

Blair outlines his vision of the new military world order

Chris Marsden
29 April 1999

On the occasion of his visit to America to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the NATO alliance, British Prime Minister Tony Blair took time out to espouse his new "Doctrine of the International Community".

Blair's speech to the Chicago Economic Club was the highpoint of a weekend of bellicose statements made to the US political and media establishment on the need to launch a ground war against Serbia.

It did more than seek to justify NATO's present war, however. Blair fancies himself as a theoretician of what he describes as the political "Third Way". He therefore took it upon himself to outline a rationale for any future intervention in the internal affairs of other nations which the US and European imperialist powers deem necessary.

"Fools rush in" ... as the saying goes. For Blair has given voice to the fundamental considerations shaping imperialist foreign policy that are usually concealed from the public gaze by evoking humanitarian motives.

The tone of Blair's remarks was set by his explanation of the actual content of the "special relationship" between Britain and America. "Chicagoland," he declared, "is the headquarters of some of Britain's most important inward investors: Motorola, Sara Lee, RR Donnelly. Nearly half the \$124 billion US firms spent on foreign acquisitions last year went on British companies. We would like it to be even more.

"Nor is the traffic all one way. British investment in Illinois generates some 46,000 jobs, making us the biggest foreign investor in the state. And the London Futures Exchange is working alongside your Board of Trade and Mercantile Exchange to lead the revolution in electronic trading."

Blair placed NATO's war against Serbia in the context of the profound economic changes that had taken place over the last 20 years. Globalisation had

"changed the world in a more fundamental way," he said. It has "transformed our economies and our working practices."

"Every day about one trillion dollars moves across the foreign exchanges, most of it in London.... Any government that thinks it can go it alone is wrong. If the markets don't like your policies they will punish you."

"We live in a world where isolationism has ceased to have a reason to exist. By necessity we have to co-operate with each other across nations. Many of our domestic problems are caused on the other side of the world. Financial instability in Asia destroys jobs in Chicago and in my own constituency in County Durham.... We are all internationalists now, whether we like it or not. We cannot refuse to participate in global markets if we want to prosper."

Blair insisted that all national governments must be encouraged to abide by the dictates of the world market--as laid down by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank--and allow the penetration of their economies by the transnational corporations in the name of "transparency" and "openness".

Russia was targeted for particular attention, with Blair insisting that it should be prepared "to take the difficult economic action it needs to reform its economy--to build a sound and well-regulated financial system, to restructure and close down bankrupt enterprises," etc.

Globalisation is not just an economic, "but also a political and security phenomenon," he insisted. The dependence of national economies on the performance of world stock markets means that "We are witnessing the beginnings of a new doctrine of international community." This required that all the institutions established at the end of the Second World War to

regulate relations between nations be overhauled--particularly the respective functions of the United Nations and NATO.

Blair explicitly linked the question of financial interdependence with the military policy to be pursued by the major imperialist powers. The obverse side of demanding the establishment of a new economic order based on globalisation was that the "principles of international community" must "apply also to international security".

Shrouding himself in rhetoric about the threat from "dangerous and ruthless men" like Saddam Hussein and Slobodan Milosevic, Blair called for NATO to impose order on the world under the auspices of the US--"by far the strongest state". This new version of the "Pax Americana" meant that "non-interference", long "considered an important principle of international order ... must be qualified". The imperialist powers would instead lay down the rules determining when intervention should take place. This must also allow room for the European powers to match the US "with our own efforts. That is the basis for the recent initiative I took with President Chirac of France to improve Europe's own defence capabilities."

"The spread of our values makes us safer," said Blair. In elaborating on these "values" he of course spoke of "liberty", "freedom", "democracy", and so on. But he really gathered steam when he returned to the "Third Way" policy of his government--financial prudence, the elimination of budget deficits through spending cuts privatisation, business-friendly tax policies, law-and-order measures and the economic reform of Europe along the British model.

Blair's speech was, as usual, little more than an attempt to codify changes that have already taken place and give them a democratic and humanitarian gloss. The economic and political imperatives he enumerates are shaping both US foreign policy and that of the other European powers. An April 6 article by Martin Woollacott in the *Guardian* newspaper, for example, noted a recent series in the *New York Times*, which showed "how it became part of the State Department's job to push deregulation and the dismantling of all barriers to trade and finance both with individual governments and in international negotiations on economic matters, such as those which established the World Trade Organisation. In parallel with this

ideological drive, there was a tactical campaign to ensure that American firms achieved maximum penetration of other economies."

Wollacott notes, "America's global economic policies, taken together, have undermined Russia, blown up the south-east Asian economies, de-stabilised some of its Latin American neighbours, affected many other economies for the worse, and angered its major trade partners, from Japan to Europe."

It has been a feature of the present war, moreover, that NATO's superseding of the role once assigned to the United Nations has been decisively confirmed. As far as the US is concerned, NATO is a more pliable--and therefore reliable--political and military instrument because it is more firmly under its control.

Far from leading to the creation of Blair's anodyne "international community", however, the drive by US and European imperialism to refashion the world in their own interests inaugurates a period of global militarism and brutality, the likes of which have not been witnessed for over 50 years.



To contact the WWSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact