

The Bush/Blair Nexus:  
Recognising the violence of liberal internationalism.

Jeremy Moses  
Political Science Programme  
University of Canterbury  
Christchurch, New Zealand

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## Introduction

I say to you: never fall again for the doctrine of isolationism. The world cannot afford it. Stay a country, outward-looking, with the vision and imagination that is in your nature. And realise that in Britain you have a friend and an ally that will stand with you, work with you, fashion with you the design of a future built on peace and prosperity for all, which is the only dream that makes humanity worth preserving.

- Tony Blair, Chicago Economic Club, 1999<sup>1</sup>

The U.S. national security strategy will be based on a distinctly American internationalism that reflects the union of our values and our national interests.

- The National Security Strategy of the United States of America, 2002<sup>2</sup>

The bonds of common purpose that unite British Prime Minister Tony Blair and U.S. President George W. Bush have been evident for many years now. It is no longer surprising – if it ever was – to find Blair wholeheartedly supporting the embattled President on controversial foreign policy matters, particularly in relation to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the broader “war on terror”. While some efforts have been made to explain the deep affinity between these two seemingly disparate politicians,<sup>3</sup> most scholarship on the foreign policy of the two leaders has focused solely on either the

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<sup>1</sup> Tony Blair, *The Doctrine of the International Community* (Institute of International Affairs, Saint Petersburg, 1999 [cited 27th November 2003]); available from <http://data.cirp.info/intervention/blair-chicago.html>.

<sup>2</sup> *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (The White House, 2002 [cited 11 October 2005]); available from <http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss.html>.

<sup>3</sup> See, for example John Kampfner, *Blair's Wars* (London: Free Press, 2004), 87-88, 98-99, 140-141; Richard Johnson, "Defending Ways of Life: The (Anti-)Terrorist Rhetorics of Bush and Blair," *Theory, Culture, and Society* 19, no. 4 (2002); Inderjeet Parmar, "'I'm Proud of the British Empire': Why Tony Blair Backs George W. Bush," *The Political Quarterly* 76, no. 2 (2005).

neo-conservatism of the Bush administration or the “third way” politics of Blair. In doing so, critiques of the foreign policies of these two contemporary powers have neglected the central role of liberal internationalist theory in the propagation and justification of their belligerent approaches. The purpose of this paper, in this context, is to establish the commonalities of these two ideological positions and to illustrate the profound attachment to violence that both exhibit.

It is obviously insufficient, in undertaking this task, to conceive of Blair’s foreign policy as beholden to American whims, just as it is unhelpful to focus wholly upon neo-conservatism as a new, belligerent force in U.S. foreign policy making. Rather, what is required is a recognition of the violence entailed by the liberal internationalist<sup>4</sup> discourse that both leaders espouse, whether the focus be on free markets, democratic institutions, or human rights. Stemming from the argument that liberal internationalist discourse has always (and necessarily) been accompanied by belligerent foreign policy, I will argue that there is nothing unusual or unique about the desire of both leaders to inflict violence upon “rogues”, and that the path toward infliction of such violence follows a similar and familiar pattern in the foreign policy doctrines of Blair and Bush. Hence, it will be argued that the justifications for violence in the Blair and Bush doctrines emerge through the linking of three major themes - globalisation, humanitarianism, and democracy – with their justifications for war.

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<sup>4</sup> The term “liberal internationalist” is more likely to be readily accepted by Tony Blair than by the neo-conservatives in the United States. Charles Krauthammer has argued that liberal internationalists are more concerned with multilateralism and more critical of national interest politics than the “democratic globalists” or “democratic realists” (his terms for neo-conservatives, both favouring the spread of democracy, but some favouring the national interest over universal aspirations). Nevertheless, I believe that these differences are overstated, particularly when we are considering *discourse* rather than any hidden “reality” lurking beneath. See Charles Krauthammer, “In Defence of Democratic Realism,” *The National Interest* Fall, no. 77 (2004).

This triumvirate, I will argue, is utilised in the establishment of an inside and outside of a global ‘human’ identity. In this regard, the theme of globalisation is repetitively articulated in indicating the rapid change and *progress* that characterises the contemporary world. This sense of radical transformation is definitively proposed in the Blair doctrine with the statement that, “We live in a completely new world.”<sup>5</sup> Consequently, anyone who has failed to come to terms with or accept the reality of this new global world is excluded from all the benefits that it has to offer. A similar discourse is established in the Bush Doctrine, with a definitive link being established between the free trade that symbolises acceptance of globalisation and human freedom in general. In short, those who accept the neo-liberal tenets of globalisation are on the right side, while those who refuse to take part – the so-called “closed societies,” or “globaphobes”<sup>6</sup> – will either ruin themselves or be ruined in the natural course of future world developments.

Likewise, humanitarian concern, with a particular focus on the “spread” of human rights and democracy, forms the basis for another defining characteristic of the “international community.” This humanitarianism was central to Blair’s foreign policy even before the arrival of Bush as U.S. President, and is clearly enunciated in the “Doctrine of the International Community” speech that forms the basis of the analysis to follow.<sup>7</sup> Such a commitment to humanitarian ideals is also clearly evident in the speeches and policy documents that establish the “Bush Doctrine”. According to the National Security Strategy of 2002, for example:

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<sup>5</sup> Blair, *The Doctrine of the International Community*.

<sup>6</sup> This is a term that is used amongst some of the more rabid free-marketeters, but has also, as we shall see below, been used repeatedly by Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer. See Alexander Downer, *Globalisation or Globaphobia: Does Australia have a choice?* (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 1997 [cited 28 June 2006]); available from <http://www.dfat.gov.au/media/speeches/foreign/1997/pressclub1dec97.html>.

<sup>7</sup> Blair, *The Doctrine of the International Community*.

America must stand firmly for the nonnegotiable demands of human dignity: the rule of law; limits on the absolute power of the state; free speech; freedom of worship; equal justice; respect for women; religious and ethnic tolerance; and respect for private property.<sup>8</sup>

Like the discourse on globalisation, the humanitarian concern underlying the Bush and Blair doctrines serves as a divisive tool, demarcating the democrat and the despot, the human rights advocate and the human rights abuser, and, ultimately, the human and the sub-human.

