

THE WAR ON TERROR – Two Years On

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Introduction

The attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on 11 September 2001 have had a profound impact on international security resulting in a worldwide "war on terror" led by the United States that has included major conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq costing tens of thousands of lives. This study examines the experience of the past two years and assesses the impact and effectiveness of US actions in terms of international peace and security as well as the security of the United States itself. It looks at the development of the US military posture prior to 9/11, the immediate domestic effects of the attacks and the subsequent US actions in Afghanistan and Iraq. It assesses the impact on al-Qaida and its affiliates and their subsequent levels of activity and likely further development. The study concludes by suggesting alternative policy options that might be more productive in ensuring international security.

A. The Context of the US Response to 9/11

The nature and extent of the US response to the 9/11 atrocities stems from three factors that were required for the response – military capabilities, political will and domestic support.

1. US military capacities

Following the end of the Cold War, the United States emerged as the world's sole superpower, with much of its power resting on formidable military capabilities. During the course of the 1990s there had been substantial cuts in defence budgets, with these including considerable cutbacks in personnel numbers across most of the US armed forces. Even so, the make-up of the armed forces changed substantially to reflect the end of the Cold War, and the United States was, in any case, no longer facing a single heavily armed adversary in the form of the Soviet Union.

Within the US military, the emphasis changed radically from forces required for an East-West conflict to those necessary to maintain control in an uncertain and volatile world. The US Army experienced the heaviest cuts, losing much of its armoured capabilities, numerous overseas bases and close to 40% of its personnel. Even so, it did preserve its commitments to special operations forces, and also maintained almost all of its air-mobile rapid reaction forces.

The US Air Force gave up a large part of its strategic and tactical nuclear capability but greatly enhanced its ability to project power by a combination of intercontinental-range bombers, stand-off weapons such as air-launched cruise missiles, and the

development of air expeditionary wings - self-contained air forces that could be deployed to bases distant from the continental United States but close to crisis areas.

The US Navy experienced cuts in its large anti-submarine forces but retained almost all of its powerful fleet of aircraft carrier battle groups, and expanded its ability to deploy sea-launched cruise missiles for land attack. In parallel with the navy, the US Marine Corps retained almost all of its Cold War era long-range strike capabilities, helping to ensure that the United States had by far the greatest ability of any state to project amphibious forces at a distance.

There were four other key features of the changing military posture. One was the emphasis on the forward deployment of supplies, especially in the Persian Gulf, Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean, and in the West Pacific, ensuring that troops could be airlifted into position and then linked up with pre-positioned equipment and weapons. A second was the increased emphasis on counter-insurgency support, with special operations troops working with governments in more than fifty countries across the world as the latter sought to prevent or control the development of radical paramilitary groups.

A third factor was the concern with casualties, the so-called "body bag" syndrome, where domestic politics militated against the use of force where this was likely to lead to the deaths of US soldiers. The Somalia experience in 1993 was seminal in this, and resulted in great care being taken to avoid US casualties in former-Yugoslavia later in the decade, even at the cost of many hundreds of civilian lives during the aerial bombardment of Serbia.

The final factor was the growing importance of the Persian Gulf because of its location as the key region for the world's oil reserves. By the end of the 1990s, four Gulf States each had at least three times the oil reserves of the United States (Iraq, Iran, Kuwait and UAE) and Saudi Arabia alone had seven times the US reserves. Given that the United States was already over 60% dependent on imported oil, and that this dependency was increasing, the Gulf region had become the most important region in the world in relation to long-term US energy requirements.

Overall, the US military at the end of the 20th century was already overwhelmingly powerful but was also looking to the future, with the probable development of directed energy weapons and greater emphasis on co-ordinated "network-centric" warfare being just parts of a wider concern with what was now termed "full spectrum dominance", the ability to dictate military outcomes on land, sea, in the air or in space. **(1)**

2. Political will

The capabilities of the US armed forces had changed greatly during the 1990s and, by the end of the decade, were attuned to the requirements for maintaining international control in the post-Cold War world. This did not mean that the forces would necessarily be used except in situations of clear and present danger to US interests. After the bombing of the US embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam in 1998, the response was little more than a symbolic use of cruise missiles against targets in Afghanistan and Sudan.

