Globality, War, Revolution: An Interview with Martin Shaw

Martin Shaw is a sociologist of war and global politics and holds the Chair of International Relations and Politics at the University of Sussex. He studied Sociology at the London School of Economics, graduating in 1968. Martin has been a member of the International Socialists (1965-1976), the Labour Party (1979-) and the European Nuclear Disarmament steering committee (1980-85.) A prolific writer, Martin's more recent books include *The New Western Way of War: Risk-Transfer War and Its Crisis in Iraq* (Polity, 2005), *Global Activism, Global Media*, edited with Wilma de Jong and Neil Stammers (Pluto and Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 2005), *War and Genocide* (Polity, 2003), *Theory of the Global State: Globality as Unfinished Revolution* (Cambridge University Press, 2000) Global Society and *International Relations: Sociological Concepts and Political Perspectives* (Polity, 1994) and *Post-Military Society: Demilitarization, Militarism and War at the end of the Twentieth Century* (Polity, 1991.) He is a member of the editorial board or editorial advisory board of *International Relations, Peace and Conflict Studies, Global Media-Global Culture, Global Society, Renewal: Journal of Labour Politics*, and *Democratiya*. The interview took place on October 20, 2005.

Alan Johnson: Can you say something about your family background, and the major influences on your intellectual development, and how these have helped to form the characteristic concerns of your sociology of war and global politics?

Martin Shaw: My father was a conscientious objector in the Second World War. As a Christian he publicly opposed nuclear weapons as immoral during the early 1960s. Although I became a secular humanist around the age of 19, I was always influenced by pacifism. As a student in the 1960s I moved towards Marxism, and became involved in the revolutionary left. But I always felt profoundly uneasy about their ability to embrace violence in a political cause. In the late 1970s I moved away from the far left. That was partly because of its lack of commitment to democracy, both as a political principle in the public arena, and also internally, within the organisations. But I was also questioning Marxism intellectually and moving beyond it because of its inability to deal with the problems of violence and war. I formulated a critique of Marxism, in light of these problems, which paralleled E. P. Thompson's attack on 'exterminism.' His qualified pacifism – nuclear pacifism – was a position that I could sympathise with, although I worked it through in a

rather different way, as 'historical pacifism.' My work in the last couple of decades has been of an intellectual kind and it has centred on the idea of taking the problem of war and the problem of violence seriously.

The Left and the Times

Alan Johnson: Recently you have been very critical of some trends on the left for failing to respond adequately to the times. I'd like to ask about two such trends and then ask a third, related, question. First, you got into a sharp exchange with the journalist, broadcaster and writer John Pilger. You attacked his 'contemptible excuse that Serbian atrocities in Kosovo were products of "random brutality" rather than genocidal planning.' You asked, 'What blighted vision leads [Pilger] to deny that Serbian crimes were of a kind with those of the Indonesians in East Timor?' Do you see Pilger's 'blighted vision' – more recently he urged support for the Iraqi 'resistance' on the grounds that, although it commits terrible atrocities, 'we can't be choosy' – as representative of a trend in left-wing opinion and sensibility, and if so how would you characterise that trend?

Martin Shaw: I think Pilger is, in one sense, a special case, because he takes his stance entirely and consistently on the basis of opposing the West. So he will support everybody who opposes the West and he won't support people who appear to be supported by the West. For example, he refused solidarity to the Kosovo Albanians because the West appeared to be taking up their cause. But in another sense, yes, he's a particularly sharp representative of a general trend, which I would call the reactionary left. This left sees human rights and democratisation as expressions of imperialism, is suspicious of any attempt to extend legitimate global institutions and values, and harps back to the old principle of national sovereignty, even to the point of defending nationalisms that have been perverted by genocidal dictators like Milošević or insurgents like the Iraqi so-called resistance. There is a cluster of views there which defines a very large section of the left. Pilger has just got his own particular version of that.

I would distinguish between that reactionary left and a progressive left which embraces human rights and democratisation, the extension of global institutions and values, and which takes a consistent stance against genocide.

However I think the issue of war cuts across this division. On the one hand, what I call the reactionary left opposes war, but only on the grounds that the wars in question are imperialist. I don't think that much of it is – in a very deep sense – anti

war. It's very ironical that somebody like George Galloway should be described as an 'anti-war' candidate when he publicly supported Saddam Hussein, 'to victory and to Jerusalem.' Clearly he's quite happy to support those wars which suit him. On the other hand, the progressive left often supports war as a way of overthrowing genocidal regimes but neglects the damage that war in general, particularly an illegal war like the Iraq war, does to human lives, to society and to global order. People like Michael Ignatieff, David Aaronovitch, Nick Cohen, Christopher Hitchens, who in many ways articulate quite progressive positions, don't really address the problematic nature of adopting war as a means of furthering democracy or human rights.

Alan Johnson: You have criticised Perry Anderson's rationale for the creation of the new New Left Review. I quote a long passage from your critique, here, in the hope that readers of Democratiya will go and read the whole thing at *http://www.sussex.ac.uk/Users/hafa3/nlr.htm* and then I'll ask a question. Of Anderson you wrote:

> This 'new' NLR ... betrays [a] conservatism, a reassertion of intellectual and political boundaries that have had their day. The real faultlines of the new world, which cut across these old certainties, are barely recognized.
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> The problem is capitalism. This, in a nutshell, is Anderson's old/new wisdom. And this is also the problem of his wisdom. His is a Marxism largely mesmerized by the neo-liberal renewal of capitalism in the global age. Thus he fails to catch the real sources of the global in the universalistic, even revolutionary politics of democracy and human rights. This globality is the true spirit of the age, not a mere property of 'the ruling system' or mode of projection for capitalist elites. Anderson dismisses this as the 'well-meaning cant or self-deception of the Left,' but its sources lie in momentous worldwide movements.
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> Anderson is realistic enough to recognize that these movements offer an alternative perspective on the last decade to that of neo-liberal hegemony. 'In a longer perspective, a more sanguine reading of the time can be made. This, after all, has also been a period in which the Suharto dictatorship has been overthrown in Indonesia, clerical tyranny weakened in Iran, a venal oligarchy ousted in South Africa, assorted generals and their civilian relays brought low in Korea, liberation finally won in East Timor.' He might have added,

> of course, that Stalinist tyranny was overthrown across the Soviet bloc: the alpha and omega of the current wave of democratic revolution.
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> Having found the new wave of revolution, however, Anderson discards it: 'The spread of democracy as a substitute for socialism, as hope or claim, is mocked by the hollowing of democracy in its capitalist homelands, not to speak of its post-communist adjuncts.' Yes, there are elements of hollowing and manipulation, but there are many too of renewal, and contestation, in the West as well as the non-West. And the democratic revolution, although it offers no glamorous seizure of power or expropriation of capital, may be all the better for its more modest modes of advance. It is not necessarily a substitute for socialism: it offers the possibility of space for social organization and struggle. Moreover, democratic movements have not generated totalitarianism and mass death, as did the discredited waves of both proletarian revolution and guerrilla warfare. One would think that the enormity of Communism's record, from Stalin to Mao and Pol Pot, might hold Anderson back rather more from his quick dismissal of democratic transformation.

