

Prime Minister's speech at the George Bush Senior Presidential Library

7 April 2002

It is a great privilege to be here today at the Bush Presidential Library before such a distinguished audience, and let me begin by paying tribute to two of the most distinguished members.

First, to you, Mr President. It is quite something to raise the son who goes on to be US President. To do so having been President yourself, one with a proud record of leadership and achievement, is quite another. I want to thank you for inviting me, thank you for being here, and thank you for your steadfast friendship of Great Britain.

And Jim Baker was one of the most remarkable Secretaries of State the US has ever had during a remarkable period of your history, and I am honoured that a statesman of his standing should be present to hear my speech on issues he has studied for far longer than I have.

The only purpose of being in politics is to strive for the values and ideals we believe in: freedom, justice, what we Europeans call solidarity but you might call respect for and help for others. These are the decent democratic values we all avow. But alongside the values we know we need a hard headed pragmatism - a realpolitik - required to give us any chance of translating those values into the practical world we live in.

The same tension exists in the two views of international affairs. One is utilitarian: each nation maximises its own self interest. The other is Utopian: we try to create a better world. Today I want to suggest that more than ever before those two views are merging.

I advocate an enlightened self interest that puts fighting for our values right at the heart of the policies necessary to protect our nations. Engagement in the world on the basis of these values, not isolationism from it is the hard-headed pragmatism for the 21st Century.

Why? In part it is because the countries and people of the world today are more interdependent than ever. That calls for an approach of integration. When I spoke about this issue in Chicago in 1999 and called it a doctrine of international community, people hesitated over what appeared to be Panglossian idealism. At the time, the major international crisis we faced was Kosovo, where a brutal dictator, Slobodan Milosevic, was embarked upon a programme of ethnic cleansing of innocent people - in this case, Muslims - the likes of which Europe had not seen since the Nazis.

Yet we were told: it's not our fight, why bother? there's nothing we can do; if we try to stop him, the region will explode; we will strengthen his hand, he will win; or he'll lose but be succeeded by someone worse. Sound familiar? Today thousands of refugees have gone back. Kosovo has held its first elections. Montenegro and Serbia are being reconciled. Milosevic is on trial charged with war crimes. There is a democratic government in Belgrade and the whole region, despite the massive problems which still exist, is on a path, albeit slowly, towards the EU.

It's still costing us time, effort and money, but it's a lot less than if we had turned our back and let the Balkans plunge into civil war.

In truth, it is very rare today that trouble in one part of the globe remains limited in its effect. Not just in security, but in trade and finance - witness the crisis of 1998 which began in Thailand and ended in Brazil - the world is interlocked.

This is heightened by mass communications and technology. In Queen Victoria's time, reports of battles came back weeks or months after they were won or lost. Today we see them enacted live on the BBC, Sky or CNN. Their very visibility, immediate and in technicolour, inflame feelings that can spread worldwide across different ethnic, religious and cultural communities.

So today, more than ever, "their" problem becomes "our" problem. Instability is contagious and, again today, more than ever, nations, at least most of them, crave stability. That's for a simple reason. Our people want it, because without it, they can't do business and prosper. What brings nations together - what brought them together post September 11 - is the international recognition that the world needs order. Disorder is the enemy of progress.

The struggle is for stability, for the security within which progress can be made. Of course, countries want to protect their territorial integrity but few are into empire-building. This is especially true of democracies whose people vote for higher living standards and punish governments who don't deliver them. For 2,000 years Europe fought over territory.

Today boundaries are virtually fixed. Governments and people know that any territorial ambition threatens stability, and instability threatens prosperity.

And of course the surest way to stability is through the very values of freedom, democracy and justice. Where these are strong, the people push for moderation and order. Where they are absent, regimes act unchecked by popular accountability and pose a threat; and the threat spreads.

So the promotion of these values becomes not just right in itself but part of our long-term security and prosperity. We can't intervene in every case. Not all the wrongs of the world can be put right, but where disorder threatens us all, we should act.

Like it or not, whether you are a utilitarian or a Utopian, the world is interdependent. One consequence of this is that foreign and domestic policy are ever more closely interwoven.

It was September 11 that brought these thoughts into sharper focus. Watching the horror unfold, imagining the almost unimaginable suffering of the thousands of innocent victims of the terror and carnage, the dominant emotion after the obvious feelings of revulsion, sympathy and anger, was determination.

The guts and spirit of the people of New York and America in the aftermath of that terrible day were not just admirable, they were awesome. They were the best riposte to the terrorists that humanity could give and you should be very proud of that. I want you to know too that the British people were with you from the first moment, and we will always be with you at times like those. We are not half hearted friends and we never will be. But the determination must be not just to pursue those responsible and bring them to justice but to learn from September 11.

