

# THE NUCLEAR ISSUE POST IRAQ

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This meeting is dedicated to the memory of Linus Pauling, and I want to take as my theme a paragraph from his book “No More War”.

*“The time has now come for morality to take its proper place in the conduct of world affairs; the time has now come for the nations of the world to submit to the just regulation of their conduct by international law.”*

Pauling wrote this in 1958, but it is highly pertinent 45 years later. The two fundamental principles: morality in the conduct of world affairs, and adherence to international law, need to be brought to our notice now in 2003, because they are being threatened by the policies of George W. Bush.

The topic of my lecture is the nuclear issue, but this has to be seen as part and parcel of the general policy conducted by the present US Administration, of which the war in Iraq is but one example. My own stand on this issue was quite clear; I opposed the war from the moment it came onto the agenda, and presently I will explain my reaction to its aftermaths. But first I need to put it into the general context of the doctrine propagated by the group of hardliners who now have the ear of the President.

The general impression has been created that the action by the present US Administration was the response to the events of September 11<sup>th</sup>. This response was from the beginning presented as a struggle between the forces of good and evil. A crusade was called for – although the term was soon withdrawn because of its historical connotations – in which all people of goodwill were expected to join against the inequities of the al-Qaeda terrorists and the group of states described as rogue or an “axis of evil.” “You are either with us or against us” was the motto, thus putting all those who did not fully agree with the Bush policies into the category of villains. More recently, any criticism of these policies has been branded as anti-Americanism, and, during the few weeks of the actual war, as almost treasonable. But there are many, perhaps the majority in the world, who are strongly against the terrorists, and ready to join in efforts to eradicate them, but all the same are not happy with the Bush policies.

These policies are seen by many as aiming at establishing a US hegemony; treating international undertakings with contempt, and accepting them only if judged to be in the national interest of the United States. There are enough examples of this to justify such interpretation: the abrogation of the ABM Treaty; refusal to ratify the CTBT; refusal to negotiate a verification protocol to the BWC; withdrawal from the Kyoto Agreement; opposition to the International Criminal Court.

The pursuit of these policies was evident in the campaign against Iraq. Its stated justification was to disarm Iraq of weapons of mass destruction, but it can also be seen as an attempt to increase the US influence in the Middle East. There is plenty of documentary evidence to support the thesis that the main reason for bringing down the Saddam Hussein regime in Iraq – and making similar threats against Syria and Iran – was to change the political configuration in the Middle East so as

to give the United States political, economic and military control of that region, and, in particular, to strengthen Israel's position.

The history of these endeavours is now general knowledge, but I want to recall some salient points.

Even during the Cold War years, various right wing groups in the United States – generally classed as neo-conservatives – advocated strong aggressive foreign policies. These groups had considerable sway during the Reagan Presidency, but it was after the end of the Cold War and the outcome of the first Gulf War, which they saw as having left the business unfinished, that they became really active. In the spring of 1992 a document was produced, called Defence Policy Guidance, which “was stunning in the clarity and ambition of its vision of a new US foreign and military policy.” It called for US dominance by preventing the rise of any potentially hostile power, and for a policy of pre-emptive military action against states suspected of developing weapons of mass destruction. The document was written by two relatively unknown functionaries in the Pentagon's policy department. They were Paul Wolfowitz and Lewis Libby; their boss at the time was Dick Cheney, then Secretary for Defense. All three are now prominent members of the Bush Administration.

In July 1996, the Institute for Advanced Strategic and Political Studies issued a document entitled “A Clean Break: a New Strategy for Securing the Realm”. The head of the Institute was Richard Perle – for years known as the Prince of Darkness, for his extreme views – a strong supporter of the Israel lobby. The document called on the then Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, to adopt a radical change in policy, starting with a repudiation of the Oslo Accords, to be followed by a campaign to eliminate Saddam Hussein and destabilize the governments of Syria, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and Iran.

In February 1998, Richard Perle issued an Open Letter to President Clinton, demanding a full-scale drive for a regime change in Baghdad. It had 25 signatories, including many who are now in the Bush Administration, such as:

Donald Rumsfeld – now Defence Secretary, and Paul Wolfowitz – now Deputy Defence Secretary.

The al-Qaeda attack of September 11 provided the excuse for these policies to be put into practice. The case for *Pax Americana* had been made out, and its first stage was implemented in the campaign against Iraq.

