



Backgroundnder

Executive Summary

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BRITISH AND EUROPEAN RESPONSES TO THE PROPOSED U.S. MILITARY ACTION AGAINST IRAQ

NILE GARDINER, PH.D.

As the Bush Administration contemplates taking military action against Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq, the United States is looking to the British government for military, strategic, and diplomatic support. President George Bush and Prime Minister Tony Blair are due to hold a summit meeting in Crawford, Texas, on April 5–7 to discuss possible joint action against Iraq in what will be one of the most important tests of the Anglo–U.S. “special relationship” since World War II. The White House should be fully aware of the dominant factors that bear upon a British commitment of military, strategic, and diplomatic support for such a war. For example:

- To support the U.S. position on fighting a war with Iraq, Blair must be convinced that such a war is winnable, that Saddam can be ousted, and that a viable opposition can then take power. Tony Blair faces strong opposition from members of his own Cabinet and the Labour Party, the military chiefs, and much of the British media with respect to British participation in a U.S. war against Iraq.
- Blair faces extreme pressure from the European Commission and other European Union (EU) member states to stay out of such a war. European leaders have expressed unease at Britain's

support for the United States, a reflection of the fact that the European Union resents the Bush–Blair friendship and the immense power wielded by the U.S.–British alliance. In the war against terrorism, the EU (like the United Nations) has been sidelined. The EU may try to act as a peace broker in the lead-up to a war, applying pressure on London and Washington to seek a negotiated settlement with Iraq through the U.N. It will seek to pressure Blair into acting as a moderating influence on Washington in order to weaken what it perceives as a purely English-speaking alliance.

Blair's Support. Downing Street has indicated that Tony Blair is strongly considering not only full support for a war against Saddam Hussein, but also British involvement in such a war. Officials at the

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Ministry of Defence are reportedly studying feasibility plans for the deployment of up to 25,000 military personnel to take part in a possible ground offensive against Baghdad. Blair understands that Britain's position as a leading global power (as opposed to a superpower), greatly enhanced since September 11, rests heavily on its role as a partner with the United States in the "special relationship."

Opposition in Parliament. The United States should be under no illusions that the New Labour party led by Tony Blair fully shares his pro-American stance. For much of its history, Labour has been a socialist party hostile to many aspects of U.S. foreign policy, ranging from the bombing of Libya in 1986 to the deployment of nuclear weapons on British soil.

While the Labour Party has undergone a dramatic metamorphosis since Blair took over as leader, it has retained a hard rump of left-wingers on its back benches who are fundamentally opposed to the ideas of the Bush Administration. The vast majority of Labour Members of Parliament have no instinctive sympathy for U.S. foreign policy goals, particularly those of the current U.S. government. National missile defense, foreign aid, global warming, Israeli-Palestinian relations, and the International Criminal Court are all areas of contention between New Labour and the current Republican Administration. Several Cabinet ministers have shared the concerns of left-wing Labour MPs and have been highly critical of aspects of recent U.S. policy. Over 130 MPs (most of them Labour), including four Labour ex-Ministers, have signed a House of Commons motion expressing "deep unease" at Blair's support for America over Iraq.

The European Reaction. Romano Prodi, President of the European Commission, also has expressed concern about U.S. military action against Iraq and has indicated that the EU is likely to oppose a U.S.-led attack. Tony Blair has found himself increasingly isolated within Europe over his support for America. At the Barcelona EU summit in March 2002, he failed to drum up support for

possible U.S. action against Iraq and encountered strong opposition in some quarters. Speaking at the summit, Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder announced that Germany had abandoned its policy of "unlimited solidarity" with Washington, which had been implemented following the events of September 11. France's opposition to proposed U.S.-U.K. military action is even more hostile than Germany's, with President Bush's use of the term "axis of evil" drawing fierce condemnation from Paris.

Conclusion. It is highly likely that Britain will join the United States in taking military action against Iraq should Saddam Hussein continue to pursue programs to acquire weapons of mass destruction, but its support is by no means certain. The Prime Minister must be convinced that a war with Iraq can be won, that Saddam can be successfully removed from power, and that a stable opposition government can take his place. Blair realizes that a flawed campaign that fails to oust Saddam and results in large numbers of civilian casualties would lead to his own downfall within the Labour Party. He faces strong opposition within his own government and party. He is staking his reputation on supporting the United States in an expanded war against terrorism, and backing off that support would be seen as a major display of weakness.

Tony Blair also will come under increasing pressure from the European Commission and from EU member states, particularly France and Germany, to refrain from taking military action against Iraq. The EU may well attempt to use its opposition to an Iraq conflict as a vehicle for projecting its influence on the global stage. Opposition to an Iraq war could also serve as a convenient rallying cry for anti-Americans in the EU who resent the United States for its position on a range of issues, from the Kyoto Protocol to missile defense. Thus, for the Bush Administration, Tony Blair's continuing support for the U.S. plan is growing in importance.

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BRITISH AND EUROPEAN RESPONSES TO THE PROPOSED U.S. MILITARY ACTION AGAINST IRAQ

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In his address to a joint session of Congress on September 20, 2001, President George W. Bush remarked that “America has no truer friend than Great Britain. Once again we are joined in a great cause.” Since the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, Prime Minister Tony Blair has stood “shoulder to shoulder” with the United States in the war against terrorism. Britain was the first country to join with America in launching military strikes against the Taliban in Afghanistan, and the British Prime Minister has played an outstanding role in helping to build the international coalition in the fight against al-Qaeda.

There already are 1,500 British troops serving with the International Security and Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan, and 1,700 Royal Marines are due to be sent soon to fight alongside U.S. forces against the still deadly remnants of the Taliban and al-Qaeda. In Iraq, Royal Air Force jets continue to patrol the no-fly zone in the northern part of the country together with their U.S. counterparts in a display of joint force to protect the Kurdish minority.

As the Bush Administration contemplates military action against Saddam Hussein’s regime in Iraq, the United States is looking to the British gov-

ernment for military, strategic, and diplomatic support. President Bush and Prime Minister Blair are due to hold a summit meeting in Crawford, Texas, on April 5–7 to discuss possible joint action against Iraq in what will be one of the most important tests of the Anglo–U.S. “special relationship” since World War II. According to a Downing Street spokesman, “the meeting will be to finalise phase two of the war against terrorism.”¹

As the summit approaches, the Administration would do well to keep in mind the challenges the Blair government faces in committing to a war with Iraq. Specifically:

- **In order to support the U.S. position on fighting a war with Iraq, Blair must be convinced that such a war is winnable, that Sad-**

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1. Quoted by *BBC News Online*, February 28, 2002.

dam can be ousted, and that a viable opposition can then take power. Tony Blair faces strong opposition from members of his own Cabinet, the Labour Party, military chiefs, and much of the British media to having Britain join a U.S. war against Iraq. In addition to presenting sufficient evidence of the threat Saddam Hussein poses to security, the Bush Administration should work closely with British Minister of Defence Geoff Hoon, whose support will prove critical to Blair in building support among the British military establishment and his own Cabinet.

