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Michael Mosbacher

Britain's major military role in the US-led war to disarm Saddam Hussein and remove him from power has brought the issue of British attitudes towards America once more to the fore. Tony Blair's government allied itself closely to the USA both under the Clinton and Bush administrations. This would not appear to be merely a matter of political expediency. Blair's actions and his pronouncements on Anglo-American relations seem to reflect a widespread British perception; namely that Britain and the USA have a close cultural, historical and ideological affinity and share many common interests and concerns. There are, however, also strong currents of British public opinion that are very critical of the United States and deeply sceptical of US intentions, especially under a Republican administration.

Blair's decision to militarily support the USA on Iraq even without a new and specific United Nations resolution was thus a very controversial one in the UK and carried major political risks for him. These risks were compounded by the fact that many on the left of his own party had already opposed, or at least felt very uneasy, about Blair's earlier decision to militarily participate in the campaign to remove Al-Qaeda and the Taliban from Afghanistan. Going to war with Iraq made Blair deeply unpopular with the left of his own Labour Party and, amongst sections of the wider public, especially many of those who might under normal circumstances be expected to support a government led by a party traditionally of the left. In the decisive vote in the House of Commons on whether to support British participation in the war with Iraq, 139 Labour Party Members of Parliament, out of a total of 410 Labour MPs, voted against their own governments decision to send a 45,000 strong military expedition to Iraq. This was the largest active rebellion in the House of Commons by members of a governing party in over a century. This underestimates the extent of opposition within the parliamentary Labour Party to Blair's policy on Iraq as many Labour MPs only supported their government under severe pressure from the party leadership.1

Even amongst some MPs who supported the war, this was in spite of antagonism towards George W. Bush and in some cases a deep disquiet about United States power in general. The Labour MP Oona King, who was a strong supporter of the war and by no means a knee-jerk anti-American, herself having American roots, stated that, perhaps displaying a certain confusion as to their respective roles, 'the fact that Bush could be in agreement with me on anything is enough to make me reach for a bucket to puke into.'2 Michael Meacher, who was a minister in the Blair government during the war but was dismissed in June 2003, has since shown a more generalised antipathy towards American power. He has stated that while he still supported the war with Iraq because 'getting rid of a murderous, barbarous, genocidal regime responsible for millions of death overrode everything else', the real reason for the war was that 'America wanted to establish a political and military platform in the Middle East. It saw a need for oil and of course it wished to support Israel.' Meacher argued that an 'aggressive and unilateralist America' was threatening world peace and the future of the planet and that the world's big problem is the power of the United States.3 He has also argued 'that the "global war on terrorism" has the hallmarks of a political myth propagated to pave the way for a wholly different agenda – the US goal of world hegemony'.4 Meacher's views, with the notable exception of his support for the war with Iraq, are a typical expression of contemporary British political anti-Americanism and its underlying themes, namely that America is too powerful and that it has imperialistic ambitions.

Outside of parliament many also opposed the war with Iraq vociferously. A public demonstration against the war on 15th February 2003, organised by the Stop The War Coalition, was the largest in the UK ever. Estimates for the number of demonstrators vary from 500,000 to 2 million.5 Whatever the exact numbers, the demonstration comfortably exceeded the 400,000 who participated in the previous, rather different largest march in the UK, that organised in 2002 by the Countryside Alliance, against plans to ban fox-hunting. Those taking part in the anti-war demonstration included members of far left groups one would expect to find at any such march. The numbers participating however show that the march drew many who did not fit into this stereotype: some were British Muslims, others what might best be described as 'concerned liberals', and also many school children. Many of the placards were anti-American and specifically anti-George W. Bush. Much of the opposition to the war on Iraq, both as manifested in parliament and on the streets, was motivated not merely by the rights and wrongs of disarming and removing Saddam Hussein. It was also motivated by antipathy to what some perceive as the excessive power of the USA and to opposition to US foreign policy in general and to the policies of George W. Bush in particular. This point has been well made by Michael Ignatieff, an influential liberal commentator and Harvard professor of human rights policy whose writings have been popular in the UK. Ignatieff has stated that: 'The cynicism about American on the part of the left and many in Europe depressed me. For them there is nothing to discuss except US intentions. It was never about Iraq. All they want to talk about is the US.'6