A similar tendency is readily noticeable in the antagonism established between the democratic and non-democratic or anti-democratic nations of the world. We do not need to carry out much reading or research to notice this discourse, which is particularly built around the proposition – or ‘fact’ as many would have it<sup>9</sup> - that democratic states are peaceful states and vice versa. Indeed, it might be said that this discourse of democracy has come to form the centrepiece of the justifications for the war on terror, regularly raised in response to those who have criticised the horrors of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

And this is precisely the issue at stake here, for perhaps none of this would matter so much if these discourses did not terminate in acts of war, in attempts to eliminate the deviants and outsiders that plague the moral universe that Bush and Blair claim to represent. But this, as we shall see, is precisely where the open (yet closed) principles of globalisation, humanitarianism, and democracy lead in the Bush and Blair Doctrines. War, while seen as undesirable, is articulated as the ‘final solution’ to the problems of the

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<sup>8</sup> *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America.*

<sup>9</sup> Later in the paper I will briefly discuss Jack Straw’s contribution to the political debates on democratic peace, and particularly his statement that “no two full democracies have ever made war on each other – astonishing, but true.” Jack Straw, *Promoting Democracy: A Progressive Foreign Policy Agenda* (The Fabian Society, 10 March 2005 [cited 17 November 2005]); available from [http://www.fabian-society.org.uk/press\\_office/display.asp?cat=43&id=436](http://www.fabian-society.org.uk/press_office/display.asp?cat=43&id=436).

anti-globalist, the anti-humanitarian, or the anti-democratic remnants that inhabit the world. Now, of course, these outsiders are generally represented as terrorists or the rogue states that harbour them, saboteurs who recklessly and irrationally attack the symbols of a universal order under Western hegemony. It is at these unstable frontiers that the warriors for the perfect world, Bush and Blair, stage their humanitarian interventions and their wars on terror, playing out a violence that we must recognise as stemming directly from their liberal internationalist discourses.

The significance of this recognition should be noted: this paper does not simply seek to launch another attack against the flawed, brutal and arrogant policies of the Bush and Blair administrations, it also aims to highlight the weaknesses in the arguments that have been raised against them. In particular, I seek to demonstrate that any attempt to argue that Bush and Blair are simply using the *language* of humanitarianism to *cover* their self-interested or strategic policies is bound to lead to a repetition of the same problems. In short, I aim to show that there are some fundamental problems in the discourses of liberal internationalism, and that those who seek a less violent world would do well to consider other ethical paths that deviate from the constant battle over human rights and human wrongs. It is through this analysis that political principles that are claimed to be universal, including human rights and globalisation, reveal their particularity and their tendency toward repetitive and ultimately futile violence.

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### Outside the Universal: The ‘others’ of liberal internationalism

Contemporary discourse theory is, in many respects, concerned with ‘finding’ others, ‘constitutive outsiders’ that give coherence and purpose to political power blocs or hegemonies.<sup>10</sup> In doing so, prominent discourse theorists, such as Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, have followed the lead of continental philosophers such as Jacques Derrida in exposing the precariousness and the danger of ‘totalising discourses’ that claim natural or objective foundations.<sup>11</sup> Beyond this initial inquiry, it is an approach that is concerned with critiquing and rethinking the ways in which we form political communities or coherent social identities through a comprehensive analysis of the concepts of hegemony, identity, and social antagonism as they appear in the language and symbolism of politics. This, it seems to me, is a highly useful and in many ways necessary approach to take when seeking to understand how liberal internationalists, in claiming to represent the desires of “the whole world”, justify military attacks against those who they claim to directly oppose.

Yet one might ask, in the context of an apparently universal liberal agenda: who or what could possibly exist *outside* the category of global humanity? This is where the discursive or deconstructive approach to liberal internationalism becomes most interesting, revealing the ways in which the liberal internationalist defines his or her global community in opposition to that which is deemed sub-human, recalcitrant, roguish,

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<sup>10</sup> As Ernesto Laclau has explained: “discourse, or discursive formation, establishes its limits by means of excluding a radical otherness that has no common measure with the differential system from which it is excluded, and that therefore poses a constant threat to that very system.” See E. Laclau, “Subject of politics, politics of the subject,” *Differences* 7, no. 1 (1995): 151. Jacob Torfing, *New Theories of Discourse: Laclau, Mouffe, and Zizek* (Oxford, UK; Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), 124.

<sup>11</sup> For an excellent overview of these arguments see Torfing, *New Theories of Discourse: Laclau, Mouffe, and Zizek*. and Judith Butler, Ernesto Laclau, and Slavoj Zizek, *Contingency, hegemony, universality: contemporary dialogues on the left* (London: Verso, 2000).

or evil. It reveals, in short, the identity of “humanity” or the apparently synonymous “international community” in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century.

So what does this outsider look like? In current internationalist discourse, most obviously, he may be a terrorist. The events of September 11, 2001 firmly established the terrorist as the contemporary “enemy of humanity”, the dark force in a clear battle between pure good and pure evil. But we need to go further back than 2001 to get a fuller picture, and in doing so look to the humanitarian intervention carried out by NATO in Serbia in 1999, the catalyst for the “Blair Doctrine” speech. Here we find rogue states, failed states, tyrants, and barbarians lurking in the background and threatening Blair’s universal vision of a united and peaceful global humanity.<sup>12</sup>

In identifying and opposing these universal ‘others’, enemies of ‘the whole world’, of ‘civilisation’, or of ‘the international community’, Blair and Bush seek to establish themselves (or their nations) as representatives of a truly global humanity, or global hegemon. More importantly, they believe that such dominance of the international scene is naturally, objectively, or rationally justifiable, precisely because they understand their Western liberal values to be natural, objective, and rational. The certainty that this generates in their political discourses is evident throughout their speeches, writings, and media releases, and as I now aim to demonstrate, coalesces around three core principles: globalisation, humanitarianism, and democracy.

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<sup>12</sup> Blair, *The Doctrine of the International Community*.



