

**COUNTERING TERRORISM: POWER, VIOLENCE
AND DEMOCRACY POST 9/11**

**A REPORT BY A WORKING GROUP OF THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND'S HOUSE OF BISHOPS**

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Preface

Since the terrorist attacks of the 11th September 2001, which we now refer to by the widely accepted designation '9/11', the policies of the United States and its allies have been dominated by the threat of terrorism. But how can terrorism best be combated? If the terrorists have political goals, then perhaps terrorism has to be understood and countered first of all in political terms. Although Christians make their contribution along with others to the formation of public policies, we believe that the churches have a particular role to play at this time. This is for two reasons: first, because of the complex relationship between religion and violence; and secondly, because the churches, with their tradition of self-examination and penitence, could make a distinctive contribution in the quest for reconciliation.

Yet, however important the political dimension, this report is written from the viewpoint that force is sometimes necessary. Christians who are not pacifists have in the just war tradition a set of criteria for the moral evaluation both of decisions to use force in the first place, and of the means of conducting a military operation. The just war tradition has been widely criticised as no longer applicable. We argue that it is, a view which has recently received ringing endorsement in a report of the United Nations Secretary General's High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change.¹

One particular aspect of the just war tradition that came into prominence during the 2003 Gulf War was the question of pre-emptive military action. We argue that anticipatory self-defence, often termed 'pre-emptive military action', in which the threat is immediate and serious, might under certain circumstances be regarded as morally justifiable. This is to be clearly distinguished from preventative war, where the threat is long-term and distant, and which is morally more problematic. On the basis of this and other considerations drawn from the just war tradition, many Christians, including the majority of the House of Bishops of the Church of England, opposed the 2003 Gulf War.

¹ *Report of the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, a Report to the UN General Assembly*, December 2004.

All governments have a proper responsibility to take the necessary steps to safeguard their citizens. People in Britain are acutely aware of this following the London bomb attacks of July 2005. But citizens need to be vigilant that these steps do not infringe hard won civil liberties, particularly the right to due process of law. The churches have a particular message here based on Biblical insights about fear and how playing on the fears of enemies makes for unwise policies.

From the perspective of many people in the world today, however it is not terrorism, but American foreign policy and what they perceive as American expansionism which constitutes the major threat to peace. We believe it is important to look at American power dispassionately. It is clearly a reality, the supreme reality in the power politics of the world today, with all the potential for harm as well as good that this implies. We suggest that the United States, like all major powers in history, does indeed seek to expand its economic, political and military influence and power. What distinguishes it from many other empires in history is its strong sense of moral righteousness. In this there is both sincere conviction and dangerous illusion. This sense of moral righteousness is fed by the major influence of the 'Christian Right' on present United States policy. This has a very worrying political aspect in the way in which Christian millennialism has been taken up by so many evangelical Christians, with its apocalyptic overtones and its very clear political agenda in relation to the Middle East. We argue that not only is this political reading of current history in the light of apocalyptic texts illegitimate, but that those texts need to be read in a different way altogether, as a critique of imperialism rather than as a justification of a particular form of it.

The inaugural presidential address of President Bush expressed a firm commitment to bring democracy, without the use of force, to all countries in the world. *"It is the policy of the United States to seek and support the growth of democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture, with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world."* Many in the Arab world are not only suspicious of the kind of democracy they see in the West, associating it with Western imperialism, but seriously doubt whether Shari'a law is compatible with Western liberal democracy at all. We argue that democracy is indeed worth having but that it cannot simply be imposed on the Arab world in Western secular terms. It needs to be understood and

appropriated in culturally sensitive ways. Whilst some remain pessimistic about whether this is either possible or desirable, we suggest that there are signs of hope within the Arab world itself, with some movement in the direction of an extended, if not yet a universal franchise.

By way of conclusion we offer a set of fundamental Christian principles, both theological and ethical, which we believe should guide our thinking and action, not only in relation to policy toward Iraq and Iran, but more generally to the present international order.

The United States has made it clear that it regards Iran as one of the current threats to world order through its alleged support of terrorism, its alleged denial of democratic rights to its citizens and its alleged development of a nuclear weapons programme. In an appendix we look at Iran as a kind of test case of what a Christian approach to the international order should entail. Whilst examining what drives Iran's nuclear programme and how this issue is being played out domestically in Iran, we also analyse why the West fears a nuclear Iran. In doing so we apply to Iran many of the report's earlier conclusions on terrorism, justifiable force, democracy and American power.

We offer this as a contribution first of all to fellow members of the Church of England and then more widely, in the conviction that there is a distinctively Christian perception on these grave issues and that Christians have an important role to play both as individuals and through our institutions. In addition to members of the House of Bishops who gave this text more than one reading, we are particularly grateful to Professor Sir Adam Roberts, General Sir Hugh Beach, Professor Nigel Biggar and Tim Winter for their comments on early drafts of this report.

The Rt Revd Richard Harries
Bishop of Oxford

Section One

Countering Terrorism

The terrorist attacks of 9/11 ushered in a new era of global terrorism quite distinct in shape and form from anything that has gone before. Prior to the end of the Cold War terrorism was largely associated with the rise of nationalism and the establishment of the nation state, or more specifically nations without states. For the most part this form of terrorism was undertaken locally with terrorist strategies directed at specific national targets. Those terrorist movements that emerged since the Cold War have a global and geopolitical focus to their activities, in that they seek to restructure world society in their own image. Terrorist organisations such as Al Qaeda use modern communications systems not only to attack modernity but also to reverse it. The lengths to which these organisations are prepared to go in implementing their strategies are distinctively more ruthless, as illustrated by the terrorist attacks of 9/11 and the subsequent Bali, Madrid and London bombings, than anything previously imagined or seen.

Terrorism's metamorphosis should not lead governments to take an approach to counter-terrorism that takes no account of history. A characteristic of many of the statements made by Western leaders since 9/11 is the surprisingly few references that are made to the previous experience of governments in tackling terrorist threats. As Adam Roberts, a leading expert in terrorism writes, there is a very real danger "*...that the 'war on terror' takes too little account of history of the subject, and that there is a need to develop what might be called a British (or, more ambitiously a European) view of terrorism and counter-terrorism, which in certain respects would be distinctive from the US doctrine.*"² While today's international terrorism is historically new, it nonetheless shares certain characteristics with its predecessors, namely "*the systematic use of violence and threats of violence by non-state groups,*

² House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, Foreign Policy Aspects of the War Against Terrorism, Sixth Report of Session 2004-05, *Written evidence submitted by Professor Sir Adam Roberts to the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee*, pp96-113, p96.

*designed to cause dislocation, consternation and submission on the part of a target population or government.”*³

The dilemma with which our and other societies are currently grappling with since 9/11, is whether the challenges posed by terrorism mean that we are in a perpetual state of total war, with all that this implies in terms of continued resort to military action, executive detention and martial law. The answer, as this report suggests, is that while the threats posed by terrorism are real and should be taken seriously, it is important to remain vigilant against the dangers of describing it in the language of war, not least when such language invokes religious imagery. In addition to examining how churches can play a positive role in maintaining social cohesion at times of inter-communal tension and suspicion, this report also examines those ethical constraints that should limit the use of armed force against terrorism. Equally, the more extreme the forms of terrorism (such as suicide bombings) and the more determined the perpetrators are to overthrow lawful government, the greater the strain faced by our traditional criminal justice system.

The paramount importance of the political dimension

‘War on terrorism’, like the talk in the 1980s about a ‘war on drugs’ is a piece of dangerous rhetoric. It implies that modern terrorism is to be understood primarily as a military threat that must be opposed by military means. However, as the US National Strategy for combating terrorism suggests, the ‘war on terror’ describes a broad and multifaceted type of campaign that uses “*every instrument of national power - diplomatic, economic, law enforcement, financial, information, intelligence and military*” in order to bring about a definable moment of defeat.⁴ The rhetoric of ‘war’ also suggests the perhaps unrealisable aim of the complete elimination of terrorist movements, whereas it is probably more realistic to hope, as the British government proposes, “*to eliminate terrorism as a force in international affairs*”.⁵

³ *Ibid*, p97.

⁴ The White House, *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism*, Washington DC, February 2003, p1.

⁵ *The Strategic Defence Review: A New Chapter*, Vol 1, July 2002, p4. The British Government’s position reflects its own experience with terrorism in Northern Ireland. Professor Adam Roberts writes: “A number of government pronouncements in the 1970s and early 1980s had indicated the UK’s aim was the complete ending of terrorist activity. Thereafter, every terrorist assault, including the IRA’s mainland campaign, had a possible added bonus of ‘proving’ that the government had failed to achieve

Phraseology aside, terrorism, however destructive, has to be understood, first of all, in political terms. The loose network of independent groups that go under the name of Al Qa'eda, has political goals. Osama Bin Laden has made it clear that his first aim is to force the United States to withdraw from Saudi Arabia, followed by the end of Western influence in Islamic lands with the long term goal of establishing an Islamic political order as widely as it will reach. While it needs to be remembered that Osama Bin Laden's Wahhabism is of the *takfiri* variant, which is to say that he only recognises as Muslims those who sympathise with his theology, these political goals can only be achieved with the support of the majority of citizens in Muslim countries.⁶

To gain the wider support of the Muslim world he needs to keep alive an overwhelming sense that the enemy to what most Muslims want is the United States and their allies in the West and the Middle East. Related to this he needs to create in Muslim minds an inseparable connection between these goals and Al Qa'eda as the only effective force to achieve them. What is crucial for Al Qa'eda's cause is the continuing support, overt or tacit, of Muslims. In countering modern terrorism, therefore, the immediate challenge of protecting lives has to be achieved at the same time as winning the hearts and minds of the Muslim world.

This strategy requires an understanding of what is being thought and felt in the Islamic world, together with active steps to address legitimate concerns, such as the ongoing Middle East conflict. Such an approach does not amount to appeasement nor does it imply that the existence of real grievances legitimates the resort to terrorism. Nor should it imply that just because a certain grievance is sincerely and passionately held by a particular group that such a grievance is well grounded. In certain

its proclaimed goal. Eventually the UK's aim were restated in more modest terms as being the reduction of terrorist activities: this was widely accepted by the public with remarkably little complaint, and may have helped in the slow winding down of the conflict in Northern Ireland." This leads to the conclusion that "if 'elimination' is the proclaimed goal, then every subsequent terrorist incident represents a victory for the terrorists." Adam Roberts, "The 'War on Terror' in Historical Perspective", *Survival*, Vol. 47, pp101-130, p124.

⁶ The Working Group is grateful for the comments provided by Tim Winter, a lecturer in Islamic Studies at Cambridge University. Winter suggests that it makes little difference to Osama Bin Laden that most Muslims oppose him, since he considers most Muslims to be unbelievers. This insight helps to explain why Islamic radicals in Algeria have been able to commit atrocities against fellow Muslim civilians.

instances the grievances invoked by terrorists reflect wider societal concerns, in other instances the grievances held by terrorists are misguided and unfounded. A political settlement that meets some of the terrorist concerns, while rejecting others, can help in undercutting the terrorists by reducing the pool of political support. The Cold War historian, John Gaddis, argues that there are similarities here with the way in which the US addressed those social issues on which Communist propaganda played. “*With the rehabilitation of Germany and Japan after World War II, together with the Marshall Plan, we fought the conditions that made the Soviet alternative attractive even as we sought to contain the Soviets themselves.*”⁷

There is a good parallel with this in many of the liberation struggles after World War II. The guerrilla forces that struggled for independence could not hope to win great military victories. On conventional battlefields they were quickly defeated. Their aim was to be enough of a nuisance and to stay in existence long enough, for the political victory to be won. This depended not only on being able to offer a continuing threat, but also on the support of the people in whose name they claimed to act. The majority of the struggles for independence were successful because there was a real issue of principle on which the majority of the population and the liberation army or guerrilla group were at one, even if only a minority came out publicly in support of the use of armed force.⁸

The number of those engaged in terrorism might be quite small. For 20 years a hardcore of only 20 or 30 members of the Baader Meinhof gang terrorised West Germany. Similarly only 50 to 75 Red Brigade members threatened Italy during the late 1970s. These two examples reveal clearly how much damage, and fear of damage, a small group can bring about, and at the same time why they failed in their aims. West Germany was a stable democracy in which the vast majority of the country was totally unsympathetic to what the terrorists stood for. Even though Italy was less stable politically, the same was true there - there was no widespread public support.

⁷ John Gaddis, “And Now This: The Lessons from the Old era for the New One, in Strobe Talbott and Nayan Chanda (eds); *The Age of Terror: America and the World After September 11*, Perseus Press, 2001, p20.

The example of Northern Ireland is interestingly different. The IRA's ability to threaten law and order for more than 30 years derived partly from its success in recruiting several hundred people prepared to engage in terrorism. A significant part of the population at least tacitly supported their political goals if not their methods. Eventually, the deeper feeling in the population was for a peaceful society, an end to terror, even at the price of sacrificing the short-term attainment of the goals in which many of them still continued to believe.

The example of Northern Ireland again brings out another point: the need not to underestimate the role of military containment. In Northern Ireland it was widely recognised that political, and sometimes economic, factors were paramount, even though the military action needed to be waged effectively and persistently. The key decision was taken in 1976 to give the police in Northern Ireland the lead role in countering terrorism. At that point the military retreated into a support role, where previously it had been in the lead. There were still emergency powers, including the single judge Diplock courts, but the paradigm for countering terrorism was policing and criminal justice, coupled with a determination to address the underlying social, economic and political causes which the terrorists espoused.

The British counter-terrorism strategy in Northern Ireland is also relevant in that it highlights the difficulties that arise when attempting to balance both the need to contain the terrorist threat and the political imperative in tackling wider societal concerns. Adam Roberts suggests that when faced with a terrorist threat, "*most states even democratic ones, resort to some form of detention without trial. There are huge risks in such detentions: first, a risk of arresting and convicting the wrong people; and second, maltreatment of detainees. Both tend to create martyrs and to give nourishment to the terrorist campaign.*"⁹ This dilemma was clearly shown in Northern Ireland where many of those detained on terrorist charges were acutely aware of the political propaganda to be gained by claiming to be prisoners of war and by publicising instances of ill-treatment that contravened their rights as such. The political controversy surrounding the treatment of those convicted or detained on

⁸ Richard Harries, *Should Christians Support Guerrillas?*, Lutterworth, 1982.

⁹ *Written evidence submitted by Professor Sir Adam Roberts to the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee*, pp96-113, p102.

grounds of their links to the IRA, inflamed public opinion in Northern Ireland thereby increasing the reservoir of good will on which the IRA could draw.

The historical evidence is clear. Al Qa'eda will only attain its goals if it can gain and retain the support of the majority of Muslims. If they do that, then their terrorist tactics will eventually succeed. If they fail, they will be contained, marginalised and eventually eliminated altogether. As Jason Burke, one of the world's leading experts on Al Qa'eda wrote after the London bomb attacks: "in our interconnected world, the people who now count most are not our security and emergency services, brave and competent though they are, but the hopes, fears, expectations and views of 1.3 billion Muslims, whether in Beirut, Bradford, London, Riyadh or Kuala Lumpur. They will decide who are martyrs and who are murderers."¹⁰

This strategic approach was recognised by a 2004 report by the United Nations Secretary General's High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change. "*The imperative is to develop a global strategy of fighting terrorists that addresses root causes and strengthens responsible states and the rule of law on fundamental human rights. What is required is a comprehensive strategy that incorporates but is broader than coercive measures.*"¹¹ The evidence suggests that further progress is necessary.

*The torture and ill-treatment of detainees, of which there has been substantial evidence in the war on terror, is, to quote Talleyrand, worse than a crime: it is a mistake. Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib have provided propaganda gifts to adversaries.*¹²

A successful counter-terrorist strategy must aim both to contain the terrorist threat through a variety of instruments, and also to win the hearts and minds of those who might tacitly support Al Qa'eda. As we discuss below, the churches have a major contribution to make to this task.

Good intelligence is a key asset in any counter-terrorist strategy. Intelligence operations, which were highly developed and sophisticated during the Cold War, are

¹⁰ *The Observer*, 10 July 2005, p6.

¹¹ *Report of the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, a Report to the UN General Assembly*, December 2004, p48.

¹² *Written evidence submitted by Professor Sir Adam Roberts to the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee*, pp96-113, p112.

needed just as urgently in today's very different world. Intelligence failures over recent years are therefore a matter of great concern. As Adam Roberts makes clear, *"perhaps 95% of the important action in any campaign against terrorism consists of intelligence and police work: identifying suspects, infiltrating movements, collaborating with police forces in other countries, gathering evidence for trials and so on."*¹³ While President Bush and other government leaders involved in the 'war on terror' do not deny the importance of intelligence, much of their public rhetoric appears to obscure this point, and instead appears to focus on combating terrorism through military means. There will of course be times, as the UN Secretary General's High Level Panel report makes clear, when coercive action is necessary, but it must be seen as one instrument amongst many. Although the Church has no direct contribution to make in the field of intelligence, the Church has a responsibility to help articulate those criteria against which any resort to military action might be evaluated. The approach of the Church to this area of is discussed later in this report.

The violence of religion

In reflecting on the Christian response to the patterns of violence that characterise our world at present, there is always the risk that the weight of ethical argument might blind us to a further difficult aspect of the picture: the role of religious faith in general and the religions in particular, in fomenting and then sustaining or even extending, the violence. This danger is increased for Christians in the West if they hear constant reference to 'Muslim fundamentalists', 'Islamic extremists' or 'militant Islamists', and that 'orthodox' (Jewish) 'parties' in Israel are the principal obstruction to peace. Such language implies that it is only other people's religion that increases the violence of the world, never our own. The correct response should be to educate the public about the difference between 'orthodoxy' and 'heresy', for it is not enough to talk only about 'moderates' and 'fundamentalists'. Churches have an important role to play here, in reintroducing journalists and politicians to the need to understand the theological components of religious fundamentalism.

From the point of view of others, however, it needs to be recognised that Christianity is not always seen as a benign influence in world affairs, always on the side of peace,

¹³ *Ibid*, p101.

nor has it historically always been so. For decades the words ‘protestant’ and ‘catholic’ have appeared constantly in the news from Northern Ireland, almost always standing for division and often as adjectives qualifying the noun ‘paramilitaries’. Similarly key players in the violence of Lebanon have been known as ‘Christian militias’, while the conflict in the former Yugoslavia has frequently, and sometimes accurately, been portrayed as a religious one.¹⁴

Many people whose motivation was principally religious have taken some of the most courageous peace initiatives. The traditions of all the major world faiths contain injunctions to peacemaking and peaceable living. But they contain much else too, of a much more warlike character. The stories of Exodus and of the invasion of the Promised Land, the exclusive claims of Israel’s God and his command to destroy all traces of enemy cultures and religions, and the brightly coloured images of apocalypse, whether in Mark 13 or in the Book of Revelation have all at various times inspired the violence which lies below the surface of much religious language and practice.

Even when war itself is not the topic, religious faith has an ambiguous relationship with anger and its manifestation, a spiritual issue of great difficulty. Among religious people, not least among those who are the public representatives of faith, are more than a fair share of those who try to use their religion to keep their rage under control, but find themselves at critical points making it the vehicle on which their anger travels. Moral outrage and righteous indignation, perhaps especially when the conviction is strongest that the cause is just, can be immensely violent in themselves. It can generate and stir up violence in others. From Herod at Christ’s birth (Mathew 2:16) to Caiaphas at his trial (Mathew 26:65) there has been too much evidence for us to ignore that the realities of power and jealousy cloak themselves in the language and arguments of religion, and the religion then enhances rather than quenches the energies of hatred.

¹⁴ It is perhaps helpful to bear in mind that America is increasingly perceived in the Islamic world as being driven by a particular kind of evangelical Christianity. In the Muslim press, the perspective is typically that Muslim countries are ruled by secularists who oppress Islam, while American is ruled by Christians who oppress Islam. Either way the perception by many Muslims is that Islam is under attack.

In any discussion of the contribution of religion to peacemaking we have therefore to do more than provide arguments, or demonstrate - as we also must - the churches' part in peacemaking and the limitations it has placed upon the resort to war. We have also to demonstrate in the quality of our speaking and action: an energy towards peace that can outweigh the echoes of violence that ring in the ears of our hearers when religion is so much as mentioned in connection with the most disputed areas of the world. That requires an owning of the close connection between faith and passion, and a recognition in areas of intra-religious dispute of the levels of violence that are certainly noticed by those outside, if not by the participants themselves. Our commitment to peace will only impress others and draw them into a shared peacemaking if they observe among believers something more than a recital of those texts and stories that point in the direction of peace: they look also, and often in vain, to see the religious owning their own share of the violence of the human heart, and recognising, and then addressing, the extent to which religious life and language stokes fires which it should be employed to quench.

Winning hearts and minds

Because counter-terrorism requires the winning of hearts and minds, the Christian churches have an important role to play, both within the United Kingdom and worldwide. The churches have invested considerable effort in building good community relations in the United Kingdom, especially in those cities where there are sizeable communities of those professing other faiths. Excellent relationships have been built up in recent years between Muslim groups and the churches. In a society of overtly secular values, Muslims have often looked to Church leaders as people who understand a religious perspective on life, and are natural allies in combating Islamophobia. In a number of cities there have been joint meetings and peace marches of Christians and Muslims, sometimes also involving Jews. In some places there are action plans in the case of a terrorist outrage, in order to mitigate any anti-Muslim backlash.

The reality of this backlash was shown after the 7 July 2005 bomb attacks in London by the fire-bombing of a number of mosques. The Muslim Council of Great Britain, despite a strong statement condemning the bombings, received 30,000 emails in the

first twenty four hours. The good relationships established between local Christian and Muslim communities is crucial at such times. On a national level there have been the initiatives of the previous Archbishop of Canterbury, carried on by the present Archbishop, to create a national Christian-Muslim forum.