Anti-Americanism clearly lives on in the strong opposition to the war with Iraq that was found in certain quarters in the

UK. However British anti-Americanism, however, is not confined to opposition to US foreign policy. The American historian Richard Hofstadter famously stated that, 'It has been our fate as a nation not to have ideologies, but to be one.'7 The United States inception and its history mean that the USA is not just another nation, and that attitudes towards it have as much today with the ideological standpoint of the person holding these views than with any specific US actions. There is also a popular anti-Americanism still surviving the UK, the type of comments one might hear casually expressed in a pub or on the train. These three anti-Americanisms – the popular, the foreign policy and the ideological – must be examined in turn.

Before doing this, it is worth asking how widespread such anti-American attitudes are in the UK? The circumstantial evidence is that they have a substantial constituency. Michael Moore, the left-wing American polemicist-comic whose films and books exhibit popular, foreign policy and ideological anti-Americanism in abundance, has had great success in the UK. His pro-gun control, anti-American capitalism film Bowling for Columbine was a surprise box office success, something unheard of for a polemic. His book excoriating US corporations and George W. Bush Stupid White Men has sold over 600,000 copies in the UK, competing with Dr Atkins New Diet Revolution in terms of sales figures and only comprehensively beaten by J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter books.

For a more scientific analysis of British attitudes towards America, the authoritative Pew Global Attitudes Project gives a good insight. This project, which is chaired by Clinton's Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, conducts polls across nations to find out, amongst much else, the foreign image of the United States. Its survey of June 2003 found that 70% of people in the UK have a favourable image of the USA, and 80% had a favourable image of Americans as people.8 For comparison, these figures are considerably higher than those for Germany or France, where in June 2003 only 45% and 43% respectively had a favourable view of the USA, and 67% and 58% respectively had a favourable view of Americans. During the immediate lead up to the Iraq conflict in March 2003 these figures had plummeted in all three countries. Only 48% in the UK had a positive image of the USA then, although this was still higher than figures for that point in Germany and France where they were only 25% and 31% respectively. What is interesting is that in the UK, the image of the US improved rapidly after the Iraq war to almost the levels before its lead up. In 1999/2000 83%, and in Summer 2002 75%, of people in the UK had a positive view of the USA. These figures clearly show that in the UK, outside of exceptional circumstances such as the lead up to the Iraq war, a large majority of the population have friendly attitudes towards the United States. Only a minority, albeit a fairly significant one - somewhere between 20% and 30%, hold an anti-American outlook. This is a much lower figure than that for those exhibiting similar attitudes in, to give but one example, France. Even among those in the UK who do hold anti-American nostrums, there is a reticence to blame this on America in general. 59% of those who had a problem with the USA in 2003 said it was mostly with George W. Bush, 31% said it was America in general and 8% said it was both. This gives a figure for hard-core anti-Americans in the UK, i.e. those that admit that they have a problem with the USA per se, at around 10% of the population - still a significant, assiduous number of people but distinctly a minority taste.