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## Globalisation

### *The Blair Doctrine*

The first key discourse employed by Tony Blair in his “Doctrine of the International Community” speech opposes supporters of globalisation to those who attack or reject such changes. More specifically, Blair refers to the inevitability of global markets and new technologies bringing about massive change in the world and, as I stated above, creating a “completely new world.”<sup>13</sup> Thus, according to Blair, we find ourselves in a situation where we must simply accept the inevitability of global change, to the extent that “We are all internationalists now, *whether we like it or not*. We cannot refuse to participate in global markets if we want to prosper.”<sup>14</sup>

This imperative lays the foundation for all of Tony Blair’s foreign policy thought. Within this universe, there is no room for doubt or question, there is no room for preference or alternative, there is just cold, bare facts, and the biggest of them all is that the world has changed and that we must change with it. From this basis springs the “Third Way” foreign policy program that has guided Blair through his Prime Ministership and which lies at the basis of his “doctrine of the international community”. Hence, according to Blair:

We are witnessing the beginnings of a new doctrine of international community. By this I mean the explicit recognition that today more than ever before we are mutually dependent, that national interest is to a significant extent governed by international collaboration and that we need a clear and coherent debate as to the direction this doctrine takes us in each field of

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<sup>13</sup> These themes are evident in Blair’s speeches even before his rise to the Prime Ministership. See Tony Blair, *New Britain* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996), 203-215.

<sup>14</sup> Blair, *The Doctrine of the International Community*. Emphasis added. Following on from this declaration of universal and unquestionable international interdependence, Blair makes one of his few statements implying openness to ideas beyond his own, with the argument that “We cannot ignore new political ideas in other countries if we want to innovate.” There is, however, little evidence of this openness in any other parts of the speech or in the years that have followed.

international endeavour. Just as within domestic politics, the notion of community - the belief that partnership and co-operation are essential to advance self-interest - is coming into its own; so it needs to find its own international echo. Global financial markets, the global environment, global security and disarmament issues: none of these can be solved without intense international co-operation.<sup>15</sup>

The objection to this all-encompassing discourse of globalisation is not so much that it is overstated, for there is no doubt that links between global markets and technological advances have indeed been vastly and rapidly expanded over the past two decades. The issue is more that Blair demands adherence to his view of what this means for individual and social life. He presents all of his statements about globalisation as unquestionable imperatives, implying that anyone who departs from his views is either out of the game altogether or possibly a threat to the success of global neo-liberal integration. So while globalisation is presented as an inevitable and unstoppable process, it is also paired with certain political and economic demands that determine participation, prosperity, and peace.

Crucially, in this regard, success within a globalising world is implicitly connected with the themes of “democracy” and “good governance”, as illustrated in Blair’s interpretation of the Asian financial crisis of the late 1990s:

The lesson of the Asian crisis is above all that it is better to invest in countries where you have openness, independent central banks, properly functioning financial systems and independent courts, where you do not have to bribe or rely on favours from those in power.

Two messages emerge from this statement. The first is addressed to those with the financial ability to make large investments in the global marketplace, and it comes as a warning that they will be effectively punished (in losing money) by the natural workings

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

of the global market if they direct funds to ‘closed’ or ‘corrupt’ societies. The second implicit message is that these ‘closed,’ or ‘undemocratic’ societies will, like the suffering economies of Asia, have to learn that there is only one path to prosperity in the new global economy, and that path follows directly behind the Western powers of Britain, Europe, and the United States. Countries that do not follow such a path, of ‘openness’ or ‘transparency’, will not gain the trust and financial investment of the powerful and virtuous Western nations. This logic, as we shall see below, has now become central to the justifications for the continuation of war in Iraq.<sup>16</sup>

It is important to note that Blair is not alone in this ‘with us or against us’ approach to globalisation. Indeed, the sharp line between participants and dissenters has been drawn throughout the contemporary literature on neo-classical economics. Thomas Friedman, for example, has written and spoken extensively on the “winners and losers” of globalisation, with those on the positive side of the ledger always being those who see it his way and follow his lead. Those countries that fail to learn and adapt to the new realities of the global marketplace, or who refuse to don the “golden straitjacket” will be left behind to shrivel and die.<sup>17</sup> In terms of translating this view into foreign policy, Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer took up the theme even earlier than Blair, arguing in 1997 that:

Whether we like it or not, we are part of an international community whose outlook is becoming increasingly global. As the economic and social map takes shape for the next century, we all fall into one of two camps. You are either a globaphobe or a globophile... If we start to succumb to the forces of globophobia we will be left economically, strategically

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<sup>16</sup> These themes are also prevalent in Australia’s dealings with Pacific Island nations such as Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, as well as Timor Leste.

<sup>17</sup> These are the highly influential themes that have emerged from Thomas Friedman, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree* (New York: Anchor Books, 2000).

and socially isolated - cut off in every sense from the world around us. That bleak future is not viable. The triumph of globophobia would be a death note for Australia.<sup>18</sup>

None of this is particularly new or surprising, as it is the kind of economic thinking that has been popular in Western nations for at least a quarter of a century, most notably in the Thatcher and Reagan eras.<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, what is interesting is the manner in which this understanding of globalisation has worked its way into justifications for war that have emerged since the end of the Cold War, from the intensification of discourses of humanitarian intervention, and right up to the neo-conservative-inspired Bush Doctrine, to which I now turn my attention.

#### *The Bush Doctrine*

It is with the advent of the Bush Doctrine that the ideas of economic globalization and security become firmly tied together. For Bush, free trade and openness are not only the keys to prosperity and success,<sup>20</sup> they are also moral concepts that guarantee freedom. Hence, in the National Security Strategy of 2002, it is argued that:

The concept of “free trade” arose as a moral principle even before it became a pillar of economics. If you can make something that others value, you should be able to sell it to them.