- **The Prime Minister may have to look increasingly for support among the Conservative opposition in Parliament for joining a war against Iraq.** Blair faces major battles on the domestic front, particularly with trade unions and public-sector workers, and will likely need support from Conservatives for committing to a war in Iraq. Conservative Party leader Iain Duncan Smith has already pledged absolute support for the U.S. position.
- **Blair faces extreme pressure from the European Commission and other European Union (EU) member states to stay out of such a war.** The European Commission could try to use the Iraq debate as a vehicle to project its influence on the global stage and to rally opposition to other U.S. policies. Logistical support and the use of air bases may come from Rome and Madrid, but support from Germany and France would likely depend on the outcome of upcoming elections. The White House should cultivate relations with EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana, who, among officials in Brussels, has been the most receptive to the military aims of the United States.
- **Blair's support for the U.S. position on Iraq does not mean that his government will back similar action against other rogue states.** With regard to Iran and North Korea, the New Labour line has been one of engagement, similar to that of the EU. The Bush Administration

must not take Britain's military support for granted.

TONY BLAIR'S SUPPORT FOR AMERICA'S CAMPAIGN

Downing Street has not yet publicly endorsed the idea of U.S. military action against Iraq, nor has the British government stated that British forces would participate in a U.S.-led attack. However, the indications are that Tony Blair is strongly considering not only full support for a war against Saddam Hussein, but also British involvement in such a war.

Officials at the Ministry of Defence are reportedly studying feasibility plans for the deployment of up to 25,000 military personnel to take part in a possible ground offensive against Baghdad.² Britain is expected to publish a dossier of intelligence material ahead of the summit, providing damning evidence that Iraq is building weapons of mass destruction. And Alastair Campbell, Blair's communications chief and closest political adviser, has stated that the Prime Minister's message for the President when the two meet in Texas will be one of "total support" for America's campaign against international terrorism.³

The fact that Britain has dispatched a major additional force to Afghanistan (the largest British combat deployment since the Gulf War) demonstrates Blair's continuing commitment to the U.S. war on terrorism, as well as a desire to increase Britain's standing and influence with Washington as the White House prepares to expand the conflict to Iraq. Blair may also use the troop deployment as a political lever with which to press Bush into seeking wider international support for action against Baghdad. In the words of a Downing Street source:

The speed and size of the deployment to Afghanistan is a cheque that Blair will cash in. He will tell Bush that he needs to carry the international community with him.⁴

Blair held talks in London with Vice President Richard Cheney earlier this month, sending a strong signal that Britain and America are planning a combined initiative to build a coalition against the Iraqi

2. "Britain May Send Brigades," *The Times*, March 11, 2002.

3. "Britain Will Claim Iraq Is Constructing Massive Weapons," *The Wall Street Journal—Europe*, March 21, 2002.

4. "UK Warns Saddam of Nuclear Retaliation," *The Daily Telegraph*, March 21, 2002.

dictator. In a joint press conference, Blair warned that “the threat of weapons of mass destruction will have to be addressed”:

Let’s be under no doubt whatever, Saddam Hussein has acquired weapons of mass destruction over a long period of time. He is the only leader in the world that has actually used chemical weapons against his own people. He is in breach of at least 9 UN Security Council Resolutions about weapons of mass destruction. He has not allowed weapons inspectors to do the job that the UN wanted them to do in order to make sure that he can’t develop them. Now we have said right from the very outset, no decisions have been taken on how we deal with this threat, but that there is a threat from Saddam Hussein and the weapons of mass destruction that he has acquired is not in doubt at all.⁵

Significantly, Blair’s position has altered considerably since last year. Last November, after meeting in Downing Street, Blair and French President Jacques Chirac issued a joint statement expressing opposition to a widening of the war against terrorism, with Blair stressing that the focus must remain on finishing the war in Afghanistan. With regard to speculation about action against Iraq, a senior government figure was quoted at the time as saying that “we do not think it is a good idea, particularly without evidence of Baghdad’s involvement in terrorism.”⁶

The turnaround by the British government was prompted by President Bush’s State of the Union address and Blair’s realization that America is fundamentally determined to remove Saddam Hussein from power. Blair is not a conviction politician, but a pragmatist who understands that Britain’s position as a leading global power (as opposed to a superpower), greatly enhanced since September 11, rests heavily on its role as a partner with the United States in their “special relationship.” As a close ally

of America, Britain is able to exert influence across the world, in sharp contrast to Germany and France, which are merely European powers with a very limited projection of power beyond the continent.

Tony Blair also realizes that his position as President Bush’s closest political friend in Europe gives him immeasurably enhanced weight within the European Union—as witnessed by the rush of European leaders to attend a Blair-led summit dinner in Downing Street to discuss the coalition against terrorism last December. Some in Europe may carp at Britain’s seemingly unswerving support for the United States, with Blair described as Bush’s “poodle,” but the harsh reality remains that the EU is both resentful and jealous of the Bush–Blair friendship and the immense power wielded by the U.S.–British alliance. In the war against terrorism, the EU (like the United Nations) has been sidelined as a virtual irrelevance, and the Europeans may seek to use opposition to an Iraq war to try to prove that the European Union is a force to be reckoned with on the international stage.

OPPOSITION WITHIN THE PARLIAMENTARY LABOUR PARTY

The United States should be under no illusions that the New Labour Party led by Tony Blair fully shares his pro-American stance. For much of its history, Labour has been a socialist party hostile to many aspects of U.S. foreign policy, ranging from the bombing of Libya in 1986 to the deployment of nuclear weapons on British soil.

Labour continues to subscribe to a what it calls an “ethical foreign policy”—a phrase coined by the previous Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook,⁷ and the antithesis of current Bush Administration thinking. This highly confusing, utopian doctrine is neatly encapsulated in a recent speech by Denis McShane, Parliamentary Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office:

What is British foreign policy? I would sum it up in four words: prevent conflicts,

5. From a press conference given by U.K. Prime Minister Tony Blair and U.S. Vice President Richard Cheney, London, March 11, 2002.

6. “Blair and Chirac United Against American Hawks,” *The Times*, November 30, 2001.

7. For a detailed analysis of British foreign policy under Robin Cook, see Robin Harris, “Blair’s ‘Ethical’ Policy,” *The National Interest*, Spring 2001.

promote well-being. No adjectives, no metaphors about punching weight, no false fights between Europe and the United States, no Palmerstonian distinction between allies and interests and above all no dichotomy between realism and idealism. . . . It is through dialogue, negotiation, the search for international agreements, the construction of global rule of law, the strengthening of the UN and its agencies, that we will help improve the quality of life for fellow-citizens.⁸

While the Labour Party has undergone a dramatic metamorphosis since Blair took over as leader, it has retained a hard rump of left-wingers on its back benches who are fundamentally opposed to the ideas of the Bush Administration. Indeed, it would be true to say that the vast majority of Labour MPs have no instinctive sympathy for U.S. aims at all, particularly those of the current American government. National missile defense, foreign aid, global warming, Israeli–Palestinian relations, and the International Criminal Court are all areas of contention between New Labour and the current Republican Administration.

Many Cabinet members, such as Jack Straw, Clare Short, Robin Cook, and John Prescott, have shared the concerns of left-wing Labour MPs and have been highly critical of aspects of recent U.S. policy. In fact, it is highly unlikely that Britain under a Labour government would be joining military action against Iraq were it not for the leadership of Tony Blair.

