

British ‘Concert of Democracies’ Backed by Obama and McCain

by Edward Spannaus

At the groundbreaking ceremony in Washington June 5 for the new headquarters of the U.S. Institute of Peace, a speaker quoted President John F. Kennedy’s declaration, at his 1963 commencement address at American University, in which he said: “The United States, as the world knows, will never start a war.”

“By contrast,” the *Washington Post* reported the next day, former Secretary of State George Shultz, sharing the platform with President George Bush, “said Bush will be remembered kindly for promoting the idea that wars must sometimes be launched to address potential threats before they are realized.” Addressing Bush on the subject of preventive war, Shultz said: “In your time, I think this is one important idea that has real legs and staying power.”

This notion of preventive war is a crucial feature of the Final Report of the Princeton Project on National Security, whose honorary co-chairs were George Shultz and former

Bill Clinton National Security Advisor Anthony Lake. Although the Princeton report—promoting the British-sponsored idea of a “Concert of Democracies” which would carry out military interventions around the world, outside of the framework of the UN Security Council—was billed as an alternative to the policies of the Bush-Cheney Administration, one of the background papers for the Project, a March 2006 speech delivered by Shultz at Princeton, sounds word-for-word like a speech by Cheney or Bush, claiming that the war with Islamic terrorism (“Islamofascism”) actually began 30 years ago, that passivity only encourages the terrorists, that you must go on the offense and take the fight to the enemy, and that even while pursuing diplomacy, “we must retain the option and the will to use force.”

If anyone thinks that there is any significant difference between Barack Obama or John McCain (as of this moment, the two official major-party candidates), or that either represents any break from the policies of the Bush Administration, consider this:

The scheme to create an Anglo-American led Concert of Democracies is being promoted by top advisors to the Obama campaign—specifically Anthony Lake and Ivo Daalder—who are working hand-in-glove with leading neocons and McCain advisors. McCain himself explicitly endorsed the Concert of Democracies scheme in a May 26 speech to the Los Angeles World Affairs Council.

Co-chair of the Princeton Project, Lake is a top advisor to Obama; the other co-chair, Shultz, is a McCain endorser. Obama foreign policy advisor Daalder, along with McCain foreign policy advisor Robert Kagan, also co-authored an even more strident call for “Concert of Democracies” military interventionism, and targeting Russia and China, which we will review below.

A Perpetual ‘Coalition of the Willing’

The major difference between the Bush-Cheney approach and that advocated by the proponents of the Concert of Democracies, is that the unilateral-



George P. Shultz, strong advocate of Bush’s pre-emptive war strategy, now heads a “bipartisan” drive to implant the same policy in the next Presidential administration, be it Republican or Democratic.

ism of Bush-Cheney is replaced by a more-or-less permanent multilateral “Coalition of the Willing,” which would bypass or even replace the UN Security Council.

In the Princeton report, this takes two forms:

1. “Reform” of the UN Security Council, to eliminate the veto power possessed by Russia and China, two of the five permanent members of the Council. “The veto should be abolished by UNSC resolutions authorizing direct action in response to a crisis,” the report says. “It makes no sense, in 2006, for five countries that represent the distribution of power at the end of World War II to have individual vetoes over what constitutes legitimate action.... [T]he veto is a license for prevarication, obstructionism, and disillusionment.”

2. Creation of an “alternative body” to the Security Council, a “Concert of Democracies” for the purpose “to strengthen security cooperation among the world’s liberal democracies.”

Additionally, the Princeton report calls for changes in NATO, “to eliminate the veto rights of smaller NATO states and other impediments to collective action.”

There is no dispute with the Bush-Cheney regime on what they define as “the preventive use of force—attacking a state or a non-state actor before a threat fully materializes.”

As we shall see, the British-sponsored Concert of Democracies proposal¹ represents a frontal assault on what vestiges remain of the post-World War II international system of sovereign states envisioned by President Franklin Roosevelt, as well as on the very concept of national sovereignty that inspired the 1648 Peace of Westphalia that ended the Thirty Years’ War.

The other critical feature of the Princeton report—neither original with them, nor the last word—is the right to intervene in sovereign states even when there is no threat to other countries. In the recent period, this refers to the Chicago speech by then-British Prime Minister Tony Blair, on the eve of the 1999 NATO summit, calling for a “globalized



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Mariusz Kubik

Anthony Lake (left), a top advisor to Barack Obama, and Robert Kagan (above), John McCain’s foreign policy advisor, couldn’t agree more on a policy of targeting Russia and China with a “Concert of Democracies” policy of military interventionism.

