

## AGAINST ALL REASON

Propaganda, Politics, Power

ISSN 1741-0754 Volume 1, 2003: 29-42

Original Article

### WEB OF DECEIT: BRITAIN'S REAL ROLE IN THE WORLD

By Mark Curtis

#### **Introduction**

Since achieving power in 1997, New Labour government ministers have ceaselessly made extraordinary claims about the morality of their foreign policies and wanting to be a 'force for good in the world'. Never in British history has there been such a gap between government claims and the reality of policy.

The reality is that Britain under New Labour is a systematic violator of international law and ethical standards in its foreign policy – in effect, an outlaw state. It is a key ally of some of the world's most repressive regimes that is consistently condoning, and sometimes actively aiding, human rights abuses. During a so-called 'war against terrorism', Britain is in fact one of the world's leading apologists for, and supporters of, state terrorism by allies responsible for far more serious crimes than Al Qaida or other official threats. And, in the era of globalisation, Britain under Labour is championing a fundamentalist economic ideology that is promoting the increasing takeover of the global economy by big business.

A web of deceit is obscuring this picture. People in Britain are largely unaware of what has been done in their name, even as government policies undermine our own interests. The public's understanding of Britain's real role in the world is being obscured by an ideological system – principally, the mainstream media – that is largely accepting at face value New Labour's rhetoric on its moral purpose.

Current British foreign policies are generally not only immoral, but also dangerous, for the British public as well as others. These policies are helping to make the world more insecure, unequal and abusive of human rights. In the post-September 11th world, the threat of terrorism by organisations like Bin Laden's Al Qaida is certainly real, but it is the policies of our own government, and our principal ally, the US, that are in reality the greatest threat to the public. It is in our self-interest, therefore, to press for fundamental changes to Britain's role in the world.

Blair government claims are often extraordinary. Labour's first Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, spoke of 'putting human rights at the centre of foreign policy' and outlined an 'ethical dimension' to foreign policy one month after taking office. Tony Blair promises to help heal the 'scar on the conscience of the world', referring to poverty and conflict in Africa, and to 'fight for justice' globally. He ceaselessly stresses the concept of global interdependence and has outlined 'a new doctrine of international community', saying that national interest is 'to a significant extent governed by international collaboration'. 'We are all internationalists now', he declared in a speech in Chicago in April 1999.

Former Foreign Office minister Peter Hain has written of 'our mission to conquer world poverty and build international peace and a world based upon justice, equality and human rights'. The International Development Secretary, Clare Short, says that British aims are to 'systematically reduce poverty and promote sustainable development in the poorest countries'. Even the Trade Secretary, Patricia Hewitt, says at every available opportunity that Britain is promoting 'fair trade' globally and is on the side of developing countries in the international trade negotiations that are reshaping the global economy. Officially, Britain is on the side of the angels.

Never before has the public of a democratic country been subject to such an extraordinary ongoing tirade of propaganda. For the government is, quite generally, promoting actual policies that are directly opposite to this rhetoric.

The reality of Britain's current and past role in the world can be shown by taking an independent look at current policy using a variety of sources beyond the mainstream and by revealing the formerly secret, now declassified government planning files. This book argues that we need to extricate ourselves from the web of reporting and analysis that obscures this reality and from the deceit promoted by the elite – and that behind the diplomatic language and presentation of policymakers lies a peculiar British viciousness, evident all around the world, past and present. It is not that British elites are evil or that everything they do is immoral and dangerous. There are some exceptions to promoting generally unethical foreign policies – but they are few and pale in comparison with the broader picture.

Britain's real role in the world is a great betrayal of people in this country. I believe they expect the government to uphold the moral values abroad that most people uphold in their daily lives. This is partly why, as I argue in this book, the public is in reality seen by elites as the great threat to pursuing their priorities.

In the chapters that follow, I look at some of the major foreign policies of the Blair government: its illegal wars; its support for a 'war against terrorism' that is

acting as a pretext for a new phase of global intervention and US imperial power; its support for repressive elites and state terrorism; its arms exports that help sustain repressive governments; its aim to reshape the global economy; and its extraordinary new role as recognised international expert on state propaganda (mislabelled 'spin').

I also tell the story of several long-forgotten past British interventions revealed in now declassified documents – in Iran, Malaya, British Guiana and Kenya. These interventions were much more brutal than usually believed and make exceedingly worrying reading – in Kenya alone, 150,000 Africans died as a result of British policy in the 1950s. These interventions reveal a contempt for grand ethical principles that has passed easily from Conservative to Labour and from the colonial era to the present.

