on Islamic websites on 23 January 2007. It contains a similar message, in addition to mocking Bush's decision to send a mere 20,000 extra troops to Iraq. Addressing the US military, he said (according to MEMRI):

"If you wish to live in security, you should accept reality... and strive to achieve [mutual] understanding with Muslims. Then and only then will you enjoy security. Security is a mutual fate: If we enjoy security, you will, and if we are not

harmd you will not be harmed. [However], if we are harmed and killed, you will experience the same fate. This is the correct equation...”²²

Could al-Qaida’s objective be clearer? It is not about forcing the West to convert to Islam and making us accept Islamic law: it is about ending Western, particularly US, interference in the Muslim world.

CONSERVATIVES SHIFT GROUND

The Conservative Party leadership continues to maintain that the invasion of Iraq was the right thing to do and continues to support military intervention there and in Afghanistan. However, it has recently acknowledged that there is a link between British foreign policy and the security of the British homeland.

The Conservative leader, David Cameron, even went so far as to say that “failures in Iraq had placed Britons at greater risk of terrorist attacks in the UK” (*The Guardian*, 18 December 2006).²³ True, the formulation is carefully constructed to avoid any Conservative responsibility by saying that “failures in Iraq” caused the “greater risk”, rather than the military intervention for which leading Conservatives were cheerleaders in March 2003.

Cameron was speaking at the launch of a position paper, drawn up by one of his policy review commissions, the National and International Security Policy Group. The paper, which was written by Dame Pauline Neville-Jones,

former Chair of the Joint Intelligence Committee, begins:

“The attacks of 9/11 were a warning but it was only on July 7th 2005 that the UK was forced to come face to face with the true scale and danger of the security threat. The fact that the bombers were born in Britain shocked us into realising the connection between security and community cohesion. *The fact that the bombers were radicalised in part by events outside the United Kingdom forced us to recognise that foreign affairs have become domestic affairs* [my emphasis].

“It is no longer possible to look at domestic security policy and foreign policy separately from each other.”²⁴

Later, it says:

“...we need to recognise that a central element of foreign policy – the intervention in Iraq – has failed in its objectives so badly that the threat to this country is actually greater than it was before it began.”

Commenting on this conclusion that the threat to Britain was bigger now than prior to the war, Cameron said that it was “a statement of fact”.

David Morrison

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Labour & Trade Union Review

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THE BLAIR LEGACY

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

David Morrison has produced many articles and two highly regarded pamphlets on the deception perpetrated by Prime Minister Blair to induce the British public to support military action against Iraq. The pamphlets are:

Iraq: Lies, half-truths & omissions,

and

Iraq: How regime change was dressed up as disarmament

In his foreword to the latter, George Galloway wrote:

“David Morrison is one of the most forensic, but unsung, writers in these islands. He has consistently tracked down the facts and unmasked the lies in New Labour’s propaganda.

“And in this pamphlet he demonstrates beyond contradiction that Tony Blair, the Prime Minister of this country, made a secret agreement with the leader of a foreign power to make an unprovoked war on Iraq, a member of the United Nations and the Arab League.

“Not since Hitler claimed that he was a victim of Polish aggression has an attack on a foreign country been justified by such a blizzard of lies. David Morrison has seen through this blizzard and in this pamphlet he helps the rest of us see through it too.”

Speaking of the pamphlet at the international anti-war movement conference in London on 10 December 2005, George Galloway said:

“This green document here may not be the best or most glossily produced document at this conference. It’s called *Iraq: How regime change was dressed up as disarmament*, but in my opinion it’s the most important document. It’s written by David Morrison of the *Labour & Trade Union Review*, who have a stall at the back.

“In my opinion, he’s the best researcher working in Britain today, unsung largely. But this document in any just world would be enough to impeach and imprison Tony Blair for entering into a conspiracy with a foreign power to wage an illegal war, and to lie to his own people and Parliament in order to do so.”

His pamphlet *Hezbollah wins*, on the Israeli aggression in Lebanon last summer, has been republished by Hezbollah in Beirut.

David Morrison’s writings (including the pamphlets) are available on his website www.david-morrison.org.uk