

Another doctrine of international community? UK foreign policy and the Obama administration.

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Introduction

The sense of hope and expectation that greeted the Obama presidency in the UK was testament to the continuing international appeal of the 'American dream'. By being the first black African-American to enter the White House, Obama immediately renewed faith in those values that most UK citizens hold dear. American popular culture may have a tendency to portray the British people as being sore about losing the empire, and of being somehow jealous that the former colonies have achieved a superpower status.¹ Yet the identity and the role that the empire created for the British people is more than a generation removed from the concerns of most in the UK today. Many continue to embrace US leadership not simply because it is believed to be necessary to secure British national interests; and not simply because 'playing Greece to America's Rome' enables the UK to punch above its weight on the world stage while remaining independent of Europe. Rather the appeal of American leadership for many in the UK is America itself and the values it notionally represents. The principle that all men are created equal and the idea that government can guarantee and reflect that principle while also facilitating the pursuit of happiness, is as much a British aspiration as it is an American dream. When the US fails to live up to these founding principles the sense of disappointment is felt beyond America's borders; and when, as on 20 January 2009, the US made another step toward perfecting its Union, it generated renewed hope that someday the UK will be in a position to imitate America's example.²

In terms of US foreign policy, there is also hope that Obama will bring the kind of change that will resolve those differences that have been generated by the Bush administration's response to 9-11. Thus, Obama's insistence that he would close down the Guantanamo Bay detention facility was welcomed by the British government, which had committed itself to the very same goal in its own *National Security Strategy*.³ The call from government insiders to help the new administration by taking in some of the detainees provided further evidence of the importance that Obama's campaign promise to US-UK relations.⁴ Likewise, Foreign Secretary David Miliband's Mumbai speech on the eve of Obama's inauguration indicated a sense in which closing Guantanamo was one part of what British policymakers hoped would be a broader reassessment. The 'war on terror', a concept that defined the very essence of the Bush administration's foreign and national security policy, was, Miliband stated, 'misleading and mistaken'.⁵ On this occasion, Miliband was speaking directly to the Indian people and their government. Yet such an analysis would not have been offered if it had been thought to be out of step with the incoming administration in Washington. Indeed, Miliband's citation of General David Petraeus to support the argument that the rhetoric of war was unhelpful and the use of force sometimes mistaken, suggests that the British Foreign Office firmly believed that the tide of Washington opinion was finally flowing in its direction.

It would be fair to say, however, that if an Obama administration offers an opportunity, it also represents a challenge to British foreign policymakers. This challenge, moreover, goes way beyond the possibility that Obama's approach to US-UK relations will be influenced by the British mistreatment of his grandfather in Kenya.⁶ Although deeply hurtful to a President who has obviously thought much at the personal level about his connection to previous generations, Obama is unlikely to let this influence US foreign policy. The true challenge of course lies in the question of

how the UK should respond to the issues that Obama has identified as his foreign and national security policy priorities. This above all involves questions concerning Obama's emphasis on Afghanistan as 'the central front in the war on terror', and the possibility that this will involve a continuation, and even an escalation, of the Bush administration's use of force in northern Pakistan. It is also likely to involve questions of how the UK should respond if a policy of engagement fails to persuade Iran not to pursue a nuclear weapons capability, an issue that is influenced as much by the Israeli as the American propensity to use pre-emptive (or preventive) military force. Moreover, should the new administration be in any doubt, the events in Gaza on the eve of Obama's inauguration remind everyone of the importance of the Israel – Palestine conflict to the broad context in which these issues are set.

These challenges to UK policymakers are difficult enough, but they also take place against the awkward backdrop of the UK's support for the Iraq War, a war that Obama opposed. While Obama is a pragmatic, forward-looking politician, and while Prime Minister Brown has sought to distance himself from Bush, recent history could have a distorting influence on how British policymakers relate to the new President.⁷ A willingness to trust the new President's judgement and to support his new direction will of course help to repair any damage done by the support for Bush's war. Yet this carries its own dangers. Obama's judgement, which was in many ways proven by his decision to oppose the Iraq War, may not always be right; and while he has the benefit of the doubt in his honeymoon period, his actions should always be judged on the merits of the particular case. Remaining close to the US serves all kind of British interests, but as we have seen in the recent past, it is not always in the national interest, nor indeed are American interests always served when the UK is a compliant ally.