I also sketch an outline of the ideological system that prevents the public from seeing the reality of Britain's role in the world. This system makes it easier for elites to pursue policies in their interests and against the public interest. It is not a conspiracy; rather, the system works by journalists and academics internalising sets of values, generally accepted wisdom and styles of reporting.

It means that even big stories can rarely if ever see the light of day. One example is how the British government was complicit in the genocide of Rwanda in 1994 that killed a million people. Another is Britain's role in the slaughter of a million people in Indonesia in 1965 – a story as much buried as British complicity in Indonesia's invasion of East Timor in 1975. Meanwhile, the people of Diego Garcia, thrown off their islands and the subject of a decades-long Whitehall conspiracy to banish them from history, continue to seek justice in a brave struggle but remain largely unknown to the British public.

The liberal intelligentsia in Britain is in my view guilty of helping to weave a collective web of deceit. Under New Labour, many commentators have openly taken part in Labour's onslaught on the world, often showering praise on Tony Blair and his ministers for speaking the language of rights, development and global security as they proceed to demolish such noble virtues in their actual policy. To read many mainstream commentators' writings on Britain's role in the world is to enter a surreal, Kafkaesque world where the reality is often the direct opposite of what is contended and where the starting assumptions are frighteningly supportive of state power. My view is that the intelligentsia suffers from the same malady of 'elitism' as policy-makers, generally choosing to side with them, often being willingly taken in. The British liberal intelligentsia generally displays its servitude to the powers that be rather than to ordinary people, whether here or abroad.

The view has long been held that Britain 'has lost an empire and not yet found a role', in the famous words of US Secretary of State, Dean Acheson, several decades ago. Yet Britain's real role is easily discovered if we are concerned enough to look; the problem is that the results of such a search are quite unpleasant. Britain's role remains an essentially imperial one: to act as junior partner to US global power; to help organise the global economy to benefit Western corporations; and to maximise Britain's (that is, British elites') independent political standing in the world and thus remain a 'great power'.

In the final chapter, I end with some thoughts on the major challenges ahead if we are serious about changing for good Britain's role in the world – a truly necessary task, in the light of its past and present record.

#### THE CONCEPT OF "BASIC BENEVOLENCE"

The ideological system promotes one key concept that underpins everything else - the idea of Britain's basic benevolence. Mainstream reporting and analysis usually actively promotes, or at least does not challenge, the idea that Britain promotes high principles - democracy, peace, human rights and development - in its foreign policy. Criticism of foreign policies is certainly possible, and normal, but within narrow limits which show "exceptions" to, or "mistakes" in, promoting the rule of basic benevolence. Government statements on its always noble intentions are invariably taken seriously and rarely even challenged, let alone ridiculed. These assumptions and ways of reporting are very deep-rooted.

Thus *Guardian* editors can write of "Britain's reputation as both a respecter and champion of human rights". One of its regular columnists can write that "the foreign policies of democratic states, beyond the basic requirement of ensuring physical security, are now based firmly on two pillars - trade advantage and human rights". In their book on the New Labour government, two *Guardian* writers can refer to Blair as "a high minded champion of human rights". Similarly, an academic can write of "Britain's commitment to third world development" - a fact, requiring no justification. The list could go on, and cover the entire mainstream.

Indeed, it is only we who are benevolent. As the *New Statesman's* John Lloyd has written: "the defence of human rights - or more accurately, the aggressive promotion of human rights in an arena, such as Kosovo, where they are being brutalised - is a posture confined to the rich and secure world".

Beneath this overarching concept of basic benevolence stands a set of pillars - key strategies promoted by the elite that are assumed to contribute to Britain's benevolent role in the world and promotion of high principles. These strategies make up

the single ideology on which there is consensus across the elite, as outlined in chapter 13 - such as strong support for the US, in the context of a special relationship, promotion of global economic "liberalisation", support for key elites, and a strong military intervention capability. Reporting and analysis that fall outside this construct - and certainly that directly challenge it - will tend to get excluded.

The ideological system gears into particular action during war, providing justification for the government's resort to force and backing its (always noble) aims. In war, the public is in effect actively mobilised by the various components of the elite in support of state policy. Television news functions even more extremely ideologically at these times, in practice usually abandoning any pretence of objectivity and acting simply as the mouthpiece of the state, though trying to preserve a facade of independence. Only rarely is real dissent possible in such crises in mainstream newspapers and never on television.