NATO” prepared to carry out “humanitarian interventions” around the world.

Citing “the responsibility to protect,” the Princeton Project declares that when sovereign states are unwilling to protect their own citizens, “responsibility must be borne by the international community.”

The Princeton Project went so far as to propose a “Charter for a Concert of Democracies” in which military action against a non-member sovereign state could be authorized by a two-thirds majority of member states.

Target: Russia and China

As a “consensus document” reflecting the views of dozens of participants, the Princeton report could not be as explicit as Shultz and others would have liked.

This failing was remedied, in an article published a few months later, in the January-February 2007 issue of *The American Interest*, entitled “Democracies of the World, Unite.” Its authors were the Dutch-born, British-educated Ivo Daalder, and James Lindsay of the Robert Strauss Center at the University of Texas.

The Daalder-Lindsay piece is absolutely explicit, that the target is Russia and China, as well as those two powers’ defense of national sovereignty.

The two authors contend that the United States can’t go it alone any more, but they also claim that an *ad hoc* coalition of the major powers, or a “great power concert,” won’t work either, because “Russia and China see their interests differently” than does the U.S.A.

“Moreover, disagreements among the great powers are

1. *EIR* (May 30, 2008), under the headline, “Will Obama Reject the Pinochet Team?” reported that the Concert of Democracies scheme directly echoes the League of Democracies plan put forward in 1938 by Anglophile Clarence Streit, an American leader of Lord Lothian’s Milner Group; Streit proposed that the United States, including its currency and its military, be absorbed into the British Empire as the “nucleus of a world government” that could impose its will by armed force.

the sharpest on perhaps the defining issue of our day: the extent to which sovereignty should remain inviolable,” Daalder and Lindsay write. “Russia and especially China have become the foremost defenders of the principle that states are the exclusive masters of their own internal affairs. They have resisted—from Kosovo to Darfur to Burma—every action proposed by the United States and the European Union that would interfere in the domestic circumstances of other states.”

The UN can’t provide a suitable forum for authorizing such interventions, they complain, because it operates by consensus; the Security Council couldn’t even agree on Iraq, leaving it to the United States, the United Kingdom, and a few others to act.

Another reason for the UN’s failings, they contend, is its universality; while some see this as its source of legitimacy, it is actually the UN’s greatest curse, making it beholden to its least cooperative members.

Moreover, the UN focusses on the relations *among* states, but today, the major threats to security come from developments *within* states, and “the UN’s founding Charter insists that a state’s domestic affairs remain essentially outside the purview of others.” But, they continue, “this principle of absolute sovereignty is unsustainable in an age of global politics. When developments within one state can profoundly affect the security and well-being of peoples in other states, the only practical way for countries to ensure their security is to interfere into the internal affairs of other states.”

“Democracies understand that international peace and justice in an era of global politics rest on protecting the rights of individuals,” write Daalder and Lindsay. “Nation-state sovereignty can no longer be the sole organizing principle of international politics. Since what happens within a state matters to people living outside it, tackling these internal developments cooperatively is vital to the security and well-being of all.”

The solution, they write, is to establish a “Concert of Democracies” as a formal institution, with a full-time secretariat, a budget, ministerial meetings, and regular summits. Upwards of 60 countries would qualify as “democracies,” others would not, including (in the authors’ named order) China, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Zimbabwe, and Cuba.

“Can a Concert of Democracies succeed if it excludes large countries such as China and Russia?” they ask. “Of course it can. Many successful international organizations do not count China or Russia as members. Neither country belongs to NATO, the European Union, or the OECD. China doesn’t belong to the G-8, and Russia stands (at least for now) outside the WTO. Yet no one argues that these institutions are ineffective because of these exclusions.

“A related objection is the fear that the creation of a Concert of Democracies might encourage China and Russia to create an alternative organization—some sort of League of

Authoritarian States. But if authoritarian governments find it in their interests to cooperate—as Beijing and Moscow apparently do already in many cases—they will do so regardless of what the world’s democracies may decide,” they conclude.

From this standpoint, it shouldn’t be surprising that Obama advisor Daalder, known generally as a “liberal” on foreign policy, should hook up with a neocon warhawk like

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—Ivo Daalder and James Lindsay

McCain advisor Kagan. In the mid- to late-1990s, Kagan (and his usual scribbling partner William Kristol) were leading the drumbeat against what they called the rising threat from China. Only after 9/11, did they discover that “Islamic terrorism” was suddenly the biggest threat.