Outside the United Kingdom it is possible to point to a few, alas too few, initiatives in peacemaking by religious leaders. There is the Alexandria Process, based on the recognition that attempts to make peace between Israel and Palestine had mainly been at the high level of politics and politicians. Ordinary citizens had not felt fully part of the process. It was suggested that a process initiated by religious leaders might be more successful in engaging the wider population in efforts to reach an agreement. Then in Iraq there is the Iraqi Institute of Peace (IIP), which has tried to bring together religious leaders in Iraq in an attempt to curtail the growing religious dimension to the conflict. These initiatives appear to replicate the “*intentional communities of reconciliation*” such as the Corrymeela Community that emerged in Northern Ireland in the 1960s. The Corrymeela Community provided a chance for experiential learning so that members of this community were able “*to rediscover each other as human beings.*”¹⁵ Similarly, other faith based organisations, such as the Community of Sant Egidio and the World Conference for Religion and Peace undertake unofficial mediation between conflicting parties that is sometimes beyond the capacity of any state.

The importance of religious initiatives is underlined by the recognition that religion is a major player on the world’s political stage, in a way that would scarcely have been recognised 30 or 40 years ago. Whereas the main conflicts of the twentieth century were ideological, the main conflicts of our own time are to do with identity. Religion has come into increasing prominence as a marker of identity. For example, in many parts of the world large numbers of people have for a variety of economic and social reason moved out of their villages, where they had a recognised place in a traditional hierarchy, into cities. In the city they have gravitated towards the mosque or church and tended to find their identity primarily in religious terms as a Muslim, Christian or as an adherent of some other religion. If for a variety of reasons there is strife or

¹⁵ John Morrow, *The Corrymeela Community*. Information Brochure. Belfast, Northern Ireland, 1994.

conflict, it is easy for unscrupulous religious leaders to use this badge of religious identity to exacerbate the conflict.¹⁶ This highlights the importance of the contribution by religious leaders in two ways. It is important for religious leaders to combine in ensuring that unscrupulous people do not use religion to make the conflict worse, stirring up animosities by appealing to people's beliefs. From a more positive point of view, in a world where religion is increasingly important, religious leaders have more scope than they realise, to make a significant contribution to peace-making.

If it is true that the majority of the conflicts in our time will have to do with identity, this gives us one clue as to the strength of fundamentalism in the modern world, both in its Muslim and Christian forms. Fundamentalism must not be confused, as it sometimes is in the secular West, with an adherence to a conservative view of scripture or tradition. Religious leaders should readily acknowledge that adherents of the religion to which they belong are right to hold to the fundamentals of their faith. Faith of a properly godly kind can be nourished by a pre-critical, simplistic or literalistic reading of the scriptures, whether the Bible or the Qur'an.

But, fundamentalism as a threat to civil order goes way beyond this. It is primarily about creating and entrenching intolerant attitudes and a lack of respect for other religious points of view. This is sometimes expressed in an actual denigration of those views, with an unwillingness even to meet and discuss differences. Often this has gone along with an overwhelming imperative to make a particular society Christian or Muslim, with a willingness in some cases to use violence to achieve that end. This attitude has not been confined to Christians or Muslims, but has been present even in religions that have a peaceful image in the West, such as the BJP of Hindu nationalists in India and Singhalese Buddhist monks in Sri Lanka.¹⁷

Interfaith dialogue of all kinds, but especially meetings of religious leaders, are important, therefore, in showing that despite serious and continuing differences of religious belief, respect and serious discussion can take place. The weakness of a

¹⁶ David Martin, *Does Christianity Cause War?*, Clarendon Press, 1997. Martin argues, primarily in relation to Christianity and the conflicts following the break up of Yugoslavia that in the modern world religion itself does not usually cause wars, but is a marker of identity in conflicts which have begun for other reasons.

¹⁷ Oliver McTernan, *Violence in God's Name*, Dartman, Longman and Todd, 2003.

number of interfaith groups is that they tend to consist of the liberal-minded in each religion talking to one another, with those liberal-minded people feeling closer to others in such groups than to those of more conservative viewpoints in their own religious tradition. There is a need to bring people together from across the spectrum of the different religions, and to show, that without any sacrificing of religious faith or principle, it is possible for people with deeply held convictions to coexist peacefully in the same society. Religious leaders have a particular responsibility to bring together those adherents of the different religions who are most resistant to this kind of encounter.

Countering terrorism with the use of force

All the above has to do with the role that the churches are playing and might play even more, in the battle of hearts and minds. But, as indicated above, there remains a role for force, both within the framework of a criminal justice model and, as a last resort, by the use of military power. A state that allows terrorists to operate on its territory will naturally invoke the suspicion, if not the hostility, of countries that have been the subject of such terrorist attacks. The US National Security Strategy commits the US to attack terrorist organisations by “*convincing or compelling states to accept their sovereign responsibilities.*”¹⁸ The implications of this strategy are clear. Where states are unwilling or incapable of taking remedial action then the US will do it for them, often by force.

The use of military force in the ‘war on terror’ has proved divisive. There are clear historical examples that warn against such a military strategy. Although there were a multitude of factors leading to the First World War the catalyst was the response of Austria to the determination to root out terrorism in Serbia following the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand in June 1914. Israel’s disastrous invasion of Lebanon in 1982 was a direct and initially legitimate response to the persistent forms of terrorist attacks on Israeli and Jewish targets. Not surprisingly, historians have been sceptical about the value of waging war as a response to terrorist attacks. The American historian Paul Schroder writes:

¹⁸ *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, Washington DC, September 2002, p6.

Three lessons emerge from reasoning by historical analogy from the early summer of 1914 to the late summer of 2001. The first is that a great power must avoid giving terrorists the war they want, but that the great power does not want. The second is that a great power must reckon the effects of its actions not only on immediate circumstances, but also with regard to the larger structure of international politics in which it clearly has a significant stake. The third is that a great power must beware the risks of victory as well as the dangers of defeat. If it is not careful and wise the United States could find itself enmeshed even deeper in the Middle East and Southwest Asia than it is today, and risk generating greater prospective dangers in the process of containing smaller near-term ones.¹⁹

Schroder draws a distinction between Afghanistan, where the 2002 war had a legitimate objective and was widely understood internationally, and other targets such as Iraq where the case was more difficult to make. He does not rule out the use of military force in all circumstances, but stresses that there should be clear guidelines determining when such military action was both justified and necessary. The divisive nature of recent debates regarding whether it was appropriate to use military force in Afghanistan and Iraq underline the importance of having clear criteria against which such action might be judged or evaluated.

Some Christians have always seen pacifism as a matter of Christian obedience and will reject the use of military force under any circumstances. Before 173 AD Christians refused to join the army and for many of them this was because, in the words of Tertullian, in disarming Peter, Christ unbelted every soldier. Christian pacifism can take a number of forms. One influential strand today argues that in a fallen world, where war is endemic, it is a priority of the Church to witness to the fact that in some decisive sense Christ's peaceable Kingdom has broken into this world and Christians must, even now, act on the principles of that Kingdom. The Christian community will, on that view, stand in sharp contrast to the culture of violence which afflicts so many relationships. This approach is not to be identified with withdrawal or passivity. It involves active peacemaking and a continual struggle against the oppressive powers that dominate so much human life. It takes evil seriously, but

¹⁹ Paul W. Schroeder, "The Risks of Victory: An Historian's Provocation", *The National Interest*, Washington DC, No 66 (Winter 2001-02), p22.

refuses methods of overcoming it that are life denying. It is not passivism: it is an active resistance to evil.

However, most Christians stand, with more or less conviction, in the unfortunately named 'just war' tradition. This is a misleading phrase in that it may suggest an attitude of moral righteousness that can verge on a crusading mentality. The just war tradition - more correctly the tradition that war can be justified - is imbued with the sense that war may, under certain circumstances, be a tragic necessity, but it is never less than a tragedy. It is really a tradition about the justifiable use of force provided that certain criteria are fulfilled. In fact, properly understood, there is a sharp difference between a crusade approach and a just war approach to war. A crusade approach works on the assumption that the struggle is on God's side against God's enemies. Sadly, it has characterised certain Christian attitudes in the past and sometimes seems to emerge in right-wing Christian rhetoric in the United States. It has also been a feature of some Muslim attitudes to war and armed struggle. The just war tradition, however, is steeped in a sense of war as a tragic necessity, a last resort, which, however necessary, is also a failure.

It is sometimes said that in the modern world the just war tradition is outmoded and no longer applicable to the conditions of modern warfare. Nothing could be further from the truth. Anyone who makes a judgement about the rightness or wrongness of a particular military conflict will, whether they are aware of it or not, be using principles and criteria which are basic to the just war tradition. These criteria have reached us from a long Christian tradition on the subject, but their validity and utility can be recognised by those who belong to other religious and ethnic groups. They belong to the Natural Law tradition, which works on the assumption that certain moral judgements can be agreed upon by all people of goodwill, whatever their religious beliefs or lack of them.

The criteria of the just war tradition have to be applied afresh in the very different contexts provided by the modern world, whether of humanitarian crises, nuclear deterrence or terrorist threat. But properly thought through those criteria remain indispensable. In 2001 the Canadian sponsored International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty produced a report, *The Responsibility to Protect*,

that attempted to address the highly complex problem of sovereignty and international responsibility in humanitarian crises.²⁰ The report concluded that while military intervention for human protection purposes is an exceptional and extraordinary measure it can be warranted if there is evidence of serious and irreparable harm occurring to human beings, or imminently likely to occur, such as the large scale loss of life or large scale ethnic cleansing. Having defined just cause in this manner the report then drew further on the just war tradition by listing a number of precautionary principles - right intention, last resort, proportional means and reasonable chance of success - that needed to be taken into consideration when contemplating military action for humanitarian purposes.

A similar approach was taken by the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change that was set up by the UN Secretary General following the 2003 Iraq War. This Panel was created to assess the current threats to international peace and security and to recommend ways of strengthening the United Nations to provide collective security for the twenty-first century. It is clear from the Panel's report, *A More Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility*, that the Panel framed its discussions on collective security and the use of force in terms that are virtually identical to the just war tradition. *A More Secure World* argues that in addition to the continuing right of self-defence under Article 51, wars of intervention, which are strongly endorsed in principle, must take into account five basic criteria of legitimacy: the seriousness of the threat, proper purpose, last resort, proportional means and balance of consequences. The Panel acknowledged that while the adoption of these criteria might not produce agreed conclusions with "push-button predictability", it "should significantly improve the chances of reaching international consensus on what have been in recent years deeply divisive issues."²¹ The UN Secretary General's response to *A More Secure World*, not only accepted the Panel's criteria governing the use of force, but recommended that the "Security Council adopt a resolution setting out these principles expressing its intention to be guided by them when deciding

²⁰ *The Responsibility to Protect*, Report of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, December 2001.

²¹ *Report of the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, a Report to the UN General Assembly*, December 2004, p3.

whether to authorise or mandate the use of military force."²² It is difficult to find a more ringing endorsement, by a body that is multi-cultural and multi-religious, of the continuing validity of Christian thinking about the morality of warfare.

Despite the continued relevance of just war thinking, criticism is often made against the tradition that it has been used to endorse whatever a state has decided, through its leaders to do, anyway and it is simply a moral fig leaf used to conceal reasons that have primarily to do with national interest, often very narrowly conceived. The just war tradition has indeed often been used and abused in such a way. But the modern use of that tradition by its most thoughtful adherents does not in fact merit that criticism. The just war tradition is composed of two major parts, *ius ad bellum*, which is concerned with the moral considerations that have to be taken into account before war is declared in the first place and *ius in bello*, which is concerned with the morality of the conduct of the war. It was on the basis of traditional principles of discrimination and proportion from the *ius in bello* part of the just war tradition that many Christians rejected the use, and hence the deployment, of nuclear weapons under any circumstances. Whilst most people standing within this tradition probably supported the 1991 Gulf War, the intervention in Kosovo and Afghanistan, on the basis of the same criteria a significant portion of the public, as illustrated by numerous opinion polls prior to the conflict, strongly opposed the 2003 Gulf War.²³

For those who are not pacifists the just war tradition remains an indispensable tool of moral analysis. However, it remains important that its criteria are not applied in a wooden way, but are thought through and related to the actualities of modern warfare. Although there is nothing distinctively Christian about the criteria as such, the way they have been interpreted and the way they can be applied today demonstrate a profound connection with Christian faith and discipleship. For example, the conflict, and the damage that is done by it, have been seen by Christians in the widest possible terms. This was a very marked feature of the thinking of Francisco de Vitoria in relation to the wars of the Spanish in South America in the sixteenth century. He urged the widest possible view, with the imperative of desisting from any military

²² *In Larger Freedom: Towards Development, Security and Human Rights For All*, Report of the Secretary General, United Nations Department of Public Information, 2005.

²³ Charles Reed, *Just War?*, SPCK, 2004, p96 and p137.

action which whilst it might benefit a particular state in the short run would be disadvantageous to the world as a whole in the longer run. Vitoria writes: “*Since one nation is part of a whole world, and since the Christian province is a part of the whole Christian state, if any war should be advantageous to one province or nation but injurious to the world or to Christendom, it is my belief, that, for this very reason, that war is unjust.*”²⁴

This involves, for instance, taking fully into account the number of casualties on the other side, as well as ones own. It has been all too apparent in Iraq that whilst the number of US and coalition casualties are counted and reported - a sadly large number - the number of Iraqi deaths, whether of insurgents or of civilians, is left to speculation. A recent call by political and religious leaders in Britain for the government to set up an independent inquiry in order to try to assess the accurate figure was immediately rejected. The suffering and death of Iraqi civilians matter. They need to be taken into account as part of the moral calculus of war. The instinctive tendency of the media is to give great prominence to every death of a British service man or woman, which is indeed tragic, but almost totally to gloss over the sometimes very extensive death and casualties of Iraqis, in many cases civilians. In the words of 52 former UK diplomats, who wrote an open letter to Tony Blair, on 26 April 2004, “it is a disgrace that the coalition forces themselves appear to have no estimate of Iraqis killed by coalition forces.” Research on this has now been done by the Oxford Research Group who indicate that 24,865 civilians were killed in the first two years of the conflict by violence.²⁵

The traditional moral imperatives of *ius ad bellum* and *ius in bello* remain in place. But they fail in their purpose if they are applied without a historical sense and without reference to existing military doctrines. They need to take into account both the nature of the enemy and the means that are necessary to achieve victory. It has been suggested, for example, that at least until the end of 2003 and early 2004, the United States army was trained to fight a large-scale conventional war with ‘overwhelming’

²⁴ Francisco de Vitoria, de Potestate Civile, 13, discussed in Richard Harries, *Christianity and War in a Nuclear Age*, Mowbray, 1986, Chap 9.

²⁵ Oxford Research Group, *Iraq Body Count - A Dossier of Civilian Casualties, 2003-2005*, July 2005. This figure is consistent with a little reported, but larger scale, survey published by the United Nations in May 2005 which put the total of Iraqi casualties up to the summer of 2004 at 24,000.

combat power. This might be likened to trying to drive a screw with a hammer. If counter-terrorism is as much about the winning over of hearts and minds as neutralising armed insurgents, such a military strategy, with such an armoury, is not only counterproductive militarily but also fails the ethical test.²⁶

Preemptive military action (anticipatory self-defence) and preventative war

Part of the challenge for churches in putting forward a different perspective is to ask questions of their government, and of world leaders generally, whether the use of force in a particular instance is strictly necessary or whether alternative methods of conflict resolution, such as diplomacy and economic sanctions, might be more effective and less costly. The just war tradition requires that not only should there be a justifiable cause, but also that all reasonable efforts to resolve a crisis short of armed force have been found wanting. War should never be entered into lightly nor the threshold so lowered that the use of force becomes the policy of choice rather than necessity. However, aversion to the horrors of war should not prohibit governments from relying on military force as means of defence. As such moral judgements need to be informed by a certain political realism. Moral judgments need to go hand in hand with political and military ones.

Unless a strictly pacifist position is adopted, it is generally accepted that it is permissible to use force as a form of self-defence. How 'self-defence' is defined is obviously problematic and open to intense political and moral debate. For some Christians, self-defence is only permissible when an act of aggression has occurred. The logical extension of this thesis is the understanding that alternative and non-violent attempts at conflict prevention ought not to be foreclosed until such time as an armed attack has taken place. The difficulty with this position is that a potential or actual aggressor state might use yet another round of diplomacy as an opportunity to further develop its own military planning or even consolidate territorial acquisitions already gained through force.

²⁶ T. K. Kelly, "The Just Conduct of War Against Radical Islamic Terror and Insurgencies", in C. Reed and D. Ryall (eds.), *The Price of Peace: Just War in the Twenty First Century*, Cambridge University Press, 2006.

These practical political and military problems help explain why the Christian just war tradition does not restrict the meaning of ‘justness’ to wars of self-defence where it is necessary to repel a foreign force. In certain instances the use of force is considered justified as a form of anticipatory self-defence. Where a threat is real, serious and immediate, there might indeed be a proper moral case for taking such proportionate action as may be necessary to prevent such an attack. This position is also recognised in international law so long as the threatened attack is imminent, no other means would deflect it and the action is proportionate. However, both the just war tradition and international law, make clear that anticipatory self-defence, often termed pre-emptive military action, can only be used when a threat looks imminent (for instance through such signs as the mobilisation of troops on the border) and not when a threat has yet to materialise.

Anticipatory self-defence cannot be justified on grounds of national paranoia or resorted to simply as a matter of opinion, based on no obvious signs of aggressive behaviour. The American moral theologian, James Turner Johnson, writes that to resort to anticipatory self-defence, “*it is absolutely required that the other’s intent be certain. Uncertain fear of a neighbouring country whose power is swelling is explicitly named as an unjust cause for war. The causes of a war should be made, so that everyone may decide as to their justice. If any doubt remains, it is necessary to wait, meanwhile seeking to avoid war. It is thus obvious that the intent of an enemy must be manifested overtly.*”²⁷ Johnson refers to the imagery provided by Hugo Grotius who argues, that like a drawn sword or a weapon snatched up “*the danger must be present and ready instantly to fall upon us.*”²⁸

This distinction between preventative and pre-emptive military action informed the Church of England’s House of Bishops’ position prior to the 2003 Gulf War.²⁹ In its October 2002 submission to the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Select Committee, the House of Bishops suggested that to argue in favour of preventative

²⁷ James Turner Johnson, *Ideology, Reason, and the Limitation of War. Religion and Secular Concepts*, Princeton, 1975, p214-215.

²⁸ Hugo Grotius, *Rights of War and Peace*, as quoted in James Turner Johnson, *Ideology, Reason, and the Limitation of War. Religion and Secular Concepts*, Princeton, 1975, p215.

²⁹ *Evaluating the Threat of Military Action Against Iraq: A Submission by the House of Bishops to the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Select Committee’s ongoing inquiry into the War on Terrorism*, 9 October 2002.

military action would be to undermine the need for war to be used as a last resort. Such an approach would prejudice alternative efforts at conflict prevention and resolution thereby raising questions as to the motive or intent behind the action. In making the case against the use of force in Iraq the House of Bishops argued that the proposed military action risked failing the most fundamental of all the just war criteria, that armed force be used only as a defensive and not as an offensive option.

The House of Bishops' thinking on this matter was developed further in a subsequent submission by the Church of England's Public Affairs Unit to an inquiry set up by the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Select Committee to examine the decision to go to war in Iraq.³⁰ The submission argued that the collapsing of the boundaries between anticipatory self-defence and preventative, action as occurred at the time of the 2003 Gulf War, had opened a Pandora's box, which would prove difficult to close. The submission concluded by arguing that unless the international community provided clearer guidelines concerning the use of preventative military action, then questions would always be asked, not least by churches, whether such an attack was itself nothing more than an act of aggression and a breach of the peace.

The controversy surrounding the legality and legitimacy of preventative military action was taken up the UN's High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change. The Panel concluded that:

In the world of the twenty-first century, the international community does have to be concerned about nightmare scenarios combining terrorists, weapons of mass destruction and irresponsible States, and much more besides, which may conceivably justify the use of force, not just reactively but preventatively and before a latent threat becomes imminent. The question is not whether such action can be taken: it can, by the Security Council as the international community's collective security voice, at any time it deems that there is a threat to international peace and security. The Council may well need to be

³⁰ Public Affairs Unit of the General Synod of the Church of England, *A Submission to the House of Commons' Foreign Affairs Select Committee's Inquiry into the Decision to go to War in Iraq*, 9 June 2003.

*much more proactive on these issues, taking more decisive action earlier, than it has been in the past.*³¹

A More Secure World accepts that the use of military force against an imminent threat is acceptable under A51 of the UN Charter, but that A51 cannot be used when the threat is not imminent. The report stresses that “*if there are good arguments for preventative military action, with good evidence to support them, then the case should be put to the Security Council, which can then authorise such action if it chooses to.*” If the Security Council chooses not to authorise such action then “*there will be, by definition, time to pursue other strategies.*”³²

It might appear, on the face of it at least, that the Panel’s thinking on preventative military action is at odds with traditional just war thinking. This is not necessarily the case, for central to both is the understanding that what distinguishes pre-emptive from preventative military action is the question of whether the proposed action is premature or whether effective alternatives exist to counter the alleged threat. Nigel Biggar suggests that by reframing the debate as to whether the action is *premature*, the following definitions can be reached. “*Morally permissible pre-emptive military action is that which is directed against a threat whose seriousness and emergence is sufficiently clear, and where no effective non-military alternatives are available; morally impermissible premature military action is that which is directed against a threat whose seriousness and emergence are not sufficiently clear, or where effective non-military alternatives are available.*”³³

If these definitions are accepted then the argument moves of course onto the question of what degree of clarity is ‘sufficient’. To some extent that will vary according to the gravity of the threat and how long a state can afford to delay military action. Although this will vary from case to case the Panel is right to stress the importance of the UN Security Council as the most appropriate decision making body. The Panel acknowledges correctly the need to improve the effectiveness of the Security Council, but it stresses that, “*in a world full of perceived potential threats. The risk to the*

³¹ *Report of the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, a Report to the UN General Assembly*, December 2004, p64.

³² *Ibid*, p63.