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<sup>18</sup> Downer, *Globalisation or Globophobia: Does Australia have a choice?* More recently, Downer reiterated this theme and claimed that “what history also teaches us is that those societies which recognise the inevitability and irreversibility of new technologies and harness them, all the time carefully managing social changes, will succeed. Those which try to resist the tide of evolution are doomed to despair.” Alexander Downer, *“Increasing Interconnectedness”: Globalisation and International Intervention* (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2000 [cited 28 June 2006]); available from [http://www.dfat.gov.au/media/speeches/foreign/2000/000717\\_intervention.html](http://www.dfat.gov.au/media/speeches/foreign/2000/000717_intervention.html).

<sup>19</sup> As Friedman has argued “The Golden Straitjacket first began to be stitched together... by British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. That Thatcherite coat was soon reinforced by Ronald Reagan.” Friedman, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*.

<sup>20</sup> As Bush argues in a speech excerpt included in the National Security Strategy, “*When nations close their markets and opportunity is hoarded by a privileged few, no amount-no amount-of development aid is ever enough. When nations respect their people, open markets, invest in better health and education, every dollar of aid, every dollar of trade revenue and domestic capital is used more effectively.*” *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*. Emphasis in original.

If others make something that you value, you should be able to buy it. This is real freedom, the freedom for a person—or a nation—to make a living.<sup>21</sup>

It is very clear at this point that “freedom”, that elusive term that is so often used to describe the virtue of U.S. society, is inextricably linked with processes of economic globalisation in the Bush Doctrine. Furthermore, this is posited as a moral argument, with the apparent consequence that any individual or nation that rejects this notion of freedom is behaving in an immoral fashion, against the interests of themselves, their nation, and the whole world.

In order to aid in the termination of such aberrant behaviour, aid policy is used to ‘guide’ poorer and less developed countries along the path to honesty, openness, and freedom. The ‘others’ of globalisation, in other words, must be educated and cajoled along the one true path to peace and prosperity. In these terms, the National Security Strategy sets as one of its key goals to “*Provide resources to aid countries that have met the challenge of national reform.*”<sup>22</sup> This then leads to the introduction of the “Millennium Challenge Account”:

for projects in countries whose governments rule justly, invest in their people, and encourage economic freedom. Governments must fight corruption, respect basic human rights, embrace the rule of law, invest in health care and education, follow responsible economic policies, and enable entrepreneurship. The Millennium Challenge Account will *reward* countries that have demonstrated real policy change and *challenge* those that have not to implement reforms.<sup>23</sup>

There is clearly a “carrot and stick” approach to global economic reform here, which could only be confidently articulated by a nation that views itself as a global hegemon, as the United States undoubtedly does (and, in many respects, undoubtedly *is*).

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. Emphasis in original.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. Emphasis added.

This confidence in their own leadership and their own power is clearly manifested in the explicit desire to “*Open societies to commerce and investment.*”<sup>24</sup> There is, I believe, good reason to analyse this policy of “openness”, of prising open the “closed” society, from a feminist or psychoanalytic perspective. The reason for this becomes clear when it is realised that this “opening” is blatantly connected to national security, or to put it another way, that “closed societies” are considered to be a threat to national security, and therefore need to be confronted and reformed. As the National Security Strategy states, “Free markets and free trade are key priorities of our national security strategy.”<sup>25</sup> The danger here, of course, is that in positing “closed societies” as dangers to US national security, the way is opened for the waging of war against those states that are declared to be out of step with the march of globalisation.

In short, I would argue that the policies associated with free trade and globalisation in both the Blair and Bush doctrines are clearly articulated in terms of objectivity, necessity, and superiority. Objectivity in the sense that globalisation is posited as a natural and inevitable progression for all of humanity, necessity in the sense that nations and individuals must alter their behaviour in order to be accommodated within this “new world”, and superiority in the sense that both leaders see it as being *their* responsibility and duty to encourage, educate, and even force other nations, be they backward, ‘globophobic’, or isolationist, to accept this new economic and social reality that globalisation has inaugurated. An apparently benign economic logic can thus be seen as a potent disciplinary norm, and this in some way lessens our surprise that such

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

principles have become central to the justifications offered in support of the ongoing war on terror.

### Humanitarianism

#### *The Blair Doctrine*

The second key discourse that must be considered in this context is that of global humanitarianism, or what we might call the social dimension of liberal internationalism. It is on this front that Tony Blair has certainly blazed a militaristic trail over the term of his Prime Ministership,<sup>26</sup> and it was during the humanitarian intervention in Serbia in 1999 that the Blair Doctrine was most clearly expounded. Indeed, it must be said that the humanitarian discourse has been central in connecting liberal internationalist principles to the justification for aggression, both before and after the September 11 attacks.

The humanitarian intervention in Serbia in 1999 was in many ways the high point of belligerent humanitarian rhetoric pre-September 11. Throughout 1998 and into 1999, Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic was increasingly portrayed by Tony Blair as an enemy of humanity, a man who must be confronted and removed in order for Blair's vision of "a future built on peace and prosperity for all" was to succeed. It was about three weeks into the bombardment of Serbia, in April 1999, that Blair made his now famous speech to the Chicago Economic Club, "Doctrine of the International Community." It is interesting to note that Blair confidently speaks on behalf of "the international community", laying down a doctrine for the whole world. It is also interesting to see the 'rogues' that he opposes to this international community in establishing his humanitarian discourse:

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<sup>26</sup> See John Kampfner, *Blair's Wars* (London: Free Press, 2004), Preface.

