

Rethinking the Neoliberal World Order

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Earlier instalments of the Kilburn Manifesto have focused on the impacts of neoliberalism on British society, and on how we might begin to conceive of feasible alternatives to that regime. But in thinking about the sphere of international relations, and the position Britain takes up within the world, it is necessary to take a more global perspective. We are taking as our starting point for understanding these issues the situation that emerged following the defeat of Communism and the end of the Cold War at the end of the 1980s. What is in the forefront of our analysis here is the continuing sequence of failures – catastrophes in fact – that have characterised the international policies of the west during that entire period, now of more than thirty years. There is need to understand the dynamic forces, and the ideological beliefs, which have brought this situation about.

We are going to focus particular attention on the sequence of crises that have taken place in the Middle East, and now in Europe. These include the disintegration of Iraq into warring sub-states and of Libya into warring fiefdoms, a bloody and unresolved civil war in Syria, the resurgence of the Taliban in Afghanistan as the strongest power, the ungoverned and self-destructive brutality of Israel in the treatment of the population of Gaza, and the descent of Ukraine into a state of civil war. And most recently there has been added the emergence of 'Isis', The Islamic State, which has swept aside resistance and is engaged in the establishment of a new theocratic state, or caliphate, occupying territories which were until now part of Iraq, Syria, and the *de facto* autonomous region of Kurdistan. Scarcely ever have governments the

world over seemed less capable of responding with clear understanding and capability to the problems they encounter. It is not without significance that the situation in the Ukraine called forth comparisons with the chaotic situation which led to the outbreak of the First World War and the end of the 'long peace' of the nineteenth century. We think of these events as a series of catastrophes not because of any particular commitment to the regimes and territorial arrangements which preceded these upheavals, but rather because of the huge losses of life, expulsions of populations, and disintegration of more or less peaceable conditions of social order, that have been their consequence.¹

Our contention is that this has not been a contingent series of events, a random sequence of foreign policy accidents, but that they are in their own way systemic – a kind of organised disorder – and that understanding them is closely related to the task we have set ourselves in this Manifesto's analysis and critique of neoliberalism as a global system.

The politics of the post-second world war period seemed to have been so largely shaped by the Cold War that its end was expected by many to be a moment of opportunity. At least the risk of nuclear war had been significantly lessened, and several 'proxy wars' between the west and the Communist east (for example in Angola and Mozambique) were able to be resolved after the 'Second Cold War'.² The end of the apartheid regime in South Africa was hastened once the possible implications for the Cold War of the assumption of power by the African National Congress lost their significance. In Latin America, anti-communist perspectives which had legitimised interventions by the United States in several nations lost at least their overt relevance (for example the overthrow of Allende in Chile in 1973, the condoning of military dictatorship in Argentina from 1976 to 1983, and Brazil from 1964 to 1985, covert support by the United States for the subversion of Nicaragua's elected government by the Contras). For the first time for many decades major Latin American nations such as Brazil found space to pursue more radical agendas, with less interference from the United States.

Yet at a time when progressive development might seem to have become possible in several continents, including Europe (both east and west), the western powers, led by the United States, and with Britain as its most compliant ally, found themselves engaged in a gathering series of armed interventions. The central focus of these has been the Middle East, and the commitment of the western powers to retaining their hegemony in that region. While this drive is incomprehensible without reference to western powers' economic dependence on the Middle East's oil resources, we think that more than narrowly material interests are involved.

To understand this pattern of disasters it is important to remember that the end of the Cold War came about through the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of European Communism, in what was seen as the total victory of the United States and its allies. This period saw the triumph of what was already by then a fully neoliberal system, which had followed the conservative counter-revolution led by Reagan in the USA and Thatcher in Britain. (We describe its effects within Britain elsewhere in this Manifesto – here we are examining its wider consequences.)

United States governments and their allies believed that this system could from now onwards exercise unquestioned hegemony over the entire world. The axiom of 'full spectrum dominance' was the military aspect of this ambition. The 'Washington Consensus', imposing the regime of neoliberalism through the instruments of international agencies such as the IMF and the World Bank, was its economic instrument. Universalist ideas of representative democracy, political and religious freedom, and human rights, were its ideological expression. This world-view was and is intolerant of other forms of political and economic organisation, and of cultures and beliefs different from its own. Thus support for Gorbachev's gradualist adaptation of the Soviet Union in the direction of social democracy was withheld, and 'shock therapy' and the gangster capitalism of Yeltsin preferred, the result being to weaken and impoverish Russia. This neoliberal system has to be understood in its entirety, in its economic, military, political and indeed psycho-social dimensions.