*global order and the norm of non-intervention on which it continues to be based is simply too great for the legality of unilateral preventative action, as distinct from collectively endorsed action, to be accepted.*³⁴ The changed security environment following 9/11 might make it necessary to “*adapt the concept of imminent threat to the capabilities and objectives of today’s adversaries,*” but such an undertaking when done unilaterally and without the consent of the wider international community remains morally and politically hazardous.³⁵

The dilemma posed by post conflict Iraq

Those who strongly opposed the recent war against Iraq, including the majority of the House of Bishops of the Church of England, find themselves in a particular dilemma. Withdrawing from Iraq as quickly as possible, leaving the Iraqi people to govern themselves is a proper objective. On the other hand to pull out of Iraq precipitously would be irresponsible. The country might quickly disintegrate into a vicious civil and religious war. Staying there, however, can give the impression both of supporting a long term American presence and also of colluding with the military action in the first place. A way through this dilemma, with its possible practical implications, is suggested along the following lines.

Although the military action was gravely mistaken, in that many people saw it failing to meet almost all the traditional just war criteria, some of the war aims were laudable, notably bringing an end to Saddam Hussein’s tyranny. While the British and American Government over emphasised the alleged presence of WMD as justification of the war, many people in the region saw the displacements of local populations, such as the Kurds and the Marsh Arabs as equally important considerations in the removal of Saddam Hussein from power. As a result, some of the possible results of the action, namely the establishment of a democratic regime based on law and observing human rights, are desirable. However, the means whereby democracy is established and the kind of democracy involved need to be

³³ Nigel Biggar, “Between Development and Doubt: The Recent Career of Just War Doctrine in British Churches”, in C. Reed and D. Ryall (eds.) *The Price of Peace: Just War in the Twenty First Century*, CUP, 2006.

³⁴ *Report of the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, a Report to the UN General Assembly*, December 2004, p63.

carefully considered. This means that it is right, even apart from the question of responsibility, to stay in Iraq until such a regime can be secured.

However, if there is not to be collusion with what has gone before, there needs to be a clear public recognition of the way that the West has contributed to the present tragic situation. This is not to ignore the nature of the regime itself but is it to recognize that there is a long litany of errors in the West's handling of Iraq that need to be remembered. These include: its support for Saddam Hussein over many years as a strategic ally against Iran; its willingness to sell him weapons; its willingness in particular to sell him components for weapons of mass destruction; its failure to distance itself from his regime in its use of chemical weapons against Iran and the Kurds; the suffering caused to the Iraqi people by sanctions, and the fact that the recent war against Iraq appeared to be as much for reasons of American national interest as it was for the well-being of the Iraqi people.³⁶

Governments are not likely publicly to acknowledge such factors, let alone express remorse for them. But here in particular there might be a role for the churches. There are three recent precedents. There are the official statements by the Vatican expressing sorrow for the responsibility of Christians in the persecution of Jews down the ages. Another powerful example is the way in which Nippon Seiko-kai, the Anglican Church in Japan, expressed public sorrow and repentance for its complicity in Japanese aggression during World War II. Yet another is the action by leaders of the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa for their theological and political support for apartheid. These indicate that it is possible for institutions to take responsibility for their corporate action in the past, not in order to make individual Christians today feel guilty but as a mature, public act of institutional repentance. In relation to Iraq, it might be possible for there to be a public gathering, well prepared in advance, at which Christian leaders meet with religious leaders of other, mainly Muslim, traditions, on the basis of truth and reconciliation, at which there would be a public recognition of at least some of the factors mentioned above.

³⁵ *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, September 2002, p15.

Such a meeting would be likely to attract not only ordinary criticism, but also denigration from predictable quarters. It would be said that this act of truth and reconciliation would be cost-free as far as Church leaders are concerned, whereas genuine acts of truth and reconciliation are extremely costly. In short, it would be dismissed as a cheap gesture. This is not entirely true. An event of this kind would be very difficult to arrange in the first place, involving all kinds of suspicions and hostilities from the Muslim side. It would also have to bear the kind of cynical dismissal and denigration just referred to.

There would be no question of accepting a moral equivalence between Western democracies and Saddam Hussein's regime, or indeed any other despotic or tyrannical regime. In a world suffused by an easy relativism, it is important to assert that some things really are better than others; that some things are right and others wrong. But if such an attitude were to avoid slipping into a self-righteousness, an element of contrition based on genuine insight into the factors involved would be necessary. It is vitally necessary, even if it is not always easy, to combine a rejection of moral equivalence on the one hand, and an awareness on the other hand that even the most morally justified cause is likely to be flawed in some ways.

The work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in South Africa suggests that even the most terrible crimes can be faced and worked through, even if only in a fragmentary way. While searching for the 'truth' can divide as much as it can reconcile, the TRC enabled the South African populace at large to tell their stories of suffering and oppression - often for the first time - and to find a measure of healing in the telling.³⁷ It is possible that what is needed in Iraq is a commission of a similar kind, with commissioners drawn from amongst religious and political leaders of standing, who are representative of the various religious constituencies of the Iraqi community. This might provide the opportunity for ordinary Iraqi people to tell their stories so that truth-telling can indeed promote reconciliation and healing. Such a process might be initiated by attempts at symbolic reconciliation between leaders of

³⁶ Evidence of the sales appears in the 1994 US Senate *Riegle Report*. See also Geoffrey Holland, *Biological and Toxic Weapons Convention and Iraq*, School of Social Sciences and Cultural Studies, University of Sussex, October 2004

³⁷ Nigel Biggar (ed); *Burying the Past: Making Peace and Doing Justice After Civil Conflict*, Georgetown University Press, 2001.

different religious traditions. To have real meaning it would need to be sustained at a grass roots level. The South African experience clearly demonstrates that such a process, involving the largest possible proportion of the population, could have a significant impact on the creation of a culture of human rights and democratic values.

Being vigilant about civil liberties

Collapsing the boundaries between preventive action and anticipatory self-defence is symptomatic of a deeper malaise within the international body politic, which invokes a politics of fear to justify repressive and regressive policies that in other circumstances would be unacceptable. History is full of examples of the use of a perceived emergency to generate fear, and for fear to destroy the restraints that protect democratic societies from totalitarian remedies. The fact that fear makes populations tolerant of extreme remedies provides opportunities for the unscrupulous to create 'emergencies' so as to allow them access to 'emergency powers'.³⁸

The Third Reich began as a democratic response to an 'emergency' facing the German nation. Thereafter, whenever Adolf Hitler required more power he created emergencies, real or imagined, so as to justify the democratic suspension of democratic safeguards. Military coups in Africa and Latin America were all mounted on the basis of a 'national emergency', and to the extent that they received popular support, they were based on disillusionment with a democratic politics that had descended into chaos and the fear that things could only get worse.

While it is evident that Western democracies are built on substantial foundations, it is equally clear that 9/11 represents a real and major escalation in the threats to such societies. The lesson following the terrorist attacks on Madrid in 2004 and London in 2005 is that the threat of terrorism is continuous and ongoing. The first responsibility of any government is to safeguard the lives of its own citizens. Nonetheless, if the twentieth century is full of examples of such seizures of power, there is no doubt that the current century is already producing, under the guise of the 'war on terror', a series of reductions in civil liberties. The language of 'protecting the rights of the

³⁸ It is worth noting that the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Most Revd Rowan Williams, in his April 2005 pre-election letter to all party leaders, warned political parties from invoking the politics of fear as an election strategy.

law-abiding majority' and of 'rebalancing the criminal justice system in favour of the victim' has wide appeal. Just as the purported threat of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction led to the waging of a war, so the increase of fear creates a population ready to accept the accretion of powers to the state. A tally of the new statutes that have found their way to the statute book since 9/11 and those anti-terrorist measures that look likely to be introduced to Parliament following the terrorist attacks on London in July 2005 testify to the power of fear to direct government policy and secure popular consent to a new 'balance', favouring security over civil liberty. A change in the balance might be right but continued vigilance is required to ensure that such a balance does not lead to a diminution in civil liberties.

None of this happens without protest. Each proposed erosion of civil liberties has been greeted by a negative response from lawyers and civil liberties groups. These protests have in turn produced concessions. The protest that greeted the proposal to oust the courts from reviewing asylum appeals produced a solution which, while less draconian, still reduced the capacity of asylum-applicants to appeal against deportation. The proposal to imprison without trial foreign citizens suspected of terrorist connections was modified in the light of a Law Lords' judgement so as to allow house arrest of British and foreign subjects - and that in turn has produced protests which will no doubt produce modifications. However, the process by which measures are proposed so as to meet what are perceived to be popular fears, and then modified in the light of protests, still engenders a steady erosion of liberties and an increase in the powers of the state. This is dangerous. It is also potentially counterproductive in the manner in which it sustains a breeding ground that supports a victim leading to martyrdom mentality amongst many terrorists and their sympathisers.

One argument perhaps insufficiently brought out during the recent debates over the British Government's counter-terrorism legislation was that there is a danger of contaminating the criminal justice system itself if legislators stretch it beyond what it can bear. The attempt to give judicial respectability to what are executive actions can be misplaced. There are circumstances in which it is better for the separation of powers and the integrity of the justice system to allow executive detention to stand or

fall on its own merits for a limited period, testing the argument that the nation faces a wholly abnormal threat.

Such developments as these are the inevitable by-products of the politics of fear, and the creation of a war mentality, in which we are prepared for more and more 'tough' remedies against the danger which it is claimed that we are facing. Into such an environment the most repeated of all the Biblical injunctions comes with undiminished vigour: 'Fear not'. That command is not an inhuman requirement that we lose our fearful reactions when confronted with danger or shirk the taking of necessary precautions; rather it is an injunction not to act out of fear, but to let the power of love work its way with our fears. The history of Israel in the Bible is a history of prophets warning against false alliances and false divinities whose hold over the people was based on fear. We should warn our generation also that fear makes a bad basis for the ruling of a society.

Section Two

International Order and the Ambiguity of American Power

Iraq has always been a sub-theme of a larger drama whose main theme has been how the international community accommodates American power. The end of the Cold War and the collapse of the USSR, and with it Communism as a rival ideology, have seen the emergence of a unipolar world where America, both in terms of its military and economic capacity, as well as its cultural values, remains unrivalled. There is little dispute that America possesses unrivalled power, but debate continues on whether this is desirable, or even if such a development matters.³⁹

It is of course difficult, even dangerous, to predict how events will unfold both in the theatre provided by Iraq and in their ramification for the international community. What is sometimes overlooked is the wider historical context of competing types of international order and how they have emerged following the Treaty of Westphalia at the end of the Thirty Years War in 1648 that gave rise to the modern state system. To that must be added the uncertainty there is about American domestic trends and how these shape, and continue to shape, US foreign policy. Of particular note here is the role of the 'Christian Right' within the US body politic. This section tackles these questions and concludes by offering suggestions for how the Church might engage with the phenomena of empire and power in a post Cold War era.

³⁹ Niall Ferguson and Robert Kagan see this trend as both desirable and necessary in an otherwise turbulent world. In contrast, Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt argue that the concentration of US power and its predisposition to unilateral action constitutes a malignant tumour within the international body politic that needs excising. Emmanuel Todd provides a philosophical response to the polarised views of American triumphalists and anti-American polemicists. Todd's diagnosis of wider global trends suggest that such debate is rather academic as recent American "theatrical micro militarism" is more suggestive of Palmerstonian gun-boat diplomacy and indicative of a dying rather than a youthful Empire. Robert Kagan, *Of Paradise and Power: America and Europe in the New World Order*, Atlantic Books, 2003. Niall Ferguson, *Colossus: The Price of American Empire*, 2004, Niall Ferguson, *Empire: The Rise and Demise of the British World Order and the Lessons for Global Power*, 2004. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri; *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*, Hamish Hamilton, 2005. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri; *Empire*, Harvard University Press, 2001. Emmanuel Todd, *After The Empire: The Breakdown of the American Order*, Constable, 2002, p2.

International order - an antidote to enmity

Within the Iraq crisis there lies a range of questions regarding the future shape of the international community. Does the crisis over Iraq mean the death of multi-lateralism, meaning the resolution of disputes or problems through co-operative behaviour as structured by international institutions such as the UN? Will America's dominance of the international scene be temporary, or does it herald the start of a long American era. Will Russia, China, India or the EU, have the means or the inclination to challenge American supremacy by establishing alternative centres of power and influence? Are such moves desirable or should countries accept American hegemony, and seek to shape it into a more benign form of American imperialism?

Central among these questions is whether the type of 'order' that currently dominates the international system reduces or increases enmity between states. The objective of a well ordered international system is to instigate movement from enmity to amity by locking states and other actors into a variety of political, economic, military and legal arrangements. Such a movement is easily reversed and can be undermined through economic, social, political and military upheaval.

The instability and unpredictability of the balance of power that was prevalent through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries made it unreliable in structuring relations between nation states. That balance gave way in the twentieth century to a 'constitutional order', comprising international institutions and international law that helped to structure relations between states. At an international level this was marked by the League of Nations and then the United Nations. The establishment of the European Community, and other regional associations like the Association of South East Asian Nations and the North American Free Trade Association mirrored these international developments regionally. These treaties do not make the balance of power theory obsolete, but they do provide sufficient restraint through agreements on norms, rules, institutions and practices to transform relations between states without tampering with the state system itself.

Confidence in this constitutional arrangement has been undermined by two interrelated pressures: a crisis of legitimacy and the rise of hegemony. A central

legitimising tenet of twentieth century constitutionalism was the need “to facilitate reconciliation between the contrasting rights and obligations of the ‘haves’ and ‘have nots’.”⁴⁰ One expression of this was the 1968 Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which sought to nullify the asymmetry between nuclear and non nuclear weapons states through a practice of arms control and disarmament. Similar policies of reciprocity were evident in various trade and economic policies that sought to reverse the discrepancies in global inequality. International institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF emerged to facilitate and implement such policies. Many states, especially from the Two-Thirds World, now see these mechanisms as a means of control, cementing the asymmetrical advantages enjoyed by others, rather than as a vehicle through which symmetry is achieved

With the end of the Cold War this constitutional approach to international order has been challenged further by the emergence of hegemony. This is not a new phenomenon, as illustrated by the quest for empire by European powers during the nineteenth century. It had been assumed, however, that the post-1945 order would militate against such developments by institutionalising a balance of power between states. The end of the Cold War has challenged this assumption and the ability of the prevailing order to accommodate the predominance of US social, economic and military power.

During the 1990s this arrangement appeared to unravel with the US rejection of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), the Kyoto Agreement and the International Criminal Court (ICC). While not all of these measures might have been right in all cases, William Walker writes:

*Emboldened by its new-found military supremacy, encouraged by perceived difficulties in containing the diffusion of WMD capabilities in certain regions and radicalised by the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, the United States came to embrace a new approach to international order. This approach had long been advocated from the fringes, but had only briefly captured the high ground during the first Reagan administration.*⁴¹

⁴⁰ William Walker; *Weapons of Mass Destruction and International Order*, Adelphi Paper 370, 2005 p12.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, p14.

The defining characteristic of this emergent order was starkly illustrated by the US National Security Strategy in September 2002 and in US Presidential speeches leading up to the 2003 Iraq War. Born out of the destruction of the World Trade Centre, this Strategy provided the framework through which the US reappraised its policy not only towards Iraq but also towards the wider world.

Central to the Strategy is the premise that “*the US possesses unprecedented and unequalled strength and influence in the world.*” The primary thrust of American foreign policy is to maintain this hegemony by “*dissuading future military competition, deterring threats against US interests and decisively defeating any adversary if deterrence fails.*”⁴² Second, it provides a new analysis of global threats. “*The gravest danger lies at the crossroads of radicalism and technology*” with terrorist organisations acquiring WMDs from rogue regimes.⁴³ This leads to the conclusion that the US “*must adapt the concept of imminent threat to the capabilities and objectives of today's adversaries.*”⁴⁴ Third, “*while the United States will constantly strive to enlist the support of the international community, we will not hesitate to act alone, if necessary, to exercise our right of self-defence by acting preemptively against such terrorists, to prevent them from doing harm.*”⁴⁵ The US will only participate in those multi-lateral organisations or alliances, which enhance rather than limit its power.

The Strategy emphasises providing security for the American ‘Self’. This ‘Self’ should not be compromised either by institutional arrangements, or by ‘Other’ states’ understanding of security. This policy of American exceptionalism reserves for itself the right to determine who are its friends and enemies. This downplays the role of multilateralism and any reciprocal obligation and collective decision-making. Rather than being restrained by collective decision-making the Strategy liberates the American ‘Self’ from institutionalised relationships between states, to seek out new co-operative relations with like-minded states. The Strategy seeks to legitimate the policy of pre-emption and unipolarity by stressing that US power will be used to promote democratisation and market liberalisation. In doing so the ‘Other’ will be

⁴² *The National Security Strategy*, p29.

⁴³ *Ibid*, p2.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, p6 & p15.

remade and transformed by the US vision of itself. The Strategy confirms America's hegemonic status and propagates "*a distinctively American internationalism that reflects the union of our values and our national interest.*"⁴⁶

The union of our values versus our national interest

The relationship between the union of 'our values' and 'our national interest' is complex and needs closer examination. Anatol Lieven contends that US foreign policy is increasingly shaped by the special character of its nationalism. This embraces two contradictory features: the American thesis and antithesis. The 'American thesis', which the US presents about itself to the world, is a civic nationalism, based on what has been called 'the American Creed'. This adheres to the principles of liberty, democracy, individualism and the rule of law. These principles are of immense value to America and the wider world, in that they "*help bind the United States to the wider community of democratic states*".⁴⁷ The almost religious nature of American belief in the 'Creed' also creates certain grave dangers: especially, a tendency toward messianism, a belief in America's right and duty to extend American values and democracy, irrespective of the needs and desires of others. This civic nationalism is prone to fits of 'moral crusading', and "*would be fatal if they were not sooner or later tempered with a measure of apathy and common sense*".⁴⁸

American political culture, however, also embraces what Lieven calls 'the American antithesis': a chauvinist and bellicose type of 'Jacksonian nationalism', consisting of conservative populism at home and aggressive nationalism abroad. This antithesis reflects a view of America as a closed cultural community at risk from a hostile and treacherous world. This nationalism has its roots in aggrieved and embittered sections of 'white America', above all in the South. American civic nationalism is universalist, optimistic and even triumphalist. In contrast this national antithesis is profoundly sceptical about the world outside America. It is rooted in a strong historical sense of social, religious and sectional defeat. The forces of a

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, p6.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, p1.

⁴⁷ Anatol Lieven, *America Right or Wrong: An Anatomy of American Nationalism*, Harper Collins, 2004, p5.

⁴⁸ Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform*, Vintage Books, 1955, p15.

fundamentalist Protestantism that feels resentful and defeated by modern American culture feed it. Although many immigrant Americans feel they are living the American dream, much of 'white America' feels that it is living in an American nightmare, where *"the religious beliefs of large sections of this core population are under constant daily threat from modern secular culture, above all via the mass media."*⁴⁹ This leads to the strange paradox that many Americans are deeply hostile to the modern world, which America itself has made, and which the American thesis claims as America's proudest achievement.

The interaction of these two antithetical impulses helps to explain US policy since 9/11. For the most part 'Jacksonian nationalism' is subordinate to American civic nationalism stemming from the 'Creed'. However, it has a natural tendency to rise to the surface in times of crisis. President Clinton was committed to American hegemony, but his administration did not adhere to an American chauvinism. As one critic on the 'American Right' noted, Clinton attempted to extend American leadership by *"moving us incrementally into a network of global organisations."*⁵⁰

Even though the 2002 National Security Strategy is *"expressed in traditional American nationalist terms of self-defence and the messianic role of the United States in spreading freedom,"* it stands in marked contrast to the universalist ideals and ambitions of the American Creed.⁵¹ In cloaking its imperial ambitions in the high moral language of civic nationalism, which reinforces America's image of itself as the indispensable nation and the last best hope for mankind, the Bush administration attempts to shield America from acknowledging that its policies are more akin to a 'self righteous victim' than a 'righteous nation'.

Phyllis Schlafly goes on to argue that this *"nationalism risks undermining precisely those American values which make the nation most admired in the world and which in the end provide both a pillar for its current global power and the assurance that*

⁴⁹ *America Right or Wrong*, p9.

⁵⁰ Phyllis Schlafly, "Beware of Clinton's Web of Treaties", speech to the Christian Coalition, Washington, DC, 18 September 1998, on www.eagleforum.org. As quoted in Anatol Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*, p12.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, p14.

future ages will look back on it as a benign and positive leader of humanity."⁵² This nationalism encourages irrational and prejudicial hatred of the other and the portrayal of other nations or ethno-religious groups as irredeemably wicked and hostile. This logic leads the US to treat with suspicion any international institutional arrangement that seeks to transcend the nation state. Rather than using its predominance to cement or develop the post-1945 concert of powers in support of regulated capitalist growth, world stability and the relief of poverty, contemporary American nationalism appears at times to be directed at seeking out new enemies and markets.

This crisis of modernity releases American power from any sense of collective responsibility. It is an extremely unstable basis upon which to base any hegemony, not least because it increases enmity at the expense of amity. As observed by one commentator: *"What made all this so unsettling to international order was that a kind of double enmity was conceived in the United States against certain actors and against certain conceptions of order. Underlying the understandable enmity against state and non-state actors that threatened vital interests, the US displayed a more disturbing enmity against constitutional order wherever and whenever it implied limits on American freedom of choice and action."*⁵³

It would be erroneous to assume that the National Security Strategy was an inevitable result of the terrorist attacks of 9/11. The global outpouring of good will and empathy signalled 'we are all Americans now'. This sentiment revealed a wider belief that 9/11 was not only an attack on the US but shared common values. The need to stand shoulder to shoulder with the US legitimated wider public and political support for the NATO led coalition in Afghanistan. Rather than using this unique opportunity to reinvest in the constitutional order, the US visibly turned its back on constitutionalism. In so doing, the Bush administration appeared to squander international goodwill and with it the capacity to bring other states and actors into the fold. Instead the course pursued by the Bush administration was charted by navigational points determined by domestic forces that not only questioned whether there were shared global common values, but saw in others values that were alien and threatening to their own.