What then became significant was a substantial change in the security paradigm in the United States with the election of George W Bush in 2000. The election itself was so narrowly won, dependent not least on Florida "chads", that many analysts expected a consensus presidency, but this did not ensue in any major area of policy, and a radically changed outlook was particularly evident in foreign and security policy.

Prior to the 2000 election, the Republicans had already demonstrated a commitment to the vigorous pursuit of US security interests, if need be through unilateral actions. The Clinton administration did not even try to get the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) ratified by Congress, and there was also opposition to the planned International Criminal Court (ICC).

After the election, multilateral cooperation was evident where it was clearly perceived to be in US interests, not least on some issues of trade policy, but not when it was considered to be in any way limiting. In addition to the CTBT and the ICC, many other issues came to the fore. They included opposition to the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, to aspects of UN proposals on the control of arms transfers and to proposed talks to control the weaponisation of space. In a significant rebuff to European opinion, the Bush administration withdrew from the Kyoto Protocols on climate change, and there was even outright opposition to the plans to strengthen the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention, even though six years of negotiations were nearing their conclusion in Geneva.

At the root of this considerable change in outlook was the emergence of a neo-conservative view of America's place in the world, with much of it characterised by the outputs of policy organisations such as the American Enterprise Institute (AEI) and the Project for the New American Century (PNAC). Prior to the election, the Project, in particular, had been supported by many people such as Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld who went on to be major figures in the Bush administration. Moreover, it was robust in its view that the United States had an historic mission to "make" the world in the American image. **(2)**

In this view, the only socio-economic alternative to free market democracy has been roundly defeated with the collapse of the Soviet Union and communism. It follows that the only way forward for the world is to embrace versions of the American system. That way lies prosperity, security and freedom, and the United States is in a position to ensure the security of such a world. **(3)**

Such an outlook should most accurately be considered a matter of belief rather than merely of practical politics. What is good for America is good for the world, and it is frankly not possible to countenance any alternative. Indeed, if alternative ideas are proposed they must be oppositional by definition and might even constitute a threat to the American century and thereby to the United States itself.

Within six months of the start of the Bush administration, many of these ideas had permeated into US foreign and security policy, often to the concern of allied states, not least in Europe. Even so, they were becoming firmly entrenched, and one of the main effects was to convince the neo-conservative community that a new era had indeed dawned and that the American century was in the making.

3. Domestic support

It is within this context that the atrocities of 9/11 must be seen, and it has to be recognised that their effect on domestic opinion was traumatic. There are several different reasons for this, and together they give some indication of how strong was the support for a punitive and vigorous response. One factor is that the United States might have experienced paramilitary attacks on its forces overseas, and might have occasionally had major domestic atrocities such as the Oklahoma bombing, but there was no previous experience of an attack on this scale.

Furthermore, it was a total and complete surprise to almost everyone, and to a country that had not experienced anything remotely similar since Pearl Harbour, sixty years previously. It also has to be recognised that the twin towers of the World Trade Center were potent symbols of American post-war business prowess and demonstrated in a tangible way that the United States was dominant in world trade. In a sense, their destruction was deeply symbolic. Furthermore, after the North Tower had been hit, its subsequent destruction and that of the South Tower were seen live on television by tens of millions of people across the United States.

Although less obvious, the impact of the unexpected vulnerability of the Pentagon, the very seat of the US armed forces, was profound within the military. Finally, the ease with which an operation involving dedicated paramilitaries armed with nothing more than parcel knives was undertaken only added to a sense of vulnerability.

B. Outcomes of the Response to 9/11

1. The Afghanistan War and the State of the Union Address September 2001 – January 2002

In the four months after the 9/11 attacks, the United States commenced its war on terror, initially with extensive support from its closest allies especially in Europe. This took the form of a substantial military operation in Afghanistan intended to destroy the Taliban regime and cripple the al-Qaida organisation that was considered to be responsible for the 9/11 attacks.