Within neoliberalism as a global project are a number of hidden or denied continuities with its antecedent ideologies and systems of power. These represent ‘transformations’ which have nevertheless left their preceding structures largely intact.³ Thus the Cold War against the Communist enemy becomes the War on Terror, or the struggle against ‘Islamic fundamentalism’, even ‘a War of Civilisations’. Under these umbrellas the military-industrial complexes and the security apparatuses that flourished during the Cold War were able to claim a new necessity and legitimacy, and the mentalities of antagonism and (at times) paranoia that the Cold War encouraged found new objects of fear and hatred. Colonialism – always ostensibly rejected by the United States because of America’s original foundation in its Declaration of Independence, and supposedly repudiated by former European powers following their (mostly reluctant) acceptance of decolonisation – found a new lease of life, under the guise of humanitarianism and the advocacy of universal human rights.⁴ The aim of economic domination survived after the apparent end of empires, though it took different forms.

The interventions and conflicts that have followed from the implementation of this neoliberal design in the Middle East have taken various forms. The support for Iraq in its war with Iran between 1980 and 1988 was aimed at preventing the emergence of a rival regional centre of power. Iran had been antipathetic to the west since the overthrow of the Shah, who had been especially strongly supported by the west after the coup against prime minister Mossadeq following the nationalisation of Iran’s oil assets in 1951. The unconditional support of the United States for Israel, and its failure to insist that Israel comes to a peaceful settlement of its conflict with the Palestinians (e.g. the ‘two state solution’, which has probably now been destroyed as an option by successive Israeli governments), is another pillar of this neo-imperialist strategy. Political support for Israel within the United States is of great significance in US policy-making, just as support for ‘white settlers’ within threatened colonies influenced the imperial policies of Britain and France in different regions of Africa in earlier decades.⁵

The Cold War had provided the rationale for previous American intervention in the region, when they had supported the subversion of the Russian-backed government of Afghanistan, both before and after the Soviet Union's withdrawal from that country. But the unintended effect of this intervention had been to assist the rise of a new enemy, since the American-supported militant Islamic resistance to the regime subsequently turned its hostility towards the west: once their fight in Afghanistan had been won, the antagonism of the militants made no distinctions between communist and capitalist projects of atheistical modernisation. Thus it was that military and ideological structures in the west, which had for decades been directed against its Communist enemies, came to be redeployed for service against a new enemy that was in part its own creation.

Then, as an indirect consequence of the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan, came the attack on the Twin Towers and the Pentagon in 2001. This, from the point of view of its perpetrators, was arguably the most successful act of terrorism in history. In provoking the United States into its own invasion of Afghanistan, al-Qaida succeeded in defining the terms of a new global conflict, named by the Americans 'the War on Terror', but prosecuted as a war on militant Islam, or on anything that looked remotely like it. 'Those whom the gods wish to destroy they first make mad', the Islamists of al-Qaida might have thought, as after 11 September 2001 the policy of America and its allies descended into a morass of irrationality, from which they have found escape extremely difficult. 'Terrorist' and 'terrorism' have become swearwords deployed by governments to demonise enemies of all kinds, and to legitimise the expansion of their apparatuses of security and surveillance to totalitarian proportions.⁶ One may understand recent telecast executions of western journalists by ISIS as acts of provocation of similar intent: their purpose may be to elicit armed reprisals against which whole populations can then be mobilised.

What has become known as 'liberal imperialism' has become the rationale for this post-cold-war and ostensibly post-colonial version of the west's imperial project. With an attention to spectacle and sentiment

characteristic of the media age, this doctrine often gives emphasis to 'humanitarian' conditions in its justifications of international policy. But according to Tony Blair (for example in his 2004 Sedgefield speech, in which he justified the invasion of Iraq), while such considerations had rightly extended the legitimate grounds for armed interventions beyond the norms of justifiable self defence against aggression, global threats of terror and global interdependence meant that there now existed much broader grounds for supporting military action to protect security.⁷ It seems clear that within this framework more or less any form of military action could be justified on 'preventive' grounds (and that this can be seen as part of Blair's advocacy of a global, though regulated, market system – the international version of the 'Third Way'). Arguments by academics were promulgated in this period that proposed that earlier ideas of national state sovereignty (the 'Westphalia system'), which had restricted the grounds of justifiable military action against other states to self-defence, were now obsolete. It was argued that great powers such as the United States, with their 'coalitions of the willing', were justified in exercising military force against other nations without the authority of international law, or the agreement of the United Nations.⁸

Such conceptions have been deployed in the Middle East to justify several military interventions, in Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, and less directly in Syria, not to mention various programmes of economic and diplomatic sanctions against other nations, such as Iran and now Russia, as well as the deployment by the United States of assassination by drone strikes to eliminate suspected terrorist groupings and their leaders, for example in Pakistan, the Yemen and Somalia.

