

Good international citizenship: a third way for British foreign policy^{*}

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Within days of being voted into office, the new Foreign Secretary Robin Cook broke with tradition by announcing 'a global foreign policy' for Britain which was to be guided by the goals of security for all nations, prosperity, protection for the environment and 'an ethical dimension'.¹ In the preceding fifty years, there had been no public articulation of a conceptual framework for understanding the means and ends of foreign policy. Even during the Thatcher era—the most self-consciously ideological period in postwar British politics—there was no systematic attempt to chart a course for Britain's conduct in international relations. It was apparent from the newspaper headlines the following morning that the most controversial aspect of New Labour's mission statement for 'British Foreign Policy' was the priority given to the ethical dimension.² In stirring language, the Foreign Secretary announced that the Labour government 'does not accept that political values can be left behind when we check in our passports to travel on diplomatic business'.³

Robin Cook made a link between the ethical dimension to Labour's foreign policy and the Blair government's idea of a 'third way'.⁴ To date, the third way has been developed primarily as a political strategy for transcending the

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¹ The Rt Hon. Robin Cook MP (hereafter Robin Cook), 'British foreign policy', 12 May 1997. Unless stated otherwise, all references to speeches/interviews by the Foreign Secretary and the Prime Minister, the Rt Hon. Tony Blair MP (hereafter Tony Blair), have been down-loaded from the FCO website available at <http://www.fco.gov.uk>.

² The headline in the *Daily Telegraph* the following morning gives a flavour of the 'spin' put on the ethical dimension by the media: 'Cook to lead the Foreign Office on moral crusade' (*Electronic Telegraph*, 13 May 1997).

³ Cook, 'British foreign policy'. Cook's phrase makes a nice contrast with R. J. Vincent's reflection that human rights 'taken in a foreign minister's baggage on a world tour, . . . might, as I once heard one of them say, spoil the whole trip': R. J. Vincent, *Human rights in international relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1986), p. 137.

⁴ 'Interview: Robin Cook', by Steve Richards, *New Statesman and Society*, 1 May 1998.

dualism between the old left and the new right.⁵ As a guide to political economy, it tries to avoid both the injustice of the free market and the inefficiency of public ownership.⁶ One of Labour's leading gurus, Anthony Giddens, argues that in order to further our thinking on the third way we need 'to develop a framework that could be contrasted point by point with the two rival doctrines'.⁷ On this point Giddens is surely correct. But it is noticeable that neither the government nor its gurus have begun to think through the implications of the third way in foreign policy. To date, most of Cook's references to a third way relate to one aspect of the process, that of human rights diplomacy. Despite repeated public statements about the need to put human rights at the heart of foreign policy, the government has not elucidated a conceptual framework for deciding the priority and consistency of the various principles contained in the mission statement.⁸ In the main body of this article, we offer such a conceptual rationale, enabling us to evaluate the ethical dimension of the Blair government's foreign policy.

In reflecting on previous attempts to promote human rights in the hierarchy of foreign policy goals, commentators look back to US President Jimmy Carter's attempt in the late 1970s. This proved to be a short-lived experiment which foundered on the deterioration in East-West relations. We think that the experience of Australian foreign policy in the late 1980s and early 1990s provides a more constructive lesson for Britain. In the first instance, there are clear parallels between the social democratic values pursued by our Labour government and those of the Australian Labor governments under Bob Hawke and Paul Keating. Second, Australia's foreign minister from 1988 to 1996, Gareth Evans, came into office at a time when the constraints of the Cold War which had so inhibited Carter were loosening. This opened a space for leadership and innovative thinking which Evans supplied in the form of his concept of 'good international citizenship' which was subjected to a critical analysis by academics, policy-makers and activists.

For Evans, good international citizenship departs from the traditional realist approach to foreign policy because it rejects the assumption that the national interest always pulls in the opposite direction to the promotion of human rights. Moreover, in contrast to idealism, which sees an underlying harmony of moral principles, advocates of good international citizenship recognize that 'terrible moral choices have sometimes to be made'.⁹ The belief that it is possible to transcend the traditional rival doctrines is entirely consistent with the

⁵ Recent examples of the way in which this 'philosophy' is informing Labour thinking include Tony Blair's speech in The Hague, when he sought to persuade Europe to adopt the 'third way' (Tony Blair, 'A modern Britain in a modern Europe', The Hague, 20 January 1998) and his speech to the French National Assembly on 'The third way', Paris, 24 March 1998.

⁶ Will Hutton, *The state we're in* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1995).

⁷ Anthony Giddens, 'After the left's paralysis', *New Statesman and Society*, 1 May 1998.

⁸ Interestingly, Cook has hinted that one of the virtues of the third way is that 'it offers a conceptual guide to our principles and objectives': 'Interview: Robin Cook'.

⁹ Hedley Bull, *Justice in international relations* (Hague Lectures), University of Waterloo, Ontario, 1983, p. 13.

philosophy of the third way. To this end, we contend that good international citizenship is the appropriate strategy for a foreign minister negotiating the third way in the world.

The guiding question for this article is how far Britain under New Labour qualifies as a good international citizen. The arms inspection crisis in the Gulf in early 1998 brought to the fore the issue of how far good international citizenship requires a willingness to use force in defence of UN authority. Britain and the United States faced the possibility of using force to uphold international security in the knowledge that such an action lacked widespread legitimacy. The debate about good international citizenship in Australia assumed that policing would always be multilateral. When thinking about good international citizenship in the context of Britain, which is a permanent member of the Security Council and has significant force projection capabilities, we have to confront the possibility that force might be justifiable even when it lacks the consent of the wider international community. On the other hand, in its dealings with regimes that violate human rights the government has faced a number of challenges in which force has not been part of the calculus. The two most prominent examples are Indonesia and China. In relation to the former, we examine whether the priority Britain has accorded to the human rights dimension over other interests such as trade meets the standard of good international citizenship. The key question for Britain's China policy is how far the dialogue in which Cook has invested so much hope has delivered on human rights. The dialogical approach assumes that the participants are prepared to change their positions through conversation, but the case of human rights abuses in Algeria highlights the problem of what to do if dialogue breaks down. This brings us back to the question of what sanctions—including the use of force—a good international citizen should resort to in these circumstances.

New Labour, new foreign policy?

In their recent study of British foreign policy, Laurence Martin and John Garnett point to the broad bipartisan consensus which has characterized the external 'arm' of government.¹⁰ Although they recognized that if the Labour party were to be elected it would bring to the policy process a different style, they expected little change in substance. The Conservatives tend to place more emphasis on sovereign independence, be more enthusiastic about the projection of military power, and less attracted to multilateralism than Labour. Martin and Garnett conclude their discussion of these differences with the words, 'whether any of these nuances translate into major policy differences is

¹⁰ Sir Laurence Martin and John Garnett point to nine 'underlying principles' which 'most Labour and Conservative politicians would sign up to': Laurence Martin and John Garnett, *British foreign policy: challenges and choices for the 21st century* (London: Pinter/RIIA, 1997), pp. 82–5.

doubtful'.¹¹ One year after New Labour came to office, five related factors suggest, *contra* Martin and Garnett, that there has been a marked shift in the content and conduct of British foreign policy.