Over 130 MPs, including four Labour ex-Ministers, have signed a House of Commons motion expressing “deep unease” at Blair’s support for America over Iraq. Most of the signatories are Labour MPs, backed by several Liberal Democrats and all nine Scottish and Welsh Nationalist MPs. With growing support in both the Labour and the Liberal Democratic Parties, this figure could well rise to 150–160 MPs, giving Downing Street some

cause for concern. (The government’s current majority over all other parties stands at 165.)

It is very likely that the level of opposition among Labour MPs is much higher than this figure, with many afraid to oppose the Party line openly. A February 2002 BBC poll of 101 Labour MPs found that 86 believed that there was insufficient evidence to justify British participation in an attack on Iraq. The mood of dissent was captured clearly in comments made by Donald Anderson, the Labour chairman of the parliamentary foreign affairs committee, when he described President Bush as behaving like a “wild west sheriff” isolated from world opinion: “When the time of trial. . . comes, the sheriff will look around and there won’t be any deputies there.”⁹

Whatever the level of opposition to the government among Labour MPs, the Prime Minister will not be obliged by the Constitution or by precedent to hold a full vote of Parliament on the issue, which means that a backbench rebellion will be of symbolic rather than practical importance. No vote was held before or during either the Gulf War or the Afghanistan campaign. In the highly unlikely event that he is forced into a Commons vote on the issue, Blair might have to rely on the support of the 164 Conservative MPs, who are expected overwhelmingly to support action against Iraq, for a convincing victory.

The Labour revolt in the Commons is led by Alice Mahon, a left-wing radical with outspoken views on international affairs and sponsor of the Commons motion on Iraq. Together with fellow Labour MP Tam Dalyell, “father” of the House of Commons (longest serving member of Parliament), Mahon has written an open letter to Tony Blair warning against “an aggressive war by Britain and the US” and has called on the government to “take no part in the decision to murder more helpless civilians.”¹⁰ Addressing the Commons, she urged fellow MPs to back her call to rebel against the government’s position on Iraq:

8. Denis McShane, “The Return of Foreign Policy,” speech to the Royal Institute of International Affairs, London, February 13, 2002.

9. “MPs Wary as Blair Plans Talks with Bush on Iraq,” *Financial Times*, February 25, 2002.

10. “We Must Say No to Murder of More Helpless Civilians; Labour MP’s Plea to PM over New Blitz,” *The Mirror*, March 12, 2002.

We are about to hear huge spin about how many weapons of mass destruction exist in Iraq. When we receive the dossier, no doubt we will read that some such weapons are more sophisticated than those in the Pentagon. . . . I do not think that there is a United Nations resolution that gives the Americans the right unilaterally to take action while we run alongside as little bag carriers.¹¹

Mahon is unflinching in her condemnation of U.S. policy and responded to reports of the Pentagon's Nuclear Posture Review with the observation that "The lunatics have taken over the White House."¹² She has been heavily criticized by the Labour leadership in the past for opposing NATO bombing of the Serbs.

As chairman of the Committee for Peace in the Balkans, a group sympathetic to the former Serb regime of Slobodan Milosevic, she visited Belgrade in April 1999 on a propaganda trip highlighting civilian casualties of NATO strikes.¹³ She travelled again to Serbia in September 1999, this time with Tam Dalyell, to inspect bomb sites at a time when Milosevic was being hunted as a war criminal.¹⁴

Mahon was a fierce opponent of Allied military action against the Taliban and al-Qaeda, and was one of four Labour MPs to condemn Tony Blair for backing U.S. missile strikes against Osama bin Laden's weapons factory in Sudan in August 1998.¹⁵ She was also among 40 MPs who called for America to end its sanctions policy toward Cuba in November 2000.¹⁶

Another leading figure in the Labour parliamentary rebellion is George Galloway, recently labeled

an "apologist" and "a mouthpiece for the Iraqi regime over many years" in a Commons debate by a Foreign Office minister.¹⁷ Galloway has described the campaign to eliminate Baghdad's weapons of mass destruction as "the longest running hoax in the international community."¹⁸ He has visited Iraq several times since the Gulf War and, in a 1994 fact-finding mission to Baghdad, reportedly greeted his host Saddam Hussein with the words: "Sir, I salute your courage, your strength, your indefatigability and I want you to know that we are with you."¹⁹

Galloway's views on the Anglo-U.S. alliance were summed up in a recent interview with the Al-Jazeera news network in which he told his Arab audience:

It is humiliating for Great Britain to turn itself into the tail of the American dog, particularly when the head of this dog belongs to a crazy person. Regrettably, this special relationship which we have with the United States is of the kind that President Clinton had with Monica Lewinsky. It is one-sided, it is immoral, and it can be called off whenever the more powerful partner likes.²⁰

George Galloway's rhetoric represents not just animosity toward America and its foreign policy—a decades-old tradition in the Labour Party—but a visceral hatred for the current Bush Administration that is shared by a sizeable number of his fellow Labour MPs. In a parliamentary debate on Iraq in early March, Galloway expressed his contempt for America's talk of military action in the Gulf:

11. *House of Commons Hansard Debates*, March 6, 2002.

12. "War on Terror: Next Step Nukes?" *The Mirror*, March 11, 2002.

13. "Party Shocked by MP's Secret Trip," *The Times*, April 21, 1999.

14. "Dalyell in Serbia to See NATO Bomb Sites," *The Scotsman*, September 11, 1999.

15. "Sarwar Defends Sudan Fact-Finding Trip," *The Scotsman*, August 24, 1998.

16. "An Evil Embargo," letter to *The Daily Telegraph*, November 6, 2000.

17. "MP Brands Minister a Liar During Iraq Debate," *The Times*, March 7, 2002.

18. *House of Commons Hansard Debates*, March 6, 2002.

19. Quoted by *The Sunday Times*, March 3, 2002.

20. Quoted by Thomas Kielinger in *Die Welt*, March 19, 2002 (*BBC Monitoring International Reports*).

It is the policy of a right-wing Republican administration. I say to Labour colleagues who contemplate supporting George Bush war mark 2 that my hon. friend the member for Glasgow, Baillieston [Mr. Wray] was right: the White House is not a Clinton White House; it is not a third-way White House nor is it a social democrat White House. It is the Reagan–Bush era White House reconstituted. What sort of Labour Member of Parliament will support in the Lobby a war launched by such a grizzly crew?²¹

Disturbingly for Blair, more moderate Labour MPs are joining forces with left-wingers such as Mahon and Galloway. They include some senior ex-ministers who still carry weight and respect in the party. Former Defence Minister Peter Kilfoyle, a fierce critic of what he calls Britain’s “slavish support” for America’s missile defense system, has warned that Britain may be sucked into “another Vietnam” in the war against terrorism.²² Mo Mowlam, the former Northern Ireland minister and an extremely popular figure among Labour backbenchers, recently launched a broadside against the government in a Labour-supporting newspaper: “Blair seems to be making it clear that he has more sympathy with the wishes of Washington and their reckless attitude to Iraq than he does for his own party and even members of his Cabinet.”²³

Significantly, the Iraq issue is not just a rallying cry for the British Left keen to vent their ideological anger against what they see as U.S. imperialism; the Iraq debate comes at a time when there is growing disillusionment within the Labour Party over the general direction in which the party and government are going. Mo Mowlam illustrated this mood clearly in her recent article when she wrote of “a Prime Minister who has thrown away the British constitution and seems to see himself as our Presi-