There were three key aspects of the Afghanistan War in the last three months of 2001 that help explain the aftermath of that war. The first is that the United States military forces effectively took sides in the long-running Afghan civil war, substantially aiding the Northern Alliance forces against the Taliban and the al-Qaida militia. The combination of US air power, including the extensive use of area bombing and cluster munitions, together with Northern Alliance ground forces, meant that there was clear superiority of military power over the Taliban and al-Qaida. This was achieved, though, by the provision of large quantities of armaments to the Northern Alliance forces, with these armaments subsequently cascading through warlord militias in post-war Afghanistan, strengthening the power of individual warlords and diminishing that of the putative government of Mr Karzai.

The second factor is that there was an assumption that al-Qaida and its various affiliates were using camps in Afghanistan primarily for training of paramilitaries to operate elsewhere, but most camps were actually to train militia for use in support of the Taliban regime in its civil war. Put bluntly, Afghanistan was less significant for al-Qaida than had been believed.

The final, and perhaps crucial factor was that the Taliban and al-Qaida militia repeatedly avoided direct and open conflict with US forces and even with Northern Alliance troops. Instead, these groups frequently withdrew in the face of superior forces, melting away into their own towns and villages, or else into north-western Pakistan, usually with their weapons and supplies intact. This was most notable in the overnight evacuation of Taliban forces from Kabul itself. Furthermore, few of the leaders of either the Taliban or al-Qaida were killed or captured, yet a major effect of the war was to kill at least 3,000 civilians, and to further cripple the capacity of Afghanistan to recover from decades of conflict.

In spite of these crucial features of the three-month war, it was hailed by the Bush administration as a substantial victory in the war on terror, even though there were

already many indications that al-Qaida and its affiliates were active in many countries in addition to Afghanistan. January 2002 marked a point at which the neo-conservative security community in Washington believed that control had been regained. One indication of this was the forceful *State of the Union* address, combined with a number of iterations of policy, the most significant being that demarcation lines were clearly joined between those that "are for us or against us" in the war on terror. There was, furthermore, the declaration of an "axis of evil" encompassing Iraq, Iran and North Korea, together with lesser members of the axis such as Libya and Syria, all of which presented direct threats to the United States either through their pursuit of weapons of mass destruction or their support for terrorism, or indeed both. **(4)**

Furthermore, the rhetoric was being accompanied by more specific actions and statements of intent. Across Central Asia, new US bases were being established, setting up a chain of facilities that stretched right across the oil-bearing region of the Caspian Basin even through towards western China. In the Middle East, too, it was clear that the Bush administration was actively considering military action against the Saddam Hussein regime in Iraq, action that would go far beyond punitive air strikes and would even involve regime termination.

2. Loss of support and the War on Iraq: January 2002 – June 2003

During the first six months of 2002, there was a clear decline in support for the United States from a number of key allies, not least France and Germany, and this was to lead to a certain fracturing in transatlantic relations in the following year. Beyond the initial support for the United States from European states after 9/11, there was a degree of support from many other countries, but it has to be said that opinion in the "majority world", away from the countries of the Atlantic community, was always far less supportive of the United States.

Such global attitudes depended on many different factors but at the root of them was a world-view that was radically different to that which promoted the very idea of an "American Century". Instead, a far more wide-ranging perception is of a world in which the global economy is effectively controlled by a few powerful states and allied commercial interests, in which trade negotiations invariably favour the wealthy, in which the role of developing countries is to provide cheap raw materials and sweatshop labour and in which the international debt crisis continues to damage any realistic prospects for development. From such a perception, the atrocities of 9/11 and the mass murder of 3,000 people may have represented real human tragedies but took place in a world in which 5,000 children die every day from diarrhoea and related causes. **(5)**

Hardly any of these perceptions were shared in European states, and many in the majority world would hold Europe as responsible as the United States for global inequalities and suffering, but even European public and political opinion moved steadily against the United States during 2002. One core reason, especially at governmental level, was the severe flare-up in tensions and violence in Israel and Palestine. Partly in response to suicide bombings and partly because of the hard-line stance of their government, the Israeli security forces engaged in a vigorous and highly repressive campaign in the West Bank in the early part of 2002, effectively dismantling much of the infrastructure of the would be Palestinian State.