Projecting a different identity for Britain

Prior to the Thatcher era, British foreign policy had become preoccupied with the question of decline, and how a former imperial power should adjust to the 'reality' of life outside the premier league of states. As the well-worn phrase has it, Britain had lost an empire and was struggling to find a role. From 1979 onwards, one of Margaret Thatcher's ambitions was to rid the country, and more directly the Foreign Office, of this defeatist ethos. One of the Conservative government's often repeated aims was to put the 'great' back into Great Britain. The apotheosis of this patriotism was reached in 1982 after the Falklands conflict. In the following passage, the former Prime Minister exhibited the imperialist undercurrent of her policy of national rejuvenation:

'We have ceased to be a nation in retreat. We have instead a new found confidence—born in the economic battles at home and tested and found true 8,000 miles away . . . Britain found herself again in the South Atlantic and will not look back from the victory she has won.'¹² Although this belligerence was tempered during the Major years, it resurfaced at times in the debates over the prospects for a common foreign and security policy in the European Union.¹³

New Labour's view of British identity is quite different. In the first instance, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office is aware of the need to project a more forward-looking image of Britain on the international stage. Crucially, this image is not based on our imperial past, or on our present military strength, but in the values of a confident, creative, tolerant and inclusive society.¹⁴ The contrast between the 1980s and 1990s was put starkly by Cook: 'I want our people to be proud of our country. Not proud because other countries are afraid of our might.'¹⁵ Cool Britannia is in, rule Britannia is out.

A new language of international relations

A significant departure from the foreign policy pursued by the previous government concerns the language used by Robin Cook and Tony Blair in key foreign policy speeches. As Mervyn Frost notes, the mission statement is almost wholly unrecognizable when looked at through traditional realist-cum-

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

¹² Margaret Thatcher, *The Downing Street years* (London: HarperCollins, 1995), p. 235.

¹³ As the Rt Hon. Malcolm Rifkind, former Foreign Secretary, robustly argued, it is highly unlikely that the national interests between major powers would converge. 'EMU would end nationhood, insists Rifkind', *Electronic Telegraph*, 4 March 1997.

¹⁴ Robin Cook, 'Panel 2000 launch: opening statement by the Foreign Secretary', 1 April 1998.

¹⁵ Robin Cook, 'Britain's new approach to the world', speech to the Labour party conference, Brighton, 2 October 1997.

pragmatist lenses. There is no talk of sovereignty, of which we heard so much from the previous administration, no mention of 'threats' to national security, no elevation of the principle of non-intervention in Britain's domestic affairs; in their place, one finds 'internationalism', 'promoting democracy', 'promotion of our values and confidence in our identity', 'a people's diplomacy' and so on.¹⁶

Critics of New Labour will argue that language is merely ephemeral; what matters are the actions themselves. But this view of language as instrumental has become increasingly discredited by philosophers and sociologists who point to the constitutive aspect of language in the production of meaning. The constitutive role that language plays in international relations can be seen from the fact that other governments take seriously what is said to them and about them. All governments recognize the need to justify their actions and this presupposes a shared language within which these actions are endorsed or contested. This dialogue of states changes over time, but in every epoch it is central in shaping the range of permissible actions. 'International debate', as Cook argued, 'is shaped by speeches by foreign secretaries and the rhetoric they use'.¹⁷

The ethical dimension

Perhaps the most over-used phrase of the last eighteen months has been 'ethical foreign policy'. In fact, it is not a phrase which the Foreign Secretary has ever used; rather, Cook has talked about 'an ethical dimension'. This is how he described it in the mission statement: 'Our foreign policy must have an ethical dimension and must support the demands of other peoples for the democratic rights on which we insist for ourselves. The Labour Government will put human rights at the heart of our foreign policy and will publish an annual report on our work in promoting human rights abroad.'¹⁸

Not surprisingly, this aspect of Labour's new thinking on foreign policy has attracted considerable attention. While Cook's predecessors would no doubt have concurred with the priority accorded to the goals of security, prosperity and protection for the environment—even if they would not have been so open in announcing these policy goals—they would definitely not have been comfortable with the clarion call to 'make Britain once again a force for good in the world'.¹⁹

It is commonplace for this 'ethical dimension' to be cited as the principal innovation in New Labour's approach to foreign policy, implying that previous administrations have not pursued an ethical foreign policy. The inference that ethics have been 'added and stirred' into the rest of the agenda underestimates the extent to which British foreign policy has always accommodated a

¹⁶ Mervyn Frost, 'Putting the world to rights: Britain's ethical foreign policy', paper presented to the British International Studies Association conference, Leeds, December 1997.

¹⁷ Robin Cook, 'Foreign policy and human rights', Foreign Affairs Committee, 6 January 1998, p. 59.

¹⁸ Cook, 'British foreign policy'.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

particular understanding of ethics, in terms of both who the community is and how it is to be enhanced or secured. Indeed, Cook himself implies that ethics is something which is separate from the rest of the policy process, as though security, trade and the environment stood outside of normative questions about what is to be valued and who is to be privileged. In contrast to this view of morality as something which is separate from other interests and which can be taken up (or left out) by a Foreign Secretary at will, Ken Booth has forcefully argued that foreign policy can never be 'morality-free'.²⁰

Putting human rights at the centre

It is clear from the mission statement that the moral worth of the government's foreign policy should be judged according to the degree to which it enhances respect for human rights around the world.²¹ Robin Cook will not go down in history according to how many commercial contacts he helps to secure, or even according to the extent to which Britain fulfils its obligations to its allies in the EU or NATO. Britain under New Labour will be judged according to its success in promoting human rights abroad.

Although some commentators and other governments have been quick to level the charge of cultural imperialism against Cook's human rights agenda,²² the Foreign Secretary has explicitly pointed out that he is not speaking for a specifically 'British or even Western European point of view'.²³ Instead, he has argued that what Britain requires is that other countries should 'abide by the commitment that they themselves have willingly and voluntarily given'.²⁴ During the Cold War, Western states were challenged by the Soviet bloc and Third World states for championing civil and political rights over economic and social ones, but Cook has emphatically denied that he sees any such privileging of rights. He argues that the 'Universal Declaration should be read alongside the International Covenant on Economic and Social Rights and those two should be seen as complementary and not as alternatives'.²⁵ This commitment to economic and social rights is more than a rhetorical one: Cook has put issues like child labour and sex tourism on the human rights agenda in a way that no previous British government has done. Cook's interest in economic and social

²⁰ Ken Booth, 'Exporting ethics in place of arms', *Times Higher Education Supplement*, 7 November 1997.

²¹ It is important to realize that the Blair government is not the first British administration to try to place human rights further up the diplomatic agenda. The Callaghan government of 1976–9 sought to follow the US presidency of Jimmy Carter in bringing human rights into the diplomatic dialogue. David Owen, Foreign Secretary at that time, was entrusted with this responsibility. He explained his thinking in this area in David Owen, *Human rights* (London: Trinity Press, 1978). It is also important to note that in 1992 the then Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd set up the first self-standing human rights policy department at the Foreign Office.

²² Chris Brown, 'Mutual respect? Ethical foreign policy in a multicultural world', paper presented to the International Studies Association conference, Minneapolis, 17–21 March 1998.

²³ Cook, 'Foreign policy and human rights', p. 47. For a critical view which argues that the human rights agenda is at cross purposes with the commitment to 'mutual respect', see Brown, 'Mutual respect?'.

²⁴ Cook, 'Foreign policy and human rights', p. 47.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

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rights reflects the Blair administration's commitment to development issues more generally. For example, Clare Short's newly formed Department for International Development jointly produced the annual report on human rights, much of it emphasizing Britain's role in promoting the right to development.

The policy process: widening and opening

One obvious change in the conduct of foreign policy under the new government is the relative openness of the process. This is apparent on a number of levels. In the first instance, the FCO has used a variety of different media in order to communicate the ends and means of foreign policy. Promotional videos might help in the attempt to reinvent Britain's identity abroad, but by far the most significant innovation in this respect is the access to speeches and transcripts of interviews, which are immediately 'posted' on the FCO website. Since knowledge is a form of power, the greater the diffusion of knowledge the greater the possibility for empowering those who have an interest in (and access to) engaging in the policy process.