Consider how the media supported the Blair government during 1999 in mobilising the nation to bomb Yugoslavia supposedly in defence of the highest humanitarian values. This was no easy task since it soon became clear to any independent onlooker that it was the NATO bombing that precipitated, rather than prevented, the humanitarian catastrophe. At the same time, as noted in chapter 7, our allies in Indonesia were engaged in atrocities in East Timor similar to those of Milosevic; while a few months later the same values were still relevant as Putin's Russia was committing crimes in Chechnya greater in scale than those of Milosevic in Kosovo. But in these cases the values that provided the pretext for bombing Yugoslavia needed to be buried. After a few obvious parallels were drawn between the situations in the media, the previous humanitarian pretexts used for Kosovo were indeed safely forgotten in these other conflicts.

Criticism in the mainstream of British wars tends to be restricted to the tactics used to achieve the assumed noble aims, and whether the government has chosen the right strategy to discharge its high nobility or whether it will make "mistakes".

The debate in the mainstream on bombing Yugoslavia over Kosovo, did involve argument over whether it was a "just war" or not; but both sides of this debate generally accepted that the government was seeking to achieve its stated humanitarian aims. That the government may have been acting out of other motives entirely was almost never questioned, despite the evidence.

The same goes for much media coverage of Iraq. Most reporting assumes that British aims are basically benevolent - the more regular criticism is whether government strategy is the right one to achieve noble objectives. This contrasts with reporting on US policy, where US aims of controlling Iraqi oil, or of installing an

undemocratic, pro-US regime, are more openly discussed than British involvement in the same. This said, media reporting on Iraq in 2002/3 has involved many more dissenting views than was the case over the bombing of Yugoslavia. The reason is that there is no elite consensus on war with Iraq, which is rather being promoted by a small band of people around the prime minister. Many parts of the establishment are opposed to war (for tactical reasons to achieve British objectives, not for moral reasons, which are irrelevant to them). Therefore, the media framing can be much wider and include many more critical voices.

*The Guardian's* coverage of the war in Afghanistan was a real exception to normal reporting, in that a series of comment pieces over several months put various critical perspectives and exposed much of the reality of the war and its motives. This unusual occurrence was due to one comment editor, Seumas Milne, who allowed a diversity of views - evidence in fact of how individuals can help change even well-established systems. This did not, however, stop some other reporters from toeing the state line in numerous cases elsewhere in the newspaper.

It is interesting to note that there is only one British military intervention over the past fifty years that has been severely criticised and government motives questioned in the mainstream - the invasion of Egypt in 1956 (usually called the "Suez crisis" or "fiasco" in the ideological system). Since there are many horrible British interventions worthy of attention and condemnation, with effects worse than in Egypt in 1956, why is this singled out for criticism? The reason is obvious - Britain lost. It therefore deserves a lot of soul-searching within the elite. Other interventions where we successfully blasted the nips deserve no such criticism, since we won, therefore what could possibly be the problem?

A leading US analyst of the media and foreign policy, Edward Herman, has said that "it is the function of experts and the mainstream media to normalise the unthinkable for the general public". This role sanitises quite terrible policies and presents them as "normal", current examples of which include hundreds of thousands of deaths in Iraq through sanctions, war crimes in Yugoslavia and mass civilian deaths in Afghanistan. When presented in the mainstream media, none of these outcomes tend to elicit the horror they deserve; all are normal.

The French philosopher Jean Guhenno has said that "the worst betrayal of intelligence is finding justification for the world as it is". But this is often the role played by experts, to explain the everyday as normal, justifiable, requiring little change, but rather "stability" and few upsets to "world order" unless controlled by us. In fact, the everyday is a horror for many people - the half of the planet that lives in absolute poverty, as well as the victims of torture and repression in the US and British-backed client states, for example.

Elites throughout history have presented their policies as in the natural order of things, which helps to obscure the pursuit of their own particular interests. An important aspect of the ideological system is rendering a single view dominant or "natural", presenting current policies as inevitable, and undermining the possibility of alternatives. "Globalisation" is presented by elites as such a natural phenomenon, and critics ridiculed as Luddites who cannot stop the inevitable march of history. These curiously Marxist, determinist views mask the elite's goal under globalisation of promoting total global economic "liberalisation" - a far from inevitable outcome, but a strategy chosen by the liberalisation theologians of New Labour, and their allies among the transnational elite.