The prolonged squabbles over UN Resolutions and inspections, aiming at giving legitimacy to the war against Iraq, seem to have been just a charade, to create the impression that it was not the USA alone, but a coalition that was involved in the anti-Iraq campaign. The decision to put down the Saddam Hussein regime, having been taken much earlier, it was only the time for its implementation that had to be chosen. This was probably dictated, not by the outcome of the Hans Blix inspections, but by the need to assemble the necessary military strength.

The military strength of the USA is truly awesome. Since the end of the Cold War, the Americans have built up an enormous military potential. Making use of the latest advances in science and achievements in technology – and secured by astronomical budgets – the United States has become the greatest military power that ever existed; exceeding in strength all other nations combined. Only a proportion of that might was deployed in Iraq but it was enough. The Iraqi army, with antiquated tanks and no air-power to provide cover, did not stand a chance. The dreaded Republican Guards just melted away.

Of course, the fact that Saddam Hussein's regime was rotten, and was kept from falling apart entirely by the terror imposed by a small

number of thugs, contributed to its rapid demise. The claim by Rumsfeld et al that Iraq posed a threat to other nations, including the United States, was just laughable.

But it seems to have been taken seriously by the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom. Tony Blair's role in this whole affair is ambiguous, to say the least. If we give him the benefit of the doubt, it may be that he genuinely believed that he could coax the United Nations into taking the lead and legitimizing the use of military force. He persuaded Bush to follow this path by "guaranteeing" that the UN would comply. But having failed in this venture, he felt obliged to go with Bush the whole hog.

How long Tony Blair can keep up this misguided alliance is difficult to say; the cracks have already appeared in the relations to Syria and Iran. For the time being, he is basking in the glory of a military victory, and the support of the British public, which usually follows such an event, even though the majority of the people were against the war before it began. But it seems to me that this situation will not last: Blair persuaded the House of Commons to go to war under false premises. The reasons he gave were the possession by Saddam Hussein of weapons of mass destruction and the threat this poses to the security of the world, including the United Kingdom.

The amazing collapse of the regime is proof that the threat was unfounded. As for weapons of mass destruction, their existence in Iraq seems increasingly to be unsubstantiated. Hans Blix pointed out that there was no reason for General Hammoudi al-Saadi to lie, when he said that there are no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. General al-Saadi, who surrendered to the Americans, has been the chief adviser to Saddam Hussein on these matters.

In any case, the rapid victory may turn out to be a hollow triumph. It may result in the establishment of a fundamentalist regime, with a dislike of the Americans and even greater hatred of Israel.

All the same, it would be hypocritical for those of us who were against the war, not to rejoice over the downfall of a tyrannical regime, and not to admit that this would not have come so quickly without military intervention. But the price we paid for this is far too high: it reinstated in world affairs the old maxim that the ends justify the means.

The events of the recent weeks are a severe setback to those who, like Pauling, believe that morality and adherence to the rules of law should be our guiding principles. For the time being, the rule seems to be: might is right. Whatever the real feelings of the people may be, the governments of many countries may feel obliged to adopt a “realistic” policy, acknowledge that there is now a single superpower, and accept the role of the United States as the world’s policeman.

We must do our utmost to prevent this happening. My main hope is that the opposition will come from within the United States itself. At present, Bush is very popular and carries a huge majority of public opinion, but – as in Britain – this is largely the usual wave of patriotism which comes with a military victory. But I believe that the strong anti-war demonstrations that we saw earlier are a true reflection of the views of the American people. Somehow, I do not see the American people accepting the role assigned to them by the clique that has hijacked the Administration. Public opinion is bound to turn when the dangers associated with the current policies become apparent. And they will become apparent above all in relation to the nuclear doctrines pursued by the Bush Administration.

In a way, the current nuclear policy resembles that the USA pursued at the very beginning of the nuclear age, when it decided to

demonstrate to the world, and especially the Soviet Union, its newly acquired overwhelming military might. The policy then was to keep the new means of mass destruction to itself and to deny it to other countries, initially even to its war-time ally, the UK.