This openness can become a hostage to fortune, as was illustrated by the controversy triggered by the photograph of Cook shaking hands with Suharto which was published in the human rights report at a time when the former dictator was using force to put down pro-democracy demonstrators. At a conceptual level, it is a bold move since it furnishes journalists, activists and intellectuals with the information necessary to hold the government accountable for its actions. It is perhaps worthy of note that three leading academics working in international relations in the UK have already contributed to the debate about ethics and foreign policy.²⁶

A second element in the attempt to 'open' the corridors of power to public debate and scrutiny concerns Cook's attempt to include non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the formulation and implementation of British foreign policy. An immediate signal of this intention is evident from the commitment to hold an 'NGO Forum' prior to all multilateral conferences.²⁷

Good international citizenship as a strategy of the third way

The question whether Britain is pursuing a new ethical foreign policy under Labour can be located within a broader debate about the moral responsibilities which derive from membership of an international community or international society.²⁸ Should state leaders follow a realist ethic which privileges the security

²⁶ Booth, 'Exporting ethics'; Brown, 'Mutual respect?'; and Mervyn Frost, 'Putting the world to rights: Britain's ethical foreign policy'.

²⁷ Cook, 'Human rights into a new century', 17 July 1997, p. 4.

²⁸ We are using the terms 'international community' and 'international society' interchangeably. The former is the term employed by politicians, diplomats and journalists; academics generally use the latter, following in the footsteps of Martin Wight and Hedley Bull.

and welfare of their own citizens over claims of common humanity? Or should ministers recognize that their moral responsibilities do not stop at the water's edge? The problem traditionally has been that the dominant rules of membership—sovereignty and non-intervention—have silenced the promotion of human rights abroad. The post-1945 world, however, has witnessed a sea-change in the principles of international legitimacy. Within liberal states, it has become increasingly difficult for state leaders to claim that human rights abroad are of no concern to them. On the other side of the same coin, it is no longer acceptable for states to claim that the way they treat their own citizens is excluded from international scrutiny or censure. Rather, as R. J. Vincent put it in 1986, international society exposes 'the internal regimes of all the members . . . to the legitimate appraisal of their peers'.²⁹

Irrespective of the pressures on liberal foreign ministers to advance human rights in foreign policy, realists like Henry Kissinger warn them that they cannot afford the luxury of propagating their own values in an uncertain and dangerous world. Instead, they should be guided by hard-headed security interests and commercial considerations. The implication is clear: governments which bring human rights into the diplomatic dialogue risk weakening the security of the particular national community which they are entrusted to protect. Realists point to the fate of those, like Jimmy Carter, whose human rights policies could not stand the collapse of superpower detente, degenerating into the inconsistencies which Stanley Hoffmann labelled 'the hell of good intentions'.³⁰ There is an inescapable tension between national security and human rights in foreign policy-making, and governments pursuing a realist course will always steer clear of any temptation to take the moral high ground.

Set against this, there is another viewpoint which argues for a mutual interdependence between the provision of national security, the strengthening of international order and the promotion of human rights, and this is the concept of good international citizenship. In a series of speeches in the late 1980s Gareth Evans developed this idea by arguing that Australia had to promote an internationalist agenda on global challenges such as peacekeeping, peace enforcement, arms control, the environment, drugs and refugees. These issues, Evans argued, could be addressed only through international cooperation. Good international citizenship moderates the realist struggle for power by strengthening the rules and norms of international order, and he pointed here to Australia's commitment to the UN, and multilateral institutions more generally.³¹ In justifying the concept of good international citizenship, the Australian foreign minister argued that this is not 'the foreign policy equivalent of boy scout good deeds . . . [it is] an exercise in enlightened self-interest: an

²⁹ Vincent, *Human rights and international relations*, p. 152.

³⁰ Stanley Hoffmann, 'The hell of good intentions', *Foreign Policy* 29, winter 1997–8.

³¹ Gareth Evans, *Making Australian foreign policy*, Australian Fabian Society Pamphlet 50 (Canberra, 1989), p. 42.

expression of idealistic pragmatism'.³² As a middle power lacking significant military capabilities, Australia has a long-term security interest in promoting a rule-governed international order, and here we see how good international citizenship is compatible with the goals of both national security and international order.

Gareth Evans's articulation of the concept triggered a wider debate among the academic and policy communities in Australia. In a path-breaking essay on the subject, Andrew Linklater established a criterion for judging the priority to be accorded to the goals of an ethical foreign policy when these are in conflict. Good international citizens are not required to sacrifice their vital security interests out of fidelity to the rules of international society, but they are required 'to put the welfare of international society ahead of the relentless pursuit of [their] own national interests . . . to place the survival of order before the satisfaction of minimal national advantages'.³³ We want to take Linklater's argument a stage further by defining the 'welfare' of international society to include respect for human rights. On this reading, law-abiding good international citizens not only have to place order before the pursuit of narrow commercial and political advantage; they are also required to forsake these advantages where they conflict with human rights.

Gareth Evans was explicit in asserting that 'of all the strands of good international citizenship, we give special emphasis to human rights'.³⁴ In defending the promotion of human rights as a central task of Australian foreign policy, the foreign minister, like Cook a decade later, rejected any charges of cultural imperialism, arguing that his concern was to defend and extend internationally agreed standards of human rights. It is clear that Evans thought there was an underlying harmony of interests in supporting universal human rights standards and the 'extension into our foreign relations of the basic values of the Australian community'.³⁵ In this context, Evans quoted approvingly Hedley Bull's plea that liberal societies should recognize 'purposes beyond ourselves' (demonstrating that some busy foreign ministers do at times draw on academic thinking on international politics). Almost a decade before Robin Cook's mission statement which reiterated the same theme, the Australian foreign minister stated that Australia should pursue good international citizenship 'if for no other reason than to maintain our own sense of worth in pursuing ends that are inherently valuable'.³⁶

³² Quoted in David Goldsworthy, 'Australia and good international citizenship', in S. Lawson, ed., *The new agenda for global security: cooperating for peace and beyond* (Canberra: Allen & Unwin, 1995), p. 175.

³³ Andrew Linklater, 'What is a good international citizen?', in Paul Keal, ed., *Ethics and foreign policy* (Canberra: Allen & Unwin, 1992), pp. 28–9. The analysis provided in this article is an attempt to follow his injunction to develop a 'critical approach to foreign policy analysis': Andrew Linklater, 'The question of the next stage in international relations theory: a critical-theoretical point of view', *Millennium* 21: 1, Spring 1992, p. 97.

³⁴ Evans, *Making Australian foreign policy*, p. 42.

³⁵ Goldsworthy, 'Australia and good international citizenship', p. 174.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

The vision of good international citizenship brings together domestic politics and foreign policy, since the latter springs from the principles of democracy, human rights and good governance. This leads to two conclusions. First, a government which espouses these values abroad must have a good track record on these issues at home. Evans recognized that Australia will not have much credibility in arguing for human rights internationally ‘if in our national policies on Aboriginal affairs, immigration or the like we are seen to be indulging in double standards’.³⁷ States which speak the language of good international citizenship will be mistrusted if they do not uphold principles of democratic governance at home. The second conclusion he drew is that states which practise good governance at home are likely to behave in the same way abroad. In this sense, good international citizens have a long-term security interest in promoting human rights in their foreign policies.³⁸

Realists argue that states will always manipulate the language of internationalism to cloak selfish ends, while cosmopolitan critics point to the corrupting rather than civilizing power of the state in foreign policy-making. Good international citizenship seeks to transcend these polarities by mapping out a third way which tames the element of brute power, and looks to the reconciliation of order and justice in world politics. Formulated in these terms, good international citizenship can clearly be placed within the international society tradition or English School.³⁹ However, this tradition is divided on how far human rights concerns should penetrate diplomacy, with the ‘pluralist’ wing of the tradition arguing that to promote human rights in a culturally divided world threatens the foundations of international order, while ‘solidarists’ maintain that state leaders ‘are burdened with the guardianship of human rights everywhere’.⁴⁰ We would argue that meeting this commitment is the litmus test for judging Britain as a good international citizen.