Furthermore, when considering the phenomenon of British anti-Americanism it must be remembered that America is not the only country towards which the British have from time to time taken a dislike. In a phenomenon perhaps much less prevalent in the USA due to its immigrant heritage and because it was for much of its history much more 'self-contained' than the UK, the British have a long history of taking a not altogether serious dislike of other 'foreign' nations. Anti-French and anti-German sentiment has in the UK, if anything, been much more strident than anti-American sentiment and has also taken not just a popular but also an ideological form. A classic example of the representation of anti-French sentiments is William Hogarth's great print of 1749, O The Roast Beef of Old England or the Calais Gate.9 This print was wildly popular at the time and has endured as a classic icon of English anti-French patriotic xenophobia. The print shows the Calais Gate, which had been built by the English, and shows the French in front of it as impoverished, servile, affected, effete, and oppressed. The French are subsisting on a diet of 'soupe maigre' and snails and suffer the consequences with their puny frames. The only Frenchman in the print to be well fed is a gluttonous monk. A sirloin of beef, so large the cook can hardly carry it, arrives from England, to feed English visitors to Calais with the French being reduced to drooling over it. The implied contrast is with the English over the water - large, prosperous, free men who spoke their minds and subsisted on a diet of roast beef. The print illustrates Hogarth's view of the French as marked by 'poverty, slavery and insolence, with an affectation of politeness.' Hogarth saw this state rooted in France's Catholicism and its absolute monarchy. After the French revolution the causes of the Frenchman's poor state were changed, but the symptoms as expressed in caricature were not. James Gillray in the 1790s produced a whole series of prints lampooning the promises of the French revolution with the desultory condition of the French and contrasting it with the true liberties enjoyed by the English. In Gillray's print the French were still servile and oppressed but now by 'reason' gone mad rather than papist superstition. The Jacobin had replaced the priest as the source of France's ideological corruption, but the French were still subsisting on a funny diet, more often than not a few bulbs of garlic and the passing snail or frog. In the subsequent 200 years many artists and cartoonist produced images lampooning the French, often referring to contemporary events but retaining the old stereotypes. Moving on to more recent events, in 2003 Jacques Chirac was caricatured on the front page of Britain's best selling popular newspaper, The Sun, as a snail for threatening to veto any new United Nations resolution expressly authorising the use of force to disarm Saddam Hussein. The venerable British tradition of lampooning the French in caricature lives on.

The Germans have not fared better in their portrayal by the British. The German as a figure of ridicule has until the 1990s been a mainstay of British television comedy. Popular images of Germany understandably often still remain tied up with the Nazis and their crimes nearly 60 years after the end of the war. Nicholas Ridley, who served as Trade & Industry minister under Margaret Thatcher, had to resign from the cabinet in 1990 when he compared German Chancellor Helmut Kohl's supposed economic ambitions and his support for European federalism with the Nazi's invasion of most of Europe. Such sentiments can still be detected from time to time in some of Britain's mass circulation newspapers.

British apprehension of Germany and its ambitions, of course, predates the Third Reich. In an aesthetic sense, perhaps the finest statement of British anti-German sentiment comes from the start of the 1st World War in the opening lines of Rudyard Kipling's poem, For all we have and are.

For all we have and are,
For all our children's fate,
Stand up and take the war.
The Hun is at the gate!10

These examples go to show that the popular, mass expression of anti-Americanism in the UK should not be seen in isolation. British anti-French and anti-German sentiment may be more rational than anti-Americanism, since both those countries have at various times been much more of a threat to Britain than the United States has ever been. If considered in relation to British antipathies towards other nations, its anti-Americanism comes across as a much milder, less serious phenomenon than it would if it were taken outside of this context. Even the wider phenomenon should not be taken entirely seriously. A society made up of immigrants, such as the United States, cannot afford to be too disparaging of other nations in order to maintain its own internal coherence. Furthermore, due to its size and relative geographical isolation the United States has for much of its history been much more insulated from foreign nations. Britain has, however, to some extent defined itself through the semi-jocular disparagement of others, of 'foreigners'. This is of course not to say that Britain has not been able to welcome and successfully integrate successive waves of newcomers into its society. Nor has it in general meant that such attitudes have affected how the Americans, the French, or the Germans as individuals have generally been treated in the UK.