You have articulated the notion of an unfinished global revolution and an ongoing democratic revolution. You have argued that parts of the contemporary left have a very unsatisfactory relationship to the democratic revolutions of our times? Why has that occurred and what have been the consequences for the left?

Martin Shaw: A fundamental part of the problem is the left's Stalinist or pro-Stalinist inheritance. Many of the defining global democratic movements were aimed at Stalinist regimes. Many sections of the left felt very ambivalent because they saw this as the loss of 'actually existing socialism,' and the victory of capitalism. These revolutions were seen as being 'in line' with the West's dominance of the global order. In fact, on an objective assessment, the spread of democratic movements throughout the world has challenged the West, as well as the former Soviet bloc. But, clearly, yes, the West was much more able to respond to them because it was a question of making Western politics more consistent, and a question of supporting democracy throughout the non-Western world instead of shoring up authoritarian regimes. In Indonesia, for example, although the overthrow of Suharto was the overthrow of a dictator long sustained by the West, the Americans, and the Western powers, were able to ally themselves with the movement for change. For large sections of the left this was confusing. The fact of Western, especially American,

dominance remains the touchstone for their political responses. So they have difficulty in embracing what are actually quite genuine democratic movements in a range of non-Western countries. They see these movements in terms of American or Western influence, and as manipulated and sponsored by the West. In fact, for the most part, the roots of these movements are in the authoritarian structures of the countries themselves.

Alan Johnson: You have identified a global democratic revolution and called for the left to respond with a global renewal of social democracy. You have written 'At the beginning of the 21st century, social democracy faces a challenge of "global" renewal...the Marxist critiques of new social democracy, trapped in the ideology of Cold War anti-imperialism, have little to offer. The spirit of the times is favourable to a renewal of social democracy.' What will be the central components of that renewal?

Martin Shaw: We need a global renewal of social democracy. Historically, social democracy has always had an internationalist element but it has been largely conceived, and certainly practiced, in national terms. The big successes of social democracy have been in reforming the nation state in the West in a more welfarist and genuinely democratic direction. To a large extent, social democratic politics is *still* wedded to the national level. Though social democrats tend to pay lip service to globalism and internationalism, democratic politicians find it difficult in practice to take this very far.

New Labour under Blair, unlike some of the continental socialist parties, appeared to have a global orientation. Yet this has taken very problematic forms. When Labour was in opposition I criticised the Labour Party and Blair for not articulating a clear global perspective. I was very much involved in trying to push the Labour party in the direction of a serious international commitment. Once Labour came into office though, it became quite clear that it did have some global ideas, and Blair, especially, had a distinctive interest in, and take on, global issues. There is an awful lot of the agenda which was articulated by Blair which was attractive – his commitment to strengthening global institutions, to building up global social reformism in the sense of supporting Africa and tackling the problems of both conflict and the debt there – but an awful lot remained purely aspirational. The achievements are relatively modest. There needs to be a further cultural and political transformation of the left if we are to take seriously those sorts of ambitions. And this whole project has been very fundamentally compromised by the perception

that Blair has not only been pro the invasion of Iraq but has allied himself deeply with an American administration which represents what is most reactionary about America in the world today.

Alan Johnson: What relation has this global democratic revolution to the idea of 'world unification' which you raised in an exchange with Jacques Derrida. To Derrida you said, 'it seems to me that one could understand what you're talking about in terms of globalisation, the formation of a common social space, a single world-meaning within which all these old structures which try to absolutise and fix differences are changed. But this, it also seems to me, is a ground on which to found a new form of democracy, and that ground has to be found in the concept of globality and in the concept of world unification.' Is world unification one possible outcome of the democratic revolutions? What relationship does the notion have to the concept of a world government? How do you see this coming about? What time scale is realistic? Do you see it as a development of the UN?

Martin Shaw: My starting point would be that, as a matter of world *history*, the world has become increasingly unified over the last few centuries. In the middle of the last millennium Western society expanded worldwide, coming into direct and systematic contact with the major world civilisations. We can talk about world history, in a modern sense, from that period (although there was a world context before that.) The idea of a world system, which has been propounded by various scholars, is only the first part of the story. This world system came into existence through the expansion of the various European empires. Over the last few centuries, this world system was increasingly dominated by the rivalries of different imperial centres. Therefore it did not even appear to be unified in the sense of a common politics, common values or common principles, let alone common institutions.

What has happened in the second half of the century, partly as a result of the Second World War, is that we have had a *transformation of the political context of world development*. What I call globality – the sense of a common global consciousness and a single social space – is, in my view, a reflection of the political unification which began to take place as a result of the over-coming of many of the rival empires which dominated the world until 1945.

Before 1945 we had a world that was divided between the major European empires, America, Japan, and Russia. After 1945 we had essentially this bipolar world of a dominant West under the United States, which itself was not a simple empire,

and a subordinate Soviet bloc. At the same time, the common framework of the United Nations and other global political institutions emerged. This development, at least in principle, established the idea of a common global politics. But those institutions were fundamentally compromised by the cold war.

Globality comes into existence under the impact of world events. Throughout the cold war period, we have the emergence of a new kind of democratic revolution that challenged both cold war blocs and, albeit in different ways, regimes in many so-called third world countries. What we have is the transformation of revolution. The historical capture of revolution by the proletarianism of classical Marxism and by the Maoist-Guerrilla-National Liberation idea, proved to be dead ends. We see the retaking of the idea of revolution as a democratic movement. First, we have the revolts against the Soviet bloc in East Germany in 1953, Hungary and Poland in 1956, Czechoslovakia and Poland in 1968, through to Solidarity in the early 80s. Second, and at the same time, there are democratic movements against the cold war authoritarian regimes in the Western-supporting part of the Third World. Third, there is democratic renewal in the West itself. We see the extension of the welfare state and the extension of economic and social rights, the expansion of women's rights, and the emergence of the idea of a more participatory democracy, initially propounded in the student movements in the late 60s, but which became an informing idea in many social movements in the West thereafter. So we had the expansion of the democratic space in all three arenas of the cold war. This process was taking place in different ways, at different levels, and through different kinds of political struggle, but it was an important social and political trend right across the world.

During the cold war period these sorts of transformations were constrained by the bloc system and the nation state system. They still appeared – in terms of their meaning – to be transformations within particular countries and within particular parts of the world. What seems to me important, though, is that there was an emerging idea that they were *parts of a single global transformation*. And this idea is what really comes through in 1989. What defines our era as opposed to the era of the cold war is the idea of *global* political change. The most positive side of this, for me, is the way in which this is informed by movements and organisations that are acting across the world and appealing to similar sorts of principles. I talk about a *global* democratic revolution because the democratic movements after 1989 are much more consciously and directly appealing to global principles, global institutions, to a global context and also asking for global solidarity.