From the UK perspective, this suggests two things. It suggests firstly an independently formulated foreign policy stance, one that draws on the lessons of recent US-UK relations and one that has a keen sense of the British identity and interest. An independently formulated policy is not the same as a policy of independence. It should not be confused with a nationalist, unilateralist, protectionist or 'realist' foreign policy. Such an approach would be absurd in an age of intense globalisation and inconsistent with a sense of Britishness in the 21st century. Rather, this point addresses the fact that policymakers in Whitehall should be sensitive to the public's concern that UK policy is being made in Washington at the expense of the national identity and the national interest. The US and the UK will undoubtedly share common policies. The lesson of Iraq, however, is that the British public needs reassurance that shared policies stem from a coincidence of independently formulated visions and that they are not the product of American power. This leads to the second point: UK policymakers can and should formulate a normative vision that the UK can share with the Obama administration. This independently formulated but ultimately shared vision is important. British interests are advanced by a close relationship with the US, but close relationships do not survive on a shared history alone. That history helps, but lasting relationships are based on shared values and a common vision that can withstand, and indeed come to expect, a good argument. Making clear that the UK buys-in to Obama's vision will give it the political space to disagree with, and even oppose, US foreign policy on specific issues without worrying that it is risking broader US-UK relations. It is therefore in the UK's national interest to be able to articulate its own normative vision in the context of the challenges and opportunities posed by the Obama administration.

It is argued in this article that the intellectual resources for articulating this vision lie in the concept of 'good international citizenship', which is embedded in English School International Relations Theory and its conceptualisation of international society. This broad academic and intellectual context can help convey the message that the UK is independently formulating its own vision, but its true appeal is the way in which good international citizenship speaks to the unique opportunity presented by Obama. In many respects, good international citizenship is the next stage in the Obama story. As the first black African-American to enter the White House, he is testament to the more inclusive character of America's own political community. Yet Obama would be the first to argue that his election is by no means the end-point of the struggle for realising those principles that citizenship embodies. This not only means an awareness of the socio-economic barriers that disempower and exclude those individuals that are otherwise included in America's success by virtue of their political rights; and it not only means a sensitivity to the manner in which national insecurity can erode individual civil liberties. It means something much more novel. The narrative Obama is constructing on American identity potentially involves a recognition of the manner in which foreign policy, by drawing boundaries around the concept of citizenship, can reconstruct the kinds of exclusionary hierarchies that a progressive notion of citizenship seeks to breakdown. To view international and transnational relations through the lens of citizenship, in other words, promises a profound shift in the discourse of foreign policy. For instance, we might look differently on the question of whether the US should take a multilateral rather than a unilateral approach to foreign policy when the issue is placed within the context of inclusion and exclusion. From this perspective, a multilateral foreign policy approach can be understood as part of the same progressive project as the 1965 National Voting Rights Act in the US. It is about pushing back the boundaries of community. It is about including others in the processes of public deliberation that formulate 'the common good' and the means used to secure it. A British foreign policy that can clearly articulate this will appeal to the Obama administration. More to the point, a British foreign policy that acts according to the principles of good international citizenship will be able to disagree with the Obama administration when it strays from its own vision without in anyway feeling disloyal to the United States or the values it represents.

This article goes through several stages to advance this argument. The first section develops further the notion of good international citizenship and explains how it can help formulate a normative framework that can link the UK to the Obama vision. Central to this is the idea that foreign policy has a role to play in a progressive movement that seeks to broaden the political community by including those that were once excluded. As noted, Obama is himself a product of that movement and he is acutely conscious of his place in a progressive history of American citizenship. The argument here is that he has also showed signs of recognising how that experience can inform US foreign policy. The UK would do well therefore to help him articulate a vision of international community under his leadership and to support those actions that are inspired by that vision. The second section speaks to the sceptics who may well argue that a similar 'doctrine of international community' was articulated by Tony Blair in 1999 and that this way of thinking led the UK to support an American war that was illegitimate if not illegal. The central issue here is the question about when the UK should support the use of American force. To inform answers to this question the section draws on the lessons of UK diplomacy at the UN in the fateful month of March 2003. The conclusion is that Blair ultimately betrayed the progressive's vision of international society by supporting the US invasion of Iraq. What is more, Blair betrayed the vision of America's role in the

world that President Obama is now articulating. To reinforce this point, the final section of the article locates Obama's vision in the same progressive American tradition that Tony Blair thought he was appealing to. This tradition is often associated with Wilsonianism. However, where Blair supported the conservative reading of the Wilsonian tradition (i.e. a crusading mentality associated with the just causes of Christian missionaries), Obama's Wilsonianism draws more on the enlightenment tradition of reason, deliberation and the rule of law.⁸ In this respect, UK policymakers need to relearn the Jeffersonian principles behind American liberal internationalism and be less concerned about opposing the US when it strays from them.