There have been different models of explanation for these developments. Arguments concerning the defence of human rights and the prevention of terrorism have been deployed in the Middle East to rationalise the western powers' economic interests, particularly in regard to the oil resources. But a dominant 'realist' argument in International Relations holds that nations normally behave like the self-seeking individuals of market theory, to exert and extend their power to its feasible limits and beyond. In the international context, overarching

forms of law, norms and governance are weak, and often fail to inhibit the actions of states, through their selective enforcement or non-enforcement. Within this perspective, least-bad outcomes are achieved when nation states can recognise each other's legitimate interest in security, and avoid undue provocations.⁹ (Within this framework, more altruistic interpretations of the ways in which nation states might relate to one another are more or less excluded by the very way they define state and nation.)

Justin Rosenberg has argued that such 'realist' conceptions, focused on the power-seeking attributes of states, have in particular failed to explain the antagonisms of the Cold War, which he attributes largely to the conflicts between the competing social and ideological systems of communism and capitalism.¹⁰ One could argue that this perspective, which gives emphasis to ideologies and the attributes of social systems in generating conflicts, has been refuted by the continuation of conflicts between Russia and the west after the fall of communism. But if neoliberalism – global capitalism at its most expansive – is recognised as the active force in determining the geopolitical strategies of western governments, it is evident that Rosenberg's theory of conflicting social systems retains its explanatory power. Conflicts based on ideological differences can and do persist, even after the defeat of a particular ideological enemy.

The post-cold-war imperial system chose to formulate its mode of operation in normative and ideological terms, attempting to mask the grounds of interest that motivated its actions – both of states and of sub-sectors within them (the military, the security apparatus, contractors and corporations). Following the ideological logic of the Cold War (defined as a conflict between the free and the unfree world, democracy and dictatorship), but now in a largely post-communist context, western powers have embarked on various projects of 'regime change' and 'democratic state-building', in nearly every case with catastrophic outcomes even for the promoters of these policies. This is certainly the case with the invasion and occupation of Iraq, and the invasion and occupation of Afghanistan, the countries in which the military

commitment of the United States has been at its most overt. The first of these has descended into a state of civil war: Isis or the Islamic State is best understood as an outgrowth of Sunni resistance to the Shia domination imposed by the American invasion. And meanwhile in Afghanistan the Taliban are reported to be regaining much of their lost ground, following the departure of the armed forces of the Americans and their allies.

Yet although Iraq had attacked Kuwait in 1990, and the Taliban of Afghanistan had offered some sanctuary for al-Qaida, the fact is that neither of these states had ever offered any violence to, or constituted any threat to, their invaders. For all the delusions and fabrications concerning 'weapons of mass destruction', the new imperial system was deploying its military power for different reasons and objectives than those by which it publicly justified its actions. Some of the grounds given for the overthrow of Saddam Hussein were those of justice and humanity, because of the extreme violence which had been perpetrated by his regime against Kurds and Shias and his political opponents. But whereas the intervention by Vietnam in Cambodia, against the Khmer Rouge, could be justified as seeking to stop acts of genocide, and timely intervention in Rwanda should indeed have had that purpose, the principal offences against humanity of the Iraq regime lay in the past at the time of Saddam's overthrow, which had the form more of punishment than preventive action.¹¹

While the invasion of Afghanistan was provoked by the 9-11 attack as an act of revenge and punishment, it also embodied the neoliberal hubris of that time, the idea that western models of democracy could simply be imposed by an invading force and its retinues of contractors. The perpetration of 'war crimes' – for example the deliberate killing of civilians – has also become a frequent accusation made against regimes under attack, but the western powers' own repeated responsibility for huge scales of civilian suffering and death (e.g. in the Second World War, Vietnam, Iraq, etc) invariably remains unacknowledged.

In Syria, the mentalities of the Cold War remain present, but in the background. When the Assad regime deployed armed force against

opposition resistance and consequent insurrection, and hostile outside powers (Saudi Arabia and some Gulf States on the one side, Iran on the other) intervened to arm and assist the opposing sides, the west aligned with a 'moderate' segment of the opposition, and Russia with the Assad government. Initially, western sympathies for the protesters were mobilised by the Assad regime's violent response, but as the dominant role of Islamic fundamentalists in the opposition has become clear, the depiction of the struggle as tyranny versus democracy has become untenable. Indeed it has become evident that one of the relative virtues of the Assad regime was its toleration of religious minorities, including Christians. In this case western governments, their fingers burned by earlier interventionist failures, have provided only limited assistance to their allies in the 'moderate opposition', and not enough to make a difference to the outcome of the civil war.