Much of this infrastructure had been financed by European states and by the European Union itself, and there was a certain bitterness at the lack of restraint exercised by Washington on the Israelis, given that the US was the only state with any serious influence on the Israeli government. Furthermore, the manner in which Palestinian suicide bombers were seen in Washington as simply further examples of international terrorism, to be equated with al-Qaida, caused deep unease in many European capitals where the predicament of ordinary Palestinians was far more widely recognised.

There were further issues affecting European opinion. In Afghanistan, even by the late spring of 2002, it was evident that the country was not stable. The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) may have been effective in Kabul but the rest of the country was in a degree of disarray as warlordism and banditry became dominant. Al-Qaida and their associates continued their activities, not least with the killing of French naval technicians in Karachi and German tourists at a synagogue in Tunisia. There was also the failure to kill or capture Taliban and al-Qaida leaders, despite a global campaign by the United States that had resulted in the detention of thousands of people including several hundred at Camp X-Ray in Cuba. Many such prisoners faced indefinite detention or trials by military tribunals involving procedures wholly unacceptable in most European courts of law.

Perhaps most significant of all was the evident intent of the Bush administration, towards the end of 2002, to terminate the Saddam Hussein regime in Iraq. During the latter part of the year, intensive diplomacy at the United Nations was embarked on primarily at the instigation of the UK government, but it took place in parallel with a formidable build-up of US military forces in the region. It was a concentration of forces made more difficult by the eventual refusal of the Turkish government to allow major US troop movements through its country, and the moves towards war occasioned huge anti-war demonstrations across the world, including the largest ever such public protest in Britain.

Although it was rather less of an issue in the United States, the status of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction programme became a key issue in Britain, where far-reaching claims were made by the Blair government that Iraq was an immediate threat to UK and other western interests, even possessing the ability to activate WMD systems at 45 minutes notice. **(6)** Such statements went some way to reassuring government supporters, but there remained deep unease at the speed with which UN inspections were side-lined and at the manner in which UN Security Council resolutions seemed wholly inadequate as a justification for war.

The termination of the regime was achieved in a brief but intense war in March/April 2003. Almost all of the military action was conducted by the United States and involved over 200,000 personnel including a powerful naval force, extensive use of air power and substantial army and marine corps units. The British contributed significant forces from their small and overstretched army and there were smaller commitments from Australia and some European states. Essentially, though, this was an American war and was nothing like the much broader coalition that had evicted Iraqi forces from Kuwait twelve years earlier. Furthermore, almost immediately after the regime had been terminated it became apparent that the US forces were, for the main part, not being welcomed as liberators, as they had so confidently expected.

Within a few weeks, the post-war situation had begun to deteriorate, and this was happening at a time when al-Qaida and its associates remained active, where Afghanistan was deeply unstable and where, in a smaller but still significant manner, the UK government was embroiled in political controversy over the motivations for war.

3. The current status of al-Qaida

In the two years since 9/11, there has been extensive punitive action against al-Qaida and its associates and supporters. In addition to the termination of the Taliban regime and to detentions and killings across the world, some al-Qaida leaders have been detained, financial transactions intercepted and a number of significant attacks forestalled. At the same time, the organisation and its associates have managed to plan, and often undertake, a remarkable range of activities, with these collectively showing a capability that exceeds that existing before the 9/11 attacks. On this basis alone, it is difficult to accept any claim that the war on terror is being won.

Among the operations that were intended but were intercepted or otherwise failed were:

- planned attacks on US embassies in Rome and Paris
- an attempt to shoot down a US war plane in Saudi Arabia
- a plan to attack western naval ships in the Straits of Gibraltar
- the attempted bombing of a US passenger jet
- the development of radiological weapons for use in the United States, and
- a major attack in Singapore, perhaps even on the scale of 9/11, using multiple truck bombs, believed to be aimed at embassies and possibly the financial district and Changi Airport

All of these attacks were prevented and this may be seen as a mark of a group of organisations in retreat. However, they have to be put in the context of a substantially larger number of operations that were carried out, some of them causing substantial loss of life:

- a bomb attack on the US consulate in Karachi killing 11 people and injuring at least 45
- the attack on worshippers at a church in the diplomatic compound in Islamabad, killing 5 people and injuring 46
- the killing of 11 French naval technicians and 3 Pakistanis in Karachi, injuring 23 people
- the bombing of a synagogue in Tunisia killing 14 German tourists and 7 local people
- frequent bomb attacks in the Philippines and the killing of a US special forces soldier
- a bomb attack on the *Limburg* tanker off Yemen
- an attack on a US oil company's helicopter taking off from Sana'a Airport in Yemen
- the murder of a US diplomat in Amman
- attacks on US soldiers in Kuwait
- the devastating bomb attack on the Sari nightclub in Bali killing 202 people including 88 Australians and 38 Indonesians
- an attempt to shoot down an Israeli tourist jet taking off from Mombassa Airport in Kenya
- the bombing of the Paradise Hotel at Kikambala in Kenya killing 11 people
- the multiple bombing of western targets in Casablanca, killing 39 people and injuring 60

- the multiple bombing of western residential compounds in Riyadh, killing 29 people injuring 200, and
- the bombing of a Marriott Hotel in Djakarta with 13 dead and 149 injured.

It is evident that these many incidents collectively indicate that it is quite wrong to see al-Qaida as a single rigid and hierarchical organisation. While there is evidence of connections between a number of organisations, including a degree of coordination, what is much more significant is the extent of trans-national support and the ability of national and regional groups to generate and undertake attacks. As such, it is questionable whether the risks of anti-American paramilitary actions can be countered without recognising that they stem from a widespread sense of marginalisation that greatly aids support for the more extreme paramilitary organisations.

4. The current status of Afghanistan

Following the destruction of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and the dispersal of al-Qaida militia, it was assumed that Afghanistan would experience effective post-conflict peace-building. Instead, there has been protracted instability and violence. In the early months of 2002, US forces were engaged in substantial military actions, and nearly eighteen months later, around 10,000 US troops remain in the country, frequently involved in violent confrontations with Taliban and other guerrillas. The government of Mr Karzai has little control outside Kabul, several ministers and close associates have been assassinated and Mr Karzai himself has survived attempts on his life.

More generally, Afghanistan is largely controlled by warlords and the cascading of weapons from the conflict and from the re-arming of the old Northern Alliance has added to the potential for violence. Cultivation of opium poppies has increased markedly, and many parts of the country are insufficiently safe for international aid workers to operate. While ISAF helps maintain stability in Kabul and some other cities are relatively peaceful, the situation across much of the country is deeply unstable. In one 24-hour period in early August, 2003, 61 people were killed and many more injured in a series of attacks in three different parts of the country. **(7)** A few days later, up to 400 insurgents crossed the border from Pakistan in daylight, attacking a police headquarters in the south east of the country. At least 22 people were killed, including the police chief for the area and six other police officers. **(8)**

A pattern has emerged in which US forces, often using considerable air power, are able to counterattack guerrilla groups when caught in the open, but are unable to control substantial regions after dark or when guerrilla forces operate in small

groups. **(9)** Furthermore, US-lead patrols into areas in which guerrillas operate frequently end up producing more opposition to their presence.

Meanwhile, it is proving far more difficult to train and develop an Afghan national army, with frequent desertions and a lack of recruits. Eighteen months after the end of the war, the army numbered barely 5,000 troops, massively short of the 70,000 required. It is a situation made more difficult with the continuing control of the national Ministry of Defence by the Minister, Mohammed Fahim, and a small group of ethnic Tajiks supported by a substantial private militia.

5. The current status of Iraq

In Iraq, too, the outcome of the war has been radically different to that anticipated, and with a scale of opposition that is much higher than that in Afghanistan. In some parts of the country, most notably the Kurdish north-east, the end of the Saddam Hussein regime has been hugely welcomed and the US forces are seen as liberators. Elsewhere, and especially in central Iraq, there has developed a degree of resistance and sabotage that has massively hindered the process of reconstruction and has resulted in close to 140,000 US troops being forced to remain in the country. Hundreds of Iraqis and scores of Americans have been killed and very many more seriously injured since President George Bush declared major hostilities to have ceased at the beginning of May. **(10)**

At the time of writing (mid-August 2003), attacks on US forces are continuing at the rate of at least ten a day, and there have been devastating car and truck bomb attacks on the Jordanian diplomatic mission and the UN headquarters in Baghdad.