Alan Johnson: What is the relationship between that global democratic revolution and an older political imaginary of class struggle, insurrection, working class self-emancipation, the party, and so on?

Martin Shaw: Well, we should look at this historically. I would argue that from the earliest part of the modern period there were democratic revolutions which challenged the feudal and authoritarian regimes of the pre-modern era. The working class movement developed out of those revolutions but increasingly became dominant in the general democratic movement during the 19th Century. This was because the working class became a much more powerful social force and because it did have unique characteristics as a social class compared to, for example, the peasantry, which was dominant in the populations of Western Europe, as in the world, before that. So the working class movements became the cutting edge of the democratic revolution, and the ideas of Marxists and other socialists, dominant. I would argue that, in the end, this capture of democracy by socialism was a dead end. And not only was it a dead end but, of course, it helped to spawn something a lot worse: Stalinism.

What has happened in the last fifty years is that the idea of democratic change has re-emerged *in its own right*, liberated from this capture. And this corresponds to the transformation of the social structure and the broadening of the social base for change. In the first half of the 20th Century, in most of the industrial countries, the vast majority of the population, certainly in the urban areas, were workers, often manual workers. In the second half of the 20th Century, and the 21st century, especially in the more advanced countries, the population is much more diverse and the industrial working class constitutes a much smaller proportion of the population. So, any democratic movement obviously has to have a much wider base than was conceived by socialists in the early part of the 20th Century.

However, while a broader democratic movement and agenda has emerged, the specific working class issues and interests are still a vital part of that. Most people are still workers of one sort or another and their rights at work, their experience and freedom at work, are still crucially important. The issues that affect the lives of people who work in industry are actually more important in the non-Western world. perhaps, than they are in the Western world because the exploitation of labour (not in the Marxist sense, but in the general social sense) is much sharper. There is a very important role for trade unions and other organisations addressing

the interests and needs of the working class, not least in the global south. These questions are very much a part of the democratic revolution.

Theorising War

Alan Johnson: I found your bold mapping of a tectonic shift in the character of contemporary warfare the most exciting aspect of your recent book, *The New Western Way of War: Risk-Transfer War and Its Crisis in Iraq* (Cambridge: Polity 2005.) Can I ask about your notion of 'modes of warfare,' then move on to the closely related but distinct concept of 'ways of war,' before I turn to recent wars, including the Iraq war, and to your own preferred alternative to war?

Mary Kaldor developed the notion of modes of warfare, each with an irreducible character and ends, each existing in a relation of tension with the capitalist mode of production. Your theory, as I read it, seeks to take this further. You aim to encompass all 'the variety and complexity of the warfare that is being waged or planned in the current era' within an understanding of 'the contemporary mode of warfare' (p. 52.) You hope that this more comprehensive account will enable us to better grasp 'the relations of different actors, ways of war, phases of war, and military environments.' This account involves bringing strategic studies and development studies together: a 'global integration of war studies' (p. 52.) First, what do you mean by 'mode of warfare?'

Martin Shaw: By the 'mode of warfare' I mean the general complex of the social relations, processes, and institutions through which wars are prepared, military powers are organised, and wars are fought, in any given society in any given period. The 'mode of warfare' is the general framework of military power as opposed to the particular ways in which particular peoples and states fight wars.

Alan Johnson: You place great emphasis on the necessity of a rich historical understanding of the way transitions take place from one 'mode of warfare' to another. Your thesis is that we have moved from the 'industrialised total warfare' mode to the 'global surveillance' mode of warfare (Cold-War nuclear war-preparation being a transitional mode of warfare.) What in your opinion have been the main drivers of the most recent transition?

Martin Shaw: I need to say something about what I understand by industrialised total warfare. This was a mode of warfare in which war came increasingly to

dominate society, economy and politics. There was both total mobilisation in a sense of a large scale mobilisation of the population to fight and to sustain warfare. There was also a tendency towards total destruction which followed from the tendency towards total mobilisation. When the population increasingly became a part of the process of supplying and fighting wars, it also became a target.

Now, given that sort of framework, I think that the technological change in weaponry in the second half of the 20th century is very important. It was the new ability to carry out total destruction without maintaining total mobilisation that defined many of the changes in warfare that took place, in the advanced world anyway, in the second half of the 20th century. So, to make that a bit more concrete, the superpowers in the cold war were able increasingly to project their power to destroy each others societies without relying on mass armies, labour intensive military industries, or direct mass social participation in warfare. With nuclear weapons it was possible to project total destruction without a very high degree of social mobilisation at all. So the technological change in weaponry was an important condition for some of the social changes that took place, yes.

However, during the cold war, in the second half of the 20th century, these social changes began to gather their own momentum. The loosening of the domination of warfare over society opened up new spaces. Greater space for markets because state control wasn't so essential in many areas of life. More space for mass media not just of a propagandist kind but a mass media which became much more diffuse and varied and plural and less easy to control. More space for a variety of new social movements and political orientations. But, during the cold war these transformations remain controlled by the overall conflict. When the cold war system imploded – and that took place to a great extent, not just because of the logic of the cold war but because of social and political change expressed through the mass democratic movements in the Soviet bloc – then we had a reconfiguration of a conditions for warfare.

The more specialised hi-tech warfare which emerges exists in a quite different social and political context. Militarism in the classic sense has been weakened, arenas are freed from direct military control, people, on the whole, don't have military experience and have not been conscripted into armies at a formative age. The whole relationship of society to warfare changes. Consequently, if warfare is going to continue, if states are going to continue to prepare for and fight wars, they have to reconfigure warfare in this different context. And that seems to me to be what has happened. We have a new way of fighting wars in the West – risk-transfer war

– and that new way is part of a wide set of global change in the social conditions of warfare: the global surveillance mode of warfare.

Alan Johnson: And what are the central features of the global surveillance mode of warfare?

Martin Shaw: By 'the global surveillance mode of warfare' I mean that warfare is now much more constrained by national and international political surveillance, by legal surveillance, by the surveillance exercised through elections and public opinion, and of course all of these forms of surveillance depend very much on the daily surveillance of political and military events which goes on through the mass media. Warfare is now conditioned by, rather than dominating, politics, economics, and media. The protagonists in warfare, whether they are states or armed movements, are simultaneously constrained and enabled in new ways by this context of surveillance.

Alan Johnson: You disagree with Mary Kaldor about whether this new mode of warfare is post-Clausewitzian. You deny that it is. What's at stake in that disagreement?