The British Foreign Secretary has not explicitly acknowledged the influence of good international citizenship on his thinking, but there are considerable similarities between the goals he has set and the conceptual rationale employed by Evans. There is the same commitment to reinforcing the rules of international society, and to working within multilateral security institutions. However, Britain and Australia occupy very different positions in the hierarchy

³⁷ Evans, *Making Australian foreign policy*, p. 16.

³⁸ We are not positing an automatic connection between democratic values on the inside and good behaviour on the outside, but we would argue that there is a strong relationship between how states treat their citizens and how they treat the citizens of other states. This link was emphasized by Evans when he stated that ‘in the longer term, the evolution of just and tolerant societies brings its own international returns—in higher standards of international behaviour, and in the contribution that internal stability makes to international stability and peace’: Evans, *Making Australian foreign policy*, p. 12.

³⁹ For a conceptual history of the English School, see Tim Dunne, *Inventing international society: a history of the English School* (London: Macmillan, 1998).

⁴⁰ Hedley Bull, ‘The Grotian conception of international society’, in Martin Wight and Herbert Butterfield, eds, *Diplomatic investigations: essays in the theory of international politics* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1996), p. 63. For an elaboration of pluralist and solidarist international society theory in the context of Hedley Bull’s work, see Nicholas J. Wheeler and Tim Dunne, ‘Hedley Bull’s pluralism of the intellect and solidarism of the will’, *International Affairs* 72: 1, January 1996.

of states: Britain is a permanent member of the UN Security Council, it possesses significant military capabilities, including nuclear weapons, it is the leader of the Commonwealth and a major player in the EU, and it has considerable prestige around the world.⁴¹ These attributes provide Britain with considerable diplomatic influence, and a key question to be explored in the remainder of the article is how far Britain is using this to further the principles of good international citizenship.

A commitment to strengthening the pillars of international order is an obligation which follows from being a member of the society of states. As Cook put it in his Locarno speech, 'If every country is a member of an international community, then it is reasonable to require every government to abide by the rules of membership.'⁴² As we discuss below, the Blair government has threatened to use military force against Iraq to uphold the authority of the United Nations. However, the most striking feature of the Locarno speech is Cook's proposition—in keeping with our definition of good international citizenship—that the 'rules of membership' are set out in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The clear implication is that states which abuse human rights forfeit the right to be treated as a legitimate member of the international community, and should become the subject of international scrutiny and censure.

Good international citizenship in practice

In this section we examine how far Britain has lived up to the standard of good international citizenship. We begin by looking at Britain's role in upholding UN authority in the face of Iraq's non-compliance with Security Council Resolution 687. In the latter stages, we evaluate its human rights diplomacy with Indonesia, China and Algeria.

A 'perfect peacekeeper': the 1998 Gulf crisis

A discussion of Britain's handling of this crisis reveals the difficulties of applying good international citizenship in practice. Since the end of the Gulf War in April 1991, Iraq has engaged in a game of 'cat and mouse' with the UN's Special Commission on Weapons Inspection (UNSCOM) which has responsibility under Resolution 687 for dismantling Iraq's capacity to produce chemical and biological weapons. There had been a series of confrontations since 1991 between Iraqi officials and the UN team, but on each occasion a

⁴¹ This cluster of factors implies that Britain is a major power, unlike Australia which is a middle power. Kim Richard Nossal has argued that an internationalist foreign policy 'comes easily' to middle powers such as Australia and Canada: 'Middle power diplomacy in the changing Asia-Pacific order: Australia and Canada compared', in Richard Leaver and James L. Richardson, eds, *The post-Cold War order: diagnoses and prognoses* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1993), p. 213.

⁴² Robin Cook, 'Human rights into a new century', 17 July 1997.

compromise had eventually been reached. Iraq's non-compliance convinced UNSCOM that it had further undisclosed capabilities, and perhaps even stocks of operational biological and chemical weapons. In late October 1997, matters came to a head as Iraq refused the inspectors access to so-called 'presidential sites' and sought to put a time limit on UNSCOM's mission. The Clinton administration decided to insist on Iraq's compliance with Resolution 687, and backed this determination with a threat to use force. The United States feared that if the disarmament mission failed, two negative consequences would follow: first, the Iraqi leadership would be able to carry on developing weapons of mass destruction; and second, it would become increasingly difficult to sustain the sanctions regime against Iraq which was coming under pressure from France and Russia (attracted by the prospect of oil and trade deals). As the United States built up its forces in the Gulf in the early weeks of 1998, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright visited Middle Eastern capitals in an effort to resurrect the type of coalition which President Bush had put together against Iraq prior to Operation Desert Storm in 1990–1. However, this time round there was deep unease in the region, voiced by Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the other Gulf states—an unease shared by France, Russia and China, which all cautioned against a hasty resort to force.

In contrast to the three other permanent members of the UN Security Council, the Blair government emphasized that force was justified if Iraq refused to comply with the inspection regime. In an article written for the *Observer* on 15 February 1998, the Prime Minister argued that diplomacy would only work if it were backed by the threat of force. The 'aim of any military action', declared Blair, 'will be to diminish significantly Saddam's ability to deploy, conceal and re-create his weapons of mass destruction capability, or threaten his neighbours'.⁴³ Although Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Poland moved military forces to the Gulf, Britain was the only state to support the United States with substantial military capabilities, in the form of the aircraft carrier *Invincible* and a naval flotilla. In justifying the threat to use force in terms of Iraq's defiance of a UN Security Council Resolution, the British government took the view that long-term order depended upon a willingness to enforce international law against deviant states.

In his reflections upon the duties of a good international citizen, Gareth Evans argued that a willingness to use force to uphold the rules of international order was necessary, but was emphatic that such actions had to be legitimized by the UN. A key requirement for Evans was that the good international citizen acts multilaterally. But what happens if major powers cannot secure a broad consensus for using force, yet believe that the maintenance of international peace and security depends upon it? Australia never confronted this dilemma under Evans, but Britain's support for the United States in the early months of 1998 forced it to contemplate taking a course of action which

⁴³ 'For once, there is no third way', *Observer*, 15 February 1998.

did not carry the international community with it. The problem was that the Anglo-American stance of threatening force against Iraq was perceived by many Security Council members as undermining the authority of the UN, in whose name the resort to force was being justified. The key issue centred on whether Anglo-American military strikes could be launched without a new Security Council Resolution. The Americans took the view that Resolution 678, which had authorized the use of force against Iraq in the 1991 Gulf War, was not superseded by the ceasefire agreement in Resolution 687, and therefore provided a continuing legal basis for military action. Set against this, other members of the Security Council, notably France, Russia and China, argued that any use of force required a new resolution, and that diplomatic efforts to resolve the inspection crisis should be given more time.