TONY BLAIR’S WAR CABINET

Cabinet Ministers

- David Blunkett, Home Secretary
- Gordon Brown, Chancellor of the Exchequer
- Robin Cook, Leader of the House of Commons
- Geoff Hoon, Defence Secretary
- John Prescott, Deputy Prime Minister
- Clare Short, International Development Secretary
- Jack Straw, Foreign Secretary

Advisers

- Admiral Sir Michael Boyce, Chief of Defence Staff
- Alastair Campbell, Director of Communications and Strategy, Downing Street
- Sir John Kerr, Foreign Office Permanent Secretary
- Sir David Manning, Head of Cabinet Office Defence and Overseas Secretariat
- Jonathan Powell, Chief of Staff, Downing Street
- John Scarlett, Chairman of the Joint Intelligence Committee

dent.”²⁴ There is already open talk of replacing Blair with Gordon Brown as party leader, though this is unlikely to succeed in the course of this Parliament unless the Iraq war is a total disaster for Blair.²⁵

Blair’s personal approval rating has plummeted in the past month, falling from 69 percent to 49 per-

21. *House of Commons Hansard Debates*, March 6, 2002.

22. “Former Defence Ministers Warn of ‘Another Vietnam,’” *The Independent*, March 20, 2002; “Son of Star Wars ‘Threatens Stability,’” *BBC News Online*, January 16, 2002.

23. Mo Mowlam, “Sleazier Than the Tories,” *The Sunday Mirror*, March 17, 2002.

24. *Ibid.*

25. “Labour MPs Begin to Sharpen Knives for Blair,” *The Sunday Times*, March 17, 2002; “The Rumours Are Swirling, The War Drums Beating—Rebellion Is in the Air,” *The Independent*, March 18, 2002.

cent. This compares with a popularity rating for President Bush of over 80 percent. Labour support is also falling for the first time in the course of this Parliament, with Labour's lead over the Conservatives cut from 17 points to just 9 points (43 percent to 34 percent).²⁶

The Blair government has been hit by a series of scandals, including allegations that the Prime Minister personally intervened to help billionaire Labour donor Lakshmi Mittal purchase a nationalized steel company in Romania.²⁷ Blair has brushed aside the controversy, dismissing it as “garbage-gate,” but there is little doubt that the affair has added greatly to the public perception that the New Labour government is mired in sleaze. The government is also under attack for failing to deal with the chronic problems besetting the country's schools, hospitals, and public transport, as well as a rising tide of violent crime, particularly in London.

Perhaps most seriously for Blair's own position in the Labour Party, the powerful trade unions, which continue to exert a large amount of influence within Labour, are starting to show signs of turning against Blair. John Monks, General Secretary of the Trades Union Congress (TUC), has been fiercely critical of Blair's growing collaboration with conservative leaders in Europe, including Silvio Berlusconi and José Maria Aznar, on issues such as EU labour reform. Monks attacked Blair's ties with Berlusconi as “bloody stupid” and told *The Times* that the unions were “fed up with playing the role of stooges” to the Prime Minister.²⁸

There is little doubt that Blair's position today is considerably weaker than it was in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks. With growing hostility within his own Labour Party, Blair will be acutely aware that major military mistakes in Iraq, such as a huge loss of civilian life from Allied bombing, could gravely wound him politically.

CABINET OPPOSITION

The Blair Cabinet (as opposed to the parliamentary Labour Party) has remained largely silent on the issue of Iraq, implying a level of tacit but far from enthusiastic support for Blair's position. Indeed, the level of private disquiet within the Cabinet over Blair's support for Bush is probably much greater than it appears on the surface.

Key figures such as Chancellor of the Exchequer Gordon Brown and Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott have kept out of the debate. David Blunkett, probably the leading contender along with Brown for the future leadership of the Labour Party post-Blair, has also avoided expressing his views on a possible war with Iraq, although he has warned that Muslim youths may riot in British cities if a conflict does break out in the Gulf.

Secretary of Defence Geoff Hoon is regarded as the most hawkish of Blair's ministers and is expected to support military action against Iraq; he has stated that Britain would back U.S. military force against Iraq “in the right conditions.”²⁹ Hoon recently told the House of Commons Defence Select Committee that Britain would retaliate with a nuclear strike if attacked by a rogue state such as Iraq, Iran, North Korea, or Libya using weapons of mass destruction, emphasizing that dictators such as Saddam Hussein could “be absolutely confident that in the right conditions we would be willing to use our nuclear weapons.” Hoon's statements were supported by a joint Ministry of Defence/Foreign Office paper, which warned that “a capability to target the UK accurately could emerge within the next few years” if a country in the Middle East or North Africa manages to acquire a complete long-range ballistic missile system.³⁰

Within the Blair “War Cabinet,” the team of ministers currently charged with overseeing the British campaign in the war against terrorism, three figures who will play important roles in the coming months—Jack Straw, Clare Short, and Robin

26. “New Fears on Crime Lift Tories,” *The Guardian*, March 21, 2002.

27. For an in-depth analysis of the Mittal affair, see “Now Tony Blair Must Steel Himself for More Scandal,” *The Sunday Telegraph*, February 17, 2002, and “Lies, Damned Lies and Labour Spin,” *The Sunday Times*, February 17, 2002.

28. ‘TUC Chief Rebukes Blair over Links with the Right,’ *The Times*, March 15, 2002.

29. Quoted by *The Sunday Telegraph*, March 3, 2002.

30. “Britain's Nuclear Warning to Saddam,” *The Times*, March 21, 2002.

Cook—should give the Bush Administration some cause for concern. Significantly, all three have sparked diplomatic incidents involving Israel and are known to be sympathetic to Yasser Arafat and the Palestinian cause, indicating that Blair may face strong pressure from within his Cabinet to press for an Israeli–Palestinian peace settlement before embarking on a war with Iraq.

Foreign Secretary Jack Straw. A clear sign that Tony Blair is extremely serious about supporting America in a war against Iraq has been the conversion of Foreign Secretary Jack Straw. Widely perceived as being out his depth in the aftermath of September 11, Straw has evolved into a vociferous defender of Blair’s new hard-line approach to Saddam Hussein. The Foreign Secretary, a former member of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND), has even begun to offer endorsements of Washington’s national missile defense system, a thorny issue for many New Labour ministers.³¹

Straw is now at the forefront of the campaign to inform the British and international public of the dangers posed by Saddam’s desire to develop weapons of mass destruction. Addressing the House of Commons, for example, he emphasized that

the Iraqi regime represents a severe threat to international and regional security as a result of its continued development of weapons of mass destruction. It has an appalling human rights record using torture and mass execution of political detainees. . . . [T]here is a huge amount of compelling evidence about the complicity of Saddam Hussein and the Iraqi regime in the production of weapons of mass destruction.³²

On the question of British participation in military action, Straw made it clear that this was a course of action the government would consider, though within the confines of international law:

We should not rule out possible actions if Saddam Hussein does not comply with

international law, but we have to be very careful in this situation. We must be cautious and proportionate, and ensure that the decisions that we take have the support of the international community and are consistent with international law.³³

Straw’s tough remarks are in sharp contrast to his earlier observations and suggest that Blair is applying considerable pressure on Cabinet colleagues to toe the new line on Iraq. Straw is ambitious and sees himself as a contender for the leadership when Blair goes, so he will be keen to be seen as closely backing the Blair line. Straw is also notorious for making gaffes in interviews and policy statements, however, and there is a strong possibility that he might make comments during the course of the buildup to war against Iraq that embarrass the Anglo–U.S. coalition.