This policy was succinctly expressed soon after the end of the Second World War by the man who was in charge of the Manhattan Project, which developed those weapons. In October 1945, General Leslie Groves said:

*“If we were truly realistic instead of idealistic, as we appear to be (sic), we would not permit any foreign power with which we are not firmly allied, and in which we do not have absolute confidence, to make or possess atomic weapons. If such a country started to make atomic weapons we would destroy its capacity to make them before it has progressed far enough to threaten us.”*

If this was the reason for President Truman’s decision to use the first atom bombs to destroy two populated cities – and there is enough evidence that this was at least one of the reasons – then it didn’t work. Marshall Joseph Stalin was not one to submit to such policies, and he ordered his scientists to acquire for the Soviets the same military might. With the help of spies working on the Manhattan Project, they succeeded in this in a relatively short time. The panic that ensued in the United States at the loss of its nuclear monopoly, prompted Truman to initiate a crash programme on the H-bomb, which theoretically had an infinite destructive power. But this time, the Soviets were right on the heels of the USA, with the production of their own hydrogen bomb. Thus began a mad arms race, resulting in the accumulation by both sides of obscenely huge nuclear arsenals, which – if used – would have resulted in the

destruction of our civilization, and possibly also in a threat to the very existence of the human race.

To some extent, the build-up of the nuclear arsenals was due to the changing strategic doctrines: from massive retaliation, to counterforce, to mutually assured destruction (MAD), to flexible response, to countervailance, to strategic missile defence. But to a large degree, it was due to the work of scientists; they masterminded the arms race and gave it its momentum. Scientists on both sides of the Iron Curtain were relentless in inventing new ways to make their own weapons more effective and those of the other side more vulnerable.

Scientists have much to answer for what they did during the Cold War period, but other groups in society carry a large share of the blame for creating a dangerous situation. There is, no doubt, an element of truth in Eisenhower's warning about the military-industrial complex. There are groups, not only in the United States, with an interest, or motivation, in keeping nuclear weapons, or developing defences against them, and they try to find, or if need be to invent, excuses for this. During the Cold War years this was quite easy; the ideological divide between East and West provided fertile grounds for propaganda. People in the West were manipulated into believing that the Soviet government was planning the conquest of the world by military means, using its overwhelming supremacy in conventional arms. We were led to believe that the only way to prevent this happening was for the West to threaten retaliation with nuclear weapons.

The assertion in the West – still widely accepted today – that the possession of nuclear weapons prevented a Soviet military attack, is one of the deliberately propagated myths of the Cold War. Careful studies by reputable historians from the West have found no evidence for this

assertion. The Soviet government would have liked, of course, to see communist regimes all over the world, but they tried to achieve this through propaganda and by supporting subversive groups.

All the evidence indicates that the build-up of nuclear armaments by the Soviet government was a response to that by the United States. Almost every step in the nuclear arms race, every technological advance, was initiated by the United States, with the Soviet Union struggling to keep up the pace. Out of 15 milestones in the nuclear arms race, the United States was the first to reach 14 of them. On the average, the Soviets lagged behind the USA by six years. But although usually ahead - initially in the number of warheads, later in the quality of their armaments – the Americans were never satisfied that their offensive weapons would provide full security, and they made an attempt to achieve extra security through the Strategic Defense Initiative, the Star Wars. A likely response to this by the Soviet Union would have been an increase in its offensive arsenals, to ensure saturation of the defences - a situation that would have eventually led to a catastrophe, were it not for the emergence of a leader with common sense, Mikhail Gorbachev. Listening to the advice of Soviet scientists, he made a rational assessment of the situation, and called a halt to the arms race.

After the end of the Cold War, the actual US nuclear strategy became increasingly orientated towards the first use of nuclear weapons, along the lines originally advocated by General Groves. Already, under the Clinton administration, explicit mention was made of the use of nuclear weapons in response to an attack with chemical or biological weapons. But the Nuclear Posture Review, of January 2002, under Bush goes much further; it makes nuclear weapons the tool with which to keep peace in the world.

In a reversal of the previous doctrine, whereby nuclear weapons have been viewed as weapons of last resort, the new Nuclear Posture Review spells out a strategy, which incorporates nuclear capability into conventional war planning. Nuclear weapons have now become a standard part of military strategy, to be used in a conflict just like any other high explosive. It is a major and dangerous shift in the whole rationale for nuclear weapons.

The implementation of this policy has already begun. The United States is developing a new nuclear warhead of low yield, but with a shape that would give it a very high penetrating power into concrete, the “robust nuclear earth penetrator”. It is intended to destroy bunkers with thick concrete walls in which enemy leaders may seek shelter: in Iraq, conventional bombs do not seem to have been effective in this respect.

To give the military authorities confidence in the performance of the new weapon it will have to be tested. At present there is a treaty prohibiting the testing of nuclear weapons (except in sub-critical assemblies), the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, which the United States has signed but not ratified. With President Bush’s contempt for international treaties (as mentioned earlier) he would need little excuse to authorize the testing of the new weapon.