Obama's Story and Good International Citizenship

One should be cautious about discerning future actions and even policy positions from inaugural speeches. All recent Presidents have started their term in office by addressing their 'fellow citizens'. Richard Nixon, a President not immediately associated with the progressive politics of good international citizenship, even addressed his speech to his 'fellow citizens of the world community'. Yet Obama's inaugural address was different. No other President could talk about expanding notions of community and citizenship rights by recalling that his father 'might not have been served at a local restaurant'. Obama, in other words, embodies the idea that communities can change by becoming inclusive of those individuals and groups that were previously excluded. In this respect, it may be easier to believe that his rhetoric is the product of a genuinely progressive tradition rather than the simple ceremony of a national occasion. Indeed, Obama's inaugural address gives further indication that a new narrative of American identity and role is emerging. Greater inclusiveness he tells us imposes greater demands on the citizens of the changing community. There is a greater responsibility to meet the demands of the common good by sacrificing one's own liberty. In the context of the American civil rights movement, this meant sharing the restaurants, the schools, the ballot box and ultimately the highest office in the land with people of a different skin colour; and while Obama's presence spoke to that particular success story, his words evoke broader implications for America's future. '[T]he price and the promise of citizenship', he noted, was to be found in the acts of self-sacrifice that individuals made because they found 'meaning in something greater than themselves'. America could celebrate this particular moment in history not because it was blessed by providence but rather because historically its citizens had reasoned that liberty is the product of rights *and* responsibilities. This, he concluded, had been

the quiet force of progress throughout our history. What is demanded then is a return to these truths. What is required of us now is a new era of responsibility — a recognition, on the part of every American, that we have duties to ourselves, our nation, and the world, duties that we do not grudgingly accept but rather seize gladly, firm in the knowledge that there is nothing so satisfying to the spirit, so defining of our character, than giving our all to a difficult task.⁹

If Obama's story has the potential to construct a new narrative on American identity and its role in the world, then what might this mean for the practice of US foreign policy? In order to answer this question one can draw on the concept of 'good international citizenship'. This is useful because, as Andrew Linklater makes clear, it is deeply embedded in the literature on citizenship, a literature that easily speaks to the Obama story so far and to its struggle for civil and political rights in America.¹⁰ Furthermore, it helps to navigate the difficult issues of international relations without

losing sight of the values embodied by the civil rights movement and the idea of citizenship more generally. This is not to claim that Obama and the intellectuals within his administration are guided by or even aware of this concept. As noted, it is embedded in the English School approach to International Relations theory that is only slowly making headway in North American academia. Yet this does not detract from its ability to inform the Obama administration or British foreign policy because it does, as noted, articulate very well the next stage in the development of citizenship.

From this perspective, governments motivated by the progressive agenda of expanding the boundaries of moral, legal and political community at home, do not forget these principles when they interact with one another. Other governments, and peoples of other states, are not treated as 'outsiders'. Although the rights they may claim and the responsibilities they acquire will differ profoundly from the rights and responsibilities of those individuals that claim citizenship on the basis of nationality, foreign governments and peoples should still be treated as citizens by virtue of their membership of international and world society. Consequently, states are not free to act as they please because they do not exist in an anarchical state of nature, and their relations with other governments and peoples are not always characterised by power competition. Rather good international citizens recognise that their own security exists within an international context, and just as individuals have recognised that their liberty is bought at the cost of fulfilling responsibilities, so governments take on the role of good international citizens out of an enlightened sense of self-interest. Governments inspired by the principles of good citizenship at home, in other words, carry these same basic principles forward into international society.

Of course, not all governments share the same normative goals, but this does not mean that the good international citizen should abandon its principles in favour of political expediency. The duty of the good international citizen is to work through diplomatic processes to achieve a consensus on common international goods, and once that common interest is articulated in law it has an obligation to respect that. This consensus might not be achieved easily and, just as in national society, the good citizen need not risk its essential well being in the search for common ground. Yet to the extent that the search for common ground does not demand the sacrifice of basic rights, then the good citizen should give up superfluous liberties in the search for communal harmony. There is however a potential problem in respecting the kind of international law that privileges order between morally diverse communities. It may appear from a human rights perspective to be a betrayal of the idea of citizenship. For instance, it is well known that the principles of sovereignty and non-intervention - principles that are in many ways central to the facilitation of interstate cooperation - have often protected regimes that are antithetical to the idea of citizenship. Yet the notion of good international citizenship recognises the multifaceted nature of a government's responsibility when it operates in the international arena. It recognises that the violence and disorder created by interstate conflict is as much a catastrophe for human rights as any dictatorial regime. This does not mean the good international citizen should accept an international order that excludes individuals from the benefits of citizenship. It should however recognise two things: firstly, that prudence is a virtue if it is guided by a conception of the common good; and, secondly, that public deliberation (i.e. multilateralism) is essential to understanding what the common good is.