The Foreign Secretary’s response to President Bush’s State of the Union address was dismissive and less than flattering, describing it as a piece of Republican Party electioneering aimed at a domestic audience. During a press conference at the British Embassy in Washington, Straw commented that Bush’s speech “was best understood by the fact that there are mid-term congressional elections coming up in November. You don’t need me to tell you that.”³⁴ Straw’s remarks caused considerable disquiet in London and Washington, and were used by commentators to suggest that the Anglo–U.S. alliance was starting to drift apart.

Straw has also been critical of America’s treatment of Taliban and al-Qaeda prisoners at Guantanamo Bay and had demanded guarantees from U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld that the detainees were being treated humanely.

In recent months, Straw has spearheaded the Foreign Office’s controversial policy of “critical engagement” with Iran—a country designated by the United States as a sponsor of state terrorism. He has been condemned by Richard Perle, an adviser to Rumsfeld, as an appeaser of rogue states such as Iran.³⁵ Straw visited Tehran last September soon

31. Jack Straw, “The Future of Arms Control and Non-Proliferation,” speech to King’s College, London, February 6, 2002.

32. *House of Commons Hansard Debates*, March 12, 2002.

33. *Ibid.*

34. “Straw Mocks Bush’s Axis of Evil,” *The Daily Telegraph*, February 2, 2002.

after the terrorist attacks on the United States, the first British Foreign Secretary to visit the state since the fall of the Shah in 1979. The visit provoked outrage in Israel, and diplomatic tensions between London and Tel Aviv were heightened by Straw's ill-timed decision to write an article for a state-controlled Iranian newspaper.

In the article, written without the Prime Minister's prior knowledge, Straw expressed the view "that one of the factors which helps breed terrorism is the anger which many people in this region feel at events over the years in Palestine."³⁶ Straw had earlier praised the Iranian government of President Mohammad Khatami for its "human understanding" following the events of September 11, describing its rulers as being among the "decent leaders of the Islamic world."³⁷ The Israelis reacted furiously, and only a last-minute intervention by Downing Street prevented the cancellation of a scheduled meeting between the British Foreign Secretary and Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon.

The episode demonstrated extremely poor judgment and insensitivity on Straw's part and does not bode well for his forthcoming role as ambassador for Tony Blair as the Prime Minister seeks to rally international support for extending the war against terrorism to Iraq.

International Development Secretary Clare Short. Within the Cabinet, dissent against Blair's stance on Iraq has been led by Clare Short. She is the first minister to state her opposition to a military attack on Iraq. Her position was made clear in an interview with the BBC:

Blind military action against Iraq doesn't deal with the problem.... With the state of the Middle East, the terrible suffering of both the Israeli and Palestinian people, with the anger there is in the Arab world, to open up a military flank on Iraq would be very unwise.³⁸

Short, the most outspoken and left-wing member of the Blair Cabinet, is widely expected to resign if Britain does go to war with Iraq. She has resigned from the Labour front bench twice before, including over the Gulf War in 1991, and is an old-style socialist who has never quite fit into the regimented ranks of New Labour, with its obsession with control and "spin." She is known for her anti-American views but is no more hostile to the present Republican Administration than she was to the Clinton Administration, having described the President in 1998 as unfit to be leader of the United States, much to the embarrassment of Downing Street.³⁹

Like many other Labour ministers, Short has taken a strongly pro-Palestinian stance in the past, and has upset British relations with Israel with her views. In a 1997 speech to the charity, Medical Aid for the Palestinians, Short sparked a major diplomatic incident when she spoke of the "historical wrongs done to the Palestinian people—and the unfairness of the world's expectations that they should make sacrifices to make up for the evil done by Europeans during the Holocaust."⁴⁰

Although very popular among the Labour rank and file, Short is not regarded as a figure of sufficient stature in the party to lead a Cabinet revolt. However, if she were to be joined by the leader of the House of Commons, Robin Cook, Tony Blair would be placed in a very difficult position.

Leader of the House of Commons Robin Cook. Robin Cook was Foreign Secretary from 1997 to 1991, when he was replaced by Jack Straw. As leader of the Commons and as the architect of New Labour's "ethical foreign policy," Cook still wields considerable influence in the Cabinet. Like Clare Short, he already has reached the pinnacle of his career and has been the victim of ruthless past reshuffles by Tony Blair. His demotion from Foreign Secretary by Blair was bitter and was seen as a humiliating put-down after a number of diplomatic

35. See Richard Perle's interview with *The Sun*, February 16, 2002.

36. "Blair Forced to Avert Veto by Israel on Straw's Visit," *Financial Times*, September 26, 2001.

37. "Taking Delicate Steps Towards Tehran," *Financial Times*, September 25, 2001.

38. "Short Opens Rift on Iraq," *The Guardian*, March 18, 2002.

39. "Short in Trouble over Clinton Gaffe," *The Daily Telegraph*, October 10, 1998.

40. "Clare Short Faces a Barrage of Criticism from Israel After Speech," *The Independent*, July 11, 1997.

blunders. Cook and Short have little to lose by resigning over an issue such as Iraq.

Cook has expressed dissent over the government's position on Iraq, describing talk of military action as "ludicrously premature."⁴¹ Together with Short, he was highly critical of British participation in the Gulf War while a member of the Labour Shadow Cabinet and condemned the Allied bombing of Iraq during the conflict.⁴² Like Straw (and Tony Blair), Cook is a former member of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and has strongly opposed British cooperation with the United States over national missile defense.⁴³ As Foreign Secretary, he was viewed by the Israelis as being strongly pro-Arafat and nearly caused a major crisis in relations between Britain and Israel when he visited Jerusalem in March 1998.⁴⁴

While it is conceivable that up to 160 MPs might oppose military action against Iraq, it is doubtful that such opposition would be strong enough to deter Blair from joining the U.S. campaign. The real danger would come from a Labour backbench rebellion that coincides with the resignation of two or more of his ministers such as Short and Cook. This could pressure Blair to waiver in his commitment to see through the military campaign, which would have serious consequences for an Anglo-U.S. military operation.

THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY'S POSITION

Conservative Party support for the U.S. position on Iraq has been unequivocal. Party leader Iain Duncan Smith called for action against Iraq well in advance of Tony Blair. During meetings with Vice President Cheney and other members of the Bush Administration last November, Duncan Smith called for Britain to take a leading role in supporting rebel opposition groups in Iraq that could play a role similar to that of the Northern Alliance in Afghanistan.⁴⁵

Duncan Smith also has called for the toppling of Saddam Hussein's regime,⁴⁶ and his stance is strongly supported by the Shadow Cabinet. In a foreign policy speech to the Royal Institute of International Affairs in London in January 2002, the Conservative leader accused Blair's government of "designer diplomacy" and called on Britain to play a more active role in taking on the rogue states:

The world cannot be safe while Saddam Hussein is free to develop weapons of mass destruction. Nor can we accept that, simply because they were hostile to the Taliban, other states which actively support terrorism should be treated as if they were upstanding members of the international community. Britain should give absolute support to the measures necessary to ensure that events like those of 11th September are never repeated. We should always recognize that our ability to help shape the thinking of the USA is greatest if we retain the capacity to act. If all we have to offer is our wisdom, our influence is likely to be diminished.⁴⁷

THE BRITISH MILITARY RESPONSE

Of particular concern to Tony Blair will be the growing signs of pessimism and gloom among Britain's military chiefs, which may reflect a lack of self-confidence after a decade of defense cuts. According to a report in the *Observer* newspaper, senior figures in the armed forces are warning Blair that a war against Iraq "is doomed to fail and would lead to the loss of lives for political gain." They believe that Saudi Arabia's rulers will refuse to allow the Allies to use their country as a base for strikes against Iraq. They also have expressed concern about the weakness of opposition forces in the country and the absence of a trusted, authoritative successor to Saddam Hussein.⁴⁸

41. "Blair Faces a Cabinet Revolt over Saddam," *The Daily Telegraph*, March 8, 2002.

42. "The Gulf War: Labour MP Quits Front Bench in Policy Rift," *The Daily Telegraph*, February 15, 1991.

43. "Cook at Odds with Blair on Star Wars II," *The Sunday Telegraph*, February 18, 2001.

44. "Crisis Averted over Cook's Visit to Israeli Settlement," *The Daily Telegraph*, March 17, 1998.

45. "Britain Should Support Iraqi Rebels, Says Duncan Smith," *The Daily Telegraph*, November 30, 2002.

46. "Saddam Must Be Ousted Now, Says Duncan Smith," *The Daily Telegraph*, March 18, 2002.

47. "Britain's Place in a Changing World," speech to the Royal Institute of International Affairs, January 31, 2002.

Admiral Sir Michael Boyce, Chief of Defence Staff, has been outspoken in voicing his concerns about U.S. plans to expand the war against terrorism. In a major speech to the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) in London in December, Boyce observed that

We will have to look carefully at the UK's strategic choices, and ways of prosecuting operations that may contradict national policy. Both the UK and United States wish to promote regional stability, but our perspectives of global and regional stability have been distorted by the focus on fighting terrorism. We have to consider whether we wish to follow the United States' single minded aim to finish Osama Bin Laden and al Qaeda; and/or to involve ourselves in creating the conditions for nation-building or reconstruction as well.... We have to realise that broader operations into regions that threaten UK policy goals will force us to choose between unconditional support to the coalition, conditional support, and "red lines" or selective support—or indeed lack of support.... Altogether, that there will be some slight difference in approach between the United States and UK is clear—but with a previously isolationist single super power background and a global capability, the United States has less need of consensus than we do.⁴⁹

In a thinly veiled reference to the apparently gung-ho U.S. approach to the conflict, Admiral Boyce noted that "this is not a high tech 21st century posse in the Wild West" and stated that the Allied coalition members "have to attack the causes not the symptoms of terrorism." Boyce's speech was criticized by the conservative *Daily Telegraph* as rep-

resenting "a nadir in the politicisation of the senior ranks of the Armed Forces."⁵⁰

There is growing concern within the British defense establishment that there is a serious lack of funds available for a major military campaign in the Middle East. Leaked briefing papers written by General Michael Walker, Chief of General Staff, reveal that the Army will require an extra £500 million in this summer's Comprehensive Spending Review if a war is to be embarked upon. Sir Michael wrote that future funding for defense "remains very taut, given the range of operational tasks placed on the Ministry of Defence and Armed Forces."⁵¹

Britain's armed forces will be severely stretched by participation in an Iraq campaign. It will be very difficult for Britain to provide the estimated 25,000 troops, as the United States requested, without a reduction of troop numbers in peacekeeping operations. British forces are scattered across the globe in a number of peacekeeping theaters of operation, including Afghanistan, Bosnia, Kosovo, and Sierra Leone.

BRITISH PUBLIC OPINION

Opinion Polls. A March 2002 opinion poll for *The Guardian* suggests that only 35 percent of British voters would back British support for a U.S.-led strike on Iraq, with 51 percent against it.⁵² This makes very bad reading for the Blair government and illustrates the need for an intense and hard-hitting information campaign by Downing Street and the White House to highlight the dangers posed by the Iraqi regime and the need for a military response. This contrasts with a figure of 74 percent in support of British military action in Afghanistan last October and 56 percent in support of Anglo-U.S. bombing raids against Iraq in February 1998. At the start of the Gulf War in 1991, 80 percent of British voters backed Allied military action to remove Iraq from Kuwait.

Surprisingly, according to the recent poll, only 41 percent of Conservative voters favor an attack, with

48. "Army Fear over Blair War Plans," *The Observer*, March 17, 2002.

49. Admiral Sir Michael Boyce, "UK Strategic Choices Following the Strategic Defence Review and the 11th September," RUSI Annual Chief of Defence Staff Lecture, December 10, 2001.

50. "Admiral All at Sea," *The Daily Telegraph*, December 12, 2001.

51. "Army Fear over Blair War Plans."

52. "Voters Say No to Iraq Attack," *The Guardian*, March 19, 2002; conducted by ICM.

48 percent against. Iain Duncan Smith therefore will play an important role in shoring up support among Conservatives, who traditionally provide strong backing for any military action involving British or U.S. forces. The lack of Conservative support is probably more a reflection of dislike for Tony Blair than a gut rejection of another military campaign and should not be taken as a sign that Conservative voters will not back the government in the event of a war.

Labour voters are fairly evenly divided, with 43 percent supporting the U.S. position and 46 percent opposing it. The Liberal Democrats, who have shifted to the left of Labour in recent years, are overwhelmingly hostile to U.S. military action, with 67 percent opposed. Liberal leader Charles Kennedy is likely to strongly oppose British action alongside America and is known for his anti-American views, having warned against the United States being given a “blank cheque” to take action against Afghanistan in the aftermath of September 11.⁵³

The latest figures represent growing war-weariness in the United Kingdom and a limited public awareness of the threat posed by rogue states as opposed to that represented by al-Qaeda. If strong links between Osama bin Laden and Iraq could be proven, the British and (for that matter) European publics would be more inclined to back a war against Iraq.

While America has made it clear that the battle against the “axis of evil” needs to be fought in conjunction with the war against terrorism, this message does not seem to be getting to audiences across the Atlantic. Voters in the U.K. are simply not convinced in sufficient numbers that Saddam Hussein poses as great a threat, or even a much greater threat, to British security than does the al-Qaeda network. Evidence of links between Hussein and bin Laden is starting to emerge,⁵⁴ and this evidence needs to be developed and pushed to the forefront by the intelligence services and information departments of the U.S. and British governments.