If the current horrible policies are "normal", the alternatives are "unthinkable". Even to mention the indictment of Tony Blair for war crimes, to oppose British cooperation with the US because it is a consistent supporter of human rights abuses overseas, or even to end arms exports is "unthinkable" in the mainstream and would invite ridicule.

Take the *Guardian's* Ian Black, who writes that a key aim of the International Criminal Court is to avoid: "politically motivated or frivolous investigations - what one expert calls the 'nutcase factor': for instance, of the possible pursuit of [Northern Ireland secretary] Mo Mowlam or Tony Blair for crimes against humanity". Only "nutcases" could possibly believe Our Leader could ever be guilty of crimes against humanity. (One such "nutcase" is former US Attorney General, Ramsay Clark, who lodged a complaint against Britain in July 1999 for war crimes during its assault on Yugoslavia.)

A customary way for the elite to deflect criticism is to term it a "conspiracy theory", which is common across the ideological system. There is a good reason for it. British elites have built a fundamentally secretive political system for which they are minimally accountable to the public. As noted in chapter 13, they believe the public should have only a marginal say in this system outside elections, and - to judge from some of the views expressed in the Scott inquiry - neither do they think the public should even know what the decision-making processes are. Elites are especially keen to deflect criticism exposing how the system works, which is more threatening than criticising specific policies (which can be dismissed as "exceptions"). The term "conspiracy theory" is often deployed once criticism has moved beyond the specific and is closer to exposing how the system as a whole works.

My view is that "ordinary people" - and I count myself as one of these - generally distrust their sources of information and know, ultimately, not to believe what they read or see. This is partly because ordinary people, in my view, have a much

healthier scepticism of those in power than those closer to power or those aspiring to the political class. People have little stake in the elite and therefore have no reason to trust it.

But I do not believe that people can be aware of the extent to which to which they are being misinformed. Foreign policy is different from domestic issues, where you only have to spend time in a hospital or have a child who goes to school, to know the state of public services. But with foreign policy people are overwhelmingly reliant on news rather than personal experience, which makes indoctrination much easier. Even if people have enough self-defence mechanisms to avoid being directly told what to think, it is very likely that the media tells them what to think about.

It is not that one cannot discover much about the reality of government policy. All the sources I have used in this book are public. But you have to make a real effort, and spend considerable time, which is simply not possible for most people. It involves proactively looking for alternative sources of information, usually a variety of different sources, to piece together an accurate picture, and then weighing these against mainstream sources.

It also involves what the great Kenyan novelist Ngugi Wa Thiongo has called "decolonising the mind". Ngugi was referring to Africans needing to free themselves from ideologies often subconsciously adopted under colonialism. The British public needs, in my view, to do the same thing, and consciously unlearn most of what we have been informed about and "educated" on regarding Britain's role in the world. This applies not only to the media, but to school and university too. Again, these are not easy tasks.

Overall, I believe that people are being indoctrinated into a picture of Britain's role in the world that supports elite priorities. This is the mass production of ignorance. It actively works against our interests, which is precisely why the ideological system is critical to the elite, who essentially see the public as a threat.

The basic fact is that anyone who wants to understand the reality of Britain's past and current foreign policies cannot do so by relying on the mainstream. As the chapters on Kenya, Malaya, British Guiana, Iran and others have shown, the reality of British policy is systematically suppressed; whole episodes in Britain's history have become severely ideologically treated. Interpretations of history that accord with the preferences of elites are the dominant ones. Given the extent of this ideological treatment of the past, what has happened is akin to the destruction of history. The task of any independent historian is to reconstruct real-life history, to rescue it from a self-serving web of deceit.



A chronology of major events covered in this book

**1947** Foreign Office describes Middle East oil in secret document as ‘a vital prize for any power interested in world influence or domination’.

**1948** Britain declares ‘emergency’ in Malaya and begins 12-year war to defeat rebels, who are mainly marginalised Chinese. Britain secretly describes war as ‘in defence of [the] rubber industry’ and engages in widespread bombing, draconian police measures and ‘resettlement’ of hundreds of thousands of people in fortified ‘new villages’.

**1951 June:** Attlee government begins covert plan to overthrow Iranian prime minister Musaddiq following the latter’s nationalisation of oil operations.

**1952** October: Britain declares state of emergency in colony of Kenya. British forces conduct human rights atrocities, establish Nazi-style concentration camps and ‘resettle’ hundreds of thousands of people in ‘protected villages’. Around 150,000 Africans die.