The war itself is now known to have killed over 6,000 civilians and to have injured up to 20,000 more, all in the space of three weeks, and Iraqi military casualties are likely to have been even higher. **(11)** Even so, many of the elite Iraqi forces, such as Special Republican Guard units and security force militia did not fight in the war itself, and withdrew to their own communities with weapons and munitions intact. Moreover, many of them were previously trained in urban and guerrilla warfare and are likely to have formed the basis for the opposition to US occupation which has involved around 1,500 attacks on US forces in the five months since the war ended.

Support for such actions is far from widespread, but the persistent failure of the US occupying authorities to deliver electricity supplies, coupled with a stagnant economy made worse by the summary disbanding of the old regular Iraqi army has added to the deep unpopularity of US forces. While not supporting the guerrilla-style resistance, many Iraqis are indifferent to it, and are certainly not supportive of a continuing US presence.

For the United States itself there has been a near-panic attempt to engender international support to share the burden, but this has singularly failed to deliver the hoped-for results. Particularly significant was the refusal of the Indian government in July to agree to deploy a full division of troops to the north of Iraq. In the absence of a central role for the UN in the move towards a fully independent and democratic Iraq, it is unlikely that any more of the few countries able to deploy large-scale peacekeeping forces will assist the United States.

Meanwhile, there is a continuing refusal on the part of the Bush administration to allow such a greater UN role. By occupying Iraq, the United States now has control over the world's second largest oil reserves. At the very least, a client regime is envisaged in Baghdad, and the experience of democracy in Turkey makes it unlikely that a fully independent Iraq will be allowed to develop. As a result, and bearing in mind current levels of opposition, the US military occupation is likely to continue.

The further issue then arises as to whether the US military presence will serve as a focus for radical paramilitaries from other parts of the Arab world and beyond. During the 1990s, US troops experienced considerable problems of security in Saudi Arabia, with the end result that they restricted their presence to a small number of heavily protected bases. While a permanent US military presence is well-nigh certain to be established in Iraq, this is quite different from the much larger numbers of occupying forces, many of whom necessarily have to be involved in frequent patrols, making them targets for guerrilla attacks. **(12)**

What is now happening is that the probable presence of small numbers of foreign militants is being used by the Bush administration as justification for a much wider process of re-making the political map of the Middle East as a core part of the war on terror. This has the immediate political advantage of tying US military losses not to some mistaken occupation of a distant country but to the wider process of making the US homeland safer from terrorist attacks.

The question is whether this is a genuine policy development or whether it is more of a cynical political device. Certainly, the rhetoric is there. As Paul Wolfowitz put it on US television at the end of July: "...the battle to secure the peace in Iraq is now the central battle in the global war on terror, and those sacrifices are going to make not just the Middle East more stable, but our country safer". George W. Bush actually made a similar point even before the war, when he told the American Enterprise Institute on 26 February that "A liberated Iraq can show the power of freedom to transform that vital region by bringing hope and progress to the lives of millions". **(13)**

This rhetoric, though, stems from a genuine belief within administration ranks that the consolidation of post-war Iraq is actually a fundamental part of the creation of the

New American Century, setting the scene for the transition to pro-American governments across the region. Moreover, because Iraq is the focus for this transformation, so it will attract the Islamic militants from across the region. As Thomas Friedman put it recently: "...America's opponents know just what's at stake in the postwar struggle for Iraq, which is why they flock there: Beat America's ideas in Iraq and you beat them out of the whole region; lose to America there, lose everywhere." **(14)**

There are now some indications that paramilitary groups are starting to move into Iraq, slipping easily through porous borders and possibly even linking up with dissident elements within the country. **(15)** If this becomes a trend, then it will greatly compound the security problems facing the United States. In essence, the US will be seen as taking over and occupying one of the major Arab states of the world, and its primary motives will be seen as control of Arab oil and support for the State of Israel. Whatever the truth of this, such will be the perception, with the end result that by occupying Iraq, the United States has provided 140,000 targets. No longer will al-Qaida and its associates have to attempt to carry out attacks in the United States – instead the Americans will have come to them.