Martin Shaw: I think what's at stake is whether there is a core meaning to warfare which is common to all forms, and whether that core meaning is more or less as Clausewitz defined it. I think that Mary's mistake is to identify Clausewitz's point of view very much with the statist conception of warfare. Yes, it's true that Clausewitz was writing in an era when wars were coming increasingly to be between major nation states, or major national empires, and that this continued to be the dominant frame of warfare until at least the second half of the 20th century. And, yes, in some senses that appears now to be changing. Today, the most important wars are not so much between states as between states and armed movements or networks. And I think that's an important perception. However, despite this transformation of the actors, the main aim of warfare remains the destruction of the power of the enemy by violent means. The logic of that process of destruction, which was described by Clausewitz, seems to me to still apply even if the antagonists are different.

I could explore this by talking about Bosnia. Mary was very involved with Bosnia and wrote a lot about it. Bosnia was both war in a classic sense, and genocide. It was the two at the same time. One might actually describe it most accurately as a genocidal war. It was war in the sense that there were armed protagonists and

increasingly the struggle came to be dominated by the conflict between Serbia and the Serbian nationalists on one side and Croatia and Bosnia – and to some extent, behind them, the United States – on the other. In that sense there was a classic war going on. Mary would say that there weren't actually many important battles but actually I think that the victories of the Bosnian and Croatian armies in 1995 set the seal on the project of complete Serbian dominance and forced Milošević to the negotiating table at Dayton.

But, right from the start, the conflict was an attempt by Serbian nationalists, and to some extent also by Croatian nationalists, to so-called 'ethnically cleanse,' that is to wipe out, or to drive out, the non-Serb or non-Croat populations from places in which they had lived for many decades, or even centuries. This process of what's called 'ethnic cleansing' – but which, I think, was genocide – was also a defining character of the conflict from the start. That side of the conflict was clearly not classic warfare. I see this as perverted warfare. It's warfare directed against civilians with all that that implies, and that is different from the classic idea of warfare as the conflict between two armed forces. So, yes, there was something very different about this conflict from the classic idea of war (although maybe not from the classic practice: genocide had actually been a part of many other wars in the past) and it appeared to make the war in Bosnia something new and different. I think there was something different, but there was also a core of classic warfare going on at the same time, and this had the same basic aim as war has generally had.

Alan Johnson: You claim that the ideology of industrialised total war was 'democracy vs. communism' and the ideology of global surveillance war is democracy vs. terrorism. In what sense are you using the word 'ideology?' As set of ideas, a myth, fraud? Is there nothing at all, in your view, to the notion that democracy was, back then, at war with Stalinism, and is now at war with Jihadi terrorism?

Martin Shaw: Well, I was using the term of ideology in the classic sociological sense, which ultimately derives from Marx, for whom ideology wasn't simply myth or fraud. Ideology contains elements of truth and reality. Ideology is not plausible unless it does fasten on to some elements which people can find credible. The ideological frameworks of democracy versus fascism or Stalinism, and of democracy versus terrorism, has, in each case, elements of plausibility. There is a sense in which there is, in the global war on terror, a war between democracy and terrorism. But, as an ideological framework, the 'war on terror' is much more than that. It's a way

of articulating the interests and the world view of ruling elites which is then used to mobilise and shape public opinion and international alliances, and to construct political constituencies and coalitions on a global scale. In this sense, the idea of the war on terror as a war between terrorism and democracy obscures as much as it reveals. Certainly there is a sense in which our democratic institutions are under attack from terrorists. But there is a lot more going on than defending those institutions from terrorists. The global war on terror is not just about the actions of terrorists. It is also about a political framework of global dominance and the way that is used to deal with other sorts of problems, like the problems of authoritarian dictatorship in places like Iraq, which wasn't really about terrorism.

Alan Johnson: What is a 'way of war' and how is it to be distinguished from a 'mode of warfare?'

Martin Shaw: The mode of warfare in a given historical period in society is the general framework in which the war is configured for all actors who participate in warfare. A way of war is a type of approach to fighting war which belongs to, or is developed by, an actor or a group of actors. I talk about 'Western' and 'terrorist' ways of war as two different ways of war developed and practiced within the general framework of the global surveillance mode of warfare.

Alan Johnson: You argue that risk-transfer war is the specifically Western way of war in the period of the new global surveillance mode of warfare. The new Western way of war involves the 'systematic transfer of risk.' Which risks do you have in mind and to whom are they being transferred?

Martin Shaw: The core risks are always the risks of life to which soldiers or combatants are subjected, and which often apply to non-combatants or civilians as well. In risk transfer war these risks to life are articulated with political risks for leaders. Politicians calibrate these risks and configure them together. What the West learnt from Vietnam was that in the era of global surveillance it is essential to limit the life risks to our own Western military personnel. What has happened since Vietnam is a systematic attempt to spare Western lives by finding ways of destroying enemy power without putting Western soldiers and aircrew at risk. And there is an implicit acceptance of the fact that this involves exposing civilians to greater risks than one's own soldiers. So risk is transferred not only to the armed enemy but also to civilians.

One of the most progressive features, on the surface, of the new Western way of war is that the civilians among the attacked population are not seen as part of the enemy. There is a clear distinction made between the armed enemy and the civilians, at least ideologically. In practice, the Western way of war – what I have called risk-transfer war – exposes civilians in war-zones to considerable risks of being harmed, both directly and indirectly by Western military action.

Alan Johnson: Can we talk about some of the defining features of risk-transfer war as a way of war, a way of war-fighting? First, what do you mean by the 'spectator sport militarism' of the 'post military society?'

Martin Shaw: The term 'spectator sport militarism' was invented by Michael Mann. I use it but it's not my invention. It means that wars are fought by relatively small specialised forces rather than mass conscript armies; that military industries are increasingly very specialised production processes involving relatively small, sophisticated, highly trained workforces, rather than mass production processes involving semi-skilled labour; that while mass publics are no longer mobilised directly as conscripts or munitions workers but the recruitment of these mass publics is even more crucial. The people are demobilised and war-fighting must be combined with normal mass consumption economies, normal electoral processes. For Western leaders, the trick is to calibrate war-fighting with the running of an economy and a political system in normal 'peace time mode.' In classic total war you are able to suspend a lot of these normal peace-time arrangements and expectations and to introduce more direct, even total, control. In the new Western way of war you don't do that. You pretend that things are more or less normal and try and keep delivering the economic goods to the population. You try to satisfy them politically so that they will vote you back in to office even while the war is going on.

Alan Johnson: Risk-transfer wars, you claim, are 'fought on camera and directed primarily at the opponents will to fight.' You argue that in global surveillance warfare the media is all-important. 'The global political environment is expressed largely through the common framework of media surveillance' (p. 61) and 'media management is utterly central to the new Western way of war.' In what ways has the new ubiquity of media surveillance impacted on warfare and politics?

Martin Shaw: The new characteristics are that the war is no longer something which simply happens 'over there,' a long way away and which the civilian population only read about or watch via highly controlled, manipulated images. During the Second

World War the civilian population only saw the censored news reels and newspaper reports that governments allowed them to see. Today, war is always potentially visible. Journalists have, in principle, access to the war environment, they are able to observe directly, to gather information from a variety of sources, and to film what's going on.

Of course this is what most concerned American politicians and generals about the Vietnam war. They believed this opening up of warfare damaged the image of the war in the eyes of the American electorate. They still argue about this in academic circles. Many people say that the American project in Vietnam was already fundamentally compromised and the media simply reflected this failure. Nevertheless, I think that it's partially true about all recent wars that it's very difficult to completely control the flow of information in the way that has happened in the past. There is the danger (from the point of view of governments) of civilians and voters seeing the wrong side of war – the failure, the damage, the harm caused to people, both to their own soldiers and also to innocent civilians. This is a fundamental problem, for the West at least, which claims to look after its soldiers and not to harm civilians.

Alan Johnson: How has this media surveillance played out in Iraq? In your book you argue that 'risk-transfer militarism operates through the media to neutralise electoral and other forms of surveillance that highlight the realities of death and suffering in Western wars' (p. 95.) I take this to mean (to be blunt) that the militarists use the media to spin the war and hide the truth. This strikes me as questionable. As a member of Labour Friends of Iraq my experience has been that the media will cover every single bad news story from Iraq without exception, in great detail, and repeatedly. You point out that 'one of the most important general laws of global warfare is that a massacre is the most media-worthy of events.' We could add the beheading, the car-bomb, the assassination, the kidnapping, the terrorists video, and so on. Other, more positive developments struggle to get a look in. The media chases after the latest primed press release from the terrorists. The effect is that a gigantic distorting lens is the only one available for most Westerners to see 'Iraq' through. Isn't the media, in Britain at least, now a permanent opposition to the government? Or is this a phenomenon limited to the Iraq war?

Martin Shaw: It's still true that our exposure to the real harm being caused by the American and British military adventure in Iraq has been fairly limited. Because of the context of the global war on terror, because of the very powerful patriotic identification in America, and also because of the practical consideration that

journalists could only see things if they were attached to the American/British forces, I think we didn't see – especially in the early phases of the campaign – a lot of the downside. In the period of major combat in 2003 a lot of the damaging things that were happening as a result of the invasion were not portrayed, or only made a very limited appearance in the media. Even in the present phase, there is a sense in which an awful lot doesn't get covered very directly. We don't get to see images of what is going on because it has simply become too dangerous for journalists. There is a conspiracy between al-Qaeda, the so called resistance, and the Americans. The attacks on journalists have actually inhibited their ability to cover the downsides of the American military action as much as of the terrorist campaign.

Having said all that though I think what has happened in Iraq is, in a way, what happened in Vietnam. Things have obviously gone badly wrong for the American occupation. The rise of the resistance war, and the fact that despite repeated suggestions that it will go away it just seems to get worse, and the terrible atrocities that are being committed by the insurgents (the attacks on civilians and political opponents, as much as on the Americans or the British) – these things inevitably gather media attention. I argue in my book that there is nothing is as shocking, and therefore sensational, in warfare as a massacre of civilians. The repeated massacres of civilians by the insurgents both demand attention and underline this overriding sense of an occupation gone wrong. That has become the dominant narrative of what's happening and therefore it becomes very difficult to get other things into the media. The media like simple stories and dominant themes. I think that's what's happening at the moment.

The Iraq War

Alan Johnson: You claim the Iraq war has pushed the entire Western way of war into crisis. As I read your argument, Iraq has simply been a war too far for the new Western way. The 'Global War on Terror' framework has licensed an adventure that has raised the real prospect of permanent war and people won't buy that. Bush has, therefore, 'undermined the viability that had been developed over the previous two decades' (pp. 129-30.) You claim the ideological stretching that has gone on (Saddam equals terrorism) was thin, unpersuasive and did not provide legitimacy. The publics would not follow, and so the grand coalition fell apart. The basic rules of how to fight the new Western way of war, which you outline in the book, were broken, one after another by a hubristic Bush. Result? Iraq has provoked a 'veritable crisis...of the new Western way of war' per se (p. 130) placing a 'fundamental

question mark ... against the idea that, in today's global surveillance conditions, Western governments can use war effectively to achieve political ends' (p. 140.) Why has the USA broken the rules of the Western way of war?

Martin Shaw: I think it's important to say that they haven't simply broken all the rules. They are still aware of what makes a successful war in today's conditions. They have tried to minimise American casualties. The Americans have now lost more than 2000 soldiers which, yes, are a lot more than any previous war over the last quarter century but, still, a very small number compared to the nearly 60,000 American soldiers who were killed in Vietnam. And I think that it's true to say that the Bush administration is still very much trying to keep this issue under control. This is one of their fixed points which govern the way in which they run the war and the occupation. That is why there has been the transfer of risk to Iraqi troops and police. The numbers of Iraqi police killed by the insurgents are greater than the numbers of American troops killed in the last year or so. In a sense they are still trying to keep within the Western way of war framework. And they certainly try to manipulate the running of the war in a way which makes it fit with the political and electoral demands of their own power in the United States. To some extent they got away with that because President Bush was re-elected, despite Iraq.

Having said all that, yes they have gone further. This is partly because of an ambitious agenda that existed to some extent even before the 9/11: the broader neocon agenda and specifically the overthrowing of Saddam Hussein which was a personal and a general political value for the Bush clique before they came to power. And they have gone further because of the experience of 9/11, because of the shock, the near-humiliation of the Bush presidency which was shown to be incompetent and not to have foreseen the threats, not to have managed the immediate events particularly well, and which needed to recover ground. The Bush clique saw in a 'war on terrorism' an opportunity to regain the initiative, to silence the critics, to mobilise public opinion and also an opportunity to pursue its wider goals; particularly the overthrow of Saddam, for which, up to that point, there wasn't really a context for realisation. While probably not a major cause, it is still worth mentioning (in parentheses at least) that Tony Blair's support for Bush over Iraq enabled the Iraq war more than one might think. Although it is true to say that the Bush administration was very driven, without Blair it would have been internationally isolated. Without Blair it's unlikely that any major ally would have jumped onboard.

Alan Johnson: Why is the Iraq war a crisis for the 'new Western way' if the Iraq war broke most of the 'rules' of the 'new Western way?' Is Iraq not a development of the Western way? Post 9/11 America feels its national interests are at stake, and is pursuing those national interests through a grand strategic vision for the Middle East. Are we looking at a combination of what you call 'national militarist' way of war and risk-transfer ways of war-fighting? Might it not be said that the Iraq war was one almighty act of risk-taking rather than risk-transfer? Isn't it true that infantry battle was engaged not avoided? Is it possible that risk-transfer war describes Clinton but not Bush? Pre, but not post, 9/11?