In Egypt, the outcome of mass protests was initially more positive, from a liberal perspective, than in Libya or Syria. Protesters were protected by the military against their repression by Mubarak's security forces, and Mubarak was removed from power. An election then took place, but the liberal elements of the opposition were defeated by the Muslim Brotherhood, a moderate Islamist movement which had much deeper social roots than those of the urban liberal opponents of the regime. However, within a year there was a popular rising against the Brotherhood government, followed by an army coup, and military rule was once more restored. The new military government, led by former head of the armed forces Abdul Fattah al-Sisi, is even more oppressive than that of Mubarak, and is seeking to destroy a movement – the Muslim Brotherhood – with which the Mubarak regime had co-existed. But the Americans have given their support to the Sisi government, and continue to provide it with substantial military aid (while Tony Blair has gone out of his way to endorse the new regime). The weakness of the west's supposed standard-bearers in Egypt, the democrats who were initially prominent in the demonstrations in the public squares, has been revealed by the support which many liberals have given to Sisi's overthrow of their elected government.

Meanwhile the autocracies of Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States remain uncriticised allies of the western powers, despite their covert role in promoting Sunni fundamentalism throughout the world. It is clear that the place of democratic values in the formation of the policies of western governments' policies is almost always subordinate to their broader strategic interests.

Explanations: continuities with the Cold War

How can we explain such a disastrous series of catastrophes? Why have the NATO powers engaged in so many interventions which have failed in what they set out to do? Part of the explanation lies, as we have suggested, in the nature of the system or regime which emerged following the outcome of the Cold War, and in the victory which America and its allies thought they had achieved with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of European Communism.

There are important continuities with the earlier organisation of the capitalist world in its confrontation with Communism. Thus the system has always deployed humanitarian and libertarian arguments in its stance, and during the Stalin years especially these had considerable force. The west has also always claimed that its 'free markets' are superior to other forms of economic organisation, and its preferred model of government has been democracy. Its constitutional democracies may have only ever given limited expression to democratic norms, and the system may have always been willing to tolerate and even promote 'exceptions' to its own values – for example the sponsored and supported dictatorships in Latin America in the 1970s and 1980s, and contemporary support for autocracies in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf Emirates. But nevertheless, its norms were, and remain, significantly embodied in its own political systems, and have been important in maintaining the allegiance of its citizens, especially when it was in competition with its Communist rival.

The strategy of the west has also continued in its earlier methods of international operation. The strategies of covert and overt military

intervention which were routinely practised (on both sides) during the Cold War have been adapted for use against mostly new enemies in the post-cold-war period. It is important to see these continuities between the two epochs of the west's geopolitical strategy. In the moment of triumphalism which followed the collapse of the Soviet Union, parallels must have been drawn between the democratic transformations which had just taken place in Russia and Eastern Europe and those that were now deemed to be desirable in other regions of strategic value, notably the Middle East. And of course there was a vast 'military industrial complex' built up during the Cold War which had no intention of demobilising itself now that battle was won.¹² From its point of view, new enemies could only be welcome. In terms of the social psychology or group mentalities of the west, there was also a problem to be solved. How could a society which had organised itself around a paranoid fear and hatred of its communist enemy (nuclear policy had after all declared a preference for universal destruction over ideological defeat) function in the absence of a defined antagonist? Al-Qaida and the War on Terror fulfilled this requirement perfectly.¹³

Thus equivalences were perceived between the transitions which had taken place from one-party state socialist rule to versions of democracy in Eastern Europe, and projects for transformation which were imagined (or fantasised) to be feasible in nations ruled by authoritarian regimes, such as Iraq, Syria, Libya and Afghanistan. This project had begun before the end of the Cold War, when the United States sought to undermine the Soviet-controlled regime in Afghanistan, through mobilising and supporting mujahideen – Islamic guerrillas – recruited from the tribal regions of Pakistan. This was the 'bear trap' which American cold war strategists set for the Soviet Union, as a payback for their own earlier defeat in Vietnam. Even when the Soviets withdrew from Afghanistan, leaving local communist leader Najibullah in power, the Americans saw no reason to desist from their project of subversion.¹⁴ The access to power of Islamic fundamentalists in Afghanistan – the Taliban – was an unforeseen consequence of this

cold war intervention, and an early instance of how little this regional and cultural context of operation was understood by the Americans.

