

Report co-authored by murdered British MP Jo Cox advocates for war

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11 February 2017

A recently published report for the Policy Exchange think-tank is titled, “The Cost of Doing Nothing: The price of inaction in the face of mass atrocities.”

The report opposes what it complains is the “new anti-interventionist consensus [that] has emerged in sections of the main UK political parties and elements of the press.” It is based on a paper that was being co-authored by Labour MP Jo Cox before she was murdered by a fascist in the run-up to the referendum on UK membership of the European Union in June 2016.

Cox’s brutal murder shocked millions. But her death has been used in the most cynical fashion by right-wing forces within the Labour Party.

Cox was a supporter of “humanitarian interventionism” and was a co-founder of the All-Party Parliamentary Friends of Syria group. Before her murder she had co-authored an October 2015 article in the *Observer* with Conservative MP Andrew Mitchell, arguing for British military involvement in Syria on the pretext of creating “safe havens.” Cox worked on the original draft of her report with the Conservative MP and former British Army Lieutenant Colonel Tom Tugendhat. The report was finished posthumously by Tugendhat and Labour MP Alison McGovern, who is chair of the Blairite campaign group Progress.

The report was then launched at a meeting attended by former Labour Prime Minister Gordon Brown, who employed Cox’s husband Brendan as an adviser. A video contribution from former Conservative Foreign Minister William Hague was shown, arguing against “knee-jerk isolationism”, and asserting that “ideological pacifism and doctrinal anti-interventionism are not in Britain’s national interest.”

Policy Exchange is described by the *Telegraph* as the largest and “most influential think tank on the right.” It was set up in 2002 by Michael Gove, who last year became one of the leaders of the pro-Brexit right within the Tory Party, and Francis Maude. Both went on to hold senior cabinet positions in the 2010 Tory-Liberal Democrats coalition.

Gove was succeeded as Policy Exchange chair by former *Telegraph* editor Charles Moore.

The report appears as part of the “Britain in the World” series, which Policy Exchange describes as a “new non-partisan initiative,” i.e., one that provides a meeting ground for the Tory and Labour right-wings.

Its stated aim is to “revitalise the British foreign policy debate in the UK, challenge the narrative of decline, encourage the creation of a new generation of foreign policy leaders, and to ask hard questions about Britain’s place in the world, its hard and soft power assets, and future grand strategy.”

This imperialist mission statement centres on support for “hard power” military force in the defence of Britain’s “national interest” for which the type of humanitarian rhetoric in which the late Cox specialised is used to justify. The report states:

* “Intervention—military and otherwise—has been an irreducible part of British foreign and national security policy for over two hundred years.”

* “The willingness or capacity to intervene militarily... is an essential element of Britain’s grand strategy.”

* “We must keep military intervention as a legitimate tool in our foreign-policy toolkit.”

* “Important deterrents rely for optimal effectiveness on the backing of a credible threat of military force.”

* “The tools of diplomacy and deterrence ... will be most effective if backed up by a willingness to use military force.”

Then follows the well-rehearsed political complaint of the warmongers that no one any longer believes their “humanitarian” excuses for war, because “intervention has become discredited and, in the wake of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, populations and politicians have, understandably, come to regard it with deep suspicion.”

There are then a series of banalities about learning “the lessons of Iraq and Afghanistan,” asserting, “Regrets about Iraq focus on the fact that the invasion went ahead without UN sanction and in the face of widespread public

opposition, and the belief that the evidence of an ‘imminent threat’ was deliberately exaggerated by the UK government under Tony Blair.”

The “belief” that “evidence” was “deliberately exaggerated” hardly comes close to what happened. Blair had promised British military support to US President George W. Bush for an intervention to topple Saddam Hussein, as was borne out by the Chilcot Report published last year. The “evidence” was so clearly manufactured to justify launching the war that millions of workers and young people renamed the British prime minister “Blair.”

Afghanistan “offers another cautionary tale and further underlines just how elusive ‘success’ can be,” the report states. Two such failures “have undermined the idea that humanitarian outcomes can be delivered by military intervention. This, in turn, has fed the view that military intervention itself is flawed, and has led to increased wariness towards the efficacy of military intervention.”

In true Blairite-speak, widespread public hostility to the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq is described as “oversimplified”, since it fails “to take into account the existing violence in each country, and the losses and suffering that would have occurred if intervention had not taken place.”

Libya too “provides another example of the complexities and potential pitfalls of the use of military force to protect civilians”—an anodyne description of a bloody war of aggression for which, the report complains, the UK and its allies were criticised for allowing “to morph into an effort to achieve regime change.”

To achieve regime change, NATO “protected civilians” by carrying out “over 20,000 sorties, destroying schools, hospitals and homes and slaughtering untold numbers of Libyan soldiers, many of them young conscripts.” (See “Libya: The criminal face of imperialism”)

Examples of “successful” military interventions cited in the report include, “The establishment of a no-fly zone in northern Iraq in 1991 [which] successfully protected Kurds from Saddam Hussein’s genocidal air attacks,” and “The 1999 NATO intervention in Kosovo ... [which] protect[ed] tens of thousands of Kosovar civilians.”

The result of the first Gulf War, launched in 1990, as is explained in *Desert Slaughter: The Imperialist War Against Iraq*, “was at least 250,000 Iraqi soldiers killed and the deaths of hundreds of thousands of civilians, either through the savage bombing campaign, or from disease and starvation in the aftermath of the war.”

The subsequent imposition of no-fly zones accompanied a crippling regime of sanctions that, according to various analysts, led to the deaths of at least 500,000 civilians.

The Kosovo “intervention” was in reality part of a massive

bombing campaign launched against Serbia in which hundreds of civilians were killed and vital infrastructure destroyed.

The “lessons” the authors are concerned should be learned from this are that the British state should once again be made ready to intervene militarily on the same lying “humanitarian” pretext used to sanction its previous crimes.

In Syria, the report laments the failure of the UK parliament to vote for air strikes in 2013, “coupled with President Obama’s failure to follow through on his pledge to act if President Assad crossed the US-designated ‘red line’ of using chemical weapons.”

In the report’s foreword, Cox is cited saying, “My heart sank as I watched in 2013 when, following President Assad’s use of chemical weapons against civilians, we first voted against a military response and then supported taking military options off the table.”

Advocacy of military intervention throughout is couched in the “humanitarian” rhetoric of the UN’s “Responsibility to Protect” (R2P) doctrine, for which Cox actively campaigned. “I still firmly believe that a legitimate case can be made for intervention on humanitarian grounds when a Government is manifestly unwilling or unable to protect its own civilians. Sovereignty must not constitute a licence to kill with impunity,” she said in parliament in October 2015.

The Policy Exchange report concludes by quoting the Roman writer Vegetius, “If you desire peace, prepare for war,” before listing eleven points advancing the case for continuing British military intervention around the globe. These include the need to use massive force “to avoid retaliation and further conflict,” cynically claiming, “overwhelming force deters and ultimately saves lives.”

Anticipating that such brutal interventions will unleash popular opposition, they insist the “Allies should anticipate and have the ability to withstand opposition from domestic constituencies and demands for early exits.”

This implicit threat to mobilise the power of the state against the development of a new anti-war movement is the iron fist concealed behind the political beatification of Jo Cox.



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