British popular anti-Americanism is thus best understood as such semi-jocular, barroom jousting of 'foreigners'. This makes it probably the most widespread, and also the least important, form of anti-Americanism in Britain today. The Mass Observation was established in the UK in 1937 by a group of anthropologists and sociologists to record British public attitudes through diaries and recorded conversation. Attitudes recorded in the 1940s included, amongst much else, opinions of the United States and Americans. British opinion of the USA improved, as would be expected, with increased US support in the war first via lend-lease and then with the USA's entry into it. Popular anti-Americanism, however, survived even this. The Americans were seen to be 'rather vulgar and ostentatious', 'truculent and opulent barbarians, glorying in atomic bombs and the almighty dollar', 'pushy and arrogant', 'immature, too materialistic and immoral', 'too self-satisfied, loud spoken, too ignorant', 'politically backward, uncultured and half-educated', and 'tiresome children with a mental age of 12'.11 It is interesting to note how closely these prejudices mirror the British popular anti-Americanism of today. All of them could easily have been expressed in 2003. The image of Americans as brash, loud, vulgar, uncultured and unsophisticated has had an enduring appeal in the UK, just as the different prejudiced images of the French and the Germans have. For example, the portrayal of Americans as unsophisticated can be seen in how often US Presidents have been stereotyped as stupid: Carter, Reagan, George W. Bush. During the 1980s a major theme of Spitting Image, a highly successful British satirical TV show using latex puppets, was how Ronald Reagan had mislaid his brain and where it might be lurking. Comments about George W. Bush's supposed lack of intellectual capacity have become an easy tool for lazy comic writers to gain a cheap laugh. To give but one typical example, in an article by John O'Farrell, a successful British comic novelist, one finds the throwaway line 'unless you yourself happen to be reading this, George W – which let's face it, is unlikely, given the absence of pictures.'12

Such popular anti-Americanism gains in significance when its prejudices are adopted in attacks upon US foreign policy, especially in attacks by influential policy makers. Chris Patten - the former British Conservative Cabinet Minister, ex-Governor of Hong Kong and at the time of his comments European Union commissioner in charge of Europe's international relations – in 2002 described US foreign policy in the aftermath of 9/11 as 'absolutist and simplistic'. He went on to say that the USA was too ready to see bombs as the solution to problems, instead of sophisticated policies: 'smart bombs have their place but smart development assistance seems to me even more important.'13 More recently Patten has described US policy towards the Middle East as 'too crude'.14 Such descriptions of US foreign policy – as unsophisticated, simplistic, crude – are drawn straight from the lexicon of popular anti-Americanism.

The apotheosis of the use of the language and prejudices of popular anti-Americanism to attack American foreign policy can be found in a speech by someone who, thankfully, has not occupied positions of influence but is still a public figure, arguably Britain's leading playwright, Harold Pinter. In 2002 on the occasion of receiving an honorary degree in Turin, Harold Pinter describes how he had recently had an operation for cancer: 'However, I found that to emerge from a personal nightmare was to enter an infinitely more pervasive public nightmare – the nightmare of American hysteria, ignorance, arrogance, stupidity and belligerence: the most powerful nation the world has ever known effectively waging war against the rest of the world…. The US administration is now a bloodthirsty wild animal. Bombs are its only vocabulary.'15 This was not some random, ill-considered outpouring by Pinter; he was so proud of this rant that he has had it published, alongside some anti-American, anti-Tony Blair poems, as a pamphlet. In speeches such as this, the not too serious phenomenon of British popular anti-Americanism is turned into something much more aggressive and threatening.

The far from tempered tone of Pinter's speech, and others like it, undermine the claim that anti-Americanism is simply a rational response to US foreign policy. This claim has been made most strongly by the American academic Noam Chomsky. His influence upon the politics of radical protest in the UK, or for that matter throughout Europe, has been vast. Chomsky has argued that the terrorist atrocities of 9/11 and other such attacks are not motivated by opposition to globalisation or US cultural dominance, by opposition to McDonald's or Hollywood, but are a response to what he

perceives as the iniquities of US foreign policy.16 Pinter went on to make much the same point in his speech: that, 'The atrocity in New York [9/11] was predictable and inevitable. It was an act of retaliation against constant and systematic manifestations of state terrorism on the part of the United States over many years, in all parts of the world.'17 The comment editor of The Guardian, the UK's leading left-liberal newspaper, argued on September 13th 2001, i.e. two days after 9/11, in the same fashion that 'for every "terror network" that is rooted out, another will emerge – until the injustices and inequalities that produce them are addressed.' This article was provocatively entitled 'They can't see why they are hated – Americans cannot ignore what their government does abroad.'18 Such statements show a somewhat jaundiced interpretation of US foreign policy. Even setting this aside, their high-pitched tone also suggests that they are less based on levelheaded analysis than on some deeper antagonism towards the United States. On another occasion, Pinter, commenting on his two pet hates, has said; 'Blair sees himself as a representative of moral rectitude. He is actually a mass murderer…The US is really beyond reason now…There is only one comparison: Nazi Germany.'19 This begs the question, who is really beyond reason, the United States or its more vociferous critics?