It seems likely that the current regime in Syria and the over-turned regimes of Libya and Iraq – all secular state dictatorships – are also conceived in the minds of western policy-makers as hangovers or affiliates of the defeated communist system. Syria was a long-term ally of the Soviet Union. Iraq had attempted its own aggrandisement, in its invasion of Kuwait, while its regime and that in Syria were led by rival sections of the Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party. Gaddafi in Libya had sought to be the successor of Nasser as the anti-western leader of the Arab world, and to take a role independent of both the east and the west. In this era of American triumphalism, each of these countries seemed to be candidates for transition to the west's model of a 'modern' state. Furthermore, many of the leading figures in their liberal opposition movements lived and worked in the United States, and were able to present themselves as potential leaders of alternative ruling groups who, once installed in power, would be sympathetic to western interests.

Interventions in Iraq and in Afghanistan after the Twin Towers attack were initially punitive in their nature: their projects of 'democratic state-building' followed only once the previous structures of government had been swept away. In Syria and Libya, the protest movements of the Arab Spring were seized upon as opportunities for the west to encourage the changes which both its ideology and its strategic interests required. Two further military interventions or support operations therefore followed, although, in the light of earlier harsh experience, more cautiously in the Syrian case.¹⁵

Then there is Ukraine, which can even more clearly be seen as unfinished business of the Cold War. Ukraine is perceived as having yet to make its full transition to the western, neoliberal model, being still divided between its Russian and its European Union affinities. When a movement emerged to overthrow a pro-Russian government, the Americans and West Europeans supported what was in effect a coup, and found themselves once again involved on one side of a virtual civil

war. As in many of these conflicts, including for example in Kosovo, the initial agenda was established by militant factions, which were then able (on various grounds of liberal sympathy, humanitarian concern or cynical geopolitical interest) to draw western governments and publics into giving them support, and even into fighting for them.¹⁶

There are two principal reasons why this project of liberal imperialist transformation has had such disastrous outcomes, in particular in the Middle East. The first is that military intervention, civil war and the breakdown of social order destroy the basis of social trust on which the west's sought-after democratic structures depend. In the states of fear to which people are reduced by civil violence, local forms of affiliation and security are often sought, to replace those which were previously given by the state and its laws. In the Balkans, populations defaulted to ethnic and even religious identifications that had been imagined to have lost their potency in post-war Yugoslavia. In Afghanistan, Libya and Syria, populations have returned to religious and tribal sources of identity, as their states have collapsed or have become largely criminal and gangster-infested in their operation.¹⁷ Furthermore, the institutions and values which the west ostensibly sought to advance through its armies, special agents, contractors, bombings and drones were discredited by the means by which they were being imposed.¹⁸

A second factor is that these societies always had much more complex and deeply rooted forms of life than the west's liberal colonisers understood, or chose to understand. They were also in certain respects already more 'western', more capable of moving themselves in 'liberal' directions – for example in such matters as education, emancipations of gender, technology and science – than their colonisers and modernisers wished to recognise. Thus Tony Blair's government was for once right in its view that Gaddafi's government might be persuaded to engage in peaceful relations with the west, if diplomatic efforts were made to bring this about.

The west also commonly exaggerates its own virtues when it sets its liberal society up as a model for others. Its own forms of democracy are

limited in their scope, and are distorted by the interests of property and capital, as this Manifesto has documented. Its cultures of individualism and consumption are often both crude and violent, by comparison with other forms of social life. Forms of government that may not be democratic according to the norms and procedures of western constitutionalism, may nevertheless have their own means of taking account of the wishes and interests of their citizens, and may be more responsible, for example in regard to the crisis of global warming, than some capitalist nations.

In fact, some reappraisal is being imposed on the west's rulers by the many policy failures of the post-cold-war period, and the misfortunes they have brought to a major region of the world. Few any longer believe that a new order is about to be imposed on the world by the United States, as its policy-makers envisaged two decades ago. The 'new imperialism' of invasions, assisted insurrections and regime change has been to some degree discredited. The current climate of opinion regarding international relations is one of anxious uncertainty. We hope that this provides an opportunity to set out different principles and objectives for this sphere, just as we are proposing in regard to the economy and culture of neoliberalism.

Before we discuss what such principles and goals should be, we should say something about Britain's specific involvements in the global nexus of international relations, which we see as an aspect of the system of neoliberalism.