⁵² *Ibid*, p15.

⁵³ *Weapons of Mass Destruction and International Order*, p32.

American nationalism: the religious dimension

Samuel Huntington's thesis that, "*those countries that are more religious tend to be more nationalist,*" has been used recently by a number of political scientists to explain the rise of American nationalism in the early part of the twenty first century.⁵⁴ Some secular European commentators have used this thesis to draw critical attention to the growing evangelical tradition in the US and its impact upon American domestic and foreign policy. All too often the alleged intransigence of the Bush administration, whether that be on same-sex marriages or its perceived uncritical support of Israel, is all explained as being indicative of the power of a narrow constituency within evangelicalism whose views are most certainly pre-enlightenment, if not anti-enlightenment. While there is indeed a relationship between religion and nationalism, the analysis provided by some commentators overlooks the complexity of the situation.

The evangelical Christian tradition is one of the most potent factors in global Christianity. While many evangelicals share with each other, and with other Christians, core beliefs, such as personal conversion, biblical authority and prayer, the evangelical tradition represents a far from homogeneous entity. Not all evangelicals are either fundamentalist in religion, or advocates of a right wing nationalism in politics. Large numbers of Black Americans belong to the evangelical tradition and yet their religious beliefs do not necessarily translate into right wing political positions. Similarly it would be wrong to assume that those who believe in the literal truth of the whole Bible hold to millennial views.

According to a survey completed in 2001 by the University of Michigan, white evangelical Protestants comprise 23.1% of the population. Evangelical Protestants are therefore the second largest Christian grouping in the US, after the Roman Catholics on 27.3%. Mainline Protestants including Methodists, Lutherans and Episcopalians came third with 21.2% of the population. While 14.4% of Americans described themselves as secular, a separate poll by Pew in March 2004 found that 40% of Americans believed in the literal word for word truth of the Bible. A further 42%

⁵⁴ Samuel Huntington, "Dead Souls: The Denationalisation of the American Elite", *National Interest*, No75, 2004, p28.

believed that the Bible is the word of God, but not necessarily true. In 1986 a Gallup poll found that 48% of southerners described themselves as ‘born again’ Christians compared with only 19% of North Easterners.⁵⁵

Political strategists, such as Karl Rove, attach considerable significance to the evangelical vote. This has less to do with their growing numbers, although that is important, and more because of their greater social and political commitment as expressed by their high electoral turnout, and their willingness to lobby on certain issues. Since 1976 when presidential candidate Jimmy Carter’s evangelical credentials forced President Gerald Ford to declare himself ‘born again’, all subsequent Presidents, bar President Bush Sr, have also declared themselves ‘born again’.

Despite the need to nuance any discussion as to the role of religion in American society and politics, the “*fundamentalist wing of the evangelical tradition is a very powerful ideological force in large parts of the United States.*”⁵⁶ It has been estimated that about one-half of ‘white evangelicals’, including those of a more robust conservative disposition, or about 12% of the US population, support the Christian Right.⁵⁷ The Christian Right follows a redemptive pattern in politics and places a heavy emphasis on conversion, both politically and spiritually. This ‘born again’ politics can at times promote passionate moral messages on a range of domestic issues such as abortion, homosexuality and pornography. The tendency to advocate uncompromising moral messages also affects the Christian Right worldview. For them Christianity has an inbuilt gospel imperative to carry the Christian message to all parts of the world. It subscribes politically to a strong brand of patriotism, where the US is seen to have responsibility for bringing law and order to other parts of the world.

During the Cold War, anti-communism was an article of faith for the Christian Right. It found a political expression in Ronald Reagan’s perception of the USSR as an ‘evil empire’. John Eidsmore, writes:

⁵⁵ *America Right or Wrong*, p140.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, p138.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, p141.

*The informed Christian will realise that Communism is totally at odds with Christianity and is the greatest evil of the twentieth century. A biblically based foreign policy - indeed the policy of any freedom-loving nation must be one of absolute and uncompromising opposition to Communism.*⁵⁸

During the 1980s this confrontational stance led to a coalition between religious and political conservatives, which encouraged the USA to retain its hegemonic position through the build up of conventional and nuclear weapons.

Although the Christian Right lost political ground following the end of the Cold War, 9/11 has become a rallying flag around which it has regrouped. The war against terrorism, with its potential to be perceived as part of a clash of civilisations, replaced anti-communism as the Christian Right's new moral crusade. Jerry Falwell, for instance, called the Prophet Muhammad a 'terrorist', while Pat Robertson described him as a 'wild-eyed fanatic' a 'robber' and a 'brigand'. To Franklin Graham, the son of Billy Graham, 'Islam is a very evil and wicked religion', while Henry Vines a leading southern Baptist, called the Prophet Muhammad a 'demon obsessed paedophile'.

Since 9/11 the Christian Right has found allies and support from across the wider political spectrum. In 2001 the Christian Coalition, the leading grassroots organisation of the Christian Right, calculated that 29 senators out of 100 and 125 House members out of 435 voted 100% of the time in accordance with the Christian Coalition's own principles in 2001. This amounts to more than a quarter of both Houses of Congress.⁵⁹ Similarly, while it is important to recognise the heterogeneity of those who are labelled as neoconservatives, there is a similarity in assumption between the Christian Right and certain neoconservative in how the world is viewed. Both groupings argue that America's mission is to press for global reform through the spread of traditional American values such as liberty, equality and democracy.

A significant characteristic of many of those who would identify with the Christian Right is their acceptance of millennial beliefs. Millennial ideas have erupted throughout modern European history. While some in Britain continue to hold to such

⁵⁸ John Eidsmore, *God and Caesar: Biblical Faith and Political Action*, Crossway Books, 1984, p50.

⁵⁹ *America Right or Wrong*, p128.

views, they are not reflective of contemporary mainstream evangelicalism, which tends to be much more cautious in this area. Despite their waning European influence millennial ideas were to the fore in the minds of the puritans who settled in America. This earlier form of expectation has been termed post-millennialism. On this view, the second coming of Christ comes *after* the thousand-year reign of the saints on earth. This kind of expectation fused with American optimism, and rising prosperity has sought to convince many in the United States that this was the beginning of God's kingdom on earth.

The form of expectation that is now so influential is pre-millennialism. In 1977, eight million Americans were estimated to hold such views. A survey conducted by the Pew Foundation in May 2004 found that 36% of respondents believe that the book of Revelation is no metaphor, but 'true prophesy'. Anatol Lieven notes that in 1987 63% of Southern Baptist pastors declared themselves to be believers in pre-millennialism, with a significant number holding, especially amongst those who would describe themselves as members of the Christian Right, to a more extreme variant of this belief known as dispensationalism.⁶⁰

According to this reading of the Bible there are seven dispensations in human history. We are now living in the time of great tribulation, which precedes the coming of Christ. This form of premillennialism owes its origin to John Darby, the founder of the Plymouth Brethren in the early nineteenth century. It gained great influence through the influence of the Schofield Reference Bible, which provided a grid for Christian readers to see history in these terms. However, it was when this view was taken up by more mainstream evangelicals from the Civil War onwards that it became significantly influential in the political life of the United States.

The most influential of all revivalist preachers, Dwight L Moody, summed up the mood of catastrophe promulgated by this view in the words: "*I looked on this world as a wrecked vessel. God has given me a lifeboat, and said to me "Moody, save all you can."* *God will come in judgement and burn up this world . . . this world is*

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, p144.

getting darker and darker; its ruin is coming nearer and nearer."⁶¹ On this view the ingathering of the Jewish people will precede the coming again of Christ. The founding of the state of Israel is seen by those who share this perspective as a sign that this is beginning to happen.⁶² On the basis of these views millions of Americans are Christian Zionists who strongly support the state of Israel on the basis of a reading of the books of Daniel, Ezekiel and Revelation in a way that European Christian scholars would regard as unwarranted.

These views have been taken up and disseminated in popular form by Hal Lindsey's book, *The Late Great Planet Earth*. This book relates dispensationalism to the major political events of the last part of the 20th century.⁶³ It turned dispensationalism from a minority creed of the more conservative evangelical churches and bible colleges into a majority faith among millions of American evangelical Christians through its sale of over 40 million copies. Its political influence can be seen in Ronald Reagan's reaction to Gaddafi's coup in Libya in 1971: "*That's a sign that the day of Armageddon isn't far off . . . everything is falling into place. It can't be long now. Ezekiel says that fire and brimstone will be rained upon the enemies of God's people. That must mean that they will be destroyed by nuclear weapons.*"⁶⁴

The political philosophy of these views is even more startling in the twelve books of the *Left Behind* series, apocalyptic fantasies by Tim LaHay and Jerry B. Jenkins that have appeared since the mid 1990s. These are allegedly novels, but they carry LaHay's designation as a nationally recognised speaker on Bible prophecy. They refer to the period on the earth after the rapture, that is after certain special Christians have simply disappeared. The world that remains is a world of struggle against the anti-Christ, which seems to be identified with the work of the United Nations. All this is a prelude to Christ returning to kill millions of people. Sales of this series have long since topped the 55 million mark. All this, particularly the political implications of the book, with its endorsement of unbridled American power, the role of Israel,

⁶¹ Michael Northcott, *An Angel Directs the Storm: Apocalyptic Religion and American Empire*, I. B. Tauris, 2004, p59.

⁶² In examining this issue the Working Group recognises that further work needs to be done to explore whether there is an Anglican theology of the land. While the Working Group hopes that further work might be done on this issue, it recognised that this issue lay outside the scope of this report.

⁶³ Hal Lindsey, *The Late Great Planet*, Bantam Books, 1973.

⁶⁴ *An Angel Directs the Storm*, p66.

including the rebuilding of the temple and the unquestioning acceptance of violence in the name of God is deeply worrying.⁶⁵

This whole understanding of scripture and its political implications raises four issues that need to be addressed. First, the apocalyptic elements recorded in the teaching of Jesus refer to the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem in AD 70. Whatever Jesus himself originally said or meant, the sayings as we have them in the gospels were clearly taken by the New Testament writers as referring to the destruction of the temple which happened in AD 70 and the flattening of Jerusalem after the Jewish revolt in AD 120.

Secondly, the book of Revelation, far from being a justification of American expansionism, is in fact a fierce critique of the imperial enterprise. It is not about detailed predictions of how history will unfold, but a revealing of what has truly happened through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Although Roman power appeared to remain rampant in fact, according to the visionary writer of Revelation, the Lamb of God has defeated all the forces of evil and death. All imperial systems have been in principle overthrown by God's rule in Jesus.

Thirdly, the dispensationalist view of history promulgated in the Schofield Bible, reads like a grid imposed on the Bible from outside. Of course, all reading of scripture proceeds on the basis of certain assumptions and presuppositions. There is no neutral reading. But those assumptions and presuppositions need to be questioned and challenged by the Bible itself, especially by God's revelation in Jesus. In the light of this the Bible is above all a book, which calls us to rethink our whole outlook (which is what the Greek word for repentance means) as individuals, societies and cultures. The Bible, far from allowing us to justify ourselves and our hubristic enterprises in history, calls our justifications into question. So, Michael Northcott drawing on the work of Christopher Rowland writes: "*Revelation is in other words a powerfully anti-imperial tract. Its coded and symbolic language pointed the first*

⁶⁵ A useful summary of the *Left Behind* series, together with a critique of their political significance, is Christopher Tayler, "Wrapt Attention", *Times Literary Supplement*, 7 May 2004, p36.

Christian to the real truth of history, which is that all empires will ultimately fail and be supplanted by the direct rule of God through the communion of the saints."⁶⁶

Fourthly, the place that premillennialists give to the founding of the state of Israel in God's purpose has no real foundation in the Biblical narrative. On the positive side, this premillennialist view, insofar as it affirms a continuing role of the people of Israel, is more biblical than traditional Christian supersessionism. According to the view that has dominated much of Christian history, the Christian Church has superseded the Jewish people. Jerusalem has been deterritorialized and the concept of the people of Israel as the chosen people has been appropriated by the Church, which has regarded itself as the new Israel. Judaism lived on only as a fossil, doomed to wander the earth in punishment until the end of time.⁶⁷

The premillennialist view is much truer to the vision of St Paul in Romans chapters 9 to 11, in which it is plainly stated that God has not broken his promise; has not abandoned his people. However, the linking of this to the land, to the founding of the state of Israel, regarding the latter as a sign of the in-gathering of Jews at the end of human history, has no real basis in a balanced reading of the scriptures. The state of Israel should be understood in terms of international law. The kind of massive theological foundation that Christian Zionists give to the state of Israel is both unfounded and very unhelpful in the present context. It creates amongst Arabs, particularly Christian Arabs, a deep sense of resentment and unfairness that the faith they share with American Christians has been used against them.

Restoring the constitutional balance

History suggests that American radical nationalism and the influence of the 'Christian Right' have always been reined in by the power of the 'American Creed' and a return to a more tolerant and pluralist equilibrium. The nationalism currently displayed by the US is the exception rather than the norm. The US imperial tendency has always been checked not only by the American belief that it should not have an empire, but

⁶⁶ *An Angel Directs the Storm*, p75.

⁶⁷ A thorough analysis of Christian Zionism, together with a critique of it is provided by Stephen Sizer, *Christian Zionism, Road Map to Armageddon?*, Inter-Varsity Press, 2004.

also by its refusal to pay the costs of such an empire. Some evidence suggests that the cost of the Iraqi venture might have curbed the wilder ambitions of the Bush Administration. But, suspicion remains whether recent diplomatic initiatives by the Bush Administration reflect a change of heart or merely of presentation. President Bush's 2005 inaugural speech, and the manner in which it was dominated by visionary language about spreading democracy and liberty around the world, would suggest the latter.

However, confidence in the self-correcting mechanism might prove to be misplaced if further attacks on the US occur. If the American homeland experiences another 9/11, then the American population risks retreating into a long-term state of siege and war. Such a development would see further curtailment of civil liberties at home and a progressively aggressive foreign policy abroad. Even if these attacks fail to occur, the economic and social erosion of large sections of the American middle class could lead to a fading of the American dream. In the short term at least we are likely to see a declining and embittered middle class voting *en masse* for radical conservatism. Domestically this could lead to a reiteration of traditional values as disenfranchised people try to recapture 'America'. Externally it could result either in isolationism, as America retreats into itself, or else in sporadic and aggressive strikes against imagined or real enemies abroad. Either way, it will certainly not be an America at peace with itself or with the wider world.

If doubts exist as to America's ability to moderate itself, then it is possible that the international environment might yet force America to participate more proactively in the constitutional order. The paradox of American power is that, although not since Rome has any nation had so much economic, cultural and military power, that power does not allow the US to solve global problems without involving other nations. For many key issues - from international financial stability, to drug smuggling and global climate change, to terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction - military and economic power alone cannot ensure success. An overt dependence on hard power might actually prove counter-productive to these objectives.⁶⁸

⁶⁸ Joseph Nye, *The Paradox of American Power: Why the World's Only Superpower Cannot Go It Alone*, Oxford University Press, 2004.

The terrorist attacks of 9/11 are symptomatic of deeper changes occurring in world politics. A technological revolution in information and communications has been diffusing power away from governments and empowering individuals and groups to play roles in world politics - including wreaking massive destruction - that were once reserved for states. The information revolution is creating virtual communities and networks that cut across national borders. Trans-national corporations and non-governmental actors, including terrorists, are playing more prominent roles both politically and economically. These organisations have their own cultures and values, which attract citizens into coalitions that ignore national boundaries. While the system of sovereign states is still the dominant pattern in the international system, it is possible to discern a pattern of crosscutting communities and governance that bear some resemblance to the quasi-feudal situation as existed before the Peace of Westphalia.

Allied to the contemporary information revolution has been the process of globalisation - the growth of networks of worldwide interdependence. These processes have seen a shrinking of distances. Events in what were previously seen as remote places such as Afghanistan now have a greater impact on Western policy. Whether the US likes it or not, globalisation is putting new items on national and international agendas. Many of these issues like financial stability and climate change cannot be resolved through unilateral action. International financial stability is vital to national prosperity, but governments need the co-operation of others to ensure it. In a world where national borders are becoming ever more porous nation states are forced to work with other countries. Faced with such challenges uni-lateral solutions will produce declining levels of return.

These changes do not mean that US military power has become irrelevant or that it has no role in international politics. The information revolution has yet to transform many parts of the world. Many states are unconstrained by democratic movements, and terrorist groupings pay little heed to the normal constraints of liberal societies. Civil wars remain rife in numerous places where collapsed empires have left power vacuums. The possession of military power is necessary to deter threats or to protect access to crucial natural resources such as oil. There will be times, as illustrated by the Kosovo crisis, when it is necessary to take military action in defence of the

constitutional order, even if such action is not officially sanctioned by that order. For such action to remain possible it is crucial for America to remain wedded to this process, even if at times it is necessary for America to stand aloof from it.

The growth of networks of interdependence provides a compelling argument in defence of institutional co-operation based on the rule of law. These arguments should not, however, obscure the counter argument that the European defence of such co-operative arrangements is not without self-interest, or that such self-interest is necessarily informed by an enlightened understanding of collective security and responsibility.

Robert Kagan powerfully argues that Europe's need to escape its bloody past has led to a new set of beliefs about conflict, power and threat. At the same time the USA has evolved into the guarantor of the European order by dint of its imperial might and global reach. Europe, he suggests, has turned its back on traditional balance of power theory in favour of a world of laws and rules and trans-national negotiation and co-operation. Whereas Europe has entered:

... a post historical paradise of peace and relative prosperity, the realisation of Immanuel Kant's 'perpetual peace', the United States remains mired in history, exercising power in an anarchic Hobbesian world where international laws and rules are unreliable, and where true security and the defence of a liberal order depend on the possession and use of military might. That is why on major strategic and international issues today, Americans are from Mars and Europeans are from Venus. When it comes to setting national priorities, determining threats, defining challenges and fashioning and implementing foreign and defence policies, the United States and Europe have parted ways.⁶⁹

The apparent success of the post-1945 experiment, allied to Europe's diminishing defence spending, has led European governments to favour the resolution of security interests through multi-lateral institutions with an emphasis on co-operation. As a result, "America's power and its willingness to exercise that power – unilaterally if

⁶⁹ *Paradise and Power*, pp3-4.

*necessary – constitute a threat to Europe’s new sense of mission”, the mission being “transmission of the European miracle to the rest of the world.”*⁷⁰

There are obvious dangers in overplaying the Kagan thesis, not least because of its tendency to treat Europe as a homogeneous entity, and the tendency to reinforce US exceptionalism. European critiques of the US need to be honest and self-critical and informed by the recent colonial history of many European nations. However, Kagan’s thesis usefully warns against any European sense of moral superiority vis-à-vis the US. The emergence of a European post-modern, post-industrial society has led to a focus on soft rather than hard security issues. Europe’s global reach is determined by negotiation and diplomacy, and while this approach is conducive to its own self-interest, it nonetheless cloaks Europe’s relative weakness in relation to the US. All this stands in marked contrast to the US that stands ready, through its massive military-industrial and security complex, to preside over a still greater extension of US military presence in the world. Just as this military-industrial complex was seen as vital in rolling back the Soviet threat, so many Americans, and indeed some Europeans, believe that a similar strategy is required in a post-9/11 world.

Christian reflections on international order

How then does this analysis affect a Christian understanding of international order and post-Cold War developments in US foreign policy? Central to Christianity is the understanding that humans are made in God’s image and as such all individuals share an equality of basic dignity as fellow creatures. Christians see this equality of dignity as a given in that it assumes that not only are all humans subject to a single ‘calling’, to grow and flourish in certain ways according to the common terms of their created nature as human creatures, but also that in so far as the ‘calling’ subjects all humans equally, no human is its author. Individuals, regardless of their race, ethnicity and nationality have a certain dignity that deserves and requires mutual respect.

The need to treat others with such respect and dignity as one would wish oneself to be treated means that other individuals and social groups, including nations, have a certain dignity that deserves our respect. As Nigel Biggar argues:

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, p61.

*The respect that this dignity commands is the basis of natural justice, which transcends particular cultures and is itself the basis of international justice. Christians are therefore committed to build an international order on the basis of natural dignity and justice and not just - a la Hobbes – on the basis of natural fear. Accordingly, Christians have an interest in developing international law and in seeing its authority maintained and enforced.*⁷¹

Not surprisingly, therefore, many Christians have high hopes and expectations of international law and those international institutions that have emerged following World War II. The development of common norms and the growth of international institutions that structure relations between states provide a system of checks and balances at the international level that have helped to curb the worst excesses of human behaviour and in so doing helped to provide an environment more conducive to human development and flourishing.

Jesus' command that we ought to love our neighbour as ourselves should not be seen as implying that we should love our neighbour instead of ourselves. However, it is an important part of our own self-interest, or our own flourishing, that we become faithful, sympathetic and generous to others. In certain tragic circumstances it might even be necessary to sacrifice one part of our flourishing for the sake of another. Again, unlike a Hobbesian understanding of human nature, Christians hold that faithfulness is a more important part of human flourishing than physical life. For Christians the rationality of this preference is explained through the belief in the possibility of life after death and in a God that might enable one to realise that possibility.

What applies to individuals applies *mutatis mutandis* to nations. Jesus' ethic of the Kingdom of God bears upon inter-state and inter-group relationships, as much as on individual behaviour, even though its realisation cannot be complete under the conditions of sinful, finite existence. Groups, as well as individuals, stand under the judgment and imperative of the Kingdom of God. So considerations of the common good, rather than national self-interest, usually very narrowly conceived, are an appropriate and indeed a crucial consideration.

⁷¹ Communication between Professor Nigel Biggar and Rt Revd Richard Harries, the Bishop of Oxford, 1 August 2005.