Martin Shaw: In a sense, this is the question that I'm raising. It's too early to say definitively. The attempt by the Bush administration to extend the model of warfare which had worked for America and Britain, and other Western countries, in the period before Iraq, has thrown up this big backlash. At the end of 2005, it's very difficult to say that Iraq has been a success. There has been an attempt to extend the new Western way of war which, if put into practice in its most ambitious expression – taking on Iran, overthrowing the regime in North Korea, using war as a way to wipe the global slate clean – would open up a very fundamental extension of the new Western way of war into a permanent war. I have suggested this could even produce an Israelization of American power in the sense of creating a global super power involved in constant wide running, wide-ranging local wars of a very serious kind.

But it seems to me unlikely that even the Bush administration, or a Republican successor, if that were to happen, would be very keen to repeat the Iraq experience. The attempt to radically extend the new Western way of war in Iraq has largely failed. What is left is the idea that maybe our wars ought to be much more limited, discrete, and not so ambitious. The problem with that, I think, is that the Iraq experience has entered our consciousness in the way that Vietnam entered the consciousness of an earlier generation. Iraq is now the defining experience of war for the generation which is coming of age in the early 21st century, in the United States and in other Western countries, and it's an experience which is people can't see anything good about, and which we would not want to see repeated. In this sense I think that this is more than just an embarrassing failure. It's also something which says something about the possibilities of war in our times. It's going to make it more difficult for Western governments to fight wars even in cases where it is more possible to fight something in a more discrete way.

Alan Johnson: You say few can see anything good about the war. This again returns us to the question of framing and media coverage. If we made a list – the removal of Saddam and the Ba'ath, the return of the refugees, the re-flooding of the marshlands, the return of the Marsh Arabs, the new religious freedoms of the Shia, the tremendous political and economic progress of Iraqi Kurdistan, the spread of independent media, the growth of free trade unions, the opening of the mass graves, the trial of Saddam, the national elections in which over eight million voted, the constitution, and so on – in my view there is seldom a reasonable calibrating of those positive developments alongside the terrible events. I agree with you that 'Iraq' has entered consciousness in a certain way but I wonder why such tremendous changes – moving from a totalitarian dictatorship to some kind of democracy, with the most democratic constitution in the Middle East – has registered so very little in public consciousness in the West?

Martin Shaw: I suppose it's because in the end Western public opinion isn't enormously interested in what's happening in Iraq. It would respond if media were to highlight these other issues in contrast to the brutal insurgency and counter-insurgency war. But that is the problem with using war as a substitute for political change. In the end, war tends to become the story. Even the real and undoubted political benefits of the overthrow of Saddam Hussein have tended to be sidelined in the global consciousness by the terrible reality of the continuing guerrilla war.

Against just-war thinking

Alan Johnson: You oppose just war thinking and find it an inadequate, even dangerous framework for thinking about questions of war and war-fighting today. You wrote, 'If Western society is to become really serious in its desire to save civilian life and well-being it will have to move on from just-war thinking. This tradition has been designed, after all, to enable warfare, by indicating conditions in which killing might exceptionally be allowed.' But do we not need, precisely, a tradition of thought that has been developed to indicate conditions when killing might exceptionally be allowed (and, more commonly, disallowed)? Isn't just war theory, with its jus in bello concerns, pretty well geared up to address the concerns you have about risk-transfer wars and civilian casualties? Isn't the problem not with just war theory but with the cynical 'hauling and shelving' of it by political leaders? What is your critique of just war theory?

Martin Shaw: I could start by indicating the extent of my agreement with you. I

agree that in the limited circumstances in which military action can still be justified we do need something like the just war rules. In principle the just war rules could be made to address a lot of the issues which will arise in any legitimate military action. Having said that though, it seems to me the problem is not just the way in which just war thinking is abused by political leaders. The problem is also the way in which it has been developed as an intellectual tradition. In my book I criticise the ways in which Michael Walzer in his famous book *Just and Unjust Wars*, tried to develop this tradition in the aftermath of the Vietnam war. This has been one of the defining texts of this trend of thought in recent years. It seems to me that the just war tradition has been exposed to repeated manipulation and has provided cover for the crimes that have been committed against civilians in war. This is not something which is accidental to the tradition. It comes from the basic assumption of the tradition, that war is possibly legitimate. My argument is that this is not the most appropriate starting point for us today. The questions are not just which war is legitimate, and which means are legitimate. The fundamental question is *whether war is a valid means of resolving political conflicts*. In the age of weapons of mass destruction, and an overwhelmingly urbanised, and complex global society, it seems to me that war almost always tends towards social catastrophe, of some degree or another. Maybe this argument is fairly obvious if we talk about nuclear weapons. The conceit is that 'smart' weapons somehow take out the targets you have while avoiding collateral damage. This is unrealistic in almost all cases.

If we really looked at the experience of the last two years we would go in a different direction. The smart weapons used in Baghdad in 2003 led to an extensive death toll even in a very short attack on that city. The attempt to solve the problems of Iraq by military means has just been an invitation to urban guerrilla warfare. And this all ends up with July 7th. War comes home. We shouldn't be starting from the just war premise that war is possibly a useful and valuable means of resolving conflicts because that limits our thinking to the problem of determining under which conditions, and with which methods, we should use war. I think we should start with the premise that war is *a problem in itself*, that war is not something which is any longer really appropriate for our society, and that our aim should be to remove it from the political field.

Alan Johnson: OK, so we have established that, for you, the starting point of just war thinking is the problem and that you think we should begin with a quite different premise. But, it seems to me that you are also critical of the ways in which the just war tradition treats enemy combatants and civilians and view the just war

tradition as lagging behind the new weaponry. As I read your book, your argument is that even though enemy combatants have been targeted (and not civilians) these enemy combatants have been killed so efficiently, so quickly, that this killing is, in fact, 'slaughter.' You call it 'industrial killing on a hapless enemy,' and, on that basis, find it to be immoral (p. 133.) You write 'certainly as we contemplate these inequalities of means we might recall the slaughter inflicted on helpless office workers by terrorists using civilian airliners' (p. 134) In your view, as I understand it, the fact that the Taliban and the Iraqi soldiers were carrying guns does not make a real difference (p. 134.) Have I correctly understood your argument?

Martin Shaw: I wouldn't put it quite like that. I accept that it always makes a difference that somebody takes up arms. The killing of the unarmed always raises different considerations from the killing of those who are armed to kill, and who themselves are maybe trying to kill. So, in this instance, I think you're right to say there is a difference. However, even in the just war tradition the killing of soldiers has to be proportionate and relevant to a military goal. It shouldn't be carried out in an indiscriminate or purposeless way. So even from a just war point of view one can criticise some actions against enemy civilians. For example the massacre of retreating Iraqi troops in 1991 has been widely criticised.