If the USA resumed testing, this would be a signal to other nuclear weapon states to do the same. China would be almost certain to resume testing. After the US decision to develop ballistic missile defences, China feels vulnerable, and is likely to attempt to reduce its vulnerability by a modernization and build-up of its nuclear arsenal. Other states with nuclear weapons, such as India or Pakistan, might use the window of opportunity opened by the USA to update their arsenals. The danger of a new nuclear arms race is real.

Another worry about the development of the new bomb is that it would blur the distinction between nuclear and conventional weapons. The chief characteristic of a nuclear weapon is its enormous destructive power, which classifies it as a weapon of mass destruction, unique even in comparison with current chemical or biological weaponry designated as weapons of mass destruction. This has resulted in a taboo on the use of nuclear weapons in combat, a taboo that has held out since Nagasaki. But if at one end of the spectrum a nuclear bomb can be manufactured which does not differ quantitatively from ordinary explosives, then the qualitative difference will also disappear, the nuclear threshold will be crossed, and nuclear weapons will gradually come to be seen as a tool of war, even though the danger they present to the existence of the human race will remain.

For the USA, the distinction between nuclear and conventional weapons has already been eroded, as indicated in the Nuclear Posture Review. But the situation has become even more dangerous under the new National Security Strategy introduced by Bush in September last year. “To forestall or prevent ...hostile acts by our adversaries, the United States will, if necessary, act pre-emptively.”

The danger of this policy can hardly be over-emphasized. If the militarily mightiest country declares its readiness to carry out a pre-emptive use of nuclear weapons, others may soon follow. The Kashmir crisis, in May last year, is a stark warning of the reality of the nuclear peril.

India’s declared policy is not to be the first to use nuclear weapons. But if the United States – whose nuclear policies are largely followed by India – makes a pre-emptive nuclear use part of its doctrine, this would give India the legitimacy to carry out a pre-emptive strike against Pakistan. George Fernandes, India’s Minister for Defence, said recently:

India had “a much better case to go for pre-emptive action against Pakistan than the United States has in Iraq.” Even more likely is that Pakistan would carry this out first.

Taiwan presents another potential cause for a pre-emptive nuclear strike by the United States. Should the Taiwan authorities decide to declare independence, this would inevitably result in an attempted military invasion by mainland China. The USA, which is committed to the defence of the integrity of Taiwan, may then opt for a pre-emptive strike.

Finally, we have the problem of North Korea, earlier described by Bush as one of the “axis of evil”. Under the Bush dictum not to allow the possession of weapons of mass destruction by any state considered to be hostile, North Korea will be called upon to close down the Yongbyon reprocessing facility and all other work on nuclear weapons. It is by no means certain that Kim Jong il will submit to these demands, and a critical situation may arise in that part of the world.

Altogether, the aggressive policy of the United States, under the Bush administration, has created a precarious situation in world affairs, with a greatly increased danger of nuclear weapons being used in combat.

Surely something must be done to prevent a catastrophe.

There is a need for measures to alleviate the immediate danger. Short-term measures, such as: ratifying the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty; taking nuclear weapons off alert; ending development of mini nukes; and adopting a treaty on no-first-use of nuclear weapons, should be called for urgently. This we should do. And, of course, we have the problem of the NPT, to which I will return in a moment.

On the general issue of world security, we should call on the United States to abandon its unilateralist policies, and for the Security

Council of the United Nations to be recognized as the sole authority in initiating military operations for the resolution of conflicts.

The threat to world security posed by terrorist groups of the al-Qaeda type – which may acquire weapons of mass destruction – will be removed only if we deal with the underlying reasons for the enduring of these groups. In the meantime, the threat can be greatly reduced by the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, with a safeguards system to prevent clandestine production.

This brings me to our main goal, the creation of a nuclear-weapon-free world. In order to achieve this goal, a campaign based on fundamental principles is necessary, in accordance with Linus Pauling's prescription.

One of these principles is morality. Due to their indiscriminate nature and unprecedented destructive power, the use of nuclear weapons has always been considered as immoral. Yet, this aspect is very seldom raised when calling for nuclear disarmament. We are told that a campaign based on moral principles is a non-starter and we are afraid of appearing naïve, divorced from reality. But the use of this argument is itself an indication of how far we have allowed ethical considerations to be ignored; we are accused of not being realistic, when all we try to do is to prevent a real danger.

“How many divisions does the Pope have?” Stalin has reportedly asked. As pointed out earlier, “Might is right” is the guiding principle of the hawks, who currently dictate the US policies. Nuclear weapons are horrible – they say – and their possession must not be allowed by countries whose regimes are not acceptable, but possession and use of these weapons by the United States is justified for the sake of world peace.