So what are the supposedly rational bases for foreign policy anti-Americanism in Britain? There appear to be three separate sources. The most significant group are those who object to the extent of US power and how this power is used. They object to the USA using its role as the only superpower in a unipolar world as a kind of global policeman and usually attribute nefarious motives to any US action. Interestingly some of those in the UK, including Tony Blair, who have been strong supporters of the United States and of an interventionist US foreign policy, do so partly for the obverse of this reason; they see USA power as being the most significant bulwark in maintaining a semblance of international order and in challenging those states which are a threat to global security. Others object to US support for Israel. There are also those who have a residual antagonism towards America stemming from Cold War politics.

With the US being the sole dominant player in the international system in the post Cold War world it is inevitable that doubts about its role have arisen. This is the fate of any dominant player in a given situation. Fears of US military dominance have often been combined with fears of economic dominance. Such legitimate even if misconceived concerns, however, soon become overblown in the rhetoric of the opponents of US power. Eric Hobsbawm, the renowned British historian and lifelong member the Communist Party stated, that 'A key novelty of the US imperial project is that all other empires knew that they were not the only ones, and none aimed at global domination… the present US policy is more unpopular than the policy of any other US government has ever been, and probably than that of any other great power has ever been.'20

The use of the language of empire in relation to US power has become widespread. It has obviously been used by opponents of the United States as part of the standard lexicon of abuse. It has also, however, come to be used by some commentators, most prominently the previously mentioned Michael Ignatieff, in support of the US adopting, where possible, an international humanitarian role and intervening militarily to remove pariah regimes, which are threatening the security, indeed the lives, of their own people and those of their neighbours.21 In this analysis the United States is seen as the major, if not the sole, power to lead such interventions because it has the power to do so. In the UK the Blair government clearly implicitly supported this argument. It has also converted sections of liberal and formerly left wing opinion, whilst shying away from the language of imperialism, to become much more supportive of the USA. While part of the British left strongly opposed the Anglo-American led NATO mission against the former Yugoslavia, others warmly welcomed it as just such a humanitarian action. This argument has also been used, admittedly by far fewer than over the former Yugoslavia, in relation to the Iraq war. For example, Ann Clwyd, a Labour MP on the left of her party who was a strong supporter of the campaign for Britain to unilaterally renounce its nuclear deterrent, became a strident supporter of the war on Iraq not because of weapons of mass destruction or security issues but as a way of removing an appalling regime that was abusing the human rights of its own people on a massive scale.22 For much of the left, however, all Western and especially US interventions remain suspect and probably carried out for purely economic motives. There is no analysis of the intervention's individual merits, simply a knee jerk reaction to the use of US or western power. When Noam Chomsky was asked if could think of any worthy interventions, he said that the British intervention in Sierra Leone might be genuinely humanitarian, 'but that's probably because I haven't looked at it properly.'23

Arguments have repeatedly been made, and suggestions proposed, for how to limit US power. Some of those keenest on European integration, although less so in the UK than in continental Europe, see the EU as a bulwark against US dominance. The United Nations has also often been portrayed as an institution that can channel and act as a control to US power. Much of the more temperate UK parliamentary opposition to the Blair strategy on Iraq argued that acting without a new UN resolution would encourage US unilateralism and thus undermine a major impediment to US power not just in this situation but also in the future. Their opposition was thus motivated by an explicit desire to hold US power in check.