Britain in the global system

Many elements have contributed to Britain's integration into the global strategies of the neoliberal west in the post-cold-war period. One of the most significant of these are the residual mentalities of Britain's position as the former centre of a world-wide empire. Even after decolonisation had supposedly taken place, Britain fought wars in Malaya, Kenya and Cyprus to retain its influence, and invaded Egypt in an attempt to overthrow Gamed Abdul Nasser and to retain control of the Suez Canal.

In Afghanistan Britain was re-entering a territory which it had previously fought to control (without success) in the nineteenth century. Britain and other western powers had at the end of the First World War drawn up many of the frontiers in the Middle East which are now in dispute. One can also see the prolonged 'Troubles' in Northern Ireland as resulting from a British commitment to hold on to what was originally an imperial province. The British government has sought throughout the post-war period to retain its status as a 'Great Power', despite its diminished economic and military resources; indeed the main purpose of retention of its nuclear deterrent is to maintain this position of supposed parity with other 'nuclear powers'. Thatcher's Falklands/Malvinas adventure in 1982 was a manifestation of a continuing belief in Britain's imperial mission, determined in this case by the democratic rationale of the islanders' 'right to self government' – and by the unsavoury attributes of the Argentine dictatorship at the time.¹⁹ Victory in the Falklands was a significant factor in Thatcher's election victory in 1983; popular identification with this late imperial achievement, and with the naval and military prowess which it demonstrated, outweighed the sufferings that the harsh economic policies of the government had brought during its first years of office. Tony Blair's doctrine of 'liberal imperialism' was thus the reinvention of a long tradition, set out with a new focus on humanitarian concerns. These have been brought to the centre of attention by mass media coverage, including through the (understandable) attribution of hero or heroine status to modern aid workers, and even journalists, who work in far-off situations where there is extreme suffering. Liberal imperialism in fact presents itself with two different identities. One is that of the dedicated aid worker. The other is that of the British soldier – often speaking from a situation of danger, and representing in its most responsible and capable form the activities of the military in seeking to bring 'peace' to another region of the world.²⁰ Thus public identification with Britain's continuing imperial mission is doubly sustained.

British governments were able to maintain public support for military interventions across the globe (in the Falklands/Malvinas, in

the former Yugoslavia, in Sierra Leone and in the first Iraq War) for a considerable period. Few seemed to object to successive British prime ministers and foreign secretaries lecturing other governments on their offences against human rights, or their threat to world peace, as if this was the natural prerogative of a leading nation such as Great Britain. It is only more recently, as the disappointing or catastrophic consequences of these interventions have become evident, that support for such military action has diminished. Ed Miliband plainly judged the public mood accurately when he opposed military intervention in Syria.

A second major continuity in British policy has been with the strategies and mentalities set out during the Cold War – as described above – and this has strongly maintained Britain's integration within the neoliberal international system. It is important to remember here how the Cold War imposed itself on British politics after the Second World War, diverting its course for the worse. The rearmament consequent on the Korean War divided the post-war Labour government, leading to the resignation of Aneurin Bevan and his allies, and weakening that government in its later years. The Wilson government of 1964 struggled with the political consequences of the Vietnam War, as well as its hyper-inflationary economic consequences in the 1970s. The morphing of 'imperial' into 'Cold War' interests was used to confer legitimacy on what were in reality still colonial struggles during this period: Vietnam is a prime instance of this displacement and misdefinition of goals.

A third aspect of Britain's integral involvement in this western global strategy has been the distinctive 'financialised' form of its economic development. The genesis of neoliberalism in Britain is closely linked to Britain's imperial history and to the predominant role of finance capital in its economy – which is in considerable part a residue of the empire. Rent from the ownership of and trade in land and other forms of property, whether held within Britain or abroad, has been more important in the mentality and practice of Britain's ruling class than industrial production. The outcome of the political and social crisis of the 1970s, in the arrival of Thatcherism, reinforced these long-

established tendencies. (We discuss these issues in the Manifesto's Economics instalment.)

One has a depressing sense of *déjà vu* in returning to the debates of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, on the redirection of the British economy away from finance and shareholder power, and towards manufacturing and industrial production, as well as towards more responsible forms of corporate governance. This was in effect an argument for a turn from the 'aristocratic' domination of British society, symbolised by the social origins and persona of Sir Alec Douglas Home. The complexion of the current Tory leadership shows that little has changed since. (Except perhaps that there are even fewer people of working-class origin within the system of government than in the 1960s; and today's ruling class, though still founded on inherited property, has become more meritocratic in its formation, taking advantage of its access to private education and elite universities to maintain its power.) The financialised British economy has been a major pillar of neoliberal economic orthodoxy, which opposed statist and corporatist methods of economic organisation.