Many of our problems have been caused by two dangerous and ruthless men - Saddam Hussein and Slobodan Milosevic. Both have been prepared to wage vicious campaigns against sections of their own community. As a result of these destructive policies both have brought calamity on their own peoples. Instead of enjoying its oil wealth Iraq has been reduced to poverty, with political life stultified through fear. Milosevic took over a substantial, ethnically diverse state, well placed to take advantage of new economic opportunities. His drive for ethnic concentration has left him with something much smaller, a ruined economy and soon a totally ruined military machine.<sup>27</sup>

The proposed response to “our problems” that these rogues have caused is well known: make them accept the non-negotiable demands of “humanity” or, if they refuse, attack them. While the rationale at work here is blunt and unforgiving, it is interesting to note that Blair presents the violence being waged against Serbia as being a kind of corrective discipline, which will act not only to cure the ills of Serbian society and politics, but will serve as an example to any other nation that does not live up to the standards of the “international community”. Hence:

One of the reasons why it is now so important to win the conflict is to ensure that others do not make the same mistake in the future. That in itself will be a major step to ensuring that the next decade and the next century will not be as difficult as the past. If NATO fails in Kosovo, the next dictator to be threatened with military force may well not believe our resolve to carry the threat through.<sup>28</sup>

As with the discourse on globalization, a strong link is established between the need for an outward-looking humanitarian sentiment and the security of Britain itself.<sup>29</sup> It is on this point that Blair made one of his most oft-quoted remarks in the Chicago speech,

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<sup>27</sup> Blair, *The Doctrine of the International Community*.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> As Blair argues “We cannot turn our backs on conflicts and the violation of human rights within other countries if we want still to be secure.” Ibid. It is this sentiment that places him more in line with Krauthammer’s “democratic realists”: Krauthammer, “In Defence of Democratic Realism.”



as he explicitly claimed that “our values” (which are undoubtedly of a global, humanitarian, and democratic nature) should be spread around the world in order to benefit those that receive them as well as “us”:

Now our actions are guided by a more subtle blend of mutual self interest and moral purpose in defending the values we cherish. In the end, values and interests merge. If we can establish and spread the values of liberty, the rule of law, human rights and an open society then that is in our national interests too. The spread of our values makes us safer.<sup>30</sup>

Once again it is the sheer conviction in Blair’s thought that allows him to make such a sweeping and determinant claim, presenting a doctrine of humanitarian intervention as a win-win situation, a solution to the age-old complexities of international politics. But how and by whom is this recourse to humanitarian war to be controlled and vetted?

The answer to this problem, for Blair, lies in the strong re-emergence of just war theory, which has always been concerned with producing moral *exceptions* to the prohibition on aggressive war, from Augustine onwards.<sup>31</sup> After qualifying the basic principle of non-intervention that has formed the bedrock of state sovereignty from Westphalia onwards, the claim is made that:

[The war against Serbia] is a just war, based not on any territorial ambitions but on values. We cannot let the evil of ethnic cleansing stand. We must not rest until it is reversed. We have learned twice before in this century that appeasement does not work. If we let an evil dictator range unchallenged, we will have to spill infinitely more blood and treasure to stop him later.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Blair, *The Doctrine of the International Community*.

<sup>31</sup> For Augustine, Aquinas, and later Vitoria, the concern was finding exceptions to Jesus’ apparent condemnation of all violence. Their responses to this problem established the contours of just war theory up to the present day. See St. Thomas Aquinas, *On Law, Morality, and Politics* (Cambridge: Hackett Publishing, 1988), Chapter 5; Francisco de Vitoria, *Vitoria: Political Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), Chapter 7.

<sup>32</sup> Blair goes on to set out the “five major considerations” through which recourse to intervention might be considered just: “First, are we sure of our case? War is an imperfect instrument for righting humanitarian

The moral seriousness of the situation is thus brought home by reference to the “appeasement” of the Nazis prior to World War Two, along with a warning that fighting such a tyrant in the future will cost more.

Having thus reinforced and morally justified the use of humanitarian intervention as a tool for the improvement of the world, Blair embarks on a familiar path of criticism for the UN Security Council which, it seems, is not “working properly” when it fails to authorise interventions in response to serious abuses of human rights, as in the case of Serbia. Reform of the UN Security Council is thus proposed, with the obvious goal that it should become easier to gain authorisation for disciplinary actions against rogue states and tyrants that are resisting the coming of a peaceful and prosperous future. Blair lays down the case thus:

If we want a world ruled by law and by international co-operation then we have to support the UN as its central pillar. But we need to find a new way to make the UN and its Security Council work if we are not to return to the deadlock that undermined the effectiveness of the Security Council during the Cold War. This should be a task for members of the Permanent Five to consider once the Kosovo conflict is complete.

This demand for reform of the Security Council, based on moral imperatives and the need for humanitarian wars, has been reflected throughout the literature on humanitarian

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distress; but armed force is sometimes the only means of dealing with dictators. Second, have we exhausted all diplomatic options? We should always give peace every chance, as we have in the case of Kosovo. Third, on the basis of a practical assessment of the situation, are there military operations we can sensibly and prudently undertake? Fourth, are we prepared for the long term? In the past we talked too much of exit strategies. But having made a commitment we cannot simply walk away once the fight is over; better to stay with moderate numbers of troops than return for repeat performances with large numbers. And finally, do we have national interests involved? The mass expulsion of ethnic Albanians from Kosovo demanded the notice of the rest of the world. But it does make a difference that this is taking place in such a combustible part of Europe.” Blair, *The Doctrine of the International Community*.

intervention<sup>33</sup> and in the foreign policy stances of ‘like-minded’ nations such as Australia and the United States.

### *The Bush Doctrine*

There is little need to demonstrate the presence of humanitarian rhetoric in the Bush Doctrine. It is well known to anyone following political developments over the past five years that freedom, liberty, human rights, and democracy have been a cornerstone of U.S. defence and foreign policy activity. That this is a central element in neo-conservative thought is also beyond question, although some might question whether the commitment is sincere from this perspective, given the possible influence of Straussian thought and the idea of the ‘noble lie’ that accompanies it.<sup>34</sup> Leaving this debate aside for now, we can clearly see in the Bush Doctrine that humanitarian action, including military intervention, is considered to be a key role of the United States in creating a better world:

In pursuit of our goals, our first imperative is to clarify what we stand for: the United States must defend liberty and justice because *these principles are right and true for all people everywhere*. No nation owns these aspirations, and no nation is exempt from them. Fathers and mothers in all societies want their children to be educated and to live free from poverty and violence. No people on earth yearn to be oppressed, aspire to servitude, or eagerly await the midnight knock of the secret police.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> The demand for reform is clearly evident in the highly influential “Responsibility to Protect” report: Gareth Evans *et al.*, “The Responsibility to Protect,” (Ottawa: The International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, 2001). as well as in various texts on international law and humanitarian intervention. See, for example, Geoffrey Robertson, *Crimes Against Humanity: The struggle for global justice* (New York: The New Press, 1999).