British Muslim Opinion. Home Secretary David Blunkett has warned that British participation in

U.S.-led strikes against Iraq might provoke rioting by Muslim youths in British cities, especially in Northern English towns such as Bradford, the scene of serious Muslim riots last summer. There are an estimated 2 million Muslims in Britain (in contrast to France, with its 6 million Muslims), who are largely of Pakistani origin. However, the British government is unlikely to be deterred by the threat of civil unrest by a volatile minority.⁵⁵

British Media. In a nation saturated with national newspapers, the British print media will play an important role in shaping public attitudes in the lead-up to a war in the Gulf. Ironically, it is the right-wing papers, led by *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Sun*, that are giving Tony Blair and the Labour government the strongest support for its position on Iraq. Traditional Labour-supporting publications, such as *The Guardian*, *The Mirror*, and *The Independent*, have expressed fierce opposition to any British involvement in a U.S.-led campaign. The influential business broadsheet, *The Financial Times*, has also been lukewarm in its support.

The fact that *The Sun*, a populist tabloid and Britain’s biggest-selling daily with 4 million readers, is backing a war with Iraq will be comforting for Blair. A strongly nationalistic publication that has lent its support to Blair in the last two elections, *The Sun* can be a useful barometer of British public opinion. *The Times*, like *The Sun* a Rupert Murdoch-owned publication, also has backed Blair and Bush over Iraq.

THE EUROPEAN UNION REACTION

The European Commission. Romano Prodi, President of the European Commission, has expressed clear reservations about U.S. military action against Iraq and has indicated that the EU is likely to oppose a U.S.-led attack. Interviewed by the BBC, Prodi stated that “my position is one of deep worry about a possible attack on Iraq because of the potential expansion of the conflict. It is a very delicate area.”⁵⁶ It is likely that the EU will use opposition to the Iraq issue to strengthen its position as a voice opposed to the United States on the

53. “Kennedy Backs Blair But Also Calls for Caution,” *The Daily Telegraph*, September 25, 2001.

54. “CIA Chief Accuses Iraq of Having Links With al-Qaeda,” *Financial Times*, March 20, 2002; “Allied Dossier Links Saddam to al-Qaeda,” *The Daily Telegraph*, March 9, 2002.

55. “Blunkett Warns Blair of Riots in Britain over Iraq,” *The Sunday Telegraph*, March 17, 2002.

world stage. Speaking at the EU summit in Barcelona, Prodi made it clear that Europe's goal was to create "a superpower on the European continent that stands equal to the United States."⁵⁷

EU External Relations Commissioner Christopher Patten has warned America against moving into "unilateralist overdrive." Patten believes that American military success in Afghanistan has

reinforced some dangerous instincts: that the projection of military power is the only basis of true security; that the US can rely on no-one but itself; and that the allies may be useful as an optional extra. I hope these instincts will not prevail because I believe them to be profoundly misguided.⁵⁸

A former chairman of the Conservative Party under John Major, Patten also was the last British Governor of Hong Kong. While praised in Britain and the United States for standing up to China in the final years of British rule in the colony, he has become increasingly alienated from his own political party because of his strong support for European political and economic integration. Patten is a figure largely mistrusted by the Labour Party and the Left in Britain, a legacy of his years of service in the Conservative Party in the 1980s and early 1990s. Tony Blair is therefore not likely to pay too much attention to Patten's posturing. Patten is, however, a figure of tremendous weight, influence, and respect among the political elites of the European Union, and his views are taken very seriously in Brussels, Paris, and Berlin.

Patten's outspoken condemnation of U.S. foreign policy illustrates both the resentment felt by the EU toward American global hegemony and the socialist view dominant within EU institutions that the roots of international terrorism lie in global poverty and the "dark side of globalisation." The solution, according to this worldview, is to increase levels of Third World aid and actively engage rogue nations

such as Iran and North Korea. In an interview with *The Guardian*, Patten poured scorn on recent increases in U.S. defense spending and stressed the importance of the EU's aid programs, championing the use of "smart development assistance" over "smart bombs":

President Bush has just announced a \$48 billion increase in defence spending. Now if you mark the significance of Europe's relations with America by how much we're prepared to spend on defence, forget it! We can't even pay the entrance fee! Europe provides 55% of development assistance in the world and two thirds of grant aid. So when it comes to what the Americans call the "soft end of security"—which I happen to think is the hard end of security—we have a huge amount to contribute.... We have seen the "dark side of globalisation." Now we know where the huge injustices of the global economy can lead. We know too, how important it is to handle failed states properly—and to prevent them failing in the first place. We have realised that we have to tackle "the root causes of terrorism and violence."⁵⁹

The only conciliatory noises to have come out of Brussels recently have been from the EU's "high representative" for common foreign and security policy, Javier Solana, who has been critical of the "megaphone" diplomacy of some of his European colleagues. He called for America to be treated with more respect by European politicians and emphasized that "the relationship between the United States and the EU is crucial and we should not play with that relationship."⁶⁰ While Solana is by no means a strong supporter of current U.S. foreign policy, as a former NATO Secretary General, he has a much better awareness and understanding of the

56. Romano Prodi interview with BBC Radio's *Today* programme, quoted by *BBC News Online*, March 16, 2002.

57. "EU Immobility Deprives It of the Chance to Rival the US as a Superpower," *The Times*, March 18, 2002.

58. "Patten Attacks US 'Instinct' to Go It Alone," *Financial Times*, February 15, 2002.

59. Chris Patten interview with *The Guardian*, February 9, 2002. See also Chris Patten, "Jaw-Jaw, Not War-War," *Financial Times*, February 15, 2002.

60. "Show America More Respect, EU Policy Chief Tells Bush Critics," *The Daily Telegraph*, February 20, 2002.

threat posed to the West's security than do most of his European counterparts.

Germany. Tony Blair has found himself increasingly isolated within Europe over his support for America. At the Barcelona EU summit in March 2002, Blair failed to drum up support for possible U.S. action against Iraq and encountered strong opposition in some quarters. Speaking at the summit, Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder announced that Germany had abandoned its policy of "unlimited solidarity" with Washington, which had been implemented following the events of September 11. Schroeder stated that Germany would refuse to back U.S.-led action against Iraq without a clear mandate from the United Nations.⁶¹

The Schroeder administration has been at the forefront of international criticism of the Bush doctrine. Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer, whose extreme left Green Party remains fundamentally hostile to the aims of U.S. foreign policy, has condemned what he sees as America's treatment of its European partners as "satellites."⁶² In a speech to a Green Party conference, Fischer stated his belief that the Bundestag would never approve German involvement in a war with Iraq.⁶³ Defence Minister Rudolf Scharping also has virtually ruled out German participation in such a war.⁶⁴

Gert Weisskirchen, the Social Democrat foreign policy spokesman in the German parliament, has described Blair's support for America as "very regrettable."⁶⁵

Encouragingly for America, the stance of Schroeder and his ministers has been harshly criticized by Edmund Stoiber, the Christian Democrat candidate for German Chancellor in the September elections. There is little doubt that, should Stoiber become Chancellor, there would be a sharp change in direction for German foreign policy. In an inter-

view with *Die Welt*, Stoiber made clear his support for President Bush:

With their public criticism of the United States, Schroeder and Fischer have caused a lot of harm and destroyed trust in Washington.... The remarks by the US president, that in Iraq a regime is in power that has produced evil and placed itself outside the community of values, is self-evident. So I call on Schroeder and Fischer to forge a common alliance of the Europeans with the United States on Iraq policy and not to widen the gap between Europeans and Americans through further criticism. That harms our country.... Should there be evidence, linking Iraq to the terrorist attacks of 11 September, or of illegal production of weapons of mass destruction, then Europe will share and support the responsible action of the United States in defence of our community of values.⁶⁶

France. France's opposition to Allied military action against Iraq is even more hostile than Germany's, with President Bush's use of the term "axis of evil" drawing fierce condemnation from Paris. Paris led the international criticism of President Bush's speech, with Foreign Minister Hubert Vèdrine rejecting the U.S. position as "simplistic" and "absurd."⁶⁷

Prime Minister Lionel Jospin called for the United States "not to yield to the temptation of unilateralism" and mocked American foreign policy by saying: "the problems of the world cannot be reduced simply to the struggle against terrorism, however vital that struggle may be. Nor can such problems be solved by overwhelming military power." He contrasted U.S. "militarism" with

61. "Germany Leads Revolt Against Iraq Attack," *The Daily Telegraph*, March 16, 2002.