6. Global trends

Concern about paramilitary attacks after 9/11 has concentrated on al-Qaida and its associates, but a more global view has to encompass the possible connections between terrorism, poverty and exclusion. In relation to this, there is evidence that the growing global socio-economic divide is leading directly to the growth of radical social movements, some of which are prepared to use violence against elites and other centres of power.

There is certainly a clear trend towards a widening global divide, with a trans-national community of about a billion people, centred mainly on the states of the Atlantic community, benefiting disproportionately from decades of economic growth. While abject poverty may not be increasing except in some parts of sub-Saharan Africa, the rich-poor divide is certainly growing, with the great majority of the world's people being progressively marginalised from the world's wealth. This majority is better educated, more literate and with better access to communications than earlier generations, and is therefore more aware of its own marginalisation, leading, among other things, to the more likely development of radical social movements.

There is evidence that this is now happening, in the form of a wide range of movements in countries such as Peru, Mexico, Nepal, Algeria, Indonesia and a number of states in the Middle East. Not all movements embrace paramilitary action, but those that do are frequently in a position to get support from marginalised

groups, even if paramilitary leaderships are more frequently drawn from well-educated and relatively wealthy backgrounds.

What seems likely is that we may now be entering a period of insurgency and paramilitarism in a number of parts of the world, driven in part by generic socio-economic trends in which inequality is increasing, and capable of being trans-national in its effect, as has been demonstrated by al-Qaida and its associates. Furthermore, such movements may involve adherence to particular fundamentalist orientations of major religions, not least Islam, but can also involve adherence to political, ethnic or nationalistic aspects of cultural identity.

While these are global issues, many of the features relate in particular to those states from which al-Qaida and its associates draw their support. Even in an otherwise rich state such as Saudi Arabia, the combination of an entrenched elite, a declining economy and increasing numbers of educated but unemployed young men all serve to aid substantial and widespread support for radical responses such as the actions of al-Qaida.

Such an overall analysis of trends in radical social movements does not find a ready acceptance in western political circles, not least because it implies the need for radical changes in international economic policies that would incite widespread opposition from entrenched and comfortable western elites. It would, though, be readily accepted by intellectuals and opinion formers in much of the rest of the world.

The three specific issues of the continued activity of al-Qaida, the enduring instability in Afghanistan and the burgeoning problems in Iraq must all be taken together with a more global trend of anti-Americanism. This has been powerfully demonstrated by trans-national polling undertaken for the Pew Research Center as part of its Global Attitudes Project. For example, comparing May 2003 to the previous year, it showed that those having an unfavourable view of the United States had risen from 69 to 81% in Pakistan, 55 to 83% in Turkey and 36 to 83% in Indonesia.

All these factors have to lead us to the conclusion that, whatever the view from Washington, a more detached analysis has to be that the "war on terror" is deeply problematic. Put bluntly, although some planned attacks have been prevented, it is not succeeding in diminishing paramilitary threats and it is failing to help restore Afghanistan to stability. Furthermore, its effects following regime termination in Iraq are already counterproductive to US and regional security interests, have proved very costly in human terms and are likely to serve as a very powerful focus for future opposition.

More generally, this war on terror and the attempt to create a new American century is being undertaken in an era where there are profound global problems stemming from deepening socio-economic divisions, a marginalised but increasingly aware majority of the world's people, environmental constraints and the development of radical and sometimes violent anti-elite social movements. Al-Qaida and its affiliates may draw support only partly because of such divisions, and it may have precious little interest in fostering equality or respect for human rights. Even so, its significance may lie in its trans-national potential and its ability to maintain and even enhance support at a time when the world's most powerful state is using a very wide range of vigorous methods to bring it under control.

C. Policy Alternatives

1. Afghanistan

On the specific issues of Afghanistan and Iraq, there are policy choices that are readily available. Afghanistan requires effective security, aided by an immediate extension of ISAF to other cities and major transport routes and the more rapid creation of a fully-functioning national police force. It also requires the reigning-in of the warlords and substantially greater aid to enable Afghan people to reconstruct their own country.