What is important about this debate is that the United States and Britain could have defended the use of force on legal grounds, but such an action would have lacked legitimacy in the international community. The absence of consensus seems to have constrained the United States from resorting to force, and this opened up space for exploring imaginative diplomatic solutions to the crisis. The British government did not publicly argue for a new Security Council Resolution, but it played an important role behind the scenes in persuading the United States not to use force without the backing of the other permanent members. Furthermore, Britain sought to mediate between the conflicting positions in the Council, enabling the Secretary-General to go to Baghdad with a mandate which brought an end to this phase of the crisis.⁴⁴

How, then, should we assess Britain's credentials as a good international citizen in relation to this crisis? On his return from Baghdad, the UN Secretary-General praised Britain and the United States as 'perfect peacekeepers', stating that 'we taught our peacekeepers that the best way to use force is to show it in order not to have to use it'.⁴⁵ The implication here is that the Secretary-General would not have been able to secure a deal with the Iraqi leadership in the absence of the threat to use force. Nevertheless, Britain's strategy of threatening force alongside America was a risky one for two reasons. First, had diplomacy failed and force been used, Britain would have found itself defending actions to which other members of the Security Council were opposed. The tension between the British government's ethical imperative of stopping the spread of weapons of mass destruction and its commitment to strengthening the authority of UN Resolutions would have been ruthlessly exposed had the United States decided to use force against the

⁴⁴ Cook claimed in a House of Commons debate that 'Britain has taken the lead in drafting work at the UN', *Hansard*, 17 February 1998. This is supported by an editorial comment in the *Guardian*: see 'A deal that can satisfy', *Guardian*, 24 February 1998 and 'US public readied for war', *Guardian*, 14 February 1998. For a more critical view of Britain's efforts, see 'He doesn't want a war: neither do they', *Observer*, 15 February 1998.

⁴⁵ 'UN chief praises Clinton on return from Iraq', Reuters, 25 February 1998.

Iraqi regime.⁴⁶ Second, resorting to force risked UNSCOM's mission, leaving open the probability that Iraq would emerge with its stockpile of chemical and biological weapons intact. In a House of Commons debate on 17 February, Robin Cook stated that 'we have taken great care in our targeting plan to ensure that we do not hit such completed weapons'. The fear was that were Allied planes to hit operational weapons, there was a risk of releasing deadly toxins into the atmosphere, killing hundreds of thousands of Iraqi civilians. Instead, the government planned to interdict points in the supply chain.⁴⁷ Given that the primary justification for using force was to stop Iraq from developing weapons of mass destruction, the British government's proposed targets highlighted the gap between means and ends in this aspect of its ethical foreign policy. But whatever risks Britain and the United States courted in threatening force, it is hard to believe that Iraq would have backed down in the absence of such threats.

Support for the authority of the UN as a peacekeeper and peace enforcer is without doubt an important part of acting as a good international citizen. As both Evans and Cook have argued, the moral responsibility of states should also include giving a central position to human rights. For Cook, the badge of membership in the international community is conditional upon observance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. If every state were a good international citizen in this respect there would be no gap between adherence to the rights stipulated in the Declaration and compliance with them. Unfortunately, as NGOs remind us daily, the majority of states fall below this standard; and a minority do not merely fall below, they 'grotesquely violate human rights',⁴⁸ as Cook graphically put it in his Locarno speech. In the paragraphs below we will discuss three states that have repeatedly been cited as being gross violators of basic rights and have found themselves under Cook's ethical searchlight.

Guardianship of human rights

Indonesia is an important case for a number of reasons. On the one hand, Britain is Indonesia's biggest arms supplier, with sales accounting for 10 per cent of

⁴⁶ As Kofi Annan prepared to fly to Baghdad with the Security Council's mandate, the US Ambassador to the UN, Bill Richardson, claimed that the US reserved 'the right to disagree' with the outcome of the UN Secretary-General's visit if it 'is not consistent with Security Council resolutions and our own *national interest*' (emphasis added). See 'The diplomatic deal that may be the last card', *The Age* (Melbourne) 19 February 1998.

⁴⁷ Cook, *Hansard*, 17 February 1998. It is possible that the United States would have targeted sites where it suspected that Iraq had operational chemical and biological weapons, but it seems highly likely that the same fear which deterred the British from planning such strikes would have influenced US target plans. In a speech to the Pentagon on 17 February 1998, President Clinton admitted that a 'military operation cannot destroy all the weapons of mass destruction capacity', suggesting that the United States intended to desist from targeting operational weapons. See 'Remarks by the President on Iraq to Pentagon personnel', White House press release for 17 February 1998.

⁴⁸ Cook, 'Human rights into a new century'.

our weapons exports.⁴⁹ On the other, it is one of the most corrupt and undemocratic states in the world. Cook's attempt to pursue commercial diplomacy *and* an ethical foreign policy towards Indonesia has generated the most barbed criticism of his tenure to date. The case poses the question whether Britain has sacrificed its commitment to human rights on the altar of trade.⁵⁰

Once again, when considering the predicament of British foreign policy towards Indonesia, it is fruitful to examine Australia's relations with its neighbour in the South-East Asian region. Decades of diplomatic indifference were brought to an end in 1988 when Gareth Evans and Ali Alatas (the Indonesian foreign minister) began negotiating the Timor Gap Zone of Cooperation Treaty, outlining agreed boundaries for mineral exploitation in the Timor sea. This process of closer cooperation between the two states culminated in a security treaty signed in December 1995. From Australia's perspective, the strengthening of bilateral relations with Indonesia brought considerable benefits in terms of both trade and security. But could Australia succeed in improving relations with Suharto's regime *and* be a good international citizen?

The reply from the 'left' in Australia was an emphatic 'no'. Australia's policy of cooperation in the security sphere—including high-level bilateral defence contacts and the sale of combat rifles—was adopted 'in full knowledge that the Indonesian Army is overwhelmingly tasked with an internal security role in a state notorious for its human rights abuses'.⁵¹ This 'internal security role' has been at its most brutal in the suppression of the self-determination movement in East Timor, where the total loss of life has been estimated to be as high as 200,000 (approximately 30 per cent of the East Timorese population).

Australia therefore stands accused of complicity in the suppression of basic rights of Indonesian civilians, and jettisoning its claim to be a good international citizen in favour of 'adherence to variations of *realpolitik*'.⁵² The case against the accused is not as cut and dried as it appears. Being a good international citizen does not require a state to sacrifice its vital security interests by imposing negative sanctions (supposing these were deemed to be most effective) on an illiberal regime in order to increase compliance with human rights standards. This of course begs the question whether Australia had good reasons to fear that an assertive human rights diplomacy with Indonesia would produce a regional cold war with its northern neighbour. It may be that Australian companies would have lost commercial contracts, but this does not constitute an erosion of vital security interests. When pressed on the motivations for the warm bilateral relationship with Indonesia, Gareth Evans did not seek to justify it in terms of a hierarchy of interests, with security

⁴⁹ John Kampfner, *Analysis: taking the high road*, BBC News and Current Affairs transcript, 2 October 1997.

⁵⁰ In breach of the policy 'to ensure that increased trade improves, and does not undermine, human rights': Cook, 'Human rights into a new century'.

⁵¹ Michael McKinley, 'The ethical assumptions', in Lawson, ed., *The new agenda*, p. 157.

⁵² *Ibid.*

coming before rights.⁵³ The clear lesson to be drawn from this example is that if a state has to derogate from its obligation to be a guardian of human rights because vital security interests are perceived to be at stake, it is necessary explicitly to justify accommodation on these grounds; otherwise, as in the case of Australia, governments leave themselves exposed to the charge that narrow commercial advantage is driving foreign policy.

The British government's policy on arms exports to Indonesia has provoked similar criticism. Even the most ardent defenders of the decision not to revoke export licences for military equipment (authorized by the previous administration) must have felt uncomfortable at seeing images of pro-democracy demonstrators being beaten by equipment 'made in Britain'.⁵⁴ In a radio interview, Robin Cook claimed that the new guidelines for arms sales would not have permitted the export of equipment 'that will be used in internal repression'.⁵⁵ Yet whatever assurances the importing country provides to the contrary, there are no guarantees that it will not use such weaponry against its civilian population.