There is a danger that the wider significance of the Obama foreign policy statements may be missed when they are read outside of this context. For instance, his insistence that the US 'reject as false the choice between our safety and our ideals' may be interpreted simply as responses to the

unpopular and divisive policies of the previous administration. Yet to suggest that these policies reflect a dogmatic anything-but-Bush approach, would be to overlook Obama's pragmatism (e.g. the decision to keep Bush's Secretary of Defense), as well as the broader vision in which that pragmatism operates. Obama has made clear that 'the rule of law and the rights of man' are central to the constitution of the United States. Of course, these principles are articulated in a legal document, i.e. *the* Constitution, but the US government's respect for them is not merely a legal matter that is contingent on political circumstance. These principles exerted influence on Americans before the Constitution was written and they define the very essence of the United States. Without them, the founding fathers had little in common and nothing to unite around. Indeed, the founders did not abandon these principles in exchange for security they adopted these principles in exchange for insecurity. They were, in Obama's words, 'faced with perils that we can scarcely imagine,' but still they 'drafted a charter to assure the rule of law and the rights of man'. Those ideals he continued, 'still light the world, and we will not give them up for expedience's sake'. This kind of narrative, combined with actions such as the decision to suspend the trials of terrorist suspects by military commissions, indicates a new respect for domestic and international law even while taking a tough stance against America's enemies.

Yet even here, one might miss the significance of these references to the wider narrative on citizenship and responsibility. As noted above, this is central to the new American identity that Obama is potentially constructing. From that perspective, the promise to respect the rule of international human rights and international humanitarian law, as well as the US Constitution, is a continuation of the civil rights movements of America's past. Both the civil rights movement of post-war America and the international human rights movement of today seek to expand notions of community by placing limits on what 'insiders' can do to 'outsiders' in the name of 'the common good'. By trading the liberties of some Americans in the name of national security, the Bush administration betrayed of the founder's principles. Yet by trading the liberties of outsiders for the security of insiders, it also betrayed the legacy left by the American civil rights movement. This movement knows all too well the costs of being placed outside the legal and moral protections of the community that one is living in. If Obama is to remain loyal to his narrative on American identity, one that includes efforts to push back the boundaries that separate the included from the excluded, then his administration must respect international humanitarian and international human rights law.

Likewise, the significance of Obama's promise to rebuild America's alliances may be missed if it is read outside of the struggle for citizenship. From this perspective, a multilateral approach to foreign and national security policy is not merely about maximising power, and alliances should not necessarily be discarded when the balance of power shifts. That of course is the realist approach, which partially informed Donald Rumsfeld's somewhat dismissive attitude towards NATO and his preference for loose 'coalitions of the willing'. Multilateralism from the perspective of good international citizenship is instead a form of public deliberation and an essential part of the process of governing. It legitimates the actions of the powerful because ultimately the powerless understand that those actions are advancing a genuine conception of the common good, one that has been formulated through broad deliberative processes. This principle is at the core of the American republic and most democracies. While the Supreme Court protects the non-negotiable rights of Americans, Congress provides the forum for the public deliberation that legitimates the actions of government. The fact that Congress also provides 'voice opportunities' for non-Americans

to influence how the US impacts their countries, suggests that it has a valuable role to play in legitimising America's international standing.¹¹ Yet ultimately, good international citizens demand a respect for the deliberative processes that take place within international organisations. It is here that a broader concept of community and inclusion can be forged. As noted below, the complex relationship between an individual's citizenship rights within a national community and the state's rights within an international community often demands a nuanced approach toward international organisation. Yet multilateralism *is* the default position of good international citizenship. This is because multilateralism is so central to the processes that define what it means to act in the common interest. Just as we expect democratic leaders of national communities to engage in a process of public deliberation before governing, so we should expect the leaders of international society to commit to multilateral processes, *especially if they claim to be promoting democracy*.

The idea of good international citizenship then can help to articulate a foreign policy agenda that extends, rather than interrupts or ignores, the new American narrative that Obama is living and gradually constructing. It is a narrative that seeks to build on America's relative success by extending citizenship rights to those nations and individuals that are excluded from the political processes that influence their lives. Although good international citizenship is embedded primarily in British IR theory, it can inform this very American story by clarifying the responsibilities that a good citizen acquires when he acts in the international and global arena. Furthermore, to the extent the UK wishes to maintain a special relationship with Obama's America without being or appearing to a superpower's 'poodle', good international citizenship can also inform UK policy. The approach the UK should adopt, however, is that of a true friend, one that shares the values and vision articulated by Obama and is prepared to disagree with the administration when it feels the US is not living up to those values. This is the lesson of UK-US relations from the first Bush administration, a time when the British Prime Minister articulated an appropriate vision of an international community but ultimately failed to live up to it by supporting an imprudent war that lacked international legitimacy. It is to that vision and the decision that corrupted it that we now turn.

Have we not been here before? Blair's new doctrine of international community.

The argument that UK policymakers should forge a new normative framework for British foreign policy, one based on the idea of citizenship within an international community, might seem preposterous to anyone seeking to forget the last eight years. After all, these sceptics might argue, 'the doctrine of international community' framed Tony Blair's world vision, and ultimately he led the UK into the worst foreign policy action since the Suez crisis. It is right to be sceptical. Foreign policy actions speak louder than words and the decision to support the US invasion of Iraq was a mistake, not only on the merits of the particular case but also in terms of anticipating the American political scene beyond Bush. Yet the argument advanced here is that Blair's decision to support America's war on Iraq was a betrayal of the doctrine of international community. The principles underpinning this doctrine remain useful for articulating the British identity and role in the 21st century, and they remain a useful means of connecting to the pragmatic radicalism of the Obama story. It is clear, however, that there needs to be clarity on the central question of when the UK can support the US use of force while remaining committed to a progressive vision of international citizenship. It was because Blair was unclear on this question, that his vision became corrupted by a willingness to

support a conservative American administration that was guided by a very different model of international relations. To help progressive politicians avoid making the same mistake, this section draws on the lessons of the Iraq war before restating a new way in which British foreign policy can connect to the Wilsonian tradition in the US foreign policy thinking.

The concept of community, and the balance between a citizen's rights and responsibilities that it demands, drove the New Labour project as articulated by Blair in 1997. In contrast to the extremes of Thatcherite individualism, which declared that there was 'no such thing as society', and socialist communitarianism, which rejected individual liberty, the so-called 'third way' envisioned a society whose members have rights and responsibilities. There were academics in the late 1990s that saw the connection between this new emphasis on community and the concept of good international citizenship as articulated in English School IR theory.¹² Yet third way politics entered British foreign policy discourse as the 'ethical dimension'.¹³ It was during the Kosovo campaign that Blair embellished his commitment to an ethical foreign policy with his 'new doctrine of international community' speech in Chicago.

This speech was delivered at the height of NATO's bombing campaign and for Blair that action was justified in the context of an emerging doctrine of international community. It was an example of states responding to the humanitarian needs of others and therefore fulfilling a responsibility to advance the common good even when the national interest was not directly at stake. 'We cannot let the evil of ethnic cleansing stand. We must not rest until it is reversed', he told his Chicago audience. In a globalising world, foreign policy had to be 'guided by a more subtle blend of mutual and self-interest and moral purpose in defending the values we cherish.' He insisted that 'in the end values and interests merge. If we can establish and spread the values of liberty, the rule of law, human rights and an open society then that is in our interests too. The spread of our values makes us safer.'¹⁴ Just over two years later, following the 9-11 attacks, Blair again recalled what he called 'the power of community'.

What is the answer to the current crisis? Not isolationism but the world coming together with America as a community. ... This is an extraordinary moment for progressive politics. Our values are the right ones for this age: the power of community, solidarity, the collective ability to further the individual's interests.¹⁵

The problem with Blair's doctrine of international community was not its insistence that states had a responsibility to act when common values and the common interest is threatened. This is what the theory of good international citizenship expects. Rather the problem was that Blair was not exercised enough about how the common good was defined or about the deliberative procedures that had to be followed before state action could legitimately claim to be acting on behalf of the international community. Thus, he defended vigorously the principle that NATO could act without explicit UN authorisation because the situation in Kosovo demanded an exception to the rule, which stated that any of the permanent five could veto the use of force. In this respect, commentators might have anticipated the argument that Blair presented in March 2003 to justify UK support for the US invasion of Iraq. There had of course been plenty of public deliberation in the lead up to that moment, thanks in part to Blair's own efforts in persuading the Bush administration to work with the UN Security Council. Yet when the consequences of that deliberation failed to deliver a consensus on Bush and Blair's preferred option, Blair seized on French President Chirac's statement that he would veto any resolution authorizing the explicit authorisation of force. For Blair, Chirac was being unreasonable and the UN was again failing to respond to the demands of the international

community. From his perspective, the US and the UK were not only justified in going ahead without UN authorization they had a duty to do so.