For some more radical thinkers, neither the EU nor the UN as currently constituted can hope to be satisfactory constraints on US power. What is needed, they believe, is a whole new global system of governance. An extreme proposal explicitly developed to shackle the United States both economically and politically, and also to limit what he believes to be the ever-growing power of often US multinationals, has been put forward by George Monbiot. He is both the UK's leading chronicler and advocate of the anti-corporate protest movement. He has suggested that the way to 'stop America' is to abolish the United Nations Security Council, thereby removing the veto powers of the 5 permanent members, and let all decisions be made by the General Assembly with countries having votes both in proportion to their population and as to how democratic they are and separately from this establishing a directly elected World Parliament, with each constituency representing 10 million voters.24 Although this proposal is very unlikely to be seriously taken up, its extraordinarily far-reaching nature shows how central to the concerns of today's protest movements objections to US power have become – these protesters started by targeting Nike and McDonalds but their objections to the United States are much wider than just an objection to the ubiquitousness of US trainers or burgers.

Israel has been receiving an increasingly bad press in the UK for its handling of the Palestinian issue in recent years. Too often the reporting does not offer a balanced picture or take account of the complexities of the situation; it simply portrays the Israeli-Palestinian situation as a David and Goliath human rights story. This can partly be explained as a product of a generational shift among those reporting the Middle East. For many journalists in their thirties and forties now, the Holocaust does not have the emotional immediacy it had for an earlier generation. Its continuing impact and repercussions, along with that of the Arab wars with Israel of the 1950s, 60s, and 70s - the legitimate fears such events have engendered and the need for a secure place of safety - are too often forgotten. Journalists like to side with those whom they perceive to be the underdog. In the Middle East today those are the Palestinians – and US support for Israel only compounds this impression. Such support has become a major issue for 'concerned' opinion in the UK. Before the Iraq conflict this US support was probably the most often heard criticism of United States foreign policy. The growth, through immigration, of a Muslim population in the UK has also brought another facet to anti-Israeli opinion. Members of this community have often been very vocal in criticising US support of Israel.

Where such criticisms becomes deeply problematic, and certainly depart from the rational, is when US support for Israel has been attributed to the power of something termed the 'Jewish lobby'. All too often there has been an unhappy conflation between three separate things: US support for Israel, organised pro-Israeli lobby groups, and the American Jewish community. In 2003 Tam Dalyell, a Labour MP who has been a vehement critic of Tony Blair, said in an interview with Vanity Fair magazine that, in relation to the war with Iraq, 'there is far too much Jewish influence in the United States.'25 Dalyell went on to say that Tony Blair had been too reliant on Jewish advisers in the UK, singling out Lord Levy, his special envoy to the Middle East, 'I believe his influence has been very important on the Prime Minister and has led to what I see as this awful war and the sack of Baghdad.'26

Dalyell's remarks caused uproar in the UK and debate as to whether they were anti-Semitic or the result of infelicitous expression. There has, however, been a wider debate as to whether anti-Semitism is on the rise in the UK and also whether this has become linked to anti-American attitudes. Jonathan Sacks, the British Chief Rabbi, has argued that a new anti-Semitism has emerged, 'It is coming simultaneously from three different directions: first, a radicalised Islamist youth inflamed by extremist rhetoric; second, a left-wing anti-American elite with strong representation in the European media; third a resurgent far right, as anti-Muslim as it is anti-Jewish.'27

Those whose anti-Americanism stems from disquiet about US actions in the Cold War often come from a generation of whom many formed their political outlook in opposition to US involvement in Vietnam. With the end of the Cold War the issue most often raised is that of Cuba, and the United States continuing embargo upon it. Pre the fall of the Soviet Union it could frequently be heard from some liberal, non-communist commentators that this or that East European regime had this or that redeeming feature, be it job security, universal child-care, or an effective health system. These arguments are still heard in relation to Cuba. For example Brian Wilson, a minister in Blair's government until the end of the Iraq conflict, has since said in 2003 that while 'Cuba is not perfect… But criticism should never ignore the fact that Cuba's primary service to the world has been to provide living proof that it is possible to conquer poverty, disease and illiteracy in a country that was grossly familiar with all three. That is a pretty big service. The fact that it has been delivered in the face of sustained hostility from an obsessive neighbour makes it all the more stunning…For those who go to Cuba only in order to sneer, there are political paradoxes on every street corner. All true, all the inevitable result of 40 years of siege, but also irrelevant to the bigger picture of what Cuba represents as a symbol of human potential.'28 Are these remarks not eerily reminiscent to what others have said in previous times about other socialist states? As an antidote to this, Brian Wilson goes on to state, perhaps to the surprise of some historians, that in any case Castro was never a true ally of the Soviet Union – Castro's 'Withering remarks about the Soviet Union confirm just how unloving a marriage of necessity that was.'29