It follows, therefore, that it is the specific responsibility of all governments to seek the good, well-being or genuine self-interest of their peoples. This self-interest only becomes morally problematic when it fails, out of pride, greed or anxiety to recognise the equal dignity of other peoples, or where the pursuit of such self-interest is pursued without regard for one's obligations to other nations. Power cannot be divorced from responsibility. The problem, then, for all governments is to "*choose between their own immediate perhaps too narrowly conceived interests and the common interests of their alliance, or more ultimately of their civilisation, in which, of course, their 'national interest', is also involved.*"⁷²

It is possible to identify in the Old Testament the concept of God as 'Creator' and 'Redeemer' of all people's. This concept rose to prominence in the New Testament when the connection between religious faith and membership of a particular nation was weakened by Jesus and then severed by Paul. This implies that regard for one's own nation as the chosen people should be seen as sub-Christian. There is no uniquely righteous nation. No country should see itself as the redeemer nation, singled out by God as part of his providential plan. This is not to say that certain nations don't have particular callings or roles to play at particular times in history. But it is to say that one should not suppose that God calls only one nation.

⁷² Reinhold Niebuhr, "The Hitler-Stalin Pact", in D. B. Robertson (ed.) *Love and Justice: Selections from the Shorter Writings of Reinhold Niebuhr*, John Knox Press, 1957, p80.

Section Three

Political Reform in the Arab World

Central to the international community's war on terrorism is the assumption that democratic reform in the Middle East provides the best long-term strategy to defeating radical extremists. There is indeed evidence that the US-supported G8 Broader Middle East and North Africa initiative is reaping dividend. Civil society protests in Lebanon and elections in Iraq and the Palestinian territories all illustrate a process of political reform. Autocratic governments are under increasing pressure to liberalise so encouraging political groups to be more vocal in their demands for democratic reform. In Saudi Arabia, the most conservative of Arab countries, the royal family permitted, the first ever election to municipal councils in February 2005. Although these elections were not conducted on the basis of universal franchise, His Royal Highness Prince Turki Al Faisal indicated that the election was the first step and that elections to regional councils and eventually to the Shura Council would follow in due course. Not all Arab governments talk of democracy, but all have acknowledged the need for political reform in principle.

These reforms have inspired optimistic predictions that the Middle East is at last responding to the global trend towards democracy. The Egyptian sociologist, Saad Eddin Ibrahim, argues that the prospects for liberal democracy have never been so bright, while the Arab American journalist Fareed Zakaria observes that "*everywhere in the Arab world, people are talking about reform ... the wind is behind those who advocate free market, modern, Western-style reforms.*"⁷³ Debates about reform and democracy have now become a growth industry both in the Arab press and in Western foreign policy think tanks. President Bush has talked of Arab democratisation as a certainty. His foreign policy speeches increasingly refer to the democratic imperative, though to the relief of most commentators he appears to recognise that democracy cannot be imposed by military force.

⁷³ Amy Hawthorne, "Political Reform in the Arab World: A New Ferment?" *Carnegie Papers*, Number 52, October 2004, p3.

The 2003 Arab Human Development Report suggests, however, that while there are signs that this strategy is stimulating a new dynamism in the region, any euphoria at the partial reforms in the Middle East is premature.

*There are some liberalised autocracies but no democratic countries in the region. The link between economic and political reform remains weak. Democratic reformers have failed to build strong constituencies, and the organisations with strong constituencies are Islamists rather than democratic. The integration of Islamists in the reform movement remains poor. And the United States, now championing democracy in the region, has little credibility in Arab eyes and still has not consistently integrated democracy promotion in its policy toward the area. Yet despite these problems, it is becoming increasingly clear that there is a ferment of reform in the Middle East.*⁷⁴

The old order is gradually disappearing, but a new one has yet to take shape. Doubts remain as to whether what does emerge will resemble in any shape or form Western liberal democracy.

This hesitant process of political reform in the Middle East raises a host of questions that need further examination. How significant are these reforms? Are these reforms meaningful or are they nothing more than gesture politics by authoritarian regimes under growing international and domestic pressure? Are they merely cosmetic or do they suggest a wider democratic awakening in the Middle East? Are Islam and democracy compatible? Are Islamists willing to accept a democratic order and work within it?

In view of the democratic rumblings in the Middle East and the importance of democratic reform for the West's counter-terrorism strategy, this report examines some of these questions. It proceeds by examining in closer detail Islamic perspectives on democracy, while also considering whether there are non-religious issues that have impeded the Arab democratic experiment. This report progresses by acknowledging that a push for reform from outside might be the most pragmatic strategy. However, it warns against the dangers of developing a paternalistic and selective attitude to democratic reform that prevents the Middle East from

⁷⁴ Marina Ottaway, "Evaluating Middle East Reform, How do we Know when it is Significant?", *Carnegie Papers*, Number 56, February 2005, p3.

appropriating democracy in culturally and religiously sensitive ways. It concludes by providing some Christian reflections on democracy.

Islam and democracy: an evaluation of the theoretical argument

Democracy, despite its acknowledged imperfections, is assumed to be the best way of ordering society. Theodore Parker most famously defines democracy as “*government of all the people, by all the people, for all the people.*”⁷⁵ Central to this definition is the electorate’s ability to change the ruling authority through elections. When seen from the perspective of the Middle East, it is difficult to describe any Arab state as democratic, with the possible exception of Lebanon that holds to a complicated political arrangement known as consociational democracy. Advances in democracy in the broader Muslim world have occurred in non-Arab countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia and Turkey, and to a lesser extent in Pakistan, Bangladesh and even Iran. Some Arab states, including Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco and Yemen have introduced democratic measures. While nearly all Arab states now possess pro-forma parliaments, these parliaments lack any significant power or the ability to overturn decisions taken by an unelected executive. Political parties are either absent or severely constrained by the state. The role of any opposition invariably involves some negotiated process between the government and the party that determines the opposition’s scope and remit.

Parker’s thesis, which is self-evident to most established Western-style democracies, is not necessarily so in other parts of the world, and particularly in the Middle East.⁷⁶ Indeed, many commentators start from the premise that Arab democracy is an oxymoron. Some commentators argue that Islam is authoritarian in nature, and therefore hostile to the emergence of democratic states. Bernard Lewis suggests, perhaps rather cynically, that where democracy is invoked as a useful political principle in Arab countries it is often with a view to establishing, at best an oligarchy, and, at worst, a dictatorship.

⁷⁵ *The American Idea*, speech at the N.E Anti-Slavery Convention, Boston, 29th May 1850

⁷⁶ While recognising that the terms ‘Arab’ and ‘Muslim’ are not synonymous, most of what follows relates to societies where those identities are virtually co-terminous. This is not to overlook however the role of Arab Christians and the important role that they have played in developing Arab

For Islamists, democracy, expressing the will of the people, is the road to power, but it is a one-way road on which there is no return, no rejection of the sovereignty of God as exercised through his chosen representatives. Their electoral policy has been classically summarised as 'one man (men only), one vote, once'.⁷⁷

Although Lewis is speaking of extremists it probably needs to be recognised that many parts of the Arab world do not easily recognise many of those concepts that the West deems essential for democracy, concepts such as majority rule, universal suffrage, and gender equality. Much of the Middle East has operated for centuries on a consensual principle where leadership emerges by means of convoluted but well tested processes. Until the advent of Baathism and Nasserism, in the latter part of the twentieth century, these processes respected ancient tribal or clan values and, because they were essentially hierarchical in nature, often produced considerable social stability, even if they left unchallenged the marginal role of women in society.

Some Western scholars examine the Qur'an and Islamic law to illustrate that Islam and democracy are incompatible, a conclusion which is bolstered by the activities and views of a number of radical Islamic movements in the Middle East. The essence of this argument rests on the divine source of Islamic law. If God has revealed clear principles of what is to be encouraged and what is to be proscribed, then human desire and man made law have no place in tampering with these prescriptions and prohibitions.

By its very nature Islam looks beyond, outside itself, to revelation. For some three centuries the Qur'anic text, and the Prophet's sayings, the *hadith*, and practices, the *sunna*, were elaborated by scholarly interpretation. By the tenth century the Shari'a, a tradition of legal methodologies, was more or less fixed. This system is based firmly on the principle that, because God is One, so the world and all its ways of functioning must reflect that divine unity. Society must be so ordered that Muslims may not only be encouraged, but also enabled, to live and practise their faith according to these principles. The idea that such a unified system of belief and practice could exist

nationalism. Outside the Arab world, as already indicated, there are democracies, however flawed, in both Malaysia and Indonesia, two predominantly Islamic countries.

⁷⁷ Bernard Lewis, *The Crisis of Islam*, Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 2003 p85.

alongside political pluralism thus becomes virtually impossible to accommodate. And without some form of political pluralism democracy becomes meaningless.

Little, if any, of this is *prima facie* compatible with Parker's essentially secular view of authority. According to Parker, power comes from within society. Since society comprises individuals it is the responsibility of individuals to so organise themselves that the totality of their power is harnessed and deployed for the common good. It follows that this is done most effectively and most fairly by a representative form of government elected by the majority of the people. This remains the case whether a first-past-the post style of election is adopted or an alternative such as proportional representation. The idea of 'God' may be brought in to enhance or endorse such a political practice but God is by no means essential to it. Implicit in Parker's definition is the insistence that political power not only can be, but should be, separated from all notions of divine authority; it is here that the theological dimension comes strongly into play. The emergence in eighteenth century Western Europe of the concept of the social contract provides the foundation for Parker's definition of democracy.⁷⁸

There are a number of problems with this theoretical line of argument, not least because it tends to ignore the reality that, theoretically at least, any revealed religion is incompatible with democracy. All revealed religions have authoritarian bases, are patriarchal, have no democratic foundation, are dogmatic about what constitutes the truth, and do not believe that reason alone can bring one to God. It could be argued that such a coherent and unified worldview is not unlike where Christian Europe found itself in the late medieval period – a Holy Roman Emperor balanced by an equally holy Roman Pope; political and ecclesiastical power finely balanced.⁷⁹ It was a hierarchical society, given shape and consistency by the Church, a society where individual needs were clearly subordinate to the corporate vision. It was the sixteenth century reform movement, with its implicit valuing of the individual, both in relation

⁷⁸ Classically in Jean Jacques Rousseau's *The Social Contract* 1762

⁷⁹ Tage Lindbom, *The Myth of Democracy*, William B. Eerdmann, 1996. Lindbom, a contemporary Swedish historian & philosopher, notes the deepening social, political, and moral problems of democratic societies, and asks his readers to consider the possibility that democracy is quintessentially the manifestation of a spiritual debacle - the attempt to replace the true sovereignty of God with the 'kingdom of man'. He suggests further that the entire modern political enterprise - including totalitarianism, socialism, and liberal democracy - may represent a fundamental betrayal of the divine principles that alone can give meaning to life. This is an important challenge to reflect on, but in this paper we argue that democracy, however flawed, is soundly based on ethical and religious principles.

to God and the state, which caused the fracture and led to the eventual disintegration of Christendom. Another parallel that might be drawn is that strand of Old Testament teaching which suggests that Israel's true destiny was to be a theocracy. The introduction of the monarchy was a novel concession made to human weakness which found such abstract ideas unworkable. Even so, there is no doubt that the Davidic kingship saw its rationale as being derived from Yahweh in much the same way that *ulama*, the clerical jurists in Islam, look to Allah for validation.

A further weakness in adopting a purely theoretical analysis is that most Muslims reject this approach. It is true that some Islamists argue that in Islam sovereignty comes from God, whereas in democracy it comes from human beings. It is equally evident, however, that modernist Muslims can agree that while all sovereignty comes from God, Islam does not specify in any way what form the state should take.

*The state, even the Islamic state, must still be constructed in conformity with human understanding of how Islam translates into practice and institutions - a process always open to debate and new interpretations over time. In the end, then, dicta about what is or is not permissible within Islamist thinking are strictly theoretical; supposed contradictions are belied by the facts on the ground and the actual experience of Muslims with democracy.*⁸⁰

Over the last several decades Islamists from across the Muslim world have been steadily moving towards an acceptance of the concept of democracy.⁸¹

Hope lies in the fact that there are leading Islamic thinkers today who argue that the Islamic concept of Shura (the consultative assembly) taken with *Ijtihad* (the tradition of a revisionist interpretation of Islamic law), actually entails democracy. So, as has been written: *“The Legislative Assembly - Majlis al-Shura - must be truly representative of the entire community, both men and women. But a representative character can be achieved only through free and general elections; therefore the*

⁸⁰ Graham Fuller, “Islamists in the Arab World: The Dance Around Democracy”, *Carnegie Papers*, Number 49, September 2004, p4.

⁸¹ This point is forcefully made by Noah Feldman, a political scientist who specialises in the relationship between religion and political authority. Feldman served as senior advisor on constitutional law to the Coalition Provisional Authority in Iraq and as advisor to Iraqis involved in the constitutional process there. His experience in Iraq and the wider Middle East leads him to the conclusion that Islamists are actually the best hope for democracy in the Middle East. Noah Feldman, *After Jihad: America and the Struggle for Islamic Democracy*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2004.

members of the Majlis must be elected by means of the widest possible suffrage, including both men and women.”⁸²

This move has little to do with theoretical arguments about the source of sovereignty, or whether democracy is an alien Western concept, and more because Islamists would be among the primary beneficiaries. Would Islamists still embrace democratisation even if they were not the primary beneficiaries? Some critics will point to the experience of Sudan, Iran and the Taliban’s Afghanistan to argue that Islamist enthusiasm for democracy is superficial and that once power is attained they are reluctant to give it up. The counter argument, however, suggests that in all three of these cases, Islamists came to power via non-democratic means. History suggests that when any party gains power by violent means, its commitment to democracy is compromised. Following the Presidential election in Iran, 26 June 2005, the newly elected President, Mr Ahmadnejad, said, “*we did not have a revolution to have democracy.*”⁸³

A truer estimate of Islam’s response to democracy might come from an analysis of what happens when Islamists win power through elections.

*In the Arab world there is no democratic precedent as yet - the old fear about Islamists supporting ‘one man, one vote, one time’ style elections has never actually happened in the Arab experience because Islamists have not really been permitted to participate fully or win in open elections. The real question about whether Islamists are ready to win - and lose - elections has less to do with Islam and more to do with the political culture of the country in question. Where democratic concepts and practice have some historical roots or track record, the chances are good that Islamists - indeed any political party - will honour constitutional precepts and accept defeat as well as victory.*⁸⁴

Where the democratic culture is strong, as it is in Turkey, it is possible to envisage Islamist parties abiding by constitutional arrangements. Indeed, it could be argued that Islamist parties have played the democratic game in Turkey rather more honestly than their secularist opponents; the same could also be said of Indonesia, where it was

⁸² Muhammad Asad, “The Principles of State and Government in Islam”, as quoted in John L. Esposito (ed); *Oxford History of Islam*, Oxford University Press, 1999, p677.

⁸³ As quoted in the *Financial Times*, 27, June 2005, p18.

the Muslim religious leadership which lead the campaign against the anti-democratic, Western backed, dictatorship. Where the democratic culture is less advanced, as in Algeria, there is no guarantee that Islamists - or indeed any political party - will necessarily cede power constitutionally once it has been legitimately won.

Towards an understanding of the Arab experience with democracy

How do we attribute the weak democratic development in Arab states, if a simplistic religious explanation is found wanting? Why is democracy so weak in the Arab world? Failure to discern an accurate answer to this question will thwart any remedy. Realistically, no Arab state is likely to evolve into a liberal democracy in the foreseeable future without some kind of external pressure, political or otherwise. But, if America's democratic efforts in the Middle East are to succeed, then it is imperative to have an accurate understanding of those factors that have hindered political reform. This requires a more detailed understanding of the nature of political culture in the Arab world. This report suggests that an explanation can be found in a rather confusing mix of political, religious and historical factors. These categories are, of course, somewhat artificial and overlap considerably, but they will assist in providing an analysis.

The modern Arab state is an artificial construct whose borders were drawn by colonial powers in the early twentieth century. Nowhere is this more clearly the case than in modern-day Iraq. Politically speaking, one of the most urgent tasks confronting the coalition powers in post-war Iraq is that of establishing a form of democracy which is credible, not only to observers in Washington or London, but also to the very varied population of the rather artificial political construct that is Iraq. The drawing of straight lines on the map of Mesopotamia in the early twentieth century produced an uneasy amalgam of Kurds in the north, Sunnis in the central region, and Shi'ites in the south. There is no guarantee that Iraq as a national entity will survive the move towards democracy. Of the considerable Christian minority, estimated at one million, many have now emigrated and those remaining are finding themselves under

⁸⁴ *Carnegie Papers*, Number 49, September 2004, p8.

increasing persecution from insurgents who are issuing death threats to those who refuse to convert to Islam.

This and other colonial experiments have tended to diminish the legitimacy and sovereignty of the individual Arab state. The sense of belonging that many citizens have to their particular state is further weakened by the unique existence of what is called the Arab world. A shared culture, history and language across the Arab world means that developments in other parts of the Arab world impact on a particular national interest in a way that generates a right to a voice, or even, interference, in the affairs of or on behalf of the greater 'Arab nation.' Although there is sometimes an absence of consensus as to what is best for the Arab world, an individual's identity is less shaped by her or his association with a particular state, and more with a self-identification with the wider Arab world. This process of identity formation has tended to weaken the legitimacy of the state in Arab eyes and therefore prevent its democratic evolution.

The arbitrary nature of the modern Arab state reflects the importance of geographic considerations. The location of the Arab world on a central East-West axis and the geopolitical reality that it possesses over half the world's oil reserves means that the region has been a key focus of European colonialism in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The quest for trading routes allied to the need to protect access to key natural resources has frequently led to foreign intervention. These interventions, which of course continue to this day, have produced regional tensions that have not been conducive to democratic development. During the Cold War, the long-term Western support for friendly autocratic regimes in the Middle East entrenched them in place, so further weakening democratic forces in the region. Even after 9/11, doubts remain whether the US is willing to sacrifice security for democracy in the fight against terrorism. How will the US react to a democratically elected government in Iraq that might chose to align itself with its natural co-religionists in Iran, one of the most virulently anti-American states in the world?

There can be little doubt that one of the major obstacles to the establishment of democracy in most Arab countries is the recent history of the Middle East and, in particular, the role played in the popular imagination by the state of Israel. The

creation of the state of Israel, at a time when other Arab states were achieving their independence, and the subsequent wars and Arab defeats have been a significant inhibiting factor in the region's political development. These events have enabled many Arab states to live in a perpetual state of emergency that justifies, on the one hand the development of military regimes, and on the other hand security-focused states, neither of which are conducive to democracy.

At a societal level, the state of Israel has contributed to the ideal of pan-Arabism which has in turn weakened the commitment to local autonomy. The increasing emergence of Islamist movements over the last few decades as the primary opposition, not only to any negotiated Middle East peace settlement, but also as the main source of opposition to autocratic rule has sometimes resulted in the West not pressing the democratic agenda. Arab rulers have often invoked the fear of Islamist victories at the polls to discourage support for democracy among Western powers.

Finally, it is striking that the oil producing states of the Middle East have a particularly poor record when it comes to democratic advancement. The large oil revenues that are accrued through production inhibit the development of democracy in these states “ *because states could, in effect demobilise the political aspirations of their societies by generous welfare spending, by not levying taxes and by imposing political quiescence. This autonomy from domestic and international society spread to non-oil-producing states, either as recipients of aid from the Gulf states, or as exporters of cheap labour*”.⁸⁵ When public taxation underpins a government's fiscal policy it quickly leads to vocal demands for political representation. It might equally follow that without taxation there can be no representation.

The difficulties of promoting democracy in the Middle East

Prior to 9/11, US foreign policy to the Middle East appeared at times to prioritise political stability over political change. Although successive US administrations from the 1970s onwards developed economic reform packages for the Middle East, in the hope of encouraging political reform, political reform *per se* rarely featured. This was out of the fear that pressing for political reform and democratisation would disrupt not

only the Arab-Israeli peace process, but also key strategic interests.⁸⁶ 9/11 has seen, on the face of it at least, a radical restructuring of US foreign policy. Speeches by President Bush have clearly put political reform and democratisation on the agenda. As one Bush administration official put it, “*the old bargain of choosing between stability over change is now off; we’ve opened the conversation about the need for change.*”⁸⁷

Despite the prominence of this democratic agenda a number of questions remain as to how this reorientation of US foreign policy will work in practice.

*Can the United States promote change at the risk of instability in the region while it remains dependent on petroleum from Arab countries? Can it pursue Arab-Israeli peace and democratisation at the same time? Can the United States still secure much needed military and counter-terrorism cooperation if it antagonises friendly regimes by promoting democratisation as well? Is it feasible for the United States to promote democratisation effectively amid widespread grievances against the war in Iraq and serious questions about US human rights practices there and in Afghanistan?*⁸⁸

While some commentators are optimistic that the US can simultaneously achieve peace, reform and security for the region, while continuing to protect key national interests, others are less positive arguing that such an ambitious agenda will necessitate a political compromise.

The tensions between the various strands of US foreign policy are evident in the US handling of post-war Iraq. A key strategic assumption of the Bush administration that has complicated America’s promotion of democracy in the Middle East was the idea that regime change in Iraq would act as a catalyst for change across the region. Not only did the US administration believe that it was necessary to neutralise a perceived

⁸⁵ Toby Dodge, *Iraq’s Future: The Aftermath of Regime Change*, Adelphi Paper 372, 2005, p58.

⁸⁶ Some of the economic initiatives that the US undertook during the 1980s and 1990s include: the 1994 US-Egypt Partnership for Economic Growth, the 1998 US-North Africa Economic Partnership and the 1985 US-Israel Free Trade Agreement. The political philosophy underlying these ventures was the belief that economic reform and growth would help create a middle class and elements of a civil society that could then be expected to push internally for political reform. By the end of the 1990s it was clear that not only had economic reform not led to political change but that the lack of political reform was impeding economic growth.

⁸⁷ As quoted in Michele Durocher Dunne, “Integrating Democracy Promotion into US Middle East Policy”, *Carnegie Papers*, Number 50, October 2004, p7.