2. Iraq

US policy towards Iraq is deeply flawed and requires immediate and radical changes. Central to these must be an acceptance that Iraqis must be enabled to develop a democratic and independent state that may well choose to distance itself from Washington. In addition to a substantial increase in aid for reconstruction, it would be advisable to properly internationalise the process of transition to independence, under the direct auspices of the UN. In such circumstances, it should be possible to involve a wider range of states in peacekeeping, preferably including Arab states or those from the wider Islamic world. Such progress would not be readily achieved without a much clearer and consistent support for the Israeli/Palestinian peace process.

3. Global divisions

On the more global issues of socio-economic divisions and the linked problem of anti-elite insurgencies, the primary requirement is to enhance development prospects in key areas of the world. In Britain's case the most positive contribution would be through a process of a much-improved national commitment to development

assistance, debt relief and trade reform linked to development, with this linked to persistent agenda-setting and advocacy in international fora such as the EU, G8 and appropriate UN bodies.

There further needs to be a far more sustained effort by the UK government in reversing current trends towards the diminution of human rights, together with the systematic use of a range of conflict prevention tools in countries and regions of specific paramilitary threat. **(16)** Perhaps even more important is the need to influence the United States away from its excessive and counter-productive concentration on the military control of paramilitary violence.

Two years after the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, we have to face up to an international situation in which current approaches are inappropriate and ineffective and may even be leading to more intractable problems. This is an uncomfortable conclusion but must be faced and it is therefore necessary to consider some of the other directions outlined in the final part of this report. In this respect, the UK government, whatever its recent policies, remains in an unusually good position to exert a more positive influence.

Notes

(1) US Space Command's Vision 2020 is available at www.fas.org/spp/military/docops/usspace/=20.

(2) A perceptive and wide-ranging analysis of the Bush security agenda is: Edward Rhodes, "The Imperial Logic of Bush's Liberal Agenda", *Survival*, Vo.45, No.1, pp.131-154, Spring 2003.

(3) A more detailed analysis of US unilateralism is in the first paper in this series: Paul Rogers and Scilla Elworthy, "The United States, Europe and the Majority World after 11 September", *ORG Briefing Paper*, Oxford Research Group, October 2001.

(4) Rhodes *op cit*.

(5) Two sources of analysis on the "majority world" view are the NGO *Focus on the Global South* www.focusweb.org, and the magazine *Third World Resurgence* www.twinside.org.sg/twr.htm/.

(6) This issue has acquired further political significance in Britain with the establishment of the Hutton Inquiry: www.the-hutton-inquiry.org.uk/.

(7) David Rohde, "Karzai acts to squelch pro-Taliban insurgency", *International Herald Tribune*, 15 August, 2003, p.5.

(8) "22 die in rebel assault on the Afghan police", *International Herald Tribune*, 18 August 2003, p.3.

(9) Following the earlier Taliban assaults, US F-16 and A-10 aircraft attacked Taliban positions in support of a combined force of Afghan government and US troops. *BBC News website*: "Taliban killed in US bombing", 26 August 2003, www.news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/3180161.stm.

(10) Bradley Graham, "Rising Toll Shows U.S.Challenges", *Washington Post*, 26 August 2003, p.A01.

(11) See www.iraqbodycount.net/ for details of civilian deaths and injuries.

(12) Bradley Graham, "General Cites Rising Peril of Terror in Iraq", *Washington Post*, 22 August 2003, p.A01.

(13) Both quotations are from: Dana Milbank and Mike Allen, "US Shifts Rhetoric On Its Goals in Iraq", *Washington Post*, 1 August, p.A14.

(14) Thomas L Friedman, "The wider stakes in postwar Iraq", *International Herald Tribune*, 25 August, p.6.

(15) Michael Dobbs, "Foreign Islamic Militants Add to Coalition Worries in Iraq", *Washington Post*, 24 August 2003, p.A18.

(16) This is an issue explored more fully by Scilla Elworthy in the third paper in this series: Paul Rogers and Scilla Elworthy, "The 'War on Terrorism': 12-month audit and future strategy options", *ORG Briefing Paper*, Oxford Research Group, September 2002.

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