**1953 August:** Musaddiq government in Iran overthrown in MI6/CIA-organised coup. Shah installed in power as per London’s and Washington’s plans.

**1953 October:** Britain conducts military intervention in British Guiana to overthrow democratically elected government.

**1954 July:** US overthrows Guatemalan government of Jacobo Arbenz and US-backed junta seizes power. Britain aids US position at UN.

**1956 October:** Britain invades Egypt to remove nationalist president Nasser, eventually being forced to withdraw due to US and financial pressure. MI6 plans and carries out several assassination attempts against Nasser.

**1957 July:** Britain begins military intervention in Oman in support of extremely repressive regime against rebellion by Omani Liberation Army. SAS fights covert war and RAF conducts wide-spread bombing of villages and strongholds, defeating rebels by 1959.

**1958 July:** Britain conducts military intervention in Jordan, ostensibly to protect regime from alleged Egyptian-backed coup. Declassified documents suggest, however, that British planners fabricated the coup scenario to justify intervention.

**1961** Death of UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld in mysterious plane

crash while trying to secure peace in Congo. Recent evidence has emerged of possible MI5 involvement.

**1961** US begins major intervention in Vietnam. As US atrocities mount in the war that follows, Britain secretly provides US with military intelligence, arms and covert SAS deployments, along with diplomatic support.

**1961 July:** Britain conducts military intervention in Kuwait, ostensibly to defend the country from imminent Iraqi invasion. Declassified documents suggest, however, that British planners fabricated the threat to justify intervention.

**1962** MI6 and SAS begin covert operation in North Yemen that eventually involves providing arms, funding and logistical support to royalist rebels in dirty war against pro-Egyptian republican forces. Around 200,000 die in the war.

**1964** Britain begins second war in support of Oman regime, against the Popular Front for the Liberation of the Occupied Arabian Gulf, fought mainly covertly by the SAS. The ‘Dhofar Rebellion’ is defeated by 1975.

**1965 October:** Bloodbath in Indonesia begins as army moves against supporters of Indonesian Communist Party, reaching around a million deaths. Declassified documents show Britain aids the Indonesian army in conducting the slaughter through covert operations and secret messages of support.

**1968** Britain begins illegal and secret removal of 1,500 population of Chagos islands, including Diego Garcia, following agreement to lease islands to US. Whitehall conspiracy begins, contending there are no indigenous inhabitants.

**1970 July:** British coup in Oman overthrows Sultan and installs his son. Sultan Qaboos remains in power today.

**1975 December:** Indonesia invades East Timor, leading to 200,000 deaths. In secret cable, British ambassador in Jakarta says Indonesia ‘should absorb the territory as soon and as unobtrusively as possible’ and that Britain ‘should avoid taking sides against the Indonesian government’.

**1980** MI6 begins largest postwar covert operation in Afghanistan to train mojahidin groups fighting the Soviet occupation.

**1981** US begins covert intervention against Nicaragua, training contra rebels in sabotage and terrorist operations. Britain provides strong diplomatic support to US and nod and wink to ‘security’ company, KMS, to train and recruit contra

guerillas and conduct gun-running operations.

**1983 October:** US invades Grenada. British government privately furious at US failure to consult in invasion of Commonwealth country, but publicly backs intervention.

**1985** First contract with Saudi Arabia signed in massive Al Yamamah arms deal. With second deal in 1988, overall worth is around £50 billion.

**1986 Spring:** MI6 begins supplying Afghan mujahidin groups with 'Blowpipe' shoulder-launched missiles, some of which are used to shoot down passenger airliners.

**1986 April:** US conducts air raids on Libya. Britain allows US use of British air bases and provides strong public support.

**1989 December:** US invades Panama. Britain is only major state to unstintingly support US.

**1991 January:** US, Britain and coalition begin massive bombing campaign against Iraq to force withdrawal from Kuwait following its invasion the previous August.

**1991 April:** Britain and US establish 'no fly zones' in northern and southern Iraq. They begin covert, permanent war of bombing in the zones.

**1991 November:** Indonesian forces massacre hundreds of peaceful demonstrators in Dili, East Timor. Britain continues arms exports and business as usual.

**1992** MI6 draws up plans to assassinate Yugoslav president Milosevic, according to an MI6 official. These plans are apparently not carried out.

**1993 June:** US conducts cruise missile attacks against Iraq. Britain provides political support.

**1994 April:** Rwanda genocide begins, quickly killing a million people. Britain effectively aids the slaughter by helping to reduce UN force that could have prevented the killings, in helping to delay other plans for intervention and in resisting use of the term 'genocide' which would have obligated the international community to act.