The issue that I'm raising, though, is a bit broader than that. It is the issue of the fundamental imbalance in military capacity between the most sophisticated Western armies and many of the people that they are fighting against, whether Iraqi conscripts, many of whom were there against their will, or Taliban fighters who were relatively lightly equipped. The inequality of means leads, effectively, to one-sided killing. The Americans and their allies can destroy the opposition soldiers without really risking their own lives. This doesn't sit easily with the promise of a liberating war. If one if one is going to try and dismantle the power of regimes like the Taliban or Saddam's Iraq, then one should limit the harm which one does in the process to people who may be, in many cases, relatively unwilling or unwitting participants.

Alan Johnson: Even though you have made that point in terms of the just war standard of proportionality you also argue in your book that a quite different standard (than the just war standard) should be applied to war. This different standard takes the form of both a duty ('thou shalt not kill') and a right (to freedom from violence.) You write 'Thou shalt not kill has been tightened as a general norm, with fewer and fewer exceptions allowed…and yet war has remained a huge

exception...A serious concern with civilian protection derives, therefore, from ways of thinking that are very different from 'just war.' In particular it arises from human rights thinking according to which all individual human beings enjoy the same claims to safety and from violence. If we follow this line of thought, we cannot be indifferent to lives lost or damaged, however few they are by gross historical standards' (p. 137.)

As I read the book, you think that this right to freedom from violence should be extended not just to Western soldiers, and to individual citizens, but, to 'enemy soldiers too.' (p. 138.) This puzzled me. First, because I am unsure if you are arguing from proportionality or from first principles. Second, because I wonder if you are arguing that al-Qaeda militants in their camps in Afghanistan had a human right to freedom from violence, one which they retained in spite of their own actions and intentions, and that in light of that right they should not have been forcibly attacked?

Martin Shaw: I think we can talk about both proportionality and first principles although I can recognise that they are different arguments. I don't think we can say that somebody who has arms, especially if they hold them in a relatively willing way, can claim the same rights to immunity from violence as somebody who is unarmed. So in that sense this is a proportionality argument, and the human rights argument is more qualified in this case. However, what I'm trying to get at here is a broader point than the one about the role of combatants in movements like the Taliban. It's the point that warfare has always involved a contradiction with fundamental moral norms. These norms are widely accepted in virtually every society, especially the inhibition on killing. As that inhibition has been tightened so that there are fewer and fewer occasions when it is legitimate for individuals to kill other individuals, and the state to kill individuals (the death penalty is increasingly abolished) the *exception* which warfare constitutes in human society has become more and more marked. It is now virtually the only context of legitimate killing. But within this context, killing is legitimate on a very large and awful scale. This incongruity is increasing the pressures on warfare. And the global surveillance to which warfare is subject tends to reinforce this sort of questioning of warfare. Although human rights arguments may be qualified in the context of combatants, nonetheless they don't completely go away. They are questions which we can ask in every case: why is it that somebody should not be provided with the protection which a general conception of human rights, of freedom from violence, would provide them?

Alan Johnson: You seem to me to deny the very possibility that the West could reform the way its fights its wars in order to shift the balance of risk away from civilians to such a degree that these wars could ever reasonably be called 'just' (p. 137.) Hope in such a reform, 'flies in the face of the core sociological realities of new Western warfare.' No Western government, 'would, or even could, try to bring war-fighting into concordance with the serious demands of just warfare' (p. 136.) What are these 'core sociological realities?' And what is it about 'the West' that means it can never act justly?

Martin Shaw: I think that Western publics wouldn't tolerate, or at least Western political leaders wouldn't trust them to tolerate, the kind of risks to Western military personnel which would be consistent with the just practice of warfare. For that reason I think it's unlikely that we will ever see a fully just form of warfare from the West. I think it's a recognition of this that pushes moral philosophers like Walzer towards providing excuses and get-outs for politicians who send Western troops into war today.

The Non-Violent Alternative to War

Alan Johnson: You argue for an alternative to war. You pose to us this choice: 'we can continue with war as a means, progressively abandoning the pretence that we are using armed force in new ways and becoming ever more mired in brutal struggles that we cannot win. Or we can follow the logic of our commitments to global institutions, democracy and human rights, and renew our determination to avoid war. We cannot have it both ways' (p. 3.) You end the book by saying Iraq should be 'the beginning of the end of war.' That is, of war per se. I would like to probe this choice, but, first, would you like to set out the broad outlines of your alternative?

Martin Shaw: I think the alternative is for Western governments and global institutions to act consistently on the assumption that political problems, including problems of armed conflict, should be solved as far as possible without the use of military means. Where military means are used to protect civilians against violence, these military means should be constrained and limited to exactly what is necessary for that purpose. It is necessary for Western governments and the United Nations to pursue policies based consistently on these norms. That would involve a vastly greater investment in the development of global institutions, in the development of mechanisms and institutions for enforcing conflict-resolution, and in creating a

global institutional framework. It's a very ambitious project of global reform aimed at making the resort to war less and less viable or necessary.

I think that immediately after 9/11, when Bush had enormous international and domestic good will, he could have asked the UN to establish an international tribunal along the lines of the Yugoslav and the Rwanda type, specifically to try the perpetrators of the 9/11 terrorist atrocities. He could have involved the leaders of Muslim countries, and Islamic opinion worldwide, in that project, and so marginalized the terrorists still further, claiming a global legitimacy. There was always going to be a military element to the pursuit of al-Qaeda. But al-Qaeda is an underground network and there is really no alternative to elaborate and careful policing methods. And those are the methods that seem to me to have had the most success in tracking down al-Qaeda members. I don't think the proclamation on the global war on terror has done anything more really than to add glamour, lustre, and legitimacy to the terrorists' cause. It has provided them with a further stream of recruits in Western countries, and elsewhere and generally reinforced their place in world politics.

Alan Johnson: But there is a gap between where we are now and the future realisation of that vision. How can we think and act politically in that gap? I think this is the most important question for the democratic left. To start with an obvious point, some would say that Afghanistan is better off: the Taliban have been removed, elections have been held, women are in the cabinet and some kind of life has been returned to women and girls who, for instance, are no longer publicly beaten in Kabul soccer stadium, but now play soccer there. It might be argued that these facts must be weighed in the balance alongside the loss of civilian life, but that your framework can not accommodate that kind of balancing because it has an absolutist determination to avoid war. How would you respond to that?

Martin Shaw: I would respond to it by accepting that wars do have positive effects. Just because I think that war, taken as a whole, is a fundamentally problematic option (because it has all sorts of obvious negative effects on society in the zone of war and also for the wider global society) I can still recognise that some of the uses of armed force that Western governments have gone in for in recent years have had some positive achievements both in Afghanistan, and also in Iraq to which we have referred. I don't think this is an easy argument...