<sup>34</sup> My view is in accord with the neo-conservatives on this point: that there is nothing new or unusual about their stance concerning the spread of liberty and democracy, as this has been a part of US foreign policy throughout the history of that nation. See Krauthammer, “In Defence of Democratic Realism.”; Irwin Stelzer, “Neo-Conservatives and Their Critics: An Introduction,” in *The Neocon Reader*, ed. Irwin Stelzer (New York: Grove Press, 2004).

<sup>35</sup> *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*.

Elsewhere, the National Security Strategy speaks of “the nonnegotiable demands of human dignity”, commits the US to taking “special efforts to promote freedom of religion and conscience and defend it from encroachment by repressive governments” and claims that the US government “will champion the cause of human dignity and oppose those who resist it.”<sup>36</sup>

In this way, therefore, the Bush Doctrine is very close to the Blair Doctrine, in that it affirms humanitarian principles as foundational and non-negotiable, and threatens to take action against any government that is “resisting” the spread of liberty around the world. In short, what we have, once again, are a set of liberal internationalist moral principles that lay the foundations for the justification of war.

### Democracy

#### *The Blair Doctrine*

In recent years the demand for democratisation has taken on a central part in the anti-terrorist discourses of the Bush administration, but it would, of course, be wrong to suggest that this was a novel or unprecedented development. The discourses that have placed democratic nations as leaders of “the whole world” (*because of their democratic traditions*) have developed hand in hand with the discourses of globalisation and humanitarianism that I have already discussed, and this is as evident in the Blair Doctrine as it is in the Bush Doctrine. There are two major issues that need to be covered here: the first concerns the connection that is drawn between democratic institutions and state legitimacy, and the second is the prevalence of references to “democratic peace theory” that are now firmly entrenched in both British and U.S. foreign policy.

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

On the first question, the Blair Doctrine is clear that only democratic states – which are generally described as “open societies” – have the full legitimacy of sovereign, equal, and independent nation-states. The key feature of democracy that Blair identifies is that of majority rule. So, in a manner that parrots the Reagan Doctrine of the 1980s,<sup>37</sup> Blair argues that “When regimes are based on minority rule they lose legitimacy - look at South Africa.”<sup>38</sup> In this way, democracy functions as a marker of *real* state sovereignty, laying a boundary between the “international community” and its others, and undermining the principle of non-intervention in the internal affairs of other states.

Beyond this connection between democracy and legitimacy, there is little in the Doctrine of the International Community speech that goes as far as much of the post-September democratic rhetoric of both the Blair and Bush governments. Yet last year, in a speech to the Fabian Society, former Foreign Minister Jack Straw argued passionately in favour of the spread of democracy and against those who maintain a cynicism over the potential success of this strategy.<sup>39</sup> It is particularly interesting to note how strident Straw remained, even after two years of fierce fighting in Iraq in which tens of thousands of civilians had been killed and civil infrastructure shattered. The reason for this faith becomes evident, however, when he pronounces a very clear – and in many ways simplistic and naïve – version of democratic peace theory, in stating that “no two full democracies have ever made war on each other – astonishing, but true.”<sup>40</sup> This application of the democratic peace thesis - which, as we shall see, is also prevalent in the

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<sup>37</sup> This argument about the conditional nature of state sovereignty and legitimacy was claimed to be an element of the Reagan Doctrine of the 1980s in work such as Charles Krauthammer, "The Reagan Doctrine," *Time* (1985). and Jeane Kirkpatrick and Allan Gerson, "The Reagan Doctrine, Human Rights, and International Law," in *Right v Might: International Law and the Use of Force*, ed. Louis Henkin (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1989).

<sup>38</sup> Blair, *The Doctrine of the International Community*.

<sup>39</sup> Straw, *Promoting Democracy: A Progressive Foreign Policy Agenda*.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

U.S. justifications for war - is a worrying trend insofar as it establishes a supposedly objective and scientific analysis of the causes of war and the possibilities for a future peace. I cannot go into the numerous debates surrounding democratic peace theory here, suffice it to say that this vision of a peaceful future world order is now clearly fuelling the belligerence of Western powers like Britain and the US. Allied with an often crude or distorted reading of Kant's *Perpetual Peace*, such a reading of democratic peace theory has become highly amenable to the justification of wars of aggression, a development that requires our close attention and consideration.

#### *The Bush Doctrine*

While the democratic/undemocratic division of the world has played a key role in the Blair Doctrine, this pales in comparison to the volume and stridency of references to democratic superiority emanating from the Bush administration. Under the Bush Doctrine, democratic reform has become the unequivocal cure for the ills of the world, again attributed to the terrorist, the tyrant, the barbarian or the rogue state. It is a discourse that involves the conflation of a number of appealing terms, including 'freedom', 'liberty', and (again) 'open societies', as the moral basis for the fighting of wars for positive outcomes. In Bush's West Point speech of 2002, the waging of wars for liberty, peace, and "open societies" was offered as the historical "cause" of the United States:

*Our Nation's cause has always been larger than our Nation's defense. We fight, as we always fight, for a just peace—a peace that favors liberty. We will defend the peace against the threats from terrorists and tyrants. We will preserve the peace by building good relations among the great powers. And we will extend the peace by encouraging free and open*

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*societies on every continent.*<sup>41</sup>

The argument that the United States *always* fights for liberty is an important one. For while we may argue over the “real” reasons for American aggression over the centuries past, even a cursory look at the historical record will reveal that American leaders have always at least adopted a discourse of “liberty” in their justifications for war.<sup>42</sup> This is an important point, as it throws into doubt the supposed novelty of the neo-conservative approach, leading to the point that it might well be our liberal and democratic traditions that we need to subject to more rigorous scrutiny and critique, rather than focusing on particular personalities or administrations. The confluence of the Bush and Blair policies, coming as they do from very different political backgrounds yet leading to the same propensity for war, should place this problem at the centre of any critical project.