For years Afghanistan was ruled by the Taliban. For years it nurtured the AlQaida terrorist network. For years it lived off terror and the drugs trade, a failed state purveying religious and political extremism, with its people ground under the heel of the fanatic. What erupted on the streets of New York on September 11 was not an attack on America alone. It was an attack on us all.

It wasn't just an attack on people and buildings but an attempt to provoke, through terror, such chaos that it engulfed our way of life, the very values we hold dear. But prior to September 11, our people would probably have known Afghanistan chiefly from history books and for many the Taliban might as well have been a rock band. Yet this poor and incapable nation of 27 million, thousands of miles from America gave rise to the worst terrorist act in history in the heart of the world's most powerful nation.

Fortunately, in this case, the world stood firm. America took the lead, but it led a coalition of extraordinarily wide international proportions. Countries queued up to help. We acted with care, under the clear and courageous leadership of President Bush. The Taliban are gone as a government. Al Qaida's network has been destroyed in Afghanistan, though without doubt a residual capability remains and we should still be immensely vigilant. The Afghan people feel liberated not oppressed and have at least a chance of a better future.

But I want to give this warning. There is a real danger we forget the lessons of September 11. Human beings recover from tragedy and the memory becomes less fraught. That is a healthy part of living. But we should learn from our experience.

The most obvious lesson is indeed our interdependence. For a time our world stood still. Quite apart from our security, the shock impacted on economic confidence, on business, on trade and it is only now with the terrorist network on the run, that confidence is really returning. Every nation in the world felt the reverberation of that fateful day. And that has been well illustrated by the role which the United Nations - under Kofi Annan's excellent leadership - has played since September 11.

So if we didn't know it before, we know now: these events and our response to them shape the fate not of one nation but of one world. There is no escape from facing them and dealing with them. But what are the policy positions that should guide us in doing so?

First, the world works better when the US and the EU stand together. There will be issues that divide - issues of trade, most recently over steel, for example. But on the big security issues, the common interests dwarf the divide. Forget the talk of anti Americanism in Europe. Yes, if you call a demonstration, you will get the slogans and the insults. But people know Europe needs America and I believe America needs Europe too. We have so many shared values. We are strong democracies. If we stand together, no one else feels they can play us off against each other. Complaining about each other is fashionable in some circles. But the only people really rejoicing at a falling out, are the bad guys.

Together, we can forge a new relationship with President Putin's Russia. He is in my view a bold and immensely capable leader, moving his country into a new and co-operative partnership with us. NATO is the cornerstone of the transatlantic US/EU relationship. Now we envisage a new Russia/NATO relationship where certain questions are determined at 20, by the 19 NATO members and Russia. In Afghanistan we worked with Russia in a way that would have had the old hands of the Cold War days frozen in disbelief. But the truth is Russia today has as much interest in defeating terrorism as we have.

In our different ways, but compatibly, we can develop relations with China and India, two nations about whom the only question is not whether they will be huge powers in the world, but how huge, and how that power will be used.

And we both already have strong ties with Japan. We need to use those ties both to encourage Japan towards vital economic and structural reforms and also to bind the EU, the US and Asia closer together.

It is fascinating too, to see both the US and the EU strengthening enormously their political as well as economic links with South America.

The point I am making is simply this. There are no Cold War battles to play to. 'Spheres of influence' is an outdated concept. A series of interlocking alliances with a common agenda on issues of security, trade and stability should replace old rivalries. The international coalition matters. Where it operates, the unintended consequences of action are limited, the diplomatic parameters better fixed. The US and EU together is a precondition of such alliances. But it needs hard work, dialogue and some mutual understanding. As long as I am British Prime Minister I will work to secure it.

Secondly, we must be prepared to act where terrorism or Weapons of Mass Destruction threaten us. The fight against international terrorism is right. We should pursue it vigorously. Not just in Afghanistan but elsewhere. Not just by military means but by disrupting the finances of terrorism, getting at the middle men, the bankrollers of the trade in terror and WMD. Since September 11 the action has been considerable, in many countries. But there should be no let up.

If necessary the action should be military and again, if necessary and justified, it should involve regime change. I have been involved as British Prime Minister in three conflicts involving regime change. Milosevic. The Taliban. And Sierra Leone, where a country of six million people was saved from a murderous group of gangsters who had hijacked the democratically elected government.

Britain is immensely proud of the part our forces have played and with the results but I can honestly say the people most pleased have been the people living under the regime in question. Never forget: they are the true victims. I'll always remember driving through the villages near Freetown in Sierra Leone seeing the people rejoicing - many of them amputees through the brutality from which they had been liberated - and their joy at being free to debate, argue and vote as they wished.