The consequence of all these factors is that Britain has firmly aligned itself with the United States throughout the post-war period, and it is from the United States that the main direction of its international policy has come. Support for the Americans' cold war positions led to Britain being allotted a subordinate space in which it could retain some of its post-imperial commitments. We saw in Blair's proximity to President Bush in the second Iraq War how valuable to both parties this association could be. Continuing nationalist illusions have also turned Britain away from the European Union, which could have provided an alternative, more 'industrial', less militarised and more consensual framework for development.

In Europe the class interests of British governments were also to the fore in the campaign to convert the EU from being a potential social-democratic bulwark towards being a haven for, and promoter of, the interests of capital. Their commitment to the 'widening' rather than 'deepening' of the European Union reflected this free-market priority. Its latest manifestation can be seen in the Trade and Services Agreement,

the numerous Bilateral Investment Treaties, and, most threateningly, the proposed Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership. Together these will create an even more aggressively deregulated environment for business, and, most importantly, they constitute a further attack on democratic rights – the interests of companies are to be given the power effectively to restrict the policy-making options of elected governments. The current Coalition is an enthusiastic supporter of these trends.

Alternative principles and commitments

The failures of the west's international strategies in the post-cold-war period give rise to the need to rethink these orientations in a fundamental way. In this Manifesto we have developed a critique of the neoliberal system in regard to its economic and social effects. Below we suggest some of the principles that should guide Britain's role in the international sphere:

1. Policy should be based on the recognition that war is nearly always the worst of man-made disasters. The first concern of international policy should be their avoidance as a means of pursuing conflicts, for the reason that these seem nearly always more harmful in their consequences than the 'evils', real or imputed, that they purport to remedy. Military interventions should never be supported unless sanctioned by the United Nations and for the implementation of international law, which includes the prevention of genocide. A leading criterion for such intervention should be the preservation of lives, those of by-standers and even enemies, as much as those of fellow nationals.
2. To this end, Britain's longstanding over-investment in its military power should be reduced. Its nuclear deterrent should be abandoned, and it should reduce its economic reliance on arms manufacture. Indeed, the main purpose of retaining substantial armed forces at all should be to provide a resource that can, should need arise, contribute to peace-keeping forces mandated by the

- United Nations. A commitment to a concept of an active and creative peace should take the place of the anachronistic attachment to the idea of war that lies deep in the British national tradition.²¹
3. Britain needs to emerge from the shadow, and unfinished business, of the Cold War. Russia should not be regarded as an enemy, and the aim of policy should be to increase its social and economic exchanges with the rest of Europe. There is no good reason to advance the powers of NATO or its penetration of Eastern Europe, and this organisation's quest to find a new military and ideological role for itself should be resisted. Indeed there may now be good reason to advocate its dissolution since its ideological justification as a bulwark against Communism has vanished.
 4. The idea should be rejected that access to raw materials, such as oil, depends on occupation of the territories where they are produced, or the domination of those who produce them.
 5. In so far as British governments wish to promote their own liberal, democratic, or even at some point democratic socialist values, it should do this by example, and by rhetorical, political and economic support for progressive efforts elsewhere.
 6. The undermining of democracy by market forces and corporate interests, far from being encouraged, should be actively opposed.
 7. Britain should be strongly committed to European integration, despite the failure of the European Union so far to fulfil the social democratic possibilities which it once seemed to possess, and despite its failure to respond progressively to the financial crisis of 2007-8 and the deeper contradictions of neoliberalism which this revealed. We support an enlarged economic, social and political role for the European Union in such spheres as infrastructural investment, the redistribution of resources between regions, the support of the rights of minorities, environmental protection and economic planning. Integration in these strategic spheres should be compatible with measures of democratic devolution.
 8. Britain should support the strengthening of the United Nations as an instrument for the resolution of national and sub-national conflicts,

and for international co-operation. It should encourage the adjustment of its governmental institutions to take account of the present-day balance of populations and powers in the world. It should thus support the reconstruction of the Security Council, such that its permanent members come to include large nations such as Brazil and India, and allow its own representation as a Permanent Member to be replaced by the European Union.

9. An urgent commitment must be made, as we argue in other instalments of this Manifesto, to the environmental sustainability of the globe, which calls for a commitment to radically reduce the production of CO² and other harmful greenhouse gases, and to economic models that seek to reduce the consumption of the world's scarce natural resources.

In this Manifesto, we have developed an analysis of neoliberalism and of its harmful impacts on many aspects of social and economic life in Britain. In this instalment we have sought to extend this argument to the sphere of international relations, and to a consideration of Britain's role in the world. Neoliberalism, we argue, is indeed a global system, and needs to be understood and opposed as such.