The matter of arms sales to Indonesia raises a difficult question concerning what constitutes a legitimate right to self-defence and what armaments are required for that end. Robin Cook defended the sale of additional Hawk 'trainer' aircraft on the grounds that Indonesia needed them for external defence, and he buttressed this claim by refuting the charge that these aircraft had been repeatedly used against the East Timorese people.⁵⁶ We would argue that good international citizens recognize that while states have a legitimate right to self-defence, governments that are 'gross violators' should be denied arms irrespective of their declared usage. By linking external protection to good governance, strong incentives are created for states to act as guardians of human rights in the domestic sphere. In the debate in the House of Commons on arms exports to Indonesia, it was the Liberal Democrat MP Menzies Campbell who spoke for good international citizenship when he argued that the past practices of certain governments ought to rule them out as recipients of *any* military hardware.⁵⁷

Britain has failed to be a good international citizen in its relations with Indonesia because it has placed selfish economic advantage above getting tough with the Suharto government over human rights. In its bilateral relations with

⁵³ The closest he came to making this defence can be found in his book *Australia's foreign relations*, where he claims that prior to the policy of engagement with Indonesia, minor disputes all too often began to assume 'an unwarranted prominence and seriousness', implying the potential for a spiral of insecurity to develop. See Gareth Evans and Bruce Grant, *Australia's foreign relations in the world of the 1990s* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1995), p. 204.

⁵⁴ The government admitted in the House of Commons that among the 51 licences granted in the past year, some equipment included riot control gear, small arms and armoured goods. Lord Avebury, the human rights campaigner, alleges that Scorpion tanks are still finding their way into Indonesia in 'kit' form: Rupert Cornwell, *Independent*, 21 May 1998.

⁵⁵ Transcript of interview by the Foreign Secretary, BBC Radio 4 *Today* programme, 14 May 1998.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ The Rt Hon. Menzies Campbell MP, *Hansard*, 24 October 1996. Emphasis added.

China, the good international citizen calculus is more difficult given that security interests are paramount. How should Britain balance the competing values of security and human rights in the diplomatic dialogue with China? In his own contribution to defining the third way in foreign policy, the Foreign Secretary claims that he is mapping a course between the 'row' and the 'kow-tow'.⁵⁸ He rejects the low priority the previous government accorded to human rights, but argues that more will be achieved through 'dialogue' than through public confrontation. A genuine 'dialogue' is not an occasion for lecturing or hectoring, as realist critics have contended;⁵⁹ rather, it is an opportunity for an 'open exchange of views'.⁶⁰ Instead of shying away from defending his commitment to dialogue in relation to specific cases, the Foreign Secretary makes the bold claim that his approach of establishing a dialogue with China on human rights has achieved more in the last year than the Conservative government achieved in the previous ten.⁶¹

Britain's commitment to dialogue with China is part of a wider EU policy which was revived in October 1997 as a response to the failed attempt collectively to censure China's human rights practices at the 1997 annual session of the UN's Human Rights Commission in Geneva.⁶² Since the EU–China dialogue began, there have been four rounds of talks (three more are scheduled for 1999) culminating in the first EU–China summit in London in April 1998. Derek Fatchett, Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, noted in a speech to the House of Commons that the Blair government had taken every opportunity to raise human rights matters with the Chinese government, citing nine specific instances, including the Foreign Secretary's discussion of human rights issues during his short visit to Beijing in January 1998.⁶³

The government acknowledges that a dialogue with China on human rights is a long-term process, but ministers point to the following concrete achievements: a declaratory commitment by China to the universality of human rights; the release of the prominent Chinese dissident Wei Jingsheng; the signature and proposed ratification of the International Covenant on Economic and Social Rights; a commitment to sign the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; China's agreement to extend an invitation to Mary Robinson, the UN's High Commissioner for Human Rights; reporting of Hong Kong human rights issues to the UN; and finally, China's consent to a visit by the EU troika to Tibet.⁶⁴

⁵⁸ 'A ferret in charge of the Foreign Office', *Daily Telegraph*, 14 November 1997.

⁵⁹ See Robin Cook, 'The first year', Mansion House, 23 April 1998.

⁶⁰ Robin Cook and the Rt Hon. Clare Short MP, Secretary of State for International Development, *Annual Report on Human Rights*, April 1998.

⁶¹ Edited transcript of an interview by Robin Cook, BBC Radio 4, London, 4 April 1998.

⁶² The split was primarily caused by France's decision to give lucrative business contracts with China priority over human rights concerns. 'Dissent on China damages EU', *Electronic Telegraph*, 4 April 1997.

⁶³ *Hansard*, 1 April 1998.

⁶⁴ 'Blair hails new dawn in co-operation with China', *Guardian*, 3 April 1998.

How should we judge the extent to which Britain is acting as a good international citizen in the diplomacy of human rights with China? Is Cook's claim that there is a third way between the 'row' and the 'kow-tow' just another New Labour slogan which covers up the reality that, after a few high-profile exchanges on human rights, Britain gets on with the traditional concerns of diplomacy? The difficulty in evaluating the Cook strategy is that we cannot know how much more might be achieved by adopting a tougher stance, as Chinese human rights activists and other human rights NGOs have argued.

An example of the dilemma faced in taking a position between dialogue and condemnation can be seen in the Foreign Secretary's raising of individual human rights cases during his trip to China in January 1998. Cook requested the release of twelve dissidents, but only raised these cases at a junior level within the government.⁶⁵ During a four-hour meeting with the Chinese foreign minister, Qian Qichen, Cook decided not to bring up any of the individual cases on his list, choosing instead to discuss human rights in general terms. Moreover, having said that he would provide a platform for the victims of human rights abuses, the Foreign Secretary declined to meet Wei Jingsheng during his visit. Cook later claimed China's decision in November 1997 to release its most famous dissident as a vindication of the policy of dialogue. However, the human rights campaigner, who spent eighteen years in prison, refuted Cook's claims for the third way. Not only did Wei Jingsheng criticize the Foreign Secretary for not meeting him, he later castigated the part Britain played in refusing to censure China at the 1998 UN Human Rights Commission. British policy, he argued, was a 'disgrace' which lifted 'pressure from the Chinese Government . . . [leaving] the victims of China's human rights abuses in the lurch'.⁶⁶

The British government's justification for not censuring China was that the dialogue was producing 'encouraging results',⁶⁷ but that the matter would be open for review in future years were China to fail to live up to its promises on human rights. That China is engaging in a conversation on human rights is a novelty, but it might be asked how far the Beijing government has really accepted the legitimacy of the idea of universal human rights. Hitherto, China has argued that Western demands for human rights represent a form of cultural imperialism, and even though China signed the 1993 Vienna Document which affirmed the universality of human rights, the head of the Chinese delegation, Liu Huaqia, argued at the Vienna Conference that 'one should not and cannot think of the human rights standard and model of certain countries as the only proper ones and demand all other countries to comply with them'.⁶⁸ Thus, it

⁶⁵ 'Cook's low-level protest over China dissidents', *Electronic Telegraph*, 20 January 1998.

⁶⁶ 'Cook is condemned over China motion', *Electronic Telegraph*, 10 March 1998. Other human rights organizations also responded with disappointment; for example, Jean-Paul Barthoz, of Human Rights Watch, called the collective decision of the 15 EU foreign ministers 'a major step backwards'. See 'EU agrees to take softer stance over China rights', *Electronic Telegraph*, 24 February 1998.