We cannot, of course, intervene in all cases but where countries are engaged in the terror or WMD business, we should not shirk from confronting them. Some can be offered a way out, a route to respectability. I hope in time that Syria, Iran and even North Korea can accept the need to change their relations dramatically with the outside world. A new relationship is on offer. But they must know that sponsoring terrorism or WMD is not acceptable.

As for Iraq, I know some fear precipitate action. They needn't. We will proceed, as we did after September 11, in a calm, measured, sensible but firm way. But leaving Iraq to develop WMD, in flagrant breach of no less than nine separate UNSCRs, refusing still to allow weapons inspectors back to do their work properly, is not an option. The regime of Saddam is detestable. Brutal, repressive, political opponents routinely tortured and executed: it is a regime without a qualm in sacrificing the lives of its citizens to preserve itself, or starting wars with neighbouring states and it has used chemical weapons against its own people.

As I say, the moment for decision on how to act is not yet with us. But to allow WMD to be developed by a state like Iraq without let or hindrance would be grossly to ignore the lessons of September 11 and we will not do it. The message to Saddam is clear: he has to let the inspectors back in, anyone, any time, any place that the international community demands.

Third, we should work hard to broker peace where conflict threatens a region's stability because we know the dangers of contagion. The plight of the Middle East would make the hardest heart break. Anyone with an ounce of humanity watching the current horrors unfold on TV screens across the world is willing the international community to help. To anyone familiar with Northern Ireland the pattern is sickeningly predictable. The political process breaks down. One side feeling oppressed and without political progress resorts to terror. The other, its innocent civilians dying in terrorist attacks, retaliates with force. So moderate opinion collapses. Terror reigns. Reprisals follow. Chaos and carnage are the result. There is no point in blame.

Of course, the Palestinians should stop the terrorism. They should have stopped it months ago. Of course Israel must withdraw from the Occupied Territories. But I give you my frank assessment from five years experience of what is now a reasonably successful process in Northern Ireland: there is no prospect of the bloodshed abating, unless everyone realises there is not and will never be an answer to this issue in solely military or violent terms. Unless the moderates have a political process, a vision of the future to aim for, they are powerless and the extremists move into the vacuum.

I congratulate President Bush on his timely and compelling statement last Thursday and I wish Colin Powell well. Two things are necessary now: an acceptance by all of the fixed points of principle for any final settlement - Israel, secure, its right to existence unchallenged in the Arab world; a viable Palestinian state for the Palestinian people;

and a ceasefire agreed now, to let the political dialogue recommence. In monitoring any such ceasefire and in ensuring that the Palestinian Authority genuinely take action against the terrorists, we and others stand ready to help in any way we can. I know the deep-rooted objections to any outside help. But when the situation is as grim as it is now, only some external assistance can establish the minimum trust to get security back on the agenda in a realistic way. And without a proper ceasefire we can't even take the first steps.

I welcome too the peace initiative proposed by Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia. I believe that in parallel with a ceasefire the principles he set out should be incorporated in a further UN Security Council Resolution as the way forward politically. Again, Northern Ireland taught me that you need a political vision of the final settlement and small practical steps going together, to get on the road to peace.

Above all, the Middle East requires continuous focus and engagement. The role of peacemaker, where hatreds are entrenched, is never easy. But it is massively in our interests to try.

The same is true of the dispute between India and Pakistan. Earlier this year, President Bush and I worked hard to get both nations to de-escalate the crisis. I remain very exercised about it. Once again the path through is clear: terrorism and confrontation must be replaced by dialogue and negotiation. I say publicly what I said privately to leaders of both nations. India and Pakistan are two big and powerful neighbours. To have their relations dominated by Kashmir - a relatively small part of the continent with 13 million people already divided by the Line of Control - is tragic when their common interests in regional security, trade, tackling poverty and economic development are so much more vital to their collective future.

We can't decide this dispute. Only they can. But again we should stand ready to help. And again it will require sustained focus, effort and engagement.

I could say the same also of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan and Angola. You will say: but how can we do it all? The answer is it doesn't need the same people or the same intensity all the time. But it's amazing how much can be done when the world turns its gaze on to a problem, focuses and decides to help, even if the gaze then moves on.

Which brings me to the fourth point. Prevention is better than cure. The reason it would be crazy for us to clear out of Afghanistan once we had finished militarily, is that if it drifts back into instability, the same old problems will re-emerge. Stick at it and we can show, eventually, as in the Balkans, the unstable starts to become stable.

The G8 Summit in June in Canada gives us a once-in-a-generation opportunity to help Africa out of its disastrous decline. A child dies there of disease, famine or conflict every three seconds. In the Great Lakes region alone, in the past few years, three million men, women and children have died. To bring hope to Africa we have constructed the idea of a partnership between the developed world and Africa.