Notes

1. We have for reasons of space had to omit other crucial developments, such as the rise of China and other large emerging nations and economies, and the decline in the relative power of the United States and Europe which is its consequence. The state of recurrent war and crisis which we describe, and the rightwards political movements in several nations which have accompanied it, has this underlying loss of influence, and reactions to it, as its backdrop.
2. Fred Halliday, *The Making of the Second Cold War*, Verso 1983.
3. This is analogous to how Gramsci had described the politics of 'transformism' in Italy – here apparent shifts of power between centrist political factions concealed the preservation of the status quo.
4. Of course major anti-colonial political movements were active in some of the imperial nations.

5. Analogous has been the influence of Cuban exiles in American politics in preventing any reconciliation with the government of Cuba after the overthrow of Batista in 1959, who had ruled over what had been a quasi-colony of the United States.
6. At the time of writing another consequence for the United States of this mentality has become highly visible, in the crisis of race relations and policing which has arisen in Ferguson, Missouri. Unwanted weaponry from the Iraq War has been released by the Pentagon to municipal police services in the United States, leading them to confront their urban black populations in the manner of an occupying military force.
7. Tony Blair, Speech 4 March 2004: www.theguardian.com/politics/2004/mar/05/iraq.iraq.
8. See P. Bobbitt, *The Shield of Achilles: War, Peace and the Course of History*, Knopf 2002.
9. Within this perspective, see John J. Mearsheimer's 2014 critique of policy in Ukraine, 'Why the Ukraine is the West's fault: The Liberal Delusions that Provoked Putin,' *Foreign Affairs* September-October 2014.
10. Justin Rosenberg, *A Critique of the Realist Theory of International Relations*, Verso 1994.
11. Some might draw up a more favourable balance-sheet in regard to the west's interventions in the former Yugoslavia, first to defend Bosnia-Herzegovina and its Muslim population against Serbs in 1992-95, and then to defend the Kosovo Albanians against Serbia in 1998-99. But the non-viable ward states of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo that have emerged are hardly a positive outcome of these interventions, compared with the condition of Yugoslavia before its break-up. Would it not have been better for the western powers to have supported the preservation of Yugoslavia as a federal state, and not to have lent their support to the different secessions and attempted secessions from it? Earlier traditions of imperial interference by the various European powers were in play here, as well as residual hostility to what had been a relatively successful Communist state.
12. Nevertheless, there are political conflicts over priorities, and relative military expenditures in western countries have fallen in the post-cold-war period.
13. H. Segal, 'From Hiroshima to the Gulf War and After', in A. Elliott and S. Frosh (eds), *Psychoanalysis in Contexts*, Routledge 1995.
14. Once Russian support was withdrawn in 1991, Najibullah was doomed. He was publicly hanged by the Taliban in 1996. A dramatisation of this

history by the Tricycle Theatre gave a memorable account of his fate: *The Great Game: A Cycle of 12 New Plays*, first performed in April 2009.

15. The only country of the Arab Spring which has escaped military intervention, and where there has been a relatively positive outcome, is Tunisia. This may be explained by its lack of either significant oil resources or strategic significance. By contrast, the Saudis moved to put down the protest movement in Bahrain in 2012.
16. The idea that governments find themselves endorsing initiatives which begin outside their control has a precedent in the displacement of Native Americans, in which 'settlers' often ignored treaties which had been made by the United States government, but whose expansionary actions were subsequently endorsed and legitimised by the latter.
17. Another example of this process of 'regression' to quasi-tribal affiliations and antagonisms is that of Northern Ireland during the Troubles. It was the unpredictable acts of violence, from both sides in the conflict and from the security forces, which undermined what trust there had been between the cohabiting communities.
18. There is much to be said for Hobbes's view that nothing is worse than the breakdown of peace.
19. Michael Foot, then Leader of the Opposition, supported the expedition, on grounds of the rights of the Falklands islanders and because of the dictatorial nature of the Galtieri regime.
20. Identification with British military traditions remains an important element in the national psyche, as the contested commemorations of the centenary of the Great War once more reveals. Adam Hochschild, in his 2011 book *To End All Wars: A Story of Loyalty and Rebellion* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt) describes how the traditions of fox-hunting in England were once closely connected to the aristocratic culture of the cavalry, for which some generals saw a military future even after 1918.
21. See John Gittings, *The Glorious Art of Peace: from the Iliad to Iraq*, Oxford University Press 2012.