⁸⁸ *Ibid*, p1.

threat, but it believed that regime change would lead to a democratic government in Iraq that would galvanise the democratic impulse throughout the region. To President Bush, “*a secure and free Iraq is an historic opportunity to change the world.*”⁸⁹

It is increasingly plain, however, that the US administration has acknowledged, both through its actions and its words, that a quick transition to democracy in Iraq is unlikely, and indeed that democracy is not a guaranteed outcome. Marina Ottaway observes that while the January 2005 elections were a success, they do not ensure that Iraqis can now agree on a constitutional formula that accommodates the demands of all groups. Democracy, as the separation of power, checks and balances and protection of individual rights has not proven sufficient to avoid conflict in other deeply divided societies and it is unlikely that on its own it will work in Iraq. Unless Iraqis are able to reconcile their differences through a negotiated settlement, the US will be faced with a choice of whether to keep the country together by force or to search for an early exit strategy.⁹⁰

Despite the coalition’s victory on the battlefield, intractable post-war difficulties have meant that the feasibility and desirability of such high profile military initiatives remain in question. The protracted nature of the conflict in Iraq and the difficulties experienced in state-building has constrained American influence in the region.⁹¹ Rather than acting as a catalyst for regional democratic change, American foreign policy since 9/11 has resulted in a significant level of anti-Americanism in the Arab world at nearly all levels of society.

To many in the Arab world the ‘war on terror’ appears directed almost exclusively at the Muslim world. The war in Afghanistan followed by the 2003 Gulf War has seen the spread of US military presence in the region and the creation of a defensive siege mentality amongst many Muslims in the Arab world.

Muslims are in a hunker-down mode, feeling their culture and religion under attack and under legal discrimination even in the West. Any culture feeling itself under siege turns to basics. As a result, Muslims are embracing Islamic

⁸⁹ White House Press Conference, 13 April 2004.

⁹⁰ *Carnegie Policy Brief*, Number 36, March 2005.

⁹¹ *Iraq’s Future: The Aftermath of Regime Change*, p63.

*practice more deeply, an essential element of their identity. When their religion is vilified or portrayed in the West as part of the problem, Muslims not surprisingly react by intensifying their identification with Islam as a source of strength, solace and solidarity. Islamic emotions are stronger than ever.*⁹²

Events since 9/11 have contributed to the marginalisation of those Arabs who identify with alternative ideological agendas such as Arab nationalism, Marxism or liberal secularists. These groupings are finding it increasingly difficult not to be drawn into a broader wave of Islamist-nationalist rhetoric, aimed at defending the Arab world from a perceived external aggressor. Traditional boundaries between Arab nationalism and Islamic identity have been increasingly eroded.

This erosion of boundaries will impact on the evolution of moderate Islamist movements in the Middle East. Anti-imperial and anti-regime instincts now appear to be the driving force in the region. This has resulted in a situation where anti-Western violence, while not necessarily acceptable, is increasingly seen as understandable. It is difficult to envisage this situation providing a fertile ground for democratic growth and development, especially when more moderate voices appear to be eclipsed by radical ideologies and viewpoints. If the existing regimes do fall under the weight of this internal pressure then it is likely that what emerges will be populist, anti-American forms of government.

How then should the international community respond to this situation? If it is accepted that attempting to interfere directly in the internal affairs of Arab states by supporting moderate voices runs the risk of further radicalisation, then it follows that perhaps greater effort should be paid to tackling the external sources that have fuelled this process.

This means an end to the radical-right wing policies of the Likud in Israel and a just settlement of the Palestinian problem, a departure of American troops from the region, and an end to the more intimidating and broad brush anti-Muslim discrimination that has unfortunately come to mark the new global alert against Muslim terrorism. Until this happens, the region will remain

⁹² *Carnegie Papers*, Number 49, September 2004, p14.

*radicalised and without political outlets, except through Islamist parties and movements. Anti-Americanism and anti-regime terrorism, if not condoned, will be viewed with immense ambiguity or even indulged by publics at large.*⁹³

If those external factors that have helped to generate Arab radicalism can be addressed in a pragmatic and non-adversarial manner, then it remains possible that Islamist movements will simply become part of the broader political process in a way similar to that which has occurred in Turkey.

Christian reflections on democracy

How is the Christian Church to respond, both to the specific issue of Israel/Palestine, but, more broadly, to the general thrust of those who argue that democratic institutions of the kind we enjoy are a *sine qua non* for world peace? Increasingly, Church-based organisations like Christian Aid, Sabeel, and, more recently, USPG, appear to take a stance that highlights the concerns and grievances felt by Palestinians. This position reflects the Church's own historical engagement in the region. The Church Mission Society, for instance, has a long identification with Palestinian Christians dating from the 1840s. These organisations recognise the need to take seriously the historic injustices felt and experienced by Israeli Jews, but they lay a strong emphasis on the need for a prophetic witness by the Church against the terrible injustice under which the Palestinian people suffer. They cite the continuing occupation of the West Bank and the building of the separation wall as acts of aggression perpetrated by Israel, the only fully functioning democracy in the Middle East, against a neighbour with similar democratic aspirations.

On the other hand, many Christians, and particularly but not only those from the political right with Zionist sympathies, argue that the legitimate defence of Israel as a democratic state requires such actions. Israel feels continually under threat from suicide bombers within its own territory as well as the virulently anti-Israeli and anti-Semitic propaganda that comes from so many Arab quarters urging the total destruction of the state of Israel and the Jewish people. If democratic values are to be established and maintained across the region, Israel must be guaranteed secure

⁹³ *Carnegie Papers*, Number 49, September 2004, p15.

borders and full acknowledgement as a sovereign state by the Arab world. Most Christians agree that a just and peaceful resolution of these matters is crucial to defusing the worsening situation in post-war Iraq. It is for this reason that many Christians use the following prayer in relation to Israel/Palestine:

*Pray not for Arab or Jew,
for Palestinian or Israeli,
but rather for ourselves,
that we might not divide them in our prayers,
but keep them both together in our hearts.*

The failure to provide for either the security of Israel, nor justice for the Palestinians, is probably the single most inflammatory factor in the Middle East, fuelling tension between Islamic extremists, and indeed Muslims everywhere, and the US together with its allies.

In trying to weigh the relative values of Western-style liberal democracy and traditional forms of Arab government, it is salutary to begin with democracy's failures. Briefly, they are: first, in a society dominated by the market, and therefore a society that contains a radical divide between the rich and the poor, as in the USA, it is financial resources which dominate the political process. It is the wealthy and powerful who control the media, not just during an election campaign, but through a daily diet of political assumptions and attitudes. So on television and in the newspapers it will, with a few honourable exceptions, be a perspective on the world that reflects the interests of those who can work the present system to their own advantage.

Secondly, in order to gain or retain power there will always be the temptation of politicians to pander to the narrowest and most short term interest of particular groups whose vote they want, rather than wider and longer term considerations about the common good. So it is that democratic politics can so easily result in the lowest common denominator of human desires and aspirations rather than the higher ideals of its citizens.

Thirdly, because liberal democracy and a market economy are so inseparably interconnected, it is very difficult to avoid a lowering of general standards and

common decency. Most Islamic societies are offended by the values of the West, its pornography, lewdness and vulgarity - all aspects of a society which is consumer-dominated and where the market reigns supreme, a market controlled by people with money to spend in persuading consumers to purchase the goods or services they have to offer.

The evolution of the modern Conservative Party is an interesting case study. Traditional Conservative ideology, based on Burke, took an organic view of society that was rooted in traditional values. This gave way under Mrs Thatcher to a party which sought to hold together family values and an unfettered market. But as Anthony Giddens pointed out: *“Devotion to the free market on the one hand, and to the traditional family and nation on the other is self-contradictory. Individualism and choice are supposed to stop abruptly at the boundaries of the family and national identity, where tradition must stand intact. But nothing is more dissolving of tradition than the ‘permanent revolution’ of market forces. The dynamism of market societies undermines traditional structures of authority and fractures local communities.”*⁹⁴

Fourthly, even in liberal democracies there is always the danger of eroding civil liberties. We have seen this in Guantanamo Bay as well as in the UK where alleged terrorist suspects are imprisoned without trial or due legal process. The horrific abuse, as in Abu Ghraib and scandals of inhumanity to prisoners, is a disturbing trend. Similarly, the literally hundreds of black men and women waiting on death row in the United States is indicative of a legal system that at times appears to disadvantage certain sections of society.

So in trying to assess the relative value of Western liberal democracy and Arab forms of government, it is very far from comparing what is a perfect system with one that has no value. On the contrary, it is a question of comparing a system which for all its value is nonetheless deeply flawed with one which does indeed have certain values. When these criticisms are taken into account, democracy does indeed offer something absolutely fundamental, namely checks and balances on potentially tyrannical government power.

⁹⁴ Anthony Giddens; *The Third Way*, Polity Press, 1996, p15.

What is needed in the Middle East is culturally appropriate forms of government by consent. Western liberal democracy cannot simply be imposed on a predominantly Islamic culture, for many of its concepts and assumptions exude a secularism which is antithetical to the Arab world. Democratic values and practices need to be understood and appropriated in Islamic terms. But they do need to be appropriated; for consensual government demands not only consent by all the people, including adult women who will form the majority of the population, but the clear freedom to withdraw consent from one government and bestow it on an alternative.

The strongest defence of liberal democracy from a Christian point of view is contained in Reinhold Niebuhr's book, *The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness*. He argued that a Christian basis for democracy rests not simply on a respect for individual freedom and human choice, but on our human tendency to oppress and tyrannise one another. Traditionally Christian political theologies, for example that of Martin Luther, argued for a strong state to stop citizens tearing one another apart. Indeed Martin Luther compared the state to a cage and its citizens to tigers who need to be stopped from devouring one another.

Niebuhr argued on the basis of the same pessimistic view of humanity, that the most important cage to have is one which stops governments from devouring its citizens - hence the need for checks and balances, in the United States the traditional separation of powers, with the opportunity of citizens to vote governments out of office. So whilst acknowledging the manifest faults and flaws of liberal democracy and recognising the validity of some of the insights and practices of Arab forms of government there is no moral equivalence between the two *systems*. In order to safeguard the role of women, freedom of speech, religion and assembly, and human rights more generally, it is essential to have a form of government in which the judiciary have substantial independence from the executive and the executive is accountable to the legislature, with the citizens having an absolute right to vote their government out of power and choose a new one.

In a lecture in Oxford on the 24 February 2005, the Saudi Arabian Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al-Faisal acknowledged that the Saudis were a cautious people and they

were moving slowly. But he added wryly that he hoped the emergence of democracy would not take nearly as long as it had in the West. It is good to be reminded that in Britain until 1918 and the Representation of the People Act, 40% of men were not registered to vote, and women were excluded entirely.

Christians are right to support a move in the direction of democracy in the Middle East. This is not just because of respect for individual liberty and free choice, but because of our human capacity to tyrannise and oppress one another, a capacity which is particularly dangerous in the form of government. Hence the need for checks and balances, the traditional separation of powers, and the absolute freedom of citizens to change their governments without recourse to violence. As Reinhold Niebuhr put it, *“Man’s capacity for justice makes democracy possible; but Man’s inclination to injustice makes democracy necessary.”*⁹⁵

⁹⁵ Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness*, Nisbet, 1945, pvi.

Section Four

Christian Principles of Continuing Importance and Applicability

Set out below are some Christian principles, theological and ethical, in a world characterised by power and violence. These principles underlie the discussion in this study and are, we believe, of continuing validity.

1. The whole political sphere, including the pursuit of international order, lies open before God. Those who make decisions and act within it are ultimately accountable to a power higher than any human assembly.
2. All human beings, of whatever nationality or religion, share a basic human dignity. Respect for this dignity is the underlying moral principle for relationships between states, as well as individuals. It is a moral principle that is expressed through the establishment of international law and its observance. So international order is to be built not on brute power and fear but on law that is ultimately grounded in the divine wisdom.
3. States pursue their own interests. They are right to do so on the understanding that their interest is in the pursuit of “The good”, that is, the condition of well-being and flourishing proper to human beings. This includes taking the interest of other states into account. When national self-interest is interpreted in a narrow or short-term way that excludes or ignores the flourishing of other communities, this is incompatible with a proper understanding of what is in our interest.
4. The implication of these first three principles is that conflicts, including that created by the threat of terrorism, need to be understood, first of all, in political terms. And politics is too important to be seen in purely political categories. It has a theological underpinning and an ethical imperative. For the relationship of states to states, or of states to terrorist groups, involves trying to understand the perspective on the world, the fears and interests, of those who seem antagonistic. It may be an exaggeration to assert, as has said,

that all ethics is a training in sympathy but the truth in it is that trying to enter into the perspective of the other is not simply an expression of political realism; it has a theological foundation. This means, as was argued in the study, that winning hearts and minds is absolutely fundamental in countering terrorism. Furthermore, if overt conflict is to be avoided, or terrorism overcome, the whole range of political activities, from diplomacy and constructive foreign policies to agreements and confidence-building measures, including the addressing of long-standing grievances and perhaps economic support, will all be of crucial importance. For these endeavours will be about seeking the common good, including the good of the perceived adversary.

5. Whilst the pacifist witness remains an essential strand in the Christian approach to war for most Christians the criteria of the just war tradition, appropriately applied to the conditions of modern warfare, including counter-terrorism, remain an indispensable tool of moral analysis. The Church as Church is not usually in a position to pronounce authoritatively that a particular war is morally justified or not, but it has a paramount duty to urge these criteria on all governments contemplating military action. One of the important imperatives from the application of this tradition today is the need to strengthen the United Nations as the legitimate authority for military intervention.

6. Although anticipatory self-defence (often called pre-emptive military action) might, under some carefully defined circumstances, be regarded as morally justified, this is to be clearly distinguished from preventative war where military action is premature. In short morally permissible pre-emptive military action is that which is directed against a threat whose seriousness and emergence are sufficiently clear, and where no effective non-military alternatives are available; morally impermissible premature military action is that which is directed against the threat whose seriousness and emergence are not sufficiently clear, or where effective non-military alternatives are available.

7. Democracy, with all the corresponding human rights of freedom of expression, freedom of assembly and freedom of worship, is a desirable, universal goal. But it certainly cannot be imposed on any other country by force. Furthermore, it needs to be appropriated in culturally appropriate ways. Again, democracy as we have it in the West at the moment, is deeply flawed and its serious shortcomings need to be addressed.

8. Religion is an ambiguous phenomenon. It can exacerbate or mitigate conflict. It is important to take into account the tendency of religious views of the world to absolutise issues and divisions that might otherwise be the subject of political negotiation and compromise. This is in addition to the very mixed record of attitudes to violence in all religious traditions. So religion, including the Christian Church, can only offer insights about world order on the basis of a recognition that it is itself caught up in the compromises and conflicts of humanity; on the basis of an awareness of its own mixed historical record together with a willingness to be critical about its own assumptions, attitudes and role.

9. Whilst being aware that religion, including the Christian church, is part of the problem nevertheless in a world characterised by violence and disorder the church has a gospel of peace to proclaim. This is the peace between God and humanity, brought about by Christ who is himself our peace (Ephesians 2, 14), which brings hope to people in the most dire of situations. It impels the followers of Jesus to act as peacemakers (Matthew 5, 9), by prayer for the world and its leaders, by working for reconciliation between contending parties and by seeking to establish that justice whose fruit is peace for there is a false peace to be exposed (Jeremiah 6, 13-14) as well as God's shalom to establish. So Christians first of all will pray that they may seek and work for a true peace. This is well expressed in a prayer adopted by the Corrymeela Community

Show us, good Lord
The peace we should seek,
The peace we must give

The peace we can keep,
The peace we must forego.
And the peace you have given
In Jesus Christ our Lord.

10. One implication of this is that the churches have a special responsibility in the area of reconciliation. In a world where right is rarely wholly on one side, the Churches have a particular role to play in articulating the faults, wrongs and inconsistencies of all parties to a dispute, including those of the country to which the Church belongs. This should not lead to relativism or a sense of moral equivalence between conflicting parties (though it might). But it does highlight and underline the universality of human sinfulness and a willingness to be aware of and penitent about this.
11. Christians will be alert to the politics of fear and how a heightening of the fear factor can lead to the erosion of civil liberties. This is not to deny that certain threats need to be taken with the utmost seriousness, a seriousness which has been underlined by the recent bombings in London, but it is to set these threats within a biblical perspective of trust in God, rather than a hubristic human sense that in a world of notorious uncertainty every threat to our security can be managed.
12. The tendency of some religious groups, both Christian and Muslim, to give a over simplistic reading of current events, is harmful. Both international law and human rights, properly understood, have a theological foundation in the purpose and will of God. But to go beyond this and read human history with a confidence that one knows precisely what God is doing through current events, is an illegitimate extension of our limited, creaturely status and viewpoint. History outwits all our certitudes.
13. The debate on nuclear weapons (considered in relation to Iran in the appendix) needs to be conducted with much greater honesty and consistency. If certain countries retain their nuclear weapons on the basis of the uncertainty and potentially violent volatility of international relations, on what basis are the

same weapons denied to other states? The non-nuclear weapon states need to be presented with rather more convincing arguments and incentives than they have been up to now as to why it might be in their best, long-term interests not to go nuclear.

These are the principles which emerged in our consideration of terrorism in the modern world, American power, the 2003 war in Iraq, and the establishment of democracy in the modern world. However, we believe that these fundamental principles are applicable not just to the events of the last decade but to the continuing struggle to achieve a just and stable international system. Religion is now a major player on the public stage of the world in a way that few foresaw two decades ago. We believe that the Churches have an important role to play, not simply in urging the importance and applicability of the principles discussed above, but in a proper awareness of the role of religion, for good as well as for ill, and the initiatives it might take towards reconciliation between adversaries. For the Church is called on both to be a witness to the Kingdom of God, which bears on relationships between states as well as individuals, but to be a sign of that kingdom, both in its own life and the role it plays in the international order.

Iran: A Case Study

Iran seems to embody much that is most problematic for the international community in a post 9/11 world. This case study examines the controversy surrounding Iran's nuclear programme. It provides a chronology of recent events and an overview of how the international community has reacted to the suspicion that Tehran is pursuing a nuclear weapons capability. It develops by examining what drives Iran's nuclear weapons ambitions, as well as how this debate has impacted domestically in Iran. It analyses the US and European responses to the Iranian crisis, both in terms of their policy responses and the motives behind such policies. In conclusion, attention is devoted to the way ahead for the international community in seeking to secure a non-nuclear Iran.

Background

In December 2003 Iran signed an Additional Protocol (AP) to its nuclear safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).⁹⁶ The AP requires Iran to supply the IAEA with an inventory of nuclear activities and site access to verify Iran's status as a non-nuclear-weapon state (NNWS) under the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT). The catalyst to the AP was a discovery at the Natanz installation in August 2002 showing that Iran had developed the process of enriching nuclear weapon-grade uranium. Heavy water facilities in Esfahan and Arak revealed that Iran's plutonium enrichment capabilities were more advanced than previously anticipated. These events confirmed US suspicions that Iran was pursuing a clandestine nuclear weapons capability. Technological timelines remain problematic. Previous predictions that Iran might develop nuclear weapons by 2010 have been

⁹⁶ In January 2005 the Foreign and Commonwealth Office published *Iran's Nuclear Programme: A collection of Documents*, that "record the international efforts over the past two years to establish with confidence whether Iran's nuclear programme is for peaceful purposes". *Iran's Nuclear Programme: A Collection of Documents*, January 2005, Cm 6443, p3.

radically revised. Alleged experts now suggest that Iran could cross the nuclear threshold in the next two years.⁹⁷

The international community demanded that Iran disclose its nuclear activities and cooperate with the IAEA. Iran's co-operation with the IAEA and the signing of the AP are positive steps, but the situation remains far from ideal. Iran has agreed to suspend voluntarily - but not end, let alone dismantle - its fuel cycle capabilities, especially the uranium enrichment plant at Natanz. Yet this is exactly what the West, especially the US wants. Iran as a matter of principle, prestige and the very considerable investment it has made, wants to retain this capability. Iran argues that it should be allowed to complete the fuel cycle once it has been found in compliance by the IAEA. As a signatory to the NPT, Iran should, under Article IV of the Treaty, be eligible for nuclear technology imports from other states.

Having signed the AP, Tehran has been subject to greater IAEA scrutiny. Six monthly reports by the IAEA have caused disagreements between the West and Tehran on the one hand and the US and the EU-3 (France, Germany and UK) on the other hand. While the IAEA points to a number of areas of outstanding concern that need further Iranian clarification, the EU-3 and the US remain divided as to how these concerns can be resolved. The US remains insistent that Iran's non-compliance be referred to the United Nation's Security Council (UNSC), so raising the spectre of international sanction. The EU-3 believe that its policy of critical engagement with Iran continues to reap dividends and that referral to the UNSC would be counterproductive.

Emboldened by the US predicament in Iraq, Iran used the ambiguity of the AP to renege on the October 2003 agreement. In the face of intense US lobbying for this matter to be referred to the UNSC, the EU-3 secured a new suspension agreement with Iran in Paris, 15 November 2004. The Paris Agreement holds to the October 2003 framework but elaborates on several key points, most notably the scope of the suspension. The scope of the suspension was spelt out, but its duration remained ambiguous. The Paris Agreement locked in the EU-3 and Iran into a diplomatic process supported by working groups on a range of security issues. The EU-3 hoped

⁹⁷Wyn Q Bowen and Joanna Kidd; "The Iranian Nuclear Challenge", *International Affairs*, Vol 80, March 2004, pp257-276, p261.

to use the Paris Agreement to make permanent the temporary suspension of Iran's nuclear fuel cycle. In exchange they offered a variety of economic and political inducements.