Brian Wilson's remarks in support of Cuba appear mild in comparison to those made by others. Seamas Milne, the comment editor of The Guardian previously quoted, has said: 'The historical importance of Cuba's struggle for social justice and sovereignty and its creative social mobilisation will continue to echo beyond its time and place: from the self-sacrificing internationalism of Che to the crucial role played by Cuban troops in bringing an end to apartheid through the defeat of South Africa at Cuito Cuanavale in Angola in 1988… Cuba will have to expect yet more destabilisation, further complicating the defence of the social and political gains of the revolution in the years to come. The greatest contribution those genuinely concerned about human rights and democracy in Cuba can make is to get the US and its European friends off the Cubans' backs.'30 Roll on the Red Pioneers.

For some of the UK's leading opponents of United States foreign policy, support for the old Eastern Bloc goes very much further than that of having a romantic picture of Cuba. The MP George Galloway – expelled from the Labour Party in October 2003 for statements made during the Iraq War - has been probably the most rabid parliamentary opponent of Britain's military alliance with the US on Iraq and also Blair's most vituperative opponent within his own party before being expelled. In an interview with The Guardian in 2002, more than ten years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Galloway stated that he had not changed his political position from that of the 1980s and described himself as being 'on the anti-imperialist left.' When asked if this meant the Stalinist left, Galloway's response was, 'I wouldn't define it that way because of the pejoratives loaded around it; that would be making a rod for your own back. If you are asking did I support the Soviet Union, yes I did. Yes, I did support the Soviet Union, and I think the disappearance of the Soviet Union is the biggest catastrophe of my life.'31

Or take another very prominent opponent of war with Iraq, Andrew Murray, the Chairman of the Sop The War Coalition that organised the vast anti-war demonstration discussed previously. Andrew Murray is a leading member of the Communist Party of Britain. This is a Marxist-Leninist organisation that was formed in the late 1980s by hard-liners from within the main pro-Moscow Communist Party of Great Britain who thought that the main party had sold out and become 'revisionist'.32 The Communist Party of Britain has retained control of the main party's low circulation daily paper, The

Morning Star, in which Andrew Murray has had a column. In 1999, ten years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, Murray wrote: 'Next Tuesday is the 120th anniversary of the birth of Josef Stalin. His career is the subject of a vast and ever-expanding literature. Read it all and, at the end, you are still left paying your money and taking your choice. A socialist system embracing a third of the world and the defeat of Nazi Germany on the one hand. On the other, all accompanied by harsh measures imposed by a one-party regime. Nevertheless, if you believe that the worst crimes visited on humanity this century, from colonialism to Hiroshima and from concentration camps to mass poverty and unemployment have been caused by imperialism, then [Stalin's birthday] might at least be a moment to ponder why the authors of those crimes and their hack propagandists abominate the name of Stalin beyond all others. It was, after all, Stalin's best-known critic, Nikita Khrushchev, who remarked in 1956 that "against imperialists, we are all Stalinists"'.[33]

The vast majority of those in the UK who opposed war with Iraq or even those who espouse anti-American views were not, and certainly do not remain in hindsight, active supporters of the Soviet Union. The views of George Galloway and Andrew Murray cannot however be dismissed as those of a tiny irrelevant minority who sully the good name of those who opposed the war or, for that matter, of anti-Americanism. Both these figures occupied leading, high profile positions in the campaign against that war, a campaign which itself vocalised anti-Americanism in the UK more strongly than it has been for many years. Galloway and Murray remain prominent voices of British anti-Americanism – for them the battles of the Cold War are not over.

