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Robert Glaberson

Re: **“Security through détente:
The case for a new Labour policy toward the Middle East”**

Dear Robert

I would like to elevate the consideration of your thought by writing some sporadic responses to your essay. They are mainly deconstructive, although that does not mean that I do not agree with parts of your essay elsewhere.

WMD.

1. ‘WMD’ is a separate topic from the Middle East, which is not to say there are no interrelationships.
2. ‘WMD’ is not one topic. There are different sorts of ‘WMD’:
 - (a) Thermonuclear.
 - (b) Nuclear.
 - (c) ‘Dirty’ radioactive.
 - (d) Biological (with a very large number of subheadings).
 - (e) Chemical (also with a very large number of subheadings), but we could split these into two:
 - (i) Explosive.
 - (ii) Poisonous.
3. There is a multiplicity of delivery systems varying from ballistic missiles to the use of the postal system.
4. As a catch-all rubric of ‘WMD’, no system of international agreements that I can foresee would be capable of banning or preventing production of all of them.
5. The type of ‘WMD’ – I don’t know why this term is used – it seems to be a favourite of the Ministry of Defence – varies according to the agency that produces it – say governments (e.g. exclusively those for thermonuclear and nuclear weapons), armed groups (who were able to buy nuclear shells and ‘dirty radioactive’ weapons from, say, Russia or the Ukraine) or wealthy enough individuals or those with access to knowledge (commonly available, for example, over the internet) and a moderate amount of cash (who can produce a range of biological and chemical weapons). If I were inclined to do so (I am not), I would also be able to produce some of these WMD of the latter sorts. There are between 5 and 10 million people in Great Britain alone who could do

likewise if they set their mind to it. It seems clear to me, therefore, that solutions to production of WMDs require policies substantially in addition to those of military deterrence.

Terrorism.

Terrorism is a subject as divorced from Islam as it is from Catholicism. It is likewise separate from Islamic fundamentalism as it is from Christian fundamentalism.

Once again, I would like to divide this topic, to start, in two ways.

1. State terrorism – as practiced by, say, Britain in its massacres in Kenya, Malaysia, and as it then was, Aden, before we so graciously ‘granted’ these states independence, or more recently in Iraq, although this might more properly be described as aggressive war against another state. Still, for example, our support for the trashing of the town of Falluja (more the second time round than the first) comes under the heading of state-sponsored terrorism.

This terrorism can include attempts to undermine or destroy the political system of another state, or to assassinate or overpower its leadership. Examples include (but a full list would go on too long) the overthrow of Mossadeq by the CIA in Iran and the installation of the Shah, attempts on the life of Castro, the Nicaraguan contras, the installation of Pinochet in Chile, or more recently attempts to overthrow the government of Venezuela and the successful ousting of President Aristide in Haiti.

2. Terrorism by anti-government forces. Most notable examples include Al Q’aida, the separate Iraqi Al Q’aida, Chechen rebels, Che Guevara, George Washington, Angolan and Columbian rebels, etc. These are almost always fired by a sense of deep injustice (unless they are financed by a hostile state, or less often at the behest of drug barons).

It is notable (at this stage) that the diffuse terrorist group Al Q’aida has not used WMDs. Indeed, the recent London bombings only amount to the equivalent of about two day’s carnage in present-day Iraq.

The Threats.

It is clear that the major threats to international peace and security currently are

- (1) The US.
- (2) – a subsidiary role – Great Britain.

A major question is then, how can the terrorist threat from these nations be avoided?

In this I agree with you that a prime requirement is:

Respect for international law.

This includes non-aggression and non-preemptive attacks against other states.

Such a policy, if jointly and publicly endorsed by the above two governments, would have a major benefit of reducing the risk of terrorism on their territories.

Given the current leadership, the chance of this happening is zero.

Two Civilizations.

It is notable that in apartheid South Africa – where *apartheid* means separate development – two civilizations were acknowledged by the white South African authorities – the Bantu and their own.

I think it is about time in Britain that all of us recognise we are one civilization – and that British civilization – nominally state Christian – is *de facto* Christian and Muslim in equal measure, and many other religions too.

This is ‘our’ civilization; it is multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, multi-religious, and at the same time ‘one’. And before we go out into the world declaring its ‘otherness’, it would perhaps be better to examine in which ways we have been able to foster togetherness between ourselves.

Do we consider, if someone is a Catholic or a Protestant of a religion different from our own, if we have one, that he or she is from a separate unbridgeable civilization from our own? Have we not, almost, ‘gone beyond’ this stage? Are not all people equally capable of rational thought, of working together and communicating with one another without being blinded by a historicism of religious bitterness and war?

Erect barriers if you must. They exist in your mind!

Little England in a Big World.

There is certainly one practical action the Labour Party can take to immerse ourselves the right way in world culture and world politics.

This is to undermine nationalism as a separate and hostile sense of identity opposed to other states, other cultures, other religions, other racial groups and *other languages*.

It is disgraceful that the government has ended compulsory foreign language teaching in schools. This is as detrimental to our interests, economic, social and cultural, as would be the abrogation of our responsibility to teach mathematics or the reading and writing of English, for the reason that these are difficult! No-one expects a child to acquire a full-blown vocabulary, even of English, still less a foreign language. This takes time. But a foreign language once taught is like a seed which can grow. Deny our children the possibility of acquiring other languages and you deny

them the possibility of understanding other cultures, views of history and achievements of other nations.

We are in the world, and must be part of it. It is not an option to act as if we were erecting fences around our shores.

Re-running the Cold War in a New Guise.

I would like to end with two speculations.

The first is that the military-industrial complex in the United States – and to a less important extent our own over here – *requires* the perception of an external threat to maintain and extend its control.

With the demise of an assumed threat from Soviet communism, the role of *bête noir* has now been redirected to the Middle East – identified with Islam, particularly of a fundamentalist variety.

However, the Middle East is neither monolithic politically, nor can Islam as a religion be directly equated in most states in the region with communism as an ideology, either in terms of state support or of its popularity with certain sectors of the population.

The second speculation I would refer to as the Western perception of the ‘economics of the hajib’. In order for the Middle East to participate in Western modes of economic production which exists on a global scale, it is deemed necessary that women must play a full (though perhaps deferential) role in industry, in a way that is considered in opposition to the teaching of the Muslim religion.

Yours fraternally

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