This leads to the question of how exactly good international citizens can determine when military force is justified. As noted above, the default position is that the decision to use force must be the product of broad deliberation, which suggests a respect for the UN and its procedures. Regional associations acting without UN Security Council authorisation must therefore base their claim to use force on strict notions of self-defence. Neither NATO nor a proposed 'league of democracies' can claim to be acting on behalf of international society without UN authorisation. Yet, good international citizens are aware that the great power veto at the UN Security Council can be used unreasonably and in ways that corrupt the ideal deliberative process. It can in other words be used to protect individual great power interests at the expense the common good. For this reason, good international citizens cannot invest all their hopes in the UN Security Council. One possible way to resolve this impasse is to devise criteria that can determine when exactly the great power veto at the Security Council is in fact unreasonable. This could include an assessment of the strength of the vote that is cast in opposition to the veto. So for instance, it is widely accepted that had the so-called 'second resolution' authorising the use of force against Iraq been voted on, France would not have been in the minority when it exercised its veto. France in fact represented the opinion of a strong majority, with the UK and the US only able to convince perhaps two other members that military action was justified. The French veto in this respect was far from unreasonable. During the Kosovo crisis by contrast, Russia's position was not widely supported – as proven by the defeat of its resolution condemning the action – and thus its threat to veto NATO's action could more easily be described as unreasonable.¹⁶ From this perspective, the UK was right to support the US-led action on behalf of Kosovo, but wrong to support the US-led invasion of Iraq.

For some, Blair's decision to support the US in 2003 demonstrated that 'Atlanticism' ultimately proved more significant in UK policymaking than the progressive idea of international community.¹⁷ This is true, but in Blair's eyes there was no difference between the two positions; and although Blair undoubtedly believed that what he and President Bush was doing was in the best interest of international society, it was a position that had extremely dangerous implications. For Blair, the main problem with international society was not how and by whom it was defined. Rather the main problem was getting states, in particular the United States, to commit to it. This is a dangerous position to adopt because it can lead one to believe that the international interest is whatever America says it is. E. H. Carr identified this trap when he criticised what he called 'the harmony of interests' thesis and it is ultimately the trap that Blair fell into.¹⁸ What made that mistake almost inevitable, as the next section demonstrates, was the fact that Blair's own conception of international society underplayed the importance of public deliberation. His idea of international society was derived from a commitment to moral absolutes rather than an equally important commitment to process. In other words, his conception of responsibility was very much derived from moral foundations that enabled the identification of just causes, demanded that absolute courses of action be taken, and too readily dismissed as unreasonable those who reached different conclusions. One can only speculate that this was a consequence of Blair's well-known religiosity. One can say with more certainty, however, that it was a trait he shared with conservatives in the US whose own religiosity and ideological conviction led them (incorrectly) to dismiss the outcome international public deliberation. For that reason, Blair may have thought he was encouraging

liberal internationalism in the US, but ultimately he was encouraging a distorted version of the Wilsonian tradition. He helped to create the legitimacy gap that Obama is now trying to close. In order to help the new US President do that, the following section argues that today's UK policymakers need to better understand that the roots of Wilsonianism lie not in moral conviction but in the republican institutions that have so successfully guaranteed public deliberation and the rule of law inside the US.

Before moving on to that section of the article, it is worth discussing, albeit briefly, a different aspect of recent US-UK relations to demonstrate that UK policy can remain true to the principles of good international citizenship despite the US taking a different line. The International Criminal Court (ICC) was created to exercise jurisdiction over genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. Its founding document, the Rome Statute, was based on a broad consensus that was the consequence of years of public deliberation culminating at the Rome Conference in 1998. What made the Statute revolutionary was that it created a Court that was permanent and independent of the UN Security Council. The Court's prosecutor in other words could investigate without prior authorisation from the UN. The implication of this, of course, was that the permanent five had to surrender their ability to veto international investigations. Despite this, the UK supported the Court as a matter of principle. It recognised that justice would be tainted by the charge of 'selectivity' if the international criminal process remained contingent on the willingness of the UN Security Council to set up ad hoc courts. It therefore supported an independent Court, and in doing so, it helped to extend citizenship rights to the victims of egregious human rights abuse; people who had otherwise been denied these rights because their status as victims was inconvenient to the interests of the great powers. It is well known of course that the US opposed the Court, mainly because the Court's independence took the ability to decide when and where justice was done out of the hands of the permanent five on the Security Council. Space prevents going into further detail here. The point being made, however, is that on this occasion, Atlanticism did not prevent the UK from formulating a normative position that was consistent with the idea of good international citizenship; nor did it force the UK to surrender that position when the US took the exact opposite stance.¹⁹

Understanding the Wilsonian tradition

The day after Obama was sworn in as President, Anne-Marie Slaughter spoke to the Carnegie Council about the book she had written with John Ikenberry, Thomas Knock and Tony Smith.²⁰ In the presentation, Slaughter made the argument that multilateralism was not only central to the Wilsonian tradition it should also be a cornerstone of US foreign policy under Obama. This was not merely a question of legitimising American actions, although that was important. Multilateralism for her was the process that produced the best policy. Thus, she noted that