**1996** MoD quietly sends first of several training teams to assist Saudi Arabia in

‘internal security’ as part of wider support to Saudi Arabian National Guard, the force that protects the ruling family.

**1996 February:** Assassination and coup attempt against Libya’s Colonel Qaddafi with, according to former MI5 officer David Shayler, MI6 funds and backing.

**1996 April:** British-supplied Scorpion light tanks used in Indonesia to repress demonstrators. It is the first of eight known occasions in 1996–2000 that British armoured cars are used for internal repression. Blair government continues arms to Indonesia.

**1996 September:** US conducts cruise missile attacks against Iraq. Britain provides political support.

**1997 February:** Labour leader Tony Blair reassures BAE Systems, Britain’s largest arms company, that ‘winning exports is vital to the long term success of Britain’s defence industry’.

**1998 August:** US launches cruise missile attacks against Al Qaida training camps in Afghanistan and a pharmaceutical factory in Sudan. Britain provides strong political support.

**1998 December:** US and Britain begin four-day heavy bombing campaign against Iraq, followed by weeks-long secret escalation of bombing in ‘no fly zones’.

**1999 March:** Britain and NATO begin bombing campaign against Milosevic’s Yugoslavia over Kosovo. The humanitarian catastrophe that Western leaders claim they are preventing is in reality precipitated by NATO bombing.

**1999 April:** Former members of Kenyan Mau Mau movement announce they are suing British government for human rights atrocities committed in 1950s.

**1999 August/September:** Around 5,000 are killed in East Timor and 500,000 forced to flee from Indonesian-backed terror around the vote for independence. Britain continues arms sales to Jakarta and finally agrees only to delay not stop them, while inviting Indonesia to an arms fair in Britain. Blair government tries to take credit for stopping Indonesian violence by helping to establish UN peace enforcement mission.

**1999 October:** Chinese premier Jiang Zemin visits Britain. Blair government refuses to raise human rights issues publicly, while police deny protesters the right to peaceful assembly and illegally seize Tibetan flags.

**2000 January:** Chinese defence minister, General Chi Haotian, who commanded the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre, visits Britain to explore ‘military cooperation’, showing London’s apparent defiance of EU arms embargo on China.

**2000 February:** As Russian forces ferociously bomb the Chechnyan capital, Grozny, reducing the city to rubble, Foreign Secretary Robin Cook says he ‘understood’ Russia’s problems in Chechnya.

**2000 July:** British national Ian Henderson resigns as adviser to Bahraini government after career as head of repressive internal security service.

**2000 November:** High Court rules against government that Chagos islanders be allowed to return to some of their homeland islands, but not Diego Garcia.

**2001** British arms exports reach £5 billion for 2001.

**2001 February:** US/British airstrikes against Iraq in response to alleged threats to aircraft in ‘no fly zones’.

**2001 August:** US and Britain secretly step up bombing campaign in ‘no fly zones’ in Iraq.

**2001 October:** US and Britain begin massive bombing campaign against Al Qaida and Taliban regime in Afghanistan following terrorist attacks of September 11th. Civilian deaths in the war outnumber those killed on September 11th.

**2001 November:** At the World Trade Organisation summit in Qatar, Britain with EU allies tries to force ‘new issues’ on to the WTO’s negotiating agenda in face of opposition from developing countries. The latter remain united and the decision is delayed for two years.

**2002** Foreign Office website continues to lie that there are ‘no indigenous inhabitants’ of the Chagos islands, while Foreign Office continues in effect to block islanders’ return.

**2002 August:** With full-scale war against Iraq appearing imminent, US and Britain secretly step up bombing campaign in ‘no fly zones’.

**2002 October:** In midst of continuing Russian atrocities in Chechnya, Tony Blair says ‘it is important to understand the Russian perspective’.

**2003 March:** After months of build-up, US and Britain launch war against Iraq,

discarding the UN weapons inspection process and bypassing the UN Security Council.

This is an extract from Mark Curtis's *Web of Deceit: Britain's Real Role in the World*, published by Vintage. To order the book, telephone 01206-256000 or go to [www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk). ISBN - 0099448394. Mark Curtis can be contacted at [mcurtis30@aol.com](mailto:mcurtis30@aol.com). His website is at [www.markcurtis.info](http://www.markcurtis.info).

---

© 2003. Mark Curtis. Reproduced with permission.

**AGAINST ALL REASON**