As part of the follow up to the Paris Agreement the EU-3 and Iran agreed on 25 May 2005 that the EU-3 would present comprehensive proposals for a long-term agreement by the beginning of August 2005. The EU-3 hoped that its Framework Agreement, presented to Iran on 5 August 2005, setting out a final agreement on long-term objective guarantees that Iran's nuclear programme was exclusively for peaceful purposes would lead to improved relations based on a process of collaboration in different areas. The agreement was specific in terms of what the EU-3 expected of Iran, reiterating the basic position that Iran should abandon all fuel cycle activities permanently. The framework agreement was less specific when it came to spelling out what the EU-3 would offer in return. It proposed new processes of further dialogue with the potential for cooperation in a number of areas, most notably trade and security, but few concrete offers.

This Framework Agreement was meant to provide the basis for discussions between Iran and the EU-2 on 31 August 2005. However, on 8 August 2005 Iran rejected the EU-3 offer and, in contravention of the Paris Agreement, resumed uranium conversion at its facility near Esfahan. Iran's official response to the EU-3 Framework agreement argued: *"The proposal is extremely long on demands from Iran and absurdly short on offers to Iran and it shows a lack of any attempt to even create a semblance of a balance. It amounts to an insult on the Iranian nation, for which the EU-3 must apologise."* The language and speed of the Iranian response suggest that Iran either felt betrayed by the EU-3's failure to offer more significant incentives or that it had predetermined to reject any offer which did not show flexibility on the crucial question of uranium enrichment. At the same time, however, the new Iranian President, Mr Ahmadinejad, appeared not to close the door on future negotiations when he said: "I have new initiatives and proposals which I will present after my government takes office". Despite such assurances the IAEA adopted a resolution on 11 August 2005 expressing concern about Iran's unilateral decision to restart its suspended program.

Despite these developments Iran's policy appears to be one of protracted negotiation. The Paris Agreement diminished the prospect of referral to the UNSC. However, it has provided sufficient ambiguity for Iran to draw out the negotiations with the EU-3. Disagreement regarding the Framework Agreement is a further example of this strategy. It is possible that Iran will continue with such negotiation until such time as the IAEA reports that Iran has corrected past violations of the NPT. A clean bill of health by the IAEA would diminish the threat of punitive action from the UNSC if Iran then decided to resume its enrichment programme under IAEA safeguards.⁹⁸ It remains possible, however, that Tehran might forgo a nuclear weapons capability, if the EU-3 delivered a suitably attractive incentive package. The EU might be able to provide economic inducements, but it is at a disadvantage when it comes to meeting Iran's regional security concerns.

There is no easy solution to this impasse. No Iranian regime will forgo its civil nuclear programme just because of international demands. There will have to be a *quid pro quo* if such an agreement is to be reached. This would almost certainly involve lifting US sanctions and all other discriminatory action against Iranian interests. It is difficult to imagine any American administration agreeing to such terms, unless Iran changes its behaviour on other sensitive issues. As long as the US remains wedded to its policy of regime change in Iran the prospects of a negotiated settlement will remain elusive. It is unlikely that there can be any agreement on outstanding issues outside the context of a broader settlement.

Removing Iran's demand for nuclear weapons

Understanding what drives Iran's nuclear ambition is of crucial importance if the international community is to develop policies that might resolve this crisis. All too often analysts portray Iran's nuclear programme as irrational and ideologically driven. Such analysis is misguided and ill informed. It reflects Western prejudices and irrationality regarding the Muslim world in general and Iran in particular.

Comprehending what drives Iran's nuclear ambition involves seeing the world through Iranian eyes, and in so doing recognising the fears and interests of those who

⁹⁸ "Iran's Nuclear Programme: Suspended Animation", *IJSS Strategic Comment*, Vol 10, Issue 9, November 2004, p2.

at times appear antagonistic to our own position. There are clear ethical and political reasons for doing so. Ethically, it ensures that we do not dehumanise our neighbour or those who threaten us. Politically, it opens up a range of activities from diplomacy and constructive foreign policies, to agreements and confidence building measures, including addressing long-standing grievances that are critical to achieving the common good, including the good of the perceived adversary.

Contrary to many Western assumptions, Iran's nuclear programme is driven by the need to develop a credible deterrent posture against a range of threats.

Iran's 'anarchical' regional environment has all the ingredients of a strategic nightmare: hostile neighbours, a lack of great power alliances, a 25 year face off with the greatest superpower in history, living in a war infested region (5 major wars in less than 25 years), contending with ethno-territorial disputes on its borders, competing with a dominant Wahhabi trans-regional movement that theologically and politically despises Iran, and coping with nearby nuclear powers (Pakistan, Israel, and India). In many ways, Iran is located in the middle of the uncontrollable centre that has been created by post cold war and post 9-11 world politics.⁹⁹

Allied to Iran's hostile external environment is the perception that possessing a nuclear capability will show the technological advances of the Persian civilisation and the general superiority of Shia Iranians over their mostly Sunni Arab rivals.¹⁰⁰

Understanding what drives Iran's nuclear ambitions requires some knowledge of its history. The demise of the Safavid Dynasty in 1722 and the rise of the Qajar Dynasty in 1795 were followed by a period of intense instability for Persia, which subsequent Shahs sought to mitigate by providing trading concessions to Britain in an attempt to ward off the advances of Russia. The economic devastation caused by these concessions wrought havoc on indigenous Persian industries and contributed to the social upheaval and political unrest of the Tobacco Revolt of 1891 and the Constitutional Revolution of 1906. The 1906 constitutional experiment was finally quashed in 1911 when British and Russian forces invaded Iran to protect key

⁹⁹ Nasser Hadian; "Iran's Nuclear Program: Contexts and Debates" in *Iran's Bomb: American and Iranian Perspectives*, The Nixon Centre, March 2004, pp51-67, p55.

¹⁰⁰ Geoffrey Kemp, "How to Stop the Iranian Bomb", *The National Interest*, Summer 2003, p.50

economic interests. This pattern was to repeat itself throughout the twentieth century, not least with the Anglo-American coup of 1953 that deposed Dr Mohammed Mosadeq in favour of the Shah. The background to this turbulent episode was Iran's re-nationalisation of its oil industry in 1949.

The popular Iranian legacy left by the 1953 coup is the belief that Iran's economic and political development would be assured if it were not for foreign interference.¹⁰¹ Suspicion of other powers, allied to the belief that the Shah was influenced by American administrations, fuelled the 1979 revolution. While the West tends to have a short historical memory when dealing with Iran, Iranians have a long and painful historical memory. The quest for independence allied to a suspicion of other powers has fuelled not only a virulent anti-Americanism, but also the quest for security. The pursuit of nuclear weapons provides the ultimate guarantee against foreign interference.¹⁰²

The need for protection is equally informed by regional considerations. In the medium term, Iran's nuclear experiment has been motivated by the Iran-Iraq war. It is difficult to overestimate the impact of this war. The use of chemical and biological agents against Tehran was a key factor in persuading Iran to accept a ceasefire. Far from being a historical memory, the war continues to be debated within Iran's universities, parliament and newspapers. Tehran believes that such weapons are decisive and that if Iran is to escape similar attacks then it needs significant means of retaliation. Deterring Iraq was the main rationale for the regime's reactivation of its nuclear programme in the early 1990s.¹⁰³ The 'never again' logic underpins most of Iran's security considerations and reveals not only its own vulnerability, but also its suspicion that it can not rely on other countries to safeguard its concerns.

¹⁰¹ Kenneth Pollack; *The Persian Puzzle: The Conflict Between Iran and America*, Random House, 2004, p71.

¹⁰² *Ibid*, p376.

¹⁰³ Iran's nuclear programme, first started by the Shah's regime in 1960 with tacit support of the US, came to a halt after the 1979 Revolution. Nasser Hadian argues that "suspension of the programme was due to an ideological commitment. The dominant interpretation of Islam at that time was that the production, procurement and usage of nuclear weapons contradicted Islamic principles". Nasser Hadian; "Iran's Nuclear Program: Contexts and Debates" in *Iran's Bomb: American and Iranian Perspectives*, The Nixon Centre, March 2004, pp51-67, p.57.

Although the 2003 Gulf War neutralised the threat posed by Saddam Hussein, the manner of the dictator's departure allied to ongoing concerns about Iraq's long term development continue to unsettle Iran.¹⁰⁴ The US remains embroiled in post war Iraq, but the ease with which the Iraqi President was deposed still shocked many Arab countries. Iran remains alert to the fact that successive Iraqi governments have tried to assert predominance in the Gulf. The worry persists that the US will revive the 'Nixon Doctrine' whereby it seeks to ensure the stability of the Persian Gulf by assisting its Iraqi ally.¹⁰⁵ This could impinge upon Iran's own regional aspirations. Developing a presumptive nuclear capability might therefore be seen as an attractive policy option.

The manner of Saddam Hussein's departure, allied to the language of preventative military intervention, and the presence of 130,000 US troops in Iraq remains the immediate cause of Iran's continued search for a nuclear deterrent. The significant projection of US military power both in Afghanistan and Iraq has led conservatives and moderates alike in Tehran to fear that Iran has been encircled. It is ironic that US military action against a state that possessed no nuclear capability and posed no immediate threat might hasten, rather than retard, nuclear proliferation in the region. Iranian ruling clerics will have been impressed by the lessons of North Korea. Pyongyang's presumed nuclear capability has negated the threat of military attack in favour of an economic relief package designed to dissuade North Korea from progressing further down the path of nuclear proliferation.

Israel is seen as another regional threat. Tehran remains opposed to the peace process, and supports anti-Israeli terrorist organisations such as Hezbollah and Hamas. Moreover, Israel possesses significant nuclear capabilities as well as a long distance missile delivery system. Furthermore, Israel has shown its willingness to take preventative action against those states that challenge its regional nuclear supremacy. There is an argument, however, that Iran's portrayal of Israel as a threat to its security is motivated by domestic considerations rather than by any threat. Despite heated political rhetoric by senior religious clerics that reveals ideological differences

¹⁰⁴ "The Middle East After Saddam: Implications for Iran", *RUSI Newsbrief*, Vol 23, May 2003, pp.49-51.

¹⁰⁵ *Iran Builds the Bomb*, pp.51-64, p.54.

between Iran and Israel, both countries have been careful to control their low intensity conflict. Israel's continued existence is certainly an ideological affront to many Iranians, but it is not an existential threat that demands the production of nuclear weapons.

As important as any threat posed by Israel is the perceived Western hypocrisy in allowing Israel a nuclear arsenal whilst denying Iran a similar capability. This has fuelled a feeling of victimisation that has been further aggravated by developments in Pakistan.¹⁰⁶ Pakistan's successful nuclear weapons test in May 1998 has fuelled the historical rivalry between Iran and Pakistan. Pakistan remains a fertile ground for Wahhabi fundamentalism, a strain of Sunnism, elements of which formed a strategic alliance with the Taliban during the 1980s. While Iran has welcomed the destruction and dispersal of the Taliban many Iranians still worry about Pakistan's long-term stability. Furthermore, many Iranians cannot but have been struck by the international response to developments in Pakistan. The lack of US sanction following the May 1998 testing, allied to Pakistan's emergence from the cold following 9/11, leads many Iranians to argue that if Pakistan can earn international and regional deference from its nuclear capability, then Iran must follow suit.

Underpinning Iran's grievance is the general concern, shared by other states, that not only is the Non Proliferation Treaty overtly restrictive but that the international community has been somewhat one sided in its implementation of this Treaty.¹⁰⁷ The NPT's fundamental premise is that in return for renouncing the option to acquire nuclear weapons, nuclear free states would be rewarded by access to nuclear energy for non-military use and progress by nuclear weapon states (NWS) on nuclear disarmament. This *quid pro quo* was difficult to achieve during the Cold War. Progress since has been marred by prevarication by NWS to the extent that nuclear free states see the NPT as a "*convenient instrument of US foreign policy.*"¹⁰⁸

Developments during the 1990s hardly bode well for the future success of nuclear non-proliferation. Neither the US, France nor the UK have altered their minds about

¹⁰⁶ George Perkovich, "Dealing with Iran's Nuclear Challenge", *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, 28 April 2003, p6.

¹⁰⁷ Ali M. Ansari, "Nuclear Standoff", *The World Today*, Vol. 59, November 2003, p7.

the positive benefits of nuclear weapons. Although US nuclear weapons are deployed in only six of NATO's non-nuclear-weapon states, NATO reserves for itself the right to deploy such weapons on the territories of existing and future NATO members. America's unilateral withdrawal from the ABM Treaty and its active promotion of National Missile Defence all suggest a mantra of "do as I say and not as I do".

Such developments are against the spirit, if not the letter, of the NPT. It has fuelled the image of the 'West against the rest', or more pertinently the 'rest against the West'. Such an image has been reinforced by the rhetoric of the Bush administration with its slogan that 'you are either with us or against us'. This has resulted in a new politics of grievance that plays to the image of the US as the 'Great Satan'. The bad faith that now surrounds the NPT might well prompt many countries, not least Iran, to "*decide that circumstances have changed sufficiently to justify invoking Article 10 of the NPT and withdrawing from the treaty.*"¹⁰⁹ There is therefore a crisis in the wider non-proliferation regime that needs urgent attention. Developing policies that are tailored to suit the immediacy of the Iranian crisis will prove inadequate if simultaneous steps are not also taken to bolster confidence in the non-proliferation regime. A policy that did otherwise will merely fuel allegations of double standards.¹¹⁰

The crisis of confidence in the non-proliferation regime is indicative of a wider ebbing of confidence in the international system. Rather than leading to symmetry in power between nation states, the current constitutional order has been used to cement existing asymmetries. This has contributed to a build up of enmity within the international system. The current predicament regarding Iran is an inevitable result of this skewing within the international system. It goes some way to explaining the existence of competing historical narratives between actors. Unless the dominant powers within the international community are willing to take steps to address this imbalance it is difficult to see how Iran's security needs can be met.

¹⁰⁸ *The Rise and Fall of the NPT*, p120.

¹⁰⁹ *The Rise and Fall of the NPT*, p124.

¹¹⁰ *Strengthening Non-Proliferation Rules and Norms - The Three State Problem*, p30.

The West needs to acknowledge not only its interference in the internal affairs of Iran prior to the 1979 revolution, but also the way in which it allowed its own self interest to determine its position during the Iran-Iraq war. Without such a public acknowledgment of our own complicity in creating this situation, it is difficult to see how any long-term reconciliation between Iran and the international community might be facilitated. All too often, the inability to see the other side's point of view has been matched by a neglect of history, which increases the chance that we will continue to repeat the errors of the past.

Iran's nuclear debate

Although it is unclear whether or not the political decision to cross the nuclear threshold has yet been taken, the question has nonetheless generated debate within Iran. Some have likened the debate that marked Iran's signing of the AP to a *"national debate – that, at least in its first round, was won by those who argued that the signing of the AP is a necessary affirmation of Iran's commitment to international obligations and not an abridgment of sovereignty."*¹¹¹ This debate is far from over and will remain fluid as the costs and benefits of international co-operation become evident. The widening basis of this debate means that the debate is no longer structured in narrow strategic terms, but now includes the wider issue of how Iran's relationship with the wider world should be structured.

A small number of opponents within Iran argue against acquiring nuclear energy on economic and environmental grounds. They argue that the comparative cost of producing a kilowatt of electricity is more expensive when using nuclear energy rather than relying on oil reserves. Although small, this group has an influential spokesperson in the form of Behzad Nabav, a prominent figure within the reform movement.¹¹² However this view has few supporters within academia or government not least because this view mirrors closely that of the US.

¹¹¹ Farideh Farhi, "To Sign or Not To Sign? Iran's Evolving Domestic Debate on Nuclear Options", in *Iran's Bomb: American and Iranian Perspectives*, The Nixon Centre, March 2004, pp.32-50, p. 33.

¹¹² *Ibid*, p61.

Probably the most widely held view within Iran is one that favours Iran possessing nuclear energy and that Iran should invest in nuclear technology and knowledge. This position argues that Iran should obtain the technology to acquire nuclear energy, as allowed by the NPT, but that this knowledge base should be limited to civilian purposes. Many see the possession of nuclear weapons as contrary to the Qu'ran, as well as Ayatollah Khomeini's teachings. Others argue that the possession of nuclear weapons would make Iran more, not less vulnerable. Overall, this group support the AP and regional disarmament initiatives.

A third group believe that Iran should not only possess nuclear technology, to provide alternative sources of energy, but also possess a nuclear weapons capability. This group only wants Iran to possess the capability, not the actual weapons. This view is motivated by an analysis of Iran's security environment and the perception that in times of crisis Iran has received little international support. Possessing an independent nuclear capability that can be quickly activated is seen as providing an important strategic deterrent. Such a strategy enables Iran to develop its nuclear programme and a break out policy within the confines of the NPT.

The fourth and final group believes that Iran should withdraw from the NPT and develop nuclear weapons as quickly as possible. This logic is fuelled by a sense that Iran's security environment necessitates such a move even if it is followed by wide international sanction. Central to this argument is the thesis that the possession of nuclear weapons provides the best defence of Iran's territorial integrity.¹¹³ Allied to this is the view that signing the AP risks an "Iraqisation" of Iran in that Iran will be subject to unlimited IAEA inspection and pressurised to make further concessions, all of which threaten Iran's sovereignty.

The above divisions mirror a wider debate as to Iran's future development. The majority of Iranians recognise that Iran's macro-economic situation, with high

¹¹³ Abu Mohammad Asghar-Khani, a member of the Faculty of Law and Political Science at Tehran University argues: "If you ask me if Iran needs to nuclearize itself, I would say this is a must for Iran's strategy of survival. A nuclear Iran must not be seen as a threat to its neighbouring countries or to Israel. The weapons would serve as a minimum deterrence for self defence in a world of uncertainty. It is both necessary not only as a substitute for fossil energy but also for Iran's social cohesion and prestige.... Iran needs both soft power and hard power to regain its national identity and prestige." *Daily Star*, Lebanon, 15 September 2003.

unemployment and inflation, is best rectified by closer integration into the international community. Debates as to the possible normalisation of Iran's relations with the rest of the world remain problematic given that the Iranian revolution stands in opposition to international order that is in effect *pax Americana*. Whereas many reformers accept that reintegration into the international system means accepting restrictions on state sovereignty, not least in any nuclear programme, many conservative clerics see such restrictions as a betrayal of the revolutionary spirit.

The dynamics influencing Iran's domestic debate mean that Iran's posture towards the IAEA, EU-3 and the US can appear erratic, shifting from restraint to threat, depending on the intended audience. In so doing it appears that Iran is being drawn, in military terms to the North Korean model. Foreign Ministry spokesman Hamid Reza Asefi alluded to this strategy when he said: "*We are ready for discussions and negotiations, but we need to know what benefits the Islamic Republic would get from them.*"¹¹⁴ This latter strategy is a dangerous balancing act not least because of the cost of failure if such a policy backfired. It would be made less dangerous if the international community developed more effective diplomatic strategies that not only took account of the unpredictability of Iran's decision-making process but also stored up the more pragmatic elements within Iran's theocratic hierarchy. Seen from this perspective, US rhetoric that labels Iran as a member of the 'axis of evil' can only prove counter-productive and undermine the position of those who have lobbied for Iran's co-operation with the IAEA.¹¹⁵

The intensity with which Iran's domestic nuclear debate has been conducted is striking. Iran's lack of many of the attributes of Western style democracy should not obscure the point that Iran possesses a vibrant civil society, which while admittedly existing within parameters defined by the government, is none the less able to shape the government's position on important issues. Many in the West have assumed that the election of President Mohammed Ahmadinejad, a religious conservative, signals a return to a more reactionary position. This is possibly true, but it is also possible that Ahmadinejad's election reflects a reaction against the perceived economic and

¹¹⁴ *Ibid*, p58.

¹¹⁵ Farideh Farhi, 'To Sign or Not To Sign? Iran's Evolving Domestic Debate on Nuclear Options', in *Iran's Bomb: American and Iranian Perspectives*, The Nixon Centre, March 2004, pp.32-50, p.49.

political corruption of former President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani who was standing again for election.

Recognising Iran's heterogeneity is an important step in challenging the way in which Western media and political analysts portray Iran in stereotypical terms that reinforce public ignorance and prejudice all of which reduces further the scope for governments to manoeuvre creatively. At times Western political discourse towards Iran seems ideologically driven with the intention of reinforcing and playing to the prejudices and fears of domestic constituents. This is hardly a secure position from which to develop policies capable of achieving a global common good.

The fluidity of Iran's domestic debate reveals that many sections of Iran's civil society hold that possessing or producing nuclear weapons contradicts Islamic principles. Arguments in favour of developing a nuclear option seem more informed by strategic necessity than religious conviction. It is possible that there is a role here for religious leaders to assist in developing a wider conversation than currently exists on the ethics of procuring, manufacturing and possessing nuclear weapons. This might be difficult for some churches, not least the Church of England, whose General Synod continues to hold to its 1982 position that "*it is the duty of Her Majesty's Government and her allies to maintain adequate forces to guard against nuclear blackmail and to deter nuclear and non-nuclear aggressors.*"¹¹⁶

Why the West fears a nuclear Iran

Analysing what drives Iran's nuclear ambitions and how this debate is being played out domestically provides a better foundation from which to examine the much-overlooked question, why the West fears Iran's nuclear ambitions? Most political analysts start from the assumption that a nuclear Iran would be dangerous. It follows that the international community should use a range of policy options to stop such an eventuality. But such a way of thinking tells us little about what drives the international community's policy towards Iran. Yet, having established that Iran's nuclear programme is driven by the need to develop a credible deterrent posture

¹¹⁶ General Synod, *Report of Proceedings*, Vol 14, 1983, pp237-305.

against a range of threats, questions are naturally raised as to whether the West's fears are rational or based on historical prejudice and misunderstanding? In short, what drives the US and the EU-3's Iranian policy?

All too often political and media commentary is couched in black and white terms. This tends to gloss over the complexity of the situation. George Kemp writes, "*There are two reasons why Iran remains on George W. Bush's 'axis of evil'. The regime continues to sponsor terrorists who murder Americans and it is building a very sophisticated, independent nuclear-technology infrastructure.*"¹¹⁷ This assumes that Iran is a rogue regime, that sponsors terrorism, and that the procurement of a nuclear capability by such a regime would threaten regional and international security. This threat is played out in many editorials. The Daily Telegraph recently argued that: "*Iran remains a power determined to export Islamic revolution worldwide, with the goal of destroying the liberal dominions.*"¹¹⁸ The perceived global aspirations of the Iranian Islamic Revolution places Iran ideologically in the same camp as Al Qa'eda.