⁶⁷ 'EU agrees to take softer stance on China rights', *Electronic Telegraph*, 24 February 1998.

⁶⁸ Quoted in James T. H. Tang, *Human rights and international relations in the Asia Pacific* (London: Pinter, 1995), p. 214.

remains unclear how far China has genuinely accepted that human rights should be part of the diplomatic dialogue, and how far it is using the language of human rights as a foreign policy instrument designed to deflect Western criticism of the regime. Despite the traditional Chinese argument that human rights are a form of cultural imperialism, by signing the Vienna Document and promising to accede to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, China has made it harder to claim that human rights are simply Western cultural preferences. China's growing entanglement in the diplomacy of human rights provides important arguments for Western states seeking to hold China accountable to internationally agreed standards. It may be that by eschewing a row over individual high-profile cases, Cook's third way might, in the longer term, strengthen the legitimacy of those fighting for human rights in China. Even if Britain were persuaded by the arguments of human rights activists of the need to 'get tough' with China, there are powerful constraints to bear in mind. The most significant of all concerns Britain's obligations to the people of Hong Kong. This was made crystal clear by Robin Cook in his testimony to the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee. In his words, 'the prime consideration of British foreign policy in relation to China must be because we have a duty of care to the six million residents of Hong Kong.'⁶⁹

The second constraint upon putting human rights at the centre of the government's China policy is that Britain has vital security interests in terms of both Asia-Pacific stability and the broader need for Chinese participation in multilateral security institutions. As we saw in our discussion above of the Iraqi inspection crisis, enforcing the rules of the society of states against 'rogue' states depends for its legitimacy on consensus within the Security Council, and crucial to this is cooperation among the five permanent members. Any attempt to isolate or coerce China on human rights risks jeopardizing this consensus. Given India's and Pakistan's decision in May 1998 to flout non-proliferation norms by testing nuclear devices, China's support will be crucial to any future moves to strengthen global non-proliferation norms.⁷⁰ The dilemma is that the West needs China if there is to be any enforcement of international rules on the outside, but this precludes any possibility of enforcing the rules against China for its violation of human rights on the inside.

As argued above, Britain fails the test of good international citizenship in relation to Indonesia. In the case of China, the conflict between human rights and security is posed at its starkest. Critics of Britain's China policy recognize that vital security interests are at stake but argue that these would not be jeopardized by a more assertive human rights policy. The charge that the Blair

⁶⁹ Cook, 'Foreign policy and human rights', p. 53.

⁷⁰ Recognition of the importance of securing Chinese cooperation in strengthening global security can be seen in the Clinton administration's strategy of 'cooperation, not conflict'. An example of this was the decision to sell nuclear reactors to China in October 1997 at a time when the administration was under fire from domestic critics for ignoring China's human rights abuses: 'US to end China sanctions', *Guardian*, 28 October 1997.

government is being overly timid in its belief that there is no alternative to dialogue underestimates the willingness of China to tolerate international condemnation, let alone the imposition of negative sanctions. We would argue that although there are clear continuities with the way in which preceding Conservative governments tried to balance human rights and security concerns, what marks out the new government's approach to China is the fact that it publicly defends its policy on human rights grounds. This establishes a clear standard by which critics can hold the government accountable, and to be persuasive, Robin Cook has to make the case that Britain's vital security interests would be undermined if the government adopted a more critical diplomacy of human rights.

We have seen how security concerns are a constant intrusion into the formulation of Britain's human rights policy towards China. By contrast, the case of Algeria poses a quite different challenge in so far as human rights and security are to some extent de-linked. In other words, coercive measures—from sanctions to armed humanitarian intervention—could be deployed without putting at stake either national security or wider international peace and security. Algeria also poses an important challenge because it has refused to engage seriously in a dialogue about human rights, despite the initiatives taken by Robin Cook on behalf of the EU. This raises the question at which Cook hinted in his Locarno speech: what do you do with states which are beyond 'rational persuasion' but do not present a threat to international peace and security?⁷¹

The Algerian crisis has been unfolding for the past six years. Since 1992 there has been a state of emergency in place, a response by the government to the 'threat' posed by the armed wing of the Islamic Salvation Front. In the ensuing civil conflict as many as 80,000 people have been killed.⁷² The violence escalated at the turn of the year: in the first few days of 1998, 1,000 people were reported to have been killed. Robin Cook used the vehicle of the EU presidency to raise the concerns felt by the EU, leading to a proposal that a 'troika' of ministers visit Algeria 'to get a clearer picture of the situation on the ground'.⁷³ After some dispute with the Algerian government over whether the delegation would be allowed into the country, a visit took place in mid-January, led by Derek Fatchett—who admitted to being frustrated by the restricted access the team were given to non-official sources. The delegation's report was considered by the meeting of European foreign ministers on 26 January. The ministers published a muted joint statement urging greater dialogue but admitting that the EU could do little to end the six-year war. In Cook's words: 'Europe is willing to do anything it can to help end the suffering

⁷¹ Cook, 'Human rights into a new century'.

⁷² *Algeria: programme of action to end human rights crisis: open letter to all governments from the Secretary General of Amnesty International*, Amnesty International Report, 26 February 1998.

⁷³ Statement by the Foreign Secretary on behalf of the EU presidency, 8 January 1998.

of the Algerian people. But our willingness to help needs to be matched by a willingness on the part of the Algerian government to accept the help we are offering'.⁷⁴

There is no question that the Algerian government refused to participate in the 'political dialogue' which Cook and Fatchett had hoped to inaugurate.⁷⁵ It would not agree to the appointment of a UN special rapporteur on human rights, as requested by the EU delegation and Amnesty International.⁷⁶ In addition, the offer of humanitarian aid was turned down, probably because it was to be linked to human rights/good governance conditions. What Cook described as 'neighbourly assistance' was seen by the government in Algiers as unwanted interference in its domestic affairs.

Given the unwillingness of Algeria to engage in 'political dialogue', what should be the response of a good international citizen? In the first instance, the Foreign Office should have taken seriously the arguments of those NGOs⁷⁷ and independent analysts⁷⁸ who explicitly blame the Algerian government for its role in causing the conflict and contributing to the continuing feud. By contrast, Cook has argued on more than one occasion that there was no evidence 'from our own or other sources' to support this charge.⁷⁹ It may be that Cook was keeping the public censure of the government muted while he was trying to broker the humanitarian mission; but given the failure of this initiative, the government should not have allowed the issue to disappear so rapidly off the human rights agenda. We would argue that the government was right to rule out the use of force to stop the killing in Algeria on prudential grounds: intervention would have been a dangerous and protracted business which risked high casualties with little prospect of providing a long-term solution.⁸⁰ Where Britain and the EU failed the test of good international citizenship was in the speed at which they retreated from an impending 'row' with the Algerian government to something approaching a 'kow-tow'. Confronted with a situation where tens of thousands have been slaughtered, the good international citizen should debate the merits of imposing negative sanctions when dialogue has broken down.

⁷⁴ *Electronic Telegraph*, 27 January 1998.

⁷⁵ Statement by the Foreign Secretary on behalf of the EU Presidency, 15 January 1998.

⁷⁶ *Algeria: programme of action*.

⁷⁷ Contrast this with Amnesty International's forthright judgement that 'militias armed by the state' have been responsible for the barbarism which has gripped the country. See *ibid*.

⁷⁸ George Joffé argues that, in the course of the unfolding civil war, 'the behaviour of the regime and of its clandestine opposition have become parallel experiences'. See his *Algeria in crisis*, Royal Institute of International Affairs briefing paper no. 48, June 1998, p. 1.