62. "America's Plan for Military Action Threatens to Divide EU," *The Daily Telegraph*, March 13, 2002.

63. "German Anxiety over Iraq Plan Grows," *BBC News Online*, March 18, 2002.

64. "Germany Reluctant over Iraq Attack," *BBC News Online*, March 17, 2002.

65. "Blair Angers Germans by Backing Iraq Strikes," *The Daily Telegraph*, February 26, 2002.

66. "Schroeder and Fischer Have Destroyed Much Trust," Edmund Stoiber interview with *Die Welt*, February 20, 2002 (*BBC Monitoring International Reports*).

67. "Washington Turns Deaf Ear to Europe's Divided Voices," *Financial Times*, February 13, 2002.

Europe's vision of "a more balanced international community, and a world that is safer and more just."⁶⁸

Minister for Overseas Cooperation Charles Josselin has described Bush's foreign policy as "Texas-style diplomacy," telling the Arabic-language newspaper *Asharq al-Awsat* that "France for its part considers that the logic of law and not that of force should govern international relations." Josselin noted that "we understand the anger of the United States after the September 11 attacks, but American leaders should control it and refrain from letting it guide their foreign policy."⁶⁹

While there may be some change in emphasis should Jacques Chirac defeat Jospin in the forthcoming French elections, any significant shift in policy on Iraq is unlikely. While Chirac made conciliatory gestures to the United States in a recent *International Herald Tribune* interview, rejecting the notion that the French are anti-American, his emphasis is heavily on U.N. Security Council intervention against Iraq, which is highly unlikely without Russian and Chinese backing. Chirac would strongly reject any U.S.–British military action that is not sponsored by the United Nations.⁷⁰

Other EU Members. In contrast to the war in Afghanistan, it is very doubtful that any other member of the European Union besides Britain will participate militarily in a war against Iraq. The best the U.S.–British coalition can hope for is strategic, diplomatic, and public support from some member states, notably Spain and Italy. It is possible that Madrid and Rome may offer the Allies logistical support and the use of air bases. The smaller EU states, such as Greece and Belgium, could well prove to be even more strongly anti-American than France and Germany.

CONCLUSION

It is highly likely that Britain will join the United States in taking military action against Iraq should Saddam Hussein continue to pursue programs to acquire weapons of mass destruction, but its support is by no means certain. Prime Minister Tony

Blair must be convinced that a war with Iraq can be won, that Saddam can be successfully removed from power, and that a stable opposition government can take his place.

Blair realizes that a flawed campaign that fails to oust Saddam and results in large numbers of civilian casualties would lead to his own downfall within the Labour Party. He faces strong opposition from within his own government and political party, as well as from much of Europe. He is staking his reputation on supporting the United States in an expanded war against terrorism, and backing off that support would be seen as a major display of weakness.

To shore up support for a war against Iraq, the United States and Britain must provide damning evidence that demonstrates Iraq's ability and desire to produce and acquire weapons of mass destruction, including chemical and biological weapons. Establishing a link between Saddam Hussein and al-Qaeda would significantly enhance the position of the Blair government in presenting its case to the British public.

Traditionally, British public opinion rallies around its government at a time of war, and every war that Britain has been involved in since the Falklands conflict has drawn widespread support. But public support for a war against Iraq is not nearly as strong as it is for the war against al-Qaeda in Afghanistan. A dramatic fall in public backing would prove very damaging to Britain's participation in such a war.

Washington should work closely with British Minister of Defence Geoff Hoon, the most pro-American minister in the Blair team. His support would help strengthen Blair's position on Iraq within the Cabinet and help keep the military chiefs onside at a time when key figures in the military establishment are questioning both the Pentagon's aims in expanding the war against terrorism and the viability of British involvement in a conflict in the Gulf.

68. "Jospin Berates US on Terror Stance: Europe's Fears Grow over Bush Foreign Policy After 'Axis of Evil' Attack," *Financial Times*, February 9, 2002.

69. "French Minister Blasts Washington's 'Texan' Foreign Policy," *Agence France-Presse*, February 20, 2002.

70. Jacques Chirac interview with *The International Herald Tribune*, March 20, 2002.

Tony Blair faces extreme pressure from the European Commission and from EU member states, particularly France and Germany, to refrain from taking military action against Iraq. The Commission may well attempt to use the Iraq conflict as a way to project its influence on the global stage and to portray itself as a major world player. Opposition to the Iraq war also could serve as a convenient rallying cry for anti-Americans in the EU who resent the United States for its position on a range of issues, including the Kyoto Protocol, trade relations, national missile defense, the International Criminal Court, and even the use of the death penalty.

The EU may try to act as a peace broker in the lead-up to a war, applying pressure on London and Washington to seek a negotiated settlement with Iraq through the U.N. Chris Patten is likely to play a central role in an EU campaign against a war with Iraq. Though Blair is unlikely to be deterred by Patten's condemnation, he will be sensitive to criticism that Britain is in some way anti-European by siding with the United States. The EU may try to pressure Blair into acting as a moderating influence on Washington in order to weaken what it perceives as a purely English-speaking alliance. The White House should cultivate relations with EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana, who, among the officials in Brussels, is by far the most receptive to U.S. military aims.

Tony Blair's influence will be crucial in winning the backing of the Commonwealth countries of Australia, Canada, and New Zealand for military involvement in Iraq. While Australia has expressed

support for President Bush's hard-line approach to the rogue states, Canada and New Zealand have been much less supportive. Blair will play an important role in encouraging Turkey and the West's allies in the Middle East and the Gulf States to actively support U.S. war aims in the region. His close relations with Russian President Vladimir Putin may prove indispensable in helping to maintain that country's support for the war against terrorism as well.

Blair's support for the U.S. position on Iraq should not be taken as a sign that the British government would back action beyond Iraq against other rogue states, such as Iran and North Korea. Blair and his Cabinet have avoided endorsing the description of the three states as an "axis of evil," and some ministers have been critical. With regard to Iran and North Korea, the New Labour line has been one of engagement, similar to that of the European Union.

At their April summit in Crawford, Texas, President Bush and Prime Minister Blair will face one of the most important tests of the Anglo-U.S. "special relationship" in the past 50 years—one with immense consequences for the security of the West and of the world. As the Bush Administration contemplates taking military action against the regime of Saddam Hussein, it should be fully aware of the dominant factors that bear upon a British commitment of military, strategic, and diplomatic support for such a war.

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