Of particular concern, as I have already indicated in the preceding discussion on the Blair Doctrine, is the repeated resort to “democratic peace” arguments as justifications for war. In this regard, Bush has been keen to explain the need for the transformation of Iraq as a necessary precursor to a peaceful world, recently arguing that:

The reason why I'm so strong on democracy is democracies don't go to war with each other. And the reason why is the people of most societies don't like war, and they understand what war means... I've got great faith in democracies to promote peace. And that's why I'm such a strong believer that the way forward in the Middle East, the broader Middle East, is to

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<sup>41</sup> This is an excerpt from Bush’s West Point speech of 2002: *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*. Emphasis in original. The NSS also explains the spread of democracy as a “responsibility” of the United States: “Sustained by faith in the principles of liberty, and the value of a free society, this position comes with unparalleled responsibilities, obligations, and opportunity. The great strength of this nation must be used to promote a balance of power that favors freedom.” Furthermore, the doctrine centralizes the role of other democracies in helping to change recalcitrant nations through making “freedom and the development of democratic institutions key themes in our bilateral relations, seeking solidarity and cooperation from other democracies while we press governments that deny human rights to move toward a better future.”

<sup>42</sup> There are too many examples to cite here, but the fight for liberty has been invoked by Adams, Wilson, Roosevelt, Truman, Kennedy, Reagan, and Clinton.

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promote democracy.<sup>43</sup>

That democratic peace theory is so amenable to justifying aggression against ‘non-democracies’ is clearly evident here. What we must also note, however, is the genealogy of the discourse, from its Kantian roots to its contemporary versions.<sup>44</sup> In carrying out such research, we may indeed find that the ‘others’ of liberal internationalism have always existed, and indeed from a discourse theory perspective *must always* exist in one form or another, again raising concerns about our failure to recognise the embedded violence in historical and contemporary discourses of liberal internationalism.

Most emblematic of this failure to analyse our own failings is the claim to superior knowledge that is inherent in the democratising discourse, in which nations must be aided, cajoled, or compelled along the path to democracy and peace. The willingness of the United States in using military force against the undemocratic and terroristic regimes in Afghanistan and Iraq is thus offered by Bush as an illustration of the lengths to which he is prepared to go to make the world a better place. These wars, in other words, are offered as a process of *education* of nation-states that are backward, undemocratic, or tyrannical. In these terms, the National Security Strategy claims that it will ensure “that

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<sup>43</sup> *President and Prime Minister Blair Discussed Iraq, Middle East* (Office of the Press Secretary, 2005 [cited 3 July 2006]); available from <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2004/11/20041112-5.html>.

<sup>44</sup> See, for example: Michael Doyle, "Kant, Liberal Legacies, and Foreign Affairs," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 12, no. 3 (1983); Michael Doyle, "Kant, Liberal Legacies, and Foreign Affairs, Part 2," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 12, no. 4 (1983); B. Russett, *Grasping the Democratic Peace: Principles for a Post-Cold War World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993). Nils Petter Gleditsch, "Geography, Democracy, and Peace," *International Interactions* 20, no. 4 (1995). It is indisputable that those espousing democratic peace principles are seeking to build a better world, but there seems to be a general naivety as to how their research findings in support of the ‘truth’ of democratic peace are likely to be utilised in international political discourse. Hence it is a little surprising that Bruce Russett, a leading light of the democratic peace research community, has recently expressed his dismay at the “bushwhacking” (militarisation) of democratic peace theory: B. Russett, "Bushwhacking the Democratic Peace," *International Studies Perspectives* 6, no. 4 (2005).



nations moving toward democracy are rewarded for the steps they take.”<sup>45</sup> In 2004, as the situation in Iraq continued to deteriorate, Bush made this case unequivocally, explaining to the gathered media that “it’s going to take a while for [the people of Iraq] to understand what freedom is all about.”<sup>46</sup> The very idea that a diverse nation of over twenty million people would have no understanding of “freedom” and would need to be taught through the trauma of violence that they have now been subjected to for over three years is extraordinary in its naivety and its arrogance. Nevertheless, no matter how long it takes, this education must continue to be pursued, in order to eliminate those that “hate freedom”. To again quote Bush:

We’ve got tough work [in Iraq] because, you see, there are terrorists there who would rather kill innocent people than allow for the advance of freedom... That’s what you’re seeing going on: These people hate freedom, and we love freedom, and that’s where the clash occurs.<sup>47</sup>

It would undoubtedly be difficult for many Iraqis or Afghans to accept that the scale of aggression unleashed on their countries by the United States and Britain (amongst others) is in their best interests and constitutes a ‘lesson’ that they needed to learn. Yet this is a perspective that we seem to have lost sight of in our rush to realize the dream of the democratic peace. It is a dream that is shared by Tony Blair who, like Bush, sees himself as the kind of leader that can and should teach the world how to live democratically. It is a dream that has clear roots in classical and contemporary liberal-democratic thought. It is, without doubt, a dream that we should be very wary of.

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<sup>45</sup> *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*. Elsewhere, the term “civilized nations” is used to denote the superiority of the United States and its allies over barbaric or rogue regimes: “Today our enemies have seen the results of what civilized nations can, and will, do against regimes that harbor, support, and use terrorism to achieve their political goals. Afghanistan has been liberated; coalition forces continue to hunt down the Taliban and al-Qaida.”

<sup>46</sup> Quoted in Anthony Shadid, “US Forces Take Heavy Losses As Violence Spreads Across Iraq,” *Washington Post*, April 7 2004.

<sup>47</sup> *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*.