Woodrow Wilson believed in what he called "common counsel." ... [T]he idea was that people can come together and deliberate collectively, and they will produce a better outcome. It wasn't about including everybody just for the sake of inclusion; it was a genuine belief that you would get better outcomes. ... If you apply that principle internationally, it argues that we should work through international institutions, not just because that's the law or because we think other countries will like us more if we do, although the legitimacy part is important, but because we will actually get better outcomes. We would have gotten a better outcome in Iraq if we had really listened to other countries in the United Nations. There were many countries, many of

them our allies, telling us that there were not weapons of mass destruction, or at least that we should look much harder before we decided that there were. In fact, if you go back and look at the debates, it is striking just how accurate many of the opponents from other countries were.²¹

The significance of this goes beyond academic debate. As Slaughter notes Wilson tried to govern this way and 'President Obama seems to have taken a page from Wilson's book'. A week after making this observation moreover, Slaughter left her position as Dean at Princeton and took up her position as Director of the State Department's Policy Planning Staff.

It was from this position, of course, that George Kennan helped to construct the doctrine of containment and it is clear that Slaughter is part of new foreign policy elite that seemingly wishes to imitate his influence by rewriting the intellectual framework of US foreign policy. If the above quotation is anything to go by, that framework promises to be very different from the Bush administration. It reveals, moreover, a very different reading of Wilsonianism from that which Blair was encouraging when he supported the Iraq War. Unlike Bush and Blair's approach, Slaughter's Wilsonianism can be located in a broader tradition of republican security theory, a tradition that, as Daniel Deudney's masterful account tells us, underpinned the US Constitution itself.²² The founding fathers, Deudney notes, were, like all good republicans, driven by two concerns, what he calls the anarchy-interdependence and the hierarchy-restraint problematiques. Following independence, the founders recognised the anarchical system that existed between the interdependent sovereign states of North America, and they feared that this would lead to power competition, which in turn would encourage the growth of militarised, repressive and unaccountable governments. Anarchy in other words not only threatened state security it threatened individual liberty. Their solution was international organisation or what they called federal government. Each state would delegate sovereignty on security matters to a supranational entity, which would be empowered to provide for the common defence. To guard against the federal government abusing this prerogative the founding fathers separated powers between the executive, the legislature and the judiciary. The genius of this of course was that while federalism overcame the anarchy problematique, the various states were confident that interstate (i.e. federal) action would be the product of public deliberation (in Congress), and restrained (by the Supreme Court guaranteeing basic rights).

For Deudney, Wilson recognised that in a globalising world, where the levels of security interdependence between previously isolated states increased, these republican principles had to extend further. A Wilsonian foreign policy, therefore, is not merely about promoting a respect for human rights at the societal level and liberal democratic government at the state level. It is also about addressing state insecurity through multilateral strategies involving international organisation. This latter reduces the tendency of states to adopt self-help security policies, a tendency that is itself a threat to republican government because it involves excessive centralisation and militarisation. A government is less likely to tolerate dissent for instance if it thinks this will be exploited by external enemies and this is, as Deudney notes, important to understanding what Wilson meant when he insisted that international organisation would make the world safe for democracy.²³ In other words, Wilson's plan for perpetual peace required a respect for the rule of international law and organisation because the trust that developed at the international level created the secure conditions under which liberty and democracy would flourish at the national level. In the contemporary situation, this kind of Wilsonianism, which as noted is derived from the insights of the

republican founding fathers like Jefferson and Madison, would support a positive attitude toward the UN and other multilateral institutions that encouraged public deliberation on a global scale.