⁷⁹ Reported in the *Electronic Telegraph*, 15 January 1998.

⁸⁰ In contrast to the British government's reticence to discuss the question of armed intervention publicly, the French defence minister, Alain Richard, argued that the situation did not warrant international intervention. His justification for this was not the prudential concern noted above; rather, in the context of Algeria he offered the following admission: 'To define the moment when a country is virtually without government and international intervention is justified is extremely difficult'. See 'EU reaffirms its confidence in Algerian rulers', *Electronic Telegraph*, 14 January 1998.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that there has been a radical transformation in the style of the foreign policy process over the last eighteen months: more openness, wider involvement, and a barrage of policy statements and publications. Critics of the third way argue that it is *only* the style which has changed. Cook's predecessor, Lord Hurd, has publicly asserted that the Labour party has not significantly changed course, but has merely adjusted the compass 'by two or three points'. He went on to argue: 'What is slightly irritating . . . is to pretend that a shift of two or three degrees is a shift of 180 degrees and that all his predecessors were immoral rogues.'⁸¹ Clearly, a third way in foreign policy requires more than a shift of a few degrees, but less than an about turn. We have employed the concept of good international citizenship in order to develop the idea of a 'third' alternative course for British foreign policy between the rival doctrines of realist pragmatism (the traditional course) and its antithesis, a form of cosmopolitanism which looks to replace the states system with a universal moral community. Good international citizenship furnishes the government with a conceptual rationale—which has hitherto been lacking—for deciding the priority to be accorded to the goals of security and human rights. In the main body of the article, we used this framework to produce an ethical audit of New Labour's new foreign policy.

Sacrificing the pursuit of narrow economic and political advantages in the cause of promoting international standards of human rights is the most important principle of good international citizenship. On this criterion, the Blair government has failed over Indonesia. Had the government taken the decision to cancel the order for Hawk aircraft, it would have sent a powerful signal to other despotic regimes that it was prepared to incur commercial costs in the name of human rights. The issue of whether such weapons are to be used for external purposes only is a moot one since what matters is that good international citizens are not seen to be supporting regimes which are gross violators. The other argument, that if Britain does not sell such weapons, others will fill the void, is not morally persuasive. We do not defend the export of drugs or pornography on the same grounds.⁸² Cook's predecessor argued in relation to Indonesia that the Foreign Secretary had no choice but to succumb to the 'difficulties of practice'.⁸³ What Lord Hurd is venting is the realist conviction that state leaders have to work with the world as it is and not

⁸¹ Former Foreign Secretary, Douglas Hurd, 'Foreign policy and human rights', Foreign Affairs Committee, 16 December 1997, p. 25.

⁸² This argument is made in Booth, 'Exporting ethics'. The agreement in early 1998 on an EU code of conduct for arms transfers should reduce the risks of such 'beggar-thy-neighbour' actions. Even such a code, however, would not threaten the sale of the Hawks, given the government's claim that they are to be used for defensive purposes only, for it prohibits the sale of weapons only to regimes where there is a 'clear risk' that they will be used for internal repression or external aggression. This is a major weakness of the EU's position, as is the non-binding nature of the agreement. Criticisms of the code are contained in *EU Acts on Arms Trade*, Amnesty International, July/August 1998, pp. 19–20.

⁸³ Hurd, 'Foreign policy and human rights', p. 25.

as idealist foreign ministers would like it to be. The point about 'honouring' arms contracts is that it all too easily slides into the argument that the government had no choice. It could, however, have decided to break the contracts, a policy with another set of negative moral consequences in the form of workers being laid off by British Aerospace and other defence companies. A responsibility would then fall on the government's shoulders to re-invest in the affected industries and localities. Ultimately, a good international citizen cannot justify arms exports to gangster states on economic grounds.

How far has Britain met the test of good international citizenship in relation to China? The Foreign Secretary argues that there is no alternative to conducting a dialogue on human rights, given Britain's wider security interests. Good international citizens are not required to sacrifice their security for human rights, and the success of Britain's China policy depends upon how convincing the government is in defending its actions in terms of this hierarchy of goals. Our contention is that the government's view of China as 'a major global force'⁸⁴ and its responsibilities to Hong Kong support its claim that there is little room for manoeuvre on human rights. By taking China out of the bilateral context shaped predominantly by Hong Kong, and placing it within a wider EU one, Britain has increased its capability to enmesh China into the global human rights regime without risking global security.

Good international citizens are required to use force in certain circumstances. Although this question rarely found its way into Gareth Evans's despatch box, Britain under New Labour has already had to contemplate the use of force in the Gulf, and more recently in relation to Kosovo. What rationale does good international citizenship provide for resolving the dilemma of when to resort to force and how to carry it out? Good international citizens have a duty to use force in order to maintain international peace and security, and to prevent or stop genocide and mass murder. In both these circumstances, force may still be ruled out because of prudential considerations. If this is the case, a burden of proof rests on the shoulders of the good international citizen to show that military action would be either unsuccessful or too costly in terms of casualties. We have already argued that there is a clear preference for acting multilaterally in accordance with UN Security Council authority; but in the absence of this, we think that in exceptional cases good international citizens have a duty to use force even if this weakens the rule of law in the society of states.

The key question in relation to Britain's handling of the arms inspection crisis relates to how far it was justified in arguing that a failure to disarm Iraq would threaten global security. Given the weight of evidence that Iraq had acquired a chemical and biological capability, Britain was ultimately prepared to use force even if this was perceived to be an instance of Anglo-American 'unilateralism'. The Blair government believed that it could not avoid the

⁸⁴ 'Blair hails new dawn in cooperation with China', *Guardian*, 3 April 1998.

dilemma of acting as a guardian of international security even if this meant risking the lives of Iraqi civilians and acting without collective legitimation. While the government may have defended its position on the Gulf in a manner consistent with good international citizenship, we are sceptical whether the consequences of the use of force would have been defensible on prudential grounds.

It is clear from this ethical audit that Robin Cook's aspiration to place human rights at the heart of British foreign policy has produced inconsistency in the application of the policy. The best example of this is the case of human rights violations in Algeria, which meets our criterion of humanitarian intervention for a good international citizen. The failure of its preferred policy of dialogue did not lead the British government to argue publicly for the application of coercive sanctions against the Algerian regime. It may be that a whole range of prudential reasons militated against escalating diplomacy beyond dialogue, but in the absence of ministerial-led debate, it is easy for critics to level the charge of inconsistency.⁸⁵ Britain can certainly do more in some cases than others, but that is no excuse for not doing anything where human rights are at stake. The challenge for states which aspire to be good international citizens is to apply the same principles in every case, even if this means selecting different tools for different jobs.

There is no doubt that Cook would have avoided a lot of the criticism which has been directed at him had he not claimed the moral high ground. But we would argue that he is to be congratulated for giving citizens and activists a standard against which they can scrutinize British foreign policy. The Conservatives never had the courage to do this, and it is only because of Cook's efforts that there is now a context for an informed and wide-ranging debate over ethics and foreign policy. Even if the course of the third way continues to be buffeted by the daily round of global problems which resist simple moral solutions, the new government recognizes that foreign policy should be guided by universal moral values. This represents more than a slight resetting of the compass.

⁸⁵ John Sweeney, 'We know how to deal with the bully of Baghdad (just follow Clinton). It's Algeria that will really test Cook's ethical policy', *Observer*, 18 January 1998. When questioned by the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee on what 'quiet diplomacy' had achieved with Algeria, the Foreign Secretary responded by admitting the 'appalling' human rights atrocities but would not go any further than putting his faith in the diplomatic initiative of the EU. See Cook, 'Foreign policy and human rights', p. 48.