The fear aroused by the nexus of rogue regimes, terrorism and WMD proliferation reflects the new security agenda that emerged following the terrorist attacks of 9/11. As such, it closely echoes the 2002 US National Security Strategy. "*The gravest danger lies at the crossroads of radicalism and technology*" with terrorist organisations acquiring weapons of mass destruction from rogue regimes.¹¹⁹ The logic of this strategy is that states such as Iran pose "*a grave and gathering danger*" that legitimates an early solution. Waiting until Iran possesses nuclear weapons would mean that a line would be crossed since Iran would be in a "*terrible position to blackmail anyone who opposes its aggression.*" As with Iraq, the "*fundamental problem*" with Iran "*remains the nature of the regime itself.*"¹²⁰ While Saddam Hussein was a homicidal dictator addicted to weapons of mass destruction, Iran's ruling clerics are held to be Islamic extremists and fanatics that deprive their population of basic human rights and are intent on exporting their revolution to the

¹¹⁷ George Kemp, "Iran's Bomb and What to do About It", in *Iran's Bomb: American and Iranian Perspectives*, The Nixon Centre, March 2004, pp.1-12, p.1.

¹¹⁸ *The Daily Telegraph*, 19 August 2004, as quoted in Roger Howard, "Meeting the Iranian Challenge", *RUSI Journal*, October 2004, pp.66-69, p.67.

¹¹⁹ *The National Security Strategy*, p3.

¹²⁰ President Bush, Cincinnati Speech, 7 October 2002.

four corners of the world. Such analysis holds that the only sensible way to deal with Iran's nuclear ambitions is through regime change.

The public and political rhetoric that Iran is a rogue regime, an outpost of tyranny, is as fallacious as the Iranian description of the US as the 'Great Satan'. Such rhetoric might have ideological benefits domestically, but it grossly simplifies the situation. It marginalises more rational examination of the threat posed by a nuclear Iran and how the West should respond. It would be erroneous to conflate Iran's links with Hezbollah and its involvement in Lebanon in the early 1980s as indicative of a wider Al Qaeda link. This is not to suggest that Iran's links with terrorist networks are not real or that they should not be taken seriously. During the 1980s and 1990s Iran pursued a policy of 'asymmetrical warfare' against the West in general and Israel in particular.¹²¹ The growth of various Islamist movements in the region such as Hezbollah, Hamas, the Muslim Brotherhood, Gama'a Islami and Islamic Jihad provided Iran with allies to pursue its policies of undermining any Middle East peace process and evicting the US from the region.

This policy reached its peak with the alleged Iranian backing of Hezbollah al-Hijaz, a Saudi based terrorist group responsible for bombing the Khobar Towers housing complex in Eastern Saudi Arabia on 25 June 1996. This complex was used to house American military personnel deployed to defend Saudi Arabia following the 1991 Gulf War. The attack left nineteen Americans dead and 372 wounded. Although the US decided against military retaliation, the intense domestic debate as to the viability of such an option allied to the passing of the Iran Libya Sanctions Act (23 July 1996) led to Iranian moderation.¹²² Tehran has stepped back from the brink of aggressively supporting foreign terrorist organizations. It has mounted no terrorist attack on the US since 1996. However, Iran has not given up on this policy entirely. On 3 January 2002 Israel intercepted a ship, *Karine A*, laden with Iranian manufactured explosives and arms destined for the Palestine Authority. Although there is no evidence to indicate that these were destined for terrorist use, this incident revealed to many

¹²¹ *The Persian Puzzle*, p255.

¹²² The 1996 Iran Libya Sanctions Act imposed extra territorial or secondary sanctions on any foreign corporation that invested in Iran's oil industry.

in Washington that Iran had “*not given up its support for terrorism or its determination to derail a Middle East peace through violence.*”¹²³

The worry remains that if Iran possesses a nuclear capability that it might develop an antagonistic foreign policy similar to that, which was experienced during the 1990s. This scenario is not inevitable, but it has to be countenanced. Iran modified its policy following the Khobar Towers attack because of the fear of military retaliation by the West and the imposition of economic sanctions. If possessing nuclear weapons diminishes the prospects of any future American retaliation, then it is entirely possible that Iran will see few obstacles preventing it from pursuing its policy of driving the US out of the region with terrorist attacks or seek to undermine recent efforts to restart the Middle East peace process. A nuclear Iran could prove to be a significant complicating factor to a US that is heavily committed to fostering democratic movements and structures in the Middle East.

Iran’s relationship with Islamic terrorist organisations should not be seen as proof of any Al Qa’eda link. The terrorist attacks of 9/11 “*led to spontaneous candlelit vigils in Tehran – probably the only ones anywhere in the Middle East – and the government strongly condemned the attacks.*”¹²⁴ Iran played a vital role in the US “war against terrorism” in Afghanistan by closing its borders to the Taliban and by providing considerable logistical assistance to Operation Enduring Freedom. Following the war, Iran helped to make the United Nations Conference in Bonn on rebuilding Afghanistan a success. For the most part Iranian intelligence services have not sought to destabilise the situation in Afghanistan. This co-operation and restraint was no doubt motivated by a fear that the chaos in Afghanistan would spread to Iran. It does however illustrate that Iran is capable of political pragmatism when it comes to foreign policy matters.

This pragmatism was further evident during Operation Iraqi Freedom. Given Bush’s ‘axis of evil’ speech and Iran’s involvement with *Karine A*, Iran was not as helpful as during the Afghanistan war, but it was not unhelpful. Post war, the evidence suggests that Iran has a significant intelligence presence in Iraq, but that these intelligence

¹²³ *The Persian Puzzle*, p351.

¹²⁴ *Ibid*, p346.

assets are not operational. Instead some analysts indicate that “*Tehran told its various proxy groups in Iraq not to resist the United States and instead to participate in the US led process of reconstruction.*”¹²⁵ The post war chaos in Iraq provided Iran with numerous opportunities to cause mischief for the US. Tehran has so far refrained from doing so.

All this is not to suggest that the West should not have serious concerns either about an Iranian bomb, nor the regime itself.

*This regime has demonstrated that it is aggressive, anti-status quo, anti-American and willing to employ a host of reprehensible methods (such as terrorism) to try to accomplish its goals. While it may be possible to live with such a regime after it has acquired nuclear weapons, most non-Iranians would prefer not to have to try to do so, if it could be avoided.*¹²⁶

Because many countries fear that Iran will pursue an aggressive foreign policy, other Middle Eastern countries might decide to follow suit to deter any covert or overt Iranian action. Proliferation is always a worrisome development because it increases the number of states that have access to dangerous weapons. While the number of nuclear weapon states has increased by half a dozen over the last three decades, this proliferation by itself does not pose a threat. Proliferation becomes more of a threat if the state in question is unstable and aggressive. Nuclear proliferation in a region as troubled as the Middle East would pose a serious risk to regional and global stability.

Although Iran’s human rights record poses no direct strategic threat to the West, its record illustrates the regressive nature of the regime. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office’s Annual Human Rights Report of 2004 sets out the human rights situation in Iran. Greater restrictions on freedom of expression and assembly, the closure of many newspapers and the mass disqualification of candidates for the parliamentary elections in February 2004 all suggest an increase in political repression. Arbitrary detentions and disappearances highlight serious concerns regarding Iran’s judicial and penal systems. The limited and unequal rights enjoyed by Iranian women, allied to the widespread violation of the rights of all Iran’s non-

¹²⁵ *Ibid*, p378.

¹²⁶ *Ibid*, p378.

Muslim communities illustrate a policy of systemic discrimination.¹²⁷ Iran's Guardian Council and Expediency Council rejected steps by President Khatami to introduce legislation to address the legislative and institutional shortcomings on the grounds that such measures violated Islamic law and the Iranian Constitution. As the Foreign and Commonwealth Office acknowledges, the results of the UK/Iran and EU/Iran human rights dialogue have been 'disappointing' and have failed to deliver any measurable progress.¹²⁸

The institutional stand off between the reform-dominated parliament and the conservative Guardian Council is symptomatic of a wider political, social and economic crisis in Iran. Demographic changes within Iran allied to high unemployment and Iran's inability to integrate into the global economy has led to deep-rooted alienation between society and government.¹²⁹ Iran is undergoing a social revolution (access to internet, high literacy rates, etc). Despite the conservative victory over reformist candidates in the 2005 Presidential elections it is difficult to envisage that this *status quo* is sustainable in the long term. The question remains whether the regime will reform sufficiently to satisfy the demands for democratisation and modernisation or whether Iran will face the same fate as previous Iranian ruling systems - overthrow in the face of mobilisation across the social spectrum. The West hopes for the former and fears the latter.

The prospect of Iran acquiring a nuclear capability while at the same time facing serious political unrest and uncertainty is perceived by many as the nightmare scenario.

Should the regime crumble before violent street protests, then the ensuing anarchy could easily allow nuclear materials to be spirited away by those who bribe or steel their way into its nuclear installations. And just as former Soviet and Iraqi scientists were headhunted when their own masters fell from power, so could

¹²⁷ It is surprising that despite the Foreign and Commonwealth's acknowledgment of the difficulties faced by Iran's religious minorities, the British Government's asylum policy makes no allowances for those converts to Christianity who flee Iran because of a well grounded fear of persecution.

¹²⁸ Foreign and Commonwealth Office, *Human Rights Annual Report 2004*, p64

¹²⁹ Around 65% of Iran's 72 million population is under the age of thirty and half are under the age of twenty.

*destitute Iranian scientists one day also prove easy targets for foreign governments wanting their expertise.*¹³⁰

Safeguards given by one regime might not necessarily be honoured by the next. At present such political upheaval does not seem an immediate possibility. President Khatami's reform era appears to have lost its way following Khatami's refusal to side with the tens of thousands of students and other reformers who took to the streets in July 1999. Since then Tehran's hard-line clerical establishment have regained the initiative, a process that culminated with the Presidential elections in June 2005. Tehran recognises the need to introduce some measure of social and economic reform while retaining the leverages of power. However, it remains to be seen whether Tehran is able to deliver the necessary economic reform to head of demands for political change from large sections of Iran's population.

Just as Iran has legitimate grievances that drive its nuclear programme, so too does the international community have legitimate concerns regarding Iran's actions. Rather than labeling the Iranian government as a rogue regime, the international community needs to articulate with greater clarity why a nuclear Iran is of such concern. To label a country's government as 'evil' risks putting that country beyond the pale by indicating that there is something monstrous or incomprehensible in that state's actions. In the case of Iran, this is erroneous. In doing so it diminishes any chance of reconciliation.

What is perhaps most striking in a post 9/11 world is the extent to which politicians and governments use the term 'evil' not so much as an adjective but as a noun, as if 'evil' is a thing or force that has real existence and needs to be countenanced. From a theological perspective this has close proximity with pre-Augustinian Manichean dualism. Augustine refuted this view, which was prevalent in the fourth and fifth centuries, by writing that "*there is nothing at all which is evil by nature*", rather 'evil' "*is the absence of good which has received the name 'evil'.*"¹³¹ Drawing on Augustine's scholarship, Jean Bethke Elstain writes: "*The line separating good and*

¹³⁰ Roger Howard, "Meeting the Iranian Challenge", *RUSI Journal*, October 2004, pp66-69, p68.

¹³¹ Augustine, *City of God Against the Pagans*, Book XI, Ch. 22, p477.

evil does not run between one society and another, much less between one religion and another; ultimately the line runs through the middle of every human heart."¹³²

This black and white dualism prevents those who wage war on evil from recognizing the wrongs that they themselves have committed. It justifies all actions taken by the 'good' against 'evil', however unsavoury those actions might be outside the parameters of such a Manichean world. Such a view can lead, as illustrated in Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay, to wholly unsatisfactory distinctions between actions. This should not necessarily lead to relativism or moral equivalence between conflicting parties, but it does highlight the universality of human sinfulness and the importance of penitence. Escaping this black and white picture is crucial if the international community is to develop flexible policies capable of addressing both Iran's legitimate grievances and the international community's valid concerns.

Examining the policy options

International opinion rightly holds that Iran's nuclear programme is a cause for concern. However, there is little agreement as to how to develop a proportionate response to the problem that has both widespread legitimacy as well as a probable chance of success. A broad continuum of policy options exist, ranging from an all out military invasion of Iran through to some form of 'grand bargain' leading to fully normal relations between Iran and the international community.

An invasion of Iran on the model of the invasion of Iraq has nothing to commend it. A US led invasion of Iran is militarily feasible in strictly operational terms. US forces would no doubt prevail in any offensive campaign. Securing a mountainous country four times the size of Iraq with a population three times the size would be extremely difficult. It would raise its own military and political predicaments. Any post-conflict reconstruction of Iran would be fraught with difficulties, not least widespread insurgency, fuelled by a long tradition of anti-Americanism. These difficulties could be overcome if sufficient international support was forthcoming. The evidence to date suggests, however, that there is little appetite, even within the US, for such a

¹³² Jean Bethke Elstain, *Just War Against Terror: The Burden of American Power in a Violent World*, Basic Books, 2003, p143.

strategy. While Iran's nuclear programme is a matter of concern, it does not constitute a sufficient threat to legitimate an invasion, especially when past evidence suggests that Iranian behaviour can be influenced through other means.

An Osiraq type attack on Iran's nuclear facilities has been subject to more heated debate. This would involve missile strikes against Iran's nuclear infrastructure. Unilateral strikes by the US or Israel would dispense with the need for wider international co-operation. Such an attack would retard Iran's nuclear programme, but it is unlikely, as was the case with Iraq following Israel's attack in 1981, to halt it entirely. The location of Iran's nuclear plants away from major civilian areas means that such aerial bombardment could be both proportionate and discriminate. There are, however, serious political and strategic complications with this policy. Iran would no doubt seek to retaliate against the US through terrorist organisations in Iraq and Afghanistan. This would threaten the fragile political stability in both countries. Inflamed Arab opinion would threaten not only the US led Middle East peace process, but also the tentative steps that many Arab countries have taken towards democracy. Unless the US or Israel was willing to repeat the exercise, there is a danger that such a policy would accelerate the Iranian move to acquiring a nuclear capability.

It is difficult to envisage how either of the above policies could pass the rigorous ethical tests provided by the just war tradition. Iran's civilian and military nuclear ambitions are a legitimate source of concern, but such concern does not constitute a sufficient just cause. There is no indication that Iran intends to use such a capability for anything other than defensive purposes. Iran does not pose an immediate, real or serious threat to international security of a kind that would justify recourse to military action. Without the necessary authorization from the UNSC, taking military action against a threat that has yet to materialise would be difficult to sustain politically as well as morally. It would prejudice alternative efforts at conflict prevention and resolution. Any military attack on Iran would be seen, at this moment in time, as an offensive rather than a defensive measure. Questions would be asked, not least by the churches as to whether such an attack was itself nothing more than an act of aggression and a breach of the peace.

Given the inevitable ethical and political dilemmas associated with overt military action, a number of analysts have suggested a covert strategy aimed at toppling the regime. This is not unfeasible, given the Anglo-American coup of 1953, but it would be difficult to manufacture in an age of global communications. The policy's basic assumption is that Iranians are desperate to be free of its ruling clerics. As a long-term strategy, a policy aimed at sustaining the reform movement has its attractions, but it should not be made the central tenet of any counter-proliferation strategy, not least because of the result of the 2005 Presidential elections in Iran. There is a large reservoir of public disenchantment with Iran's clerics, but it is doubtful that the country is on the verge of a revolution, or that Iranians would welcome one. History also suggests that Iranians are deeply suspicious of external interference and that such a covert strategy, if unsuccessful, would cause a significant backlash in Iranian civil society. This would remove one of the few obstacles that is constraining the Iranian government's nuclear ambitions.

The alternative to covert regime change is a strategy of seeking to change the regime by opening up Iran to outside economic and social influences. In concrete terms this would entail lifting both primary and secondary US sanctions, as well as allowing Iran to join the WTO.¹³³ China is often cited as an example in support of such a policy. However in reality, economic liberalisation in China and the integration of China into the global economy has deflected pressure both at home and abroad for political change. Taiwan excluded, China has also pursued a moderate foreign policy, whereas Iranian foreign policy appears at time more reactionary. The experience of the EU's 'Critical Dialogue' with Iran during the 1990s, whereby the EU provided trade concessions to Iran, reaped little political dividend. This policy has been labelled as 'all carrots and no stick'.¹³⁴ The philosophy behind this dialogue sought to reward Iran for acting as a good global citizen. In reality it became a "*façade for European*

¹³³ The international media recently reported a change in U.S. policy toward Iran, citing as evidence the U.S.'s March 11, 2005 statement that it would agree to offer Iran benefits and incentives, such as dropping its veto of Iran's candidacy for the World Trade Organization, and permitting Tehran to purchase spare parts for civilian airplanes. This would be in exchange for Iran's cooperation in the nuclear issue, with the aim of attaining a permanent cessation of Iran's uranium-enrichment activity. It should be noted that the day before the 'change' in U.S. policy was reported, U.S. President George W. Bush extended the sanctions on Iran for another year. Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Hamid Reza Asefi, Aftab-e Yazd (Iran), March 7, 2005; IRNA (Iran), March 13, 2005.

¹³⁴ The EU critical Dialogue with Iran was launched in Edinburgh in December 1992. *Ibid*, p.391.

trade with Iran despite Iran's persistence in taking actions that Europe too found distasteful and abhorrent."¹³⁵

An alternative strategy, the 'grand bargain', proposes that the US and Iran settle all their grievances through a comprehensive settlement. In return for the US lifting sanctions, unfreezing Iranian assets and addressing Iran's regional security concerns, Iran would renounce terrorism, its nuclear programme, as well as refrain from opposing the Middle East peace process. Although this strategy is deceptively attractive, the ultimate ambition of US policy makers must be to secure a normalisation of relations. Successive US administrations from Reagan onwards have pressed for such a strategy, but it has floundered because neither the US nor Iran have been able to overcome the great psychological and political problems incurred by historic animosity.

Despite Iran's co-operation with the US in Afghanistan and its restraint in Iraq, the US continues to see Iran as part of the 'axis of evil'. It is equally unlikely that Iranian clerics are willing to sacrifice one of the last remaining legacies of Ayatollah Khomeini. There is an urgent need for the healing of memories between the two countries, but it is not clear that attempting to change such a Manichean vision of the world will be successful in the short-term. Although the 'Grand Bargain' cannot be relied upon as a strategy to deal with Iran's nuclear ambitions, it should not be discarded as a long-term strategy. It offers the opportunity to develop a common historical narrative that might assist in repairing the brokenness of human relationships that currently exist between Iran and the international community.

None of the above options on their own offers a viable strategy for dealing with Iran. The unpredictability of the Iranian regime allied to deep-seated problems with Iran means that any policy faces major difficulties. Past evidence indicates that Iranian behaviour can be moderated through the threat of US military action, as in 1988 and 1996, and the threat of European sanctions, as happened in 1997 and 2003. These options worked well when Europe and the US were of one mind. All too often

¹³⁵*Ibid*, p264.

differences in the transatlantic relationship have provided Iran with greater room for manoeuvre than is warranted.

US and EU policy needs to be flexible enough to respond to shifts in Iranian behaviour, without necessarily jeopardising the coherence of any strategy. The US needs to be convinced to keep open the option of a 'grand bargain' that enables Iran's nuclear ambitions to be addressed in a wider context. In doing so this 'grand bargain' should seek to remove some of the factors driving Iran's nuclear programme, not least its regional security concerns. It is disappointing, therefore, that the EU-3 did not use the Framework Agreement to offer most substantial, detailed incentives on security and trade or a creative compromise solution on enrichment which could reasonably have been expected to receive Iran's endorsement.

As part of a negotiated settlement the US and the EU should accept an Iranian nuclear energy programme and seek to provide safeguards by which this can be properly monitored. Iran has rejected this strategy in the past but it is important that the option remains on the table. The strategy's success should not be dependent on unilateral concessions, but rather a more effective carrot and stick approach, that reward Iranian moderation. This would require the US to move beyond mere coercive threats and an insistence that Iran moderates its policy and behaviour on a range of issues, before the US eases its sanctions policy. It also requires a European willingness to impose sanctions if Iran insists on pursuing its nuclear ambitions. In lieu of Iran entering into any 'Grand Bargain', the international community, preferably through the UNSC, needs to provide a comprehensive list of benchmarks and their corresponding inducements and sanctions.

To date, the US has tolerated the European diplomatic approach. There is, however, a growing US consensus that Iran is not living up to its commitments. As a result, the US is increasing pressure on its European allies to refer the issue to the UNSC with the ultimate aim of pushing through sanctions for breaking the NPT. The US has offered little other than political rhetoric, in terms of viable strategic alternatives to date. Fundamental questions remain unanswered. How can Iran best be prevented from crossing the nuclear threshold? How can political developments in Iran towards

a democratic transformation best be supported? How can Iran be incorporated into a new, yet to be developed, regional security structure?

Both sides of the Atlantic need to develop more flexible policy approaches. The preconditions for a coordinated transatlantic approach are twofold: European willingness to employ increased economic pressure and American willingness to normalise relations with Iran. A joint strategy based on a broad framework of incentives and sanctions has perhaps the best chance of influencing Iran's cost-benefit analysis.

The guiding principle should be to increase the costs of maintaining the nuclear option while reducing the incentive to acquire nuclear weapons. The combined prospects of a normalisation of American-Iranian relations, US abandonment of stigmatization of Iran as a rogue state, the lifting of economic sanctions and closer social contact between Iran and the United States could help change the international context of the discussion and decisions on the nuclear issue in Iran. A policy based on hardened rhetoric and a further distancing of diplomatic relations between Iran and the rest of the world risks hastening Iran's crossing of the nuclear threshold. This would amount to the worst possible outcome at the present time.