These examples show that for many foreign policy anti-Americanism has not been a rational response to US foreign policy but has its roots in an ideological objection to the United States. Ideological anti-Americanism has been less a stand-alone variety of anti-Americanism but more the underpinning for other critiques of the United States. What is it that these ideological anti-Americans object to in the United States? The prominent American political scientist Seymour Martin Lipset has argued that, 'The American creed can be described in five terms: liberty, egalitarianism, individualism, populism and laissez-faire. Egalitarianism in its American meaning, as Tocqueville emphasized, involves equality of opportunity and respect, not of result or condition.'[34]

Notions of liberty or egalitarianism obviously exist independently of any geographic association. For some in the UK, however, support for differing aspects of the 'American creed' and the desire to see Britain change in that given direction, to become so to speak 'more American' in that particular regard, has contributed towards their pro-Americanism. Tony Blair, for example, as he has pushed the Labour Party to abandon its commitment to old-style social democracy has thought to embrace the US notion of egalitarianism – equality of opportunity, and its corollary the legitimacy of wealth creation, in his rejection of more European notions of egalitarianism - of equality of outcome. Blair has specifically defined this debate in terms of learning from the successes of the USA and has also used these arguments when attacking the British House of Lords. Jonathan Freedland, a British commentator who has - until disagreeing with Blair on the Iraq War, Freedland opposed the war - been a leading supporter of Tony Blair in the media and apparently had significant influence on the Blair agenda, has explicitly put forward the notion that Britain needs to learn from the US and adopt more of the American creed to become a more modern, more progressive society.[35] Other politicians, at other times, most notably Margaret Thatcher, have taken other lessons from the 'American creed'.

At different times, however, others in the UK have objected to differing aspects of the 'American creed' and from these objections developed a generalised anti-Americanism. In the 1830s Edward Wakefield was horrified by the lack of European style ideas of hierarchy and class in America and believed that this made a gentlemanly existence impossible and thus turned the United States into an uncivilised, barbarian place; 'A people who, though they continually increase in number, make no progress in the art of living; who, in respect to wealth, knowledge, skill, taste and whatever belongs to civilization, have degenerated from their ancestors…who delight in a forced equality, not equality before the law only, but equality against nature and truth; an equality which, to keep the balance always even, rewards the mean rather than the great, and gives more honour to the vile than the noble… We mean, in two words, a people who become rotten before they are ripe.'[36] Wakefield believed that the only answer to the revolt against nature represented by the United States was for a cross-section of British society, excluding the lowest, to settle and colonize a new, old world - in New Zealand. Here a society could be established which would not represent a 'new people' and thus possess none of the ills of the United States, but be extension of the old, retaining the virtues of the old world but eliminating its poverty and overcrowding. Although the exact importance of his role is still debated, Wakefield's enthusiasm for establishing an un-American settler colony undoubtedly played a significant part in the decision to annex New Zealand in 1840 and in its subsequent settlement.

Christopher Hitchens, the Anglo-American commentator, has argued that anti-Americanism still has a powerful right-wing component. 'The Cold War succeeded in fixing the idea of anti-Americanism as a syndrome of the left. Forgotten was the long hatred of the old right for the American idea. But now we can see its resurgence in the applause from all of the old and new fascist parties for the attacks of September 11.'[37] Notwithstanding this, the ideological rejection of what the United States is comes overwhelmingly from the left in Britain today. It is this ideological rejection that is the major motivator for British political anti-Americanism in both its foreign policy and explicitly ideological forms. Much contemporary anti-Americanism is motivated by an opposition to what those objecting to the United States believes it stands for – namely individualism and laissez-faire capitalism. The United States is the embodiment of what those objecting to it perceive as what is wrong with Britain. In a world where the alternatives have seen to fail, raging at the United States has become a safe way of raging at capitalism without having to provide one's own answers. This raises the question, why has the rejection of capitalism such an enduring appeal, why is it so incorrigible?

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