Not the old "aid" in a passive donor-recipient relationship. But a partnership in which, in return for African countries applying rules of good governance, anti-corruption, proper legal and commercial systems; we offer assistance for good governance, action on education and health, access to markets, help with conflict resolution which blights so much of the continent.

I want to pick out the issue of trade. We're all moving on it but we could move further. I want the WTO round started in Qatar last December to be a success. And it's time we took on the anti-globalisation protestors who seek to disrupt the meetings international leaders have on these issues. What the poor world needs is not less globalisation but more. Their injustice is not globalisation but being excluded from it. Free enterprise is not their enemy; but their friend.

In all these areas, we seek one integrated, international community, sharing the same values, working to the same goals.

There is one other thought I have, which may seem slightly off-centre. We should also - at least the US and the EU - think collaboratively about some of the key scientific and technological challenges we face. I know our companies will always compete. Of course they will. And on some things, like Kyoto, and climate change, there will be disagreement between us. But let me single out two areas where we could pool thoughts. One is science, where genetics and biotech will transform our lives yet again, as if the IT revolution hadn't transformed them enough already; and there is a lot of mis-information and misunderstanding about the science and its possibilities. We do work together in some parts of research but we could do more and should.

The other area is energy policy. Fuel is our economic lifeblood. The price of oil can be the difference between recession and recovery. The western world is import dependent. We base our policy on diversity of supply. You in the US import from 50 different countries, no one of which supplies more than 15 per cent of total imports. The EU pursues roughly the same policy.

So: who develops oil and gas, what the new potential sources of supply are, is a vital strategic question. We have the best energy companies in the world. Yet I don't believe that collectively, we have a sufficient strategy for

ensuring that the political and corporate world co-operate together in ensuring the diversity of supply continues or in our policy towards energy.

The Middle East, we focus on naturally. But the Caspian, Russia and Angola will be vital sources of supply in the future. Sorting out the problems - for example conflict resolution in Angola which accounts for some 7 per cent of non-OPEC US imports - is not time wasted. Neither is collaboration on research for the fuels of the future or for greater fuel efficiency. This generation may not thank us for it, but our children's generation will.

My basic argument is that in today's interdependent world, we need an integrated approach, a doctrine of international community as I put it before, based on the values we believe in. I am not suggesting, incidentally, that nothing is done without unanimity in the world. That would be a recipe for the lowest common denominator - a poor policy. I am arguing that the values we believe in are worth fighting for; they are in the ascendant and we have a common interest in standing up for them. We shouldn't be shy of giving our actions not just the force of self-interest but moral force.

And in reality, at a certain point these forces merge. When we defend our countries as you did after September 11, we aren't just defending territory. We are defending what our nations believe in: freedom, democracy, justice, tolerance and respect towards others.

What makes America great is not its GDP alone or its military might. It is its freedom, its enterprise, its rejoicing in its different colours and cultures, the fact that someone of humble beginnings can aspire, work hard, succeed and be applauded for their success. And can disagree. When I pass protestors every day at Downing Street, and believe me, you name it, they protest against it, I may not like what they call me, but I thank God they can. That's called freedom.

Usama bin Laden's philosophy is not just a security threat to us. It's an assault on our hearts and minds. It represents extremism, cruelty, intolerance of different cultures and lifestyles. It can't be fought just with guns. It must be fought by moderate Islam against extreme Islam, by the virtues of religious and political tolerance triumphing over bigotry. Likewise, what happens in Africa offends every criterion of justice and decency we believe in.

Fighting for these values is a cause the world needs. The great paradox of our modern world is that we have the unlimited possibility of scientific and technological advance, the prospect of prosperity my father could never have dreamed of as a child. Yet we also have the capacity to destroy ourselves. The very interdependence we have, can be for good or ill. What makes the difference is the values that govern it.

All this has been latent in world politics for some time. September 11 brought it into sharp relief. When an event of such magnitude occurs only a fool fails to reflect and consider. It does change everything.

For America, it has laid bare the reality. American power affects the world fundamentally. It is there. It is real. It is never irrelevant. It can affect the world for good or affect it for bad. Stand aside or engage, it never fails to affect.

You know I want it engaged. Under President Bush, I am confident it will be and for good.

But if that's what I and many others want, it comes at a price for us too. It means we don't shirk our responsibility. It means that when America is fighting for those values, then, however tough, we fight with her. No grandstanding, no offering implausible but impractical advice from the comfort of the touchline, no wishing away the hard not the easy choices on terrorism and WMD, or making peace in the Middle East, but working together, side by side.

That is the only route I know to a stable world based on prosperity and justice for all, where freedom liberates the lives of every citizen in every corner of the globe.

If the world makes the right choices now - at this time of destiny - we will get there. And Britain will be at America's side in doing it.

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