### Conclusion: “Democracy to come”?

The aim of this paper has been to explore the shared foreign policy agendas of Tony Blair and George W. Bush, and to demonstrate that the links between the two are profound and go beyond some of the more glib descriptions of their political relationship. In particular, I have tried to demonstrate that the discourses of globalisation, humanitarianism, and democracy that both leaders espouse tend toward a belligerent and aggressive approach to the world, in an attempt to eliminate the negative shadow of their positive and totalising views of the world. Cast in this light, what can we say about the future of liberal internationalism? Is the imposition of democracy, while bloody and long-term, still worth pursuing? Or do we need to reconsider the terms on which our governments and our fellow citizens, are promoting, supporting and carrying out the vicious campaigns in places like Afghanistan and Iraq? Can we recognise the evil of our own violent conduct and still maintain, as many theorists of humanitarian intervention have done,<sup>48</sup> that Western violence constitutes a “lesser evil” than that which it is confronting, and is therefore legitimate and worth pursuing? These are difficult questions and it was never the intention to pursue them in the course of this paper. Nevertheless, some preliminary thoughts about what might follow in the wake of this critique of liberal internationalism seem necessary and worthwhile. There are two points that are worth making in this context: the first concerns the danger of a re-emerging imperialist or neo-colonial attitude amongst Western governments; the second revolves around the dangers inherent in an

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<sup>48</sup> A particularly vocal and influential exponent of this view has been Michael Ignatieff. See M. Ignatieff, *The Lesser Evil: Hard Choices in a War on Terror* (Carnegie Council on Ethics and International Affairs, 2004 [cited 4 November 2005]); available from <http://www.carnegiecouncil.org/viewMedia.php/prmTemplateID/8/prmID/4370>; M. Ignatieff, *The Lesser Evil: Political Ethics in an Age of Terror* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004).

attachment to what might be termed a “naïve reason” on the part of these same governments.

On the first issue, scholars such as Beate Jahn and Anne Orford<sup>49</sup> have illustrated the dangers of an unqualified and non-reflexive attitude toward the spread of democracy and human rights, usually via humanitarian intervention. After illustrating the various connections between contemporary liberalism and the works of Immanuel Kant, Jahn argues that contemporary liberal internationalism is more akin to the theoretical grounds laid out by John Stuart Mill, particularly given his acceptance of intervention against “barbarian” states for their improvement by civilised Western powers, an acceptance derived from his belief in “the distinction between culturally superior and inferior peoples.”<sup>50</sup> The maintenance of this discourse in contemporary liberal internationalism has led, according to Jahn, to a situation where liberal internationalists are now making “an active, if involuntary, contribution to international conflicts based on the propagation and justification of imperialist policies,”<sup>51</sup> a problem that arises “from the very core of liberal international theory that shares its aims, justifications, and means with imperialism.”<sup>52</sup> Jahn’s note of caution is worth keeping in mind in this context, insofar as:

Liberal states face an indefinite security dilemma whose consequences are a deepening complicity in unfreedom and inequality internationally. Further, all non-liberal states permanently live under the threat of force. Finally, in the name of this security dilemma –

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<sup>49</sup> I will not address Orford’s arguments here, suffice it to say that she has utilised a variety of critical tools in order to uncover the dangerous heart of liberal internationalism and humanitarian intervention. See Anne Orford, *Reading Humanitarian Intervention: Human Rights and the Use of Force in International Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

<sup>50</sup> Beate Jahn, “Kant, Mill, and Illiberal Legacies in International Affairs,” *International Organization* 59, no. Winter (2005): 195.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*: 201.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*: 204.

the “war on terror,” or previously, he communist threat – liberal rights in the domestic sphere are restricted.<sup>53</sup>

This warning over the potential *domestic* dangers of liberal internationalism is also present in Jacques Derrida’s reflections on “rogue states” in the contemporary international environment.<sup>54</sup> Following Husserl’s critique of the “irrational rationalism” of the Nazis prior to World War Two,<sup>55</sup> Derrida cautions against the resort to an “objectivist naïveté” that “is no mere accident,” but rather:

is produced by the very progress of the sciences and by the production of ideal objects, which, as if by themselves, by their iterability and their necessarily technical structure, cover over or consign to forgetting their historical and subjective origin. Scientific reason, in its very progress, spontaneously produces the crisis. It is reason that throws reason into crisis, in an autonomous and quasi-autoimmune fashion.<sup>56</sup>

Herein lies the danger of an unquestioned and unquestioning attachment to democratisation: that Western powers end up attacking the very principles that they claim to represent. Or, as Derrida explains, the “irrationally rational” being tends:

to *autoimmunize* itself ... this strange illogical logic by which a living being can spontaneously destroy, in an autonomous fashion, the very thing that is supposed to protect it against the other, to immunize it against the aggressive intrusion of the other.<sup>57</sup>

The fact that many of the great principles of liberalism, such as the right to a fair trial and the prohibition on arbitrary imprisonment, are now being seriously undermined in the name of ‘war on terror’ should give pause to consider this problem. From this perspective, what needs to be recognised is the danger of trying to assimilate the world

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason*, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005).

<sup>55</sup> The text in question is Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, trans. David Carr (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1970).

<sup>56</sup> Derrida, *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason*, 127.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 123.

under a single principle or ideology. We need to recognise the limits of our knowledge and the impossibility of ever attaining a pure or perfect knowledge of the world and we need to rethink the ways in which we go about trying to create a world of harmony and peace. We need, as Derrida concludes, “a reason” that - far from being definitive, totalising, or closed - “must let itself be reasoned with.”<sup>58</sup> Only in maintaining this openness can we hope to maintain a sense of what democracy might mean, or what a commitment to a “democracy to come” might involve.

While Tony Blair may espouse a *particularly* belligerent brand of liberal internationalism, and neo-conservatism and its expression in the Bush Doctrine may be a *unusually* aggressive interpretation of democratic peace theory, we will miss the main point, and we will again race headlong into entirely avoidable wars, if we fail to recognise the violence of liberal internationalist discourse that both have adopted. The groundwork for the war on terror, and the thousands of deaths that have come with it, was not magically produced on September 11, 2001. Nor was it cunningly planned by Tony Blair, nor hatched in the dark backrooms inhabited by the American “neoconservative cabal”. Rather, it stems from a tradition of liberal internationalism that is based upon a universal sense of moral conviction and righteousness. This, to be sure, may be viewed as a naïve and distorted liberalism that focuses too much on perfection and refuses to acknowledge the ‘incalculable’ aspects of social and political life, but, if we are serious about avoiding future repeats of Iraq and Afghanistan, we must continue to acknowledge and address the problem that it raises. Liberal internationalism must let itself be reasoned with.

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 159.

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