Conclusion

It is vitally important that British policymakers understand this interpretation of the Wilsonian tradition and the connection to it made by key thinkers in the Obama administration. It has been argued in this article that good international citizens seek not only to protect human rights, they seek also to promote processes of public deliberation. It is necessary to follow these processes in order to make certain that the powerful are acting in the common good when they say they are, and to guard against behaviour that reduces the term 'international society' to a rhetorical veil that disguises selfish interests. At the domestic level, public deliberation is guaranteed by the democratic process and at the international level it is encouraged by a commitment to multilateralism. By going back to the Jeffersonian and Madisonian roots of the Wilsonian tradition, a new foreign policy elite in the United States is beginning to show signs that they recognise this. Combined with the pragmatic radicalism of the first black African-American President, and the normative power that this brings to notions of inclusiveness, citizenship and community, there is every indication that the normative framework of US foreign policy could shift quite radically. By recalling the doctrine of international community and by drawing on notions of good international citizenship, British policymakers can connect to this progressive agenda in a serious and a normatively compelling way. This would be in Britain's national interest because, despite its economic troubles, the US remains the most significant power within the international political system. It would also reaffirm the initial moves set out by Prime Minister Brown's foreign policy, such as the commitment to countering terrorism while respecting human rights, a commitment to international humanitarian and international criminal law and a commitment to international organisation. Yet, as noted at the outset, British policymakers must be clear that theirs is an independently formulated vision of international society and not something articulated merely to ingratiate the UK to American power. For while this vision of good international citizenship taps into, and hopefully encourages – to paraphrase Obama – the better aspects of American history, and while it will be in the UK national interest to restore a common intellectual agenda to the US-UK relationship, things can change. By remaining fixed on the shared vision of a more inclusive international society, UK policymakers should be prepared to disagree with the United States whenever it departs from that vision.

¹ See for instance the character of Lord John Marbury, the eccentric British diplomat that President Bartlett calls on in series one of the hit TV show *The West Wing*.

² See for instance the statement by the Equality and Human Rights Commission, 'New Commission poll shows British institutions need to "keep up with Obama generation"', 20 Jan. 2009 at www.equalityhumanrights.com

³ Cabinet Office, *The National Security Strategy of the United Kingdom*, March 2008.

⁴ Lord Goldsmith, 'A great opportunity', *The Guardian* 4 Dec. 2008; 'Lord Goldsmith says Britain should take Guantánamo prisoners', *Times Online*, 2 Jan. 2009.

⁵ Foreign Secretary, David Milliband, 'After Mumbai, beyond the war on terror', speech delivered at Taj Hotel, Mumbai, 15 Jan. 2009, available at <http://www.fco.gov.uk/>

⁶ Ben Macintyre and Paul Orengho, 'Beatings and abuse made Barack Obama's grandfather loathe the British', *Times Online*, 3 Dec. 2008.

⁷ For a critical examination of Brown's attempts to distance the UK from the Bush administration see David Hastings Dunn, 'The double interregnum: UK-US relations beyond Blair and Bush', *International Affairs* 84 : 6 (2008), pp.1131-1143.

⁸ For a view that the roots of Wilsonianism lay in the activities of 19th century Christian missionaries, see Walter Russell Mead, *Special Providence: American Foreign Policy and How it Changed the World* (New York: Knopf, 2001).

⁹ Barack Obama's Inaugural Address, 20 Jan. 2009 at www.nytimes.com/2009/01/20/us/politics/20text-obama.html

¹⁰ Andrew Linklater, 'What is a Good International Citizen?' in Paul Keal (ed.), *Ethics and Foreign Policy* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1992), pp.21-41.

¹¹ Daniel Deudney and John Ikenberry, 'The Nature and Sources of Liberal International Order,' *Review of International Studies*, April (1999), pp. 179-98.

¹² Tim Dunne and Nicholas Wheeler, 'Good International Citizenship: A Third Way for British Foreign Policy', *International Affairs* 74 : 4, (1998), pp.847-870.

¹³ David Coates and Joel Krieger (with Rhiannon Vickers), *Blair's War*, Polity, 2004, pp.9-21.

¹⁴ Tony Blair, 'Doctrine of International Community', Chicago, 22 Apr., 1999, at www.number10.gov.uk

¹⁵ Tony Blair, Speech to the Labour Party Conference, Brighton, 2 Oct., 2001, at www.guardian.co.uk/Archive

¹⁶ See Jason Ralph, 'Tony Blair's new doctrine of international community and the UK decision to invade Iraq', POLIS Working Paper No.20, Aug. 2005 at www.leeds.ac.uk/polis/research

¹⁷ Tim Dunne "'When the shooting starts": Atlanticism in British security strategy', *International Affairs*, 80 : 5, (2004), pp.893-909.

¹⁸ E H Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis 1919-1939. An Introduction to the Study of International Relations*, 2nd edn. (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), p.71

¹⁹ Jason Ralph, *Defending the Society of States. Why America opposes the International Criminal Court and its Vision of World Society*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

²⁰ *The Crisis of American Foreign Policy: Wilsonianism in the Twenty-first Century*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).

²¹ Anne-Marie Slaughter, 'The Crisis of American Foreign Policy: Wilsonianism in the Twenty-First Century', Carnegie Council, 21 Jan. 2009. Transcript available at: <http://www.cceia.org/resources/transcripts/0108.html>

²² Daniel Deudney, *Bounding Power. Republican Security Theory from the Polis to the Global Village*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

²³ Deudney, *Bounding Power*, pp.186-7.