Alan Johnson: Either way it's argued it's not an easy argument…

Martin Shaw: That's right. I do respect the views for example of those Iraqi exiles who argued before the American invasion that Saddam's regime was so awful that even war, even an American invasion, was worth seen as a way of getting rid of it. I respect that and I think that despite everything else that's come out, despite all the downsides of the occupation, the war has clearly had some positive results that it would be foolish to deny and it has opened up some opportunities which people who are involved with Iraq, like yourself, should be trying to take and extend. I don't want to make this an easy argument and clearly it's possible that without the war we would still have Saddam, we would still have the Taliban and that shouldn't be a lightly countenanced. It should have been an international duty to help the Iraqi people to find a way of getting rid of Saddam, to help the Afghan people to find a way of getting rid of their Taliban. Those are important points of principle on which I would agree with Blair and Bush. But it's a question of means. It's a question of whether the adoption of military means, especially the more ambitious military means which were used in these cases, can be justified simply by these benefits. If we take the consequences as a whole we see much more problematic outcomes. So then it becomes a question of looking at alternatives. I don't want to pretend that there is a magic wand one can wave and do without war here. I think it is a question of difficult choices. It's a question of alternative policies which might have meant the Saddam and the Taliban might have stayed in power somewhat longer than they did and that would have had consequences, but that might have meant less overall cost in human life and less destructive consequences generally for world politics.

Alan Johnson: And that alternative would, as you say, centre on our commitment to global institutions. But you do not indulge at all a style of thinking we might term 'Fantasy United Nations.' You have previously criticised the left for a 'pious attitude to the UN.' In your book you note the UN's terrible performance in Somalia, and in Rwanda, where the UN response to the genocide was to pull out its troops. You note that 'similar disasters' (p. 19) had happened in Bosnia in 1995 when UN peacekeepers handed over 7,000 men and boys to Serb fascists, its 'safe areas' a mere paper commitment unsupported by force, and in East Timor where, in 1999, UN staff 'abandoned civilians to murdering pro-Indonesian militias' (p. 19.) There is not a UN failure that escapes your attention. How can we, the democratic left, combine a sober acknowledgment of how weak actually existing international institutions are with our desire to develop multilateral global responses to situations of emergency and genocide? What should our next steps be?

Martin Shaw: I don't think it's a choice between weak global institutions and supporting the resort to war by Western powers. I think that the same Western states that fight wars could also make global institutions much more effective and could undertake the sort of political and legal interventions that would prevent war and which would remove genocidists from power in places like Iraq and Serbia. If one could imagine the resources that are devoted to the Iraq war being devoted to other sorts of intervention – and I'm not here making the traditional left wing point about economic and social investments, although that is important – such as political and legal institution-building and interventions in conflicts before they get to the stage where it appears that only a war will answer them, then I think we would be talking about shifts in a very positive direction. How do we begin to do that? At the moment it looks difficult. There is widespread disillusion with any sort of international engagement and this is one of the costs of a venture like Iraq. It reduces the appetite among Western publics for any serious investment of money, people, and resources in international intervention. We need to use the opposition to the war not to fall back on an inward looking, isolated sort of politics but to push the argument forward for a more effective international order and for our governments, particularly Western social democratic governments, to take the lead in developing that.

The Terrorist Threat and the Response

Alan Johnson: What is the nature of the threat? You write that the invasion of Iraq 'had given the terrorists an increased incentive to strike at Western societies' (p. 127.) But it is likely that without the invasion they would not have struck? At stake here seems to be how we characterise the threat.

Martin Shaw: It's obviously true to say, as Tony Blair has, that Islamic militants of the al-Qaeda type had already attacked Western societies before the Iraq war and that the conflict with this sort of terrorism is not a simple result of the Iraq war. However, it does seem to me that the Iraq war – the overwhelmingly militarised response signalled by the global war on terror – has actually played into their hands. It has legitimated their terrorism as war. It has enabled them to greatly magnify their appeal to the minority of Muslims who are open to this appeal.

We face a threat of terrorist attack which is sufficient to generate serious atrocities, to harm our society through militarising its politics and curtailing our civil liberties. But the threat is obviously not of a kind which will destroy our society. It's

a different sort of threat than the old Soviet Union. In this sense I think it's a threat which is quite well suited to the ideological project of the global war on terror which Bush has proclaimed. I think it's interesting to observe the way in which al-Qaeda calibrates its attacks with Western political developments. We have seen the intervention just before a Spanish election, the video tape which Bin Laden sent just before the American election, which I think helped Bush, and the delaying of the attacks on Britain until after the British election. I think there's a sense which al-Qaeda needs Bush and Bush needs al-Qaeda.

Alan Johnson: You raise a very important point that many shy away from. You note that the 'murderous, even genocidal logic of terrorist massacre clearly defied the logic of the basic moral standards of legitimate war, as understood not only in the Western tradition but also in Islam…And yet this method of warfare was undeniably successful in mobilising Muslims worldwide for Islamist causes.' I think this is right. Of those British Muslims interviewed by YouGov after the 7/7 atrocity six percent said the bombings were fully justified. If the poll is accurate that translates to 100,000 British Muslims. And 'one percent, about 16,000 individuals, declare themselves willing, possibly even eager, to embrace violence' ('One in four Muslims sympathises with motives of terrorists,' *Daily Telegraph*, Anthony King, 23/07/2005.) How should we begin explain those deeply depressing and alarming findings, which deserved a much more serious response than they got, I think?

Martin Shaw: I think the important thing to realise is that global Islamist terrorism is not a democratic creed. It is an elitist doctrine. It dispenses with all the requirements of mobilising and appeasing a full range of opinion that affect democratic politicians. It needs only to mobilise a sufficient minority of the Muslim population, both globally and in particular countries, to maintain its recruitment, its funding and its political impact. I don't want to suggest that it's unaffected by what the majority of Muslims think. If the majority of Muslims turned radically and actively against it that would make a difference. But I think it can survive, and has survived, as a minority thing. I think it probably appeals to the culturally and maybe economically marginalized section of young men, but not just the poor but also those you could call the young intellectuals, in the broad sense, in the Muslim community. I think its appeal is the same as nationalist and other extreme movements in many parts of the non-Western world, though of course it is mediated through a particularly powerful religious culture.

Alan Johnson: Do you think there is anything to Salman Rusdie's argument that the great need is for Islam to go through its own modernisation, to reconcile itself to modernity?

Martin Shaw: I think there is, yes. This is a broader problem and it may be that in the short run that sort of process of reformation of Islam would actually accentuate the divide in Islam and reinforce the recruitment for terrorism. But as a broad statement that has a lot to say for itself, yes.

Alan Johnson: What are you working on now?

Martin Shaw: I'm working on a book on the concept of genocide which is an attempt to look at the different ways in which genocide has been thought about and to argue for a broad sociological concept of genocide which would return us, in many ways, to the original idea of Raphael Lemkin. I will criticise the narrowing of the concept to simple mass murder. The book will also survey the range of alternative concepts which exist around the idea of genocide, such as the concept of ethnic cleansing, which I try to debunk as a perpetrator concept which doesn't add anything to our enlightenment.

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