Actually, what such policies amount to is to rest the security of the world on a balance of terror. In the long run this is bound to erode the ethical basis of civilization. I would not be surprised if evidence were found that the increase of violence in the world – from individual mugging, to organized crime, to groups such as al-Qaeda – has some connection with the culture of violence under which we have lived during the Cold War years, and still do. I am particularly concerned about the effect on the young generation.

We all crave a world of peace, a world of equity. We all want to nurture in the young generation the much heralded “culture of peace.” But how can we talk about a culture of peace if that peace is predicated on the existence of weapons of mass destruction? How can we persuade the young generation to cast aside the culture of violence, when they know that it is on the threat of extreme violence that we rely for security?

I do not believe that the people of the world would accept a policy that is inherently immoral and likely to end in catastrophe. I do believe that – if properly explained – the moral argument would win general support – including from the American public – and lead to a new campaign for the elimination of nuclear weapons.

The other fundamental principle that needs to be invoked, concerns the equitable relations between nations (as well as individuals). It is a *sine qua non* of a civilized society that nations fulfil their legal obligations and respect international treaties. World peace cannot be achieved without respect for international law.

In this respect the US nuclear policy has been one of dissemblance and equivocation. The general abhorrence of nuclear weapons, following their use in Japan, resulted in a strong desire, expressed both in public opinion and in the United Nations, to abolish nuclear weapons. This led to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), to which nearly all

members of the United Nations are now party. Under the terms of the NPT, by which the non-nuclear countries have undertaken not to acquire nuclear weapons, the five overt nuclear states have undertaken to get rid of theirs.

The United States and the other official nuclear states - China, France, Russia and the UK - are formally and unequivocally committed to the elimination of all nuclear arsenals. The creation of a nuclear-weapon-free world is a legal commitment by all signatories of the NPT.

But the de facto policy of the United States, as outlined above, implies the indefinite existence of nuclear weapons, in direct contradiction to the NPT commitment.

It so happens that we are at present in the midst of a meeting, in this very building, discussing the implementation of the NPT. The participants in this PrepCom have a Herculean task, a mission almost impossible. The policy of counter-proliferation, adopted by the USA, and apparently endorsed by the UK, is in direct conflict with the objectives of the NPT. In the present climate in Washington D.C., arms control negotiations are dead for all practical purposes.

This does not mean that the effort should be given up. We have to go on and prepare the ground for the time when sensible argumentation will again become the norm. But even now a bolder stand should be taken: a return to basics, for morality to be the guiding principle in international relations, for an end to equivocation and duplicity. I can see it in the form of a simple but strongly worded resolution, which will point out the inherent contradiction between the current policy of the United States and its obligations under Article VI, and demand a clear cut answer whether it still adheres to the terms of the Treaty which it had signed and ratified. Such a resolution would, no doubt, be rejected, nevertheless it should be tabled, and an effort made to give it the

maximum publicity, so that the general public are made aware of the real situation.

Let me conclude. Thanks largely to the fantastic progress in technology – our world is becoming more and more interdependent, more and more transparent, more and more interactive. Inherent in these developments is a set of agreements, ranging from confidence-building measures to formal international treaties; from protection of the environment to the clearance of mine fields; from Interpol to the International Criminal Court; from ensuring intellectual property rights to the Declaration of Human Rights. Respect for, and strict adherence to, the terms of international agreements are at the basis of a civilized society. Without this, anarchy and terrorism would reign, the very perils President Bush is allegedly committed to eradicate. While he intends to tackle this issue by military means, we must strive to achieve it by peaceful means. While Bush plans to act unilaterally, we have to ensure that world security is entrusted to the United Nations, the institution set up for this purpose.

And we must hope that ultimately the United States will join the rest of the world community in this endeavour.

Many in this audience are professional people, trained to look at problems in a detached, realistic, non-sentimental approach. But we are all, primarily, human beings, anxious to provide security for our nearest and dearest, and peace for fellow citizens of our nation and the world. We want to see a world in which relations between people and between nations are based on compassion, not greed; on generosity, not jealousy; on persuasion, not force; on equity, not oppression.

These are simple, some will say romantic, sentiments, but they are also realistic necessities. In a world armed with weapons of mass destruction, the use of which might bring the whole of civilization to an

end, we cannot afford a polarized community, with its inherent threat of military confrontations. In this technological age, a global, equitable community, to which we all belong as world citizens, has become a vital necessity.