The Daalder-Kagan Concert

Daalder and Kagan wrote a joint op-ed, “The Next Intervention,” for the Aug. 6, 2007 *Washington Post*, a condensation of a longer article they had written for the Stanley Foundation titled “America and the Use of Force: Sources of Legitimacy.” A central feature of the two pieces, was that the UN Security Council is useless, because it is deeply divided and paralyzed by the presence of Russia and China—“two countries that are governed in ways that are antithetical to everything America stands for.”

“Russia, China, and a host of developing nations continue to view sovereignty as the defining principle of international affairs,” Daalder and Kagan protest, “and they steadfastly maintain that a country’s borders demarcate an international no-go zone.”

We have to change our view of sovereignty, they demand, from seeing it as a *right*, to seeing it as a *responsibility*—i.e., do what we say, or else.

The New British Empire

“Responsible sovereignty” is likewise a major theme of British Foreign Secretary David Miliband. As always, “re-

sponsible sovereignty” as well as “democracy,” boil down to acceptance of British free trade and globalization—the 21st-Century British Empire. Among other places, Miliband laid this out in a Feb. 29, 2008 speech at Beijing University, “Responsible Sovereignty: A New Bargain for the International Community.”

“Responsible Sovereignty” begins at home, Miliband asserted, meaning that a nation’s domestic and economic policies cannot be separated from its foreign policies. He poses three major “shared threats” faced by a globalized world:

1. Protectionism: “Responsible sovereignty demands that we keep the forces of protectionism at bay. It demands that we dismantle barriers to trade. The UK will, for our part, continue to argue strongly for open trade and investment.”

2. Climate change: “Climate change is not just a threat in itself—it acts as a multiplier on existing stresses over scarce natural resources,” such as shortages of food, water scarcity, etc. Miliband gushed over how the United Kingdom will help China and other emerging economies to “leapfrog the industrialized world and move straight to low-carbon development.”

3. Faltering States: These are “states that are either too weak to guarantee the rule of law and protect their citizens, or states that are too strong [!] and threaten the safety of neighboring states.” We have to provide incentives for good governance and global engagement, Miliband insists, but if these don’t work, then we’ll have to apply pressure. “Decisions to interfere in another country’s affairs must never be taken lightly,” and, in acute cases, “responsible sovereign nations must be prepared to intervene together where they see a risk to regional stability and where a state is unable or unwilling to address the problem itself.”

Miliband generously offered that the United Kingdom will nurture this “new bargain” of “responsible sovereignty” through its influence in international institutions, and, regarding China, through its bilateral ties. “In the past, the UK was seen as a bridge between Europe and the United States. I believe, in what may come to be known as ‘the Asian Century,’ Britain must become a global hub. That means it has to deepen its relationship with China and other emerging powers. The popularity of the English language and UK universities, the UK’s world-class science base, and the global financial hub provided by the city of London provide a basis.”

To aid this, Miliband insists that Europe must speak with one voice, and must adopt the anti-nation-state Lisbon Treaty. “The institutional changes provided by the Lisbon Treaty, in particular, the introduction of a permanent president of the European Council, and the creation of the position of high representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy is a major opportunity for Europe to translate

British Foreign Secretary David Miliband is a spokesman for the 21st-Century British Empire, whose policies are the same as those of the “Concert of Democracies.”



common interest into common positions.”

This seems to be as about a clear a statement as one might expect to find, of Britain’s intention to suck Europe into the Lisbon Treaty, and to suck the rest of the the world into destroying itself through free trade and environmentalism—while the U.K. remains above it all, as the “hub” of the new empire now called “the new international bargain.”

Preserving the ‘Anglo-Sphere’

The Princeton Project itself is tightly tied to its British sponsors. On May 1-2, it co-sponsored a conference held at the Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies (RUSI) in London. The Princeton Project was clearly launched as a effort to control the agenda for the 2008 U.S. Presidential elections (indeed, at the moment of the release of its final report in September 2006, one of its principals was meeting with Obama’s office), and the London meeting was shamelessly explicit about this, calling itself the “Global Leadership Forum: The 2008 US Presidential Elections and the Future of World Politics.”

Michael Clarke, the director of RUSI, in an essay written for the conference, tried to counter what he called the “strategic malaise” now affecting the United States and Britain. After all, he wrote, “Britain or the United States, either individually or together, have prevailed in every major—strategically important—conflict of the last three hundred years. Every single one.” Clarke expressed his hope for the continuation of what he called “the dominance of the Anglo-sphere in modern international history.”

Both Obama’s and McCain’s chief advisors would seem to have no dispute with that corrupt perspective.