

Shams Ali

Dialogues with Blair

Issues in Blair Politics of 2002–2007

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Preface to the Second Edition

Tony Blair, was the British Prime Minister from 2nd May 1997 to 27th June 2007, and at the time of the publication of this book is “Official Envoy of the Quartet on the Middle East on behalf of the United Nations Organisation, the European Union, the United States and the Russian Federation”. He also happened to be one of the principal front stage actors in the most important development in the world international relations of the present time — the War on Terror.

This book is a unique dialogue with Tony Blair, and “everything he stood for”, within the last five most turbulent years of his prime-ministerial career.

The articles in this book were written as comments on the various moves, stances, and postures of Tony Blair in real time, as they happened. These articles were sent to Tony Blair (as well as to the main Media) by email. Although Tony Blair did not answer to these articles directly, he did read these articles, and was asked by journalists questions on issues raised in these articles. And one can find reactions to some of the points raised in these articles in Tony Blair’s speeches.

Thus, when it was suggested to Tony Blair in the article “Blair Apology and Punishment” (2004-09-29), that, if he gets rid of his tendency to “pull a fast one”, he could remain Prime Minister “not just for the next term, but for the next two, three, or four terms, or even longer . . . until he retires due to old age”, he had a minor heart failure and announced in an interview with Andrew Marr of the BBC (2004-10-01), “I’m not going on and on forever”.

Unlike most other books and articles that seek to fit the issues of the “Blair Era” into the familiar pigeon holes of “right” and “left”, this book considers the issues from the non-political stand-point of “right

and wrong and true and false”.

The first edition of this book was published in 2004 under the title *Tony Blair and His Politics* and covered the period from 2001 to 2004. This book includes all the articles of the first edition, and adds to them the articles up to November 2007.

Although this book deals with issues involving Tony Blair’s politics, these politics are just a partial view of a wider scene of the current state of the World: the War on Terror, Morality, Religion, Government and Politics. The issues concerning these areas of the current State of Mankind are discussed in separate books, which are listed at the end of this volume.

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Preface to the First Edition

Tony Blair became British Prime Minister in 1997, having displaced the then Conservative government of John Major.

Like in most modern elections, the elections of 1997 were not “won” by Tony Blair’s New Labour, they were “lost” by the Conservatives who went out of their way to display their arrogance and dishonesty at the time of the election campaign.

The remarkable feature of Tony Blair’s New Labour was that it campaigned under the banners of the party they wanted to replace — they wanted to be elected not as “traditional Labour Party Socialists”, but as “better Tories”, promising that they would continue with the Conservative policies, but will be better at it than the self-discredited Conservatives under John Major.

The result of this “New Labour” tactics was that in the first term the Blair government had a broad popular support, while the Conservative were on the verge of sinking into the Political Oblivion.

The second term of the Blair government has proved to be less “unquestioningly successful”. The Conservative opposition still remained very weak, but Tony Blair began having the problem of “trust”.

This problem of “trust” has become still more acute as a result of Tony Blair seeking to justify the American war against Iraq. And at the time of the publication of this book there are talks of Tony Blair being an electoral liability to the Labour Party.

This book contains articles dealing with the various issues which arose within the last two most turbulent years of the Blair leadership. These issues are considered from the non-political stand-point of “right and wrong and true and false”.

Although this book deals with issues involving Tony Blair’s politics,

these politics are just a partial view of a wider scene of the current state of the World: the War on Terror, Morality, Religion, Government and Politics. The issues concerning these areas of the current State of Mankind are discussed in separate books, which are listed at the end of this volume.

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Chapter 42

Blair Argument

Date of first publication: 2005–07–22

THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN POLITICAL ARGUMENT AND LOGICAL ARGUMENT

Tony Blair, in his speech on the London bombings on 2005–07–16, referring to the “threat of terrorism”, said:

“In the end, it is by the power of argument, debate, true religious faith and true legitimate politics that we will defeat this threat.”

but can he do it, and, if so, then how?

So let us examine this statement by Tony Blair, and try to understand what it means.

Because this statement raises a number of issues, to consider each of which requires an article of its own, in this article we shall limit ourselves solely to the “power of argument” of Tony Blair.

Tony Blair is notorious for his “power of argument”. It is his power of argument that has earned him the notoriety of the “Least Trusted Prime Minister in British History”.

How did he succeed to achieve this notoriety?

By stating false facts, using false logic, and calling a lie every true statement, if it seems to him to be against him.

The same techniques have been used by other members of the Blair government. Tony Blair has even elevated this technique to a “science” — the Science of Spin.

Thus, in a recent statement, Jack Straw (the Foreign Secretary in the Blair government) advanced the following argument to justify the Iraq War. According to him the Iraq War was justified because it would have been wrong for Britain not to join its ally, the USA, in their war.

The logic of this statement is that if A is a friend of B, then, if B commits any act, A should join B in that act, regardless of whether this act is right or wrong.

So, if one sees one’s friend raping a woman, one should join in the rape to “stand by” one’s friend.

The only question that should be asked in connection with this “argument” by Jack Straw is, “How a person capable of such twisted logic can be allowed to be a member of a British government?”

But this is not the first time Jack Straw makes such illogical statements to justify a government policy.

Nor is he the only politician using false logic to justify a policy.

Justification of policies by false arguments is the very essence of politics. Politicians are not concerned with whether their statements are right or wrong. Their purpose is not to discover the true state of affairs. Their purpose is to persuade the public of the righteousness of their cause, not because their cause happens to be right, but because it happens to be theirs.

It is this purpose of persuading the others of the righteousness of one’s cause, rather than establishing the true state of affairs, that distinguishes political argument from logical argument.

The purpose of logical argument is to establish the truth, the purpose of political argument is to impose one’s views on others regardless of their merits.

But Tony Blair wants to defeat the threat of terrorism by his “power of argument”.

Can the power of political argument be used to achieve this end?

Political arguments can persuade only (1) those who advance these arguments, (2) those whose ability to distinguish the true from the false is paralyzed by partisan emotions, and (3) those who are so gullible

that they believe anything they hear. To the rest of the people political arguments prove only one thing: those who use such arguments are dishonest people. And, as we noted above, it was Tony Blair's "power of argument" that had led to his loss of popularity and diminution of electoral support.

And it is political arguments that is one of the main causes of "terrorism".

The natural primitive reaction of people to injustice is anger and desire to hit back. And, if the victim of injustice cannot hit back, his anger turns into hatred.

One can observe this behaviour at any children's playground.

This human tendency is known, and in most countries there exist courts of law, where people can have their disputes resolved on the basis of justice. This is more civilized than resolving disputes by fists, sticks, stones and knives.

But what happens, if injustice is inflicted by governments or groups favoured by governments?

Governments who commit injustice deny its commission or seek to justify it by political arguments. And this deprives victims of injustice from any way to redress injustice, or even from having acknowledgment¹ of its existence. And this arouses in the victims of injustice boundless hatred of their oppressors. And it is this hatred and desire to achieve justice at any cost, even at the cost of their own lives, that drives the victims of injustice and their sympathizers to acts of terror against the oppressors.

So, the power of political argument is incapable of defeating terrorism, it can only cause it and increase it.

This was illustrated by the Iraq War. By using his "power of argument" Tony Blair succeeded to get support for this war of the political,

¹The importance of honest acknowledgment of an injustice is illustrated by the case of a person, who was unjustly convicted of murder and hanged for it. His relatives sought to "clear his name" decades after his death. As the victim of the injustice was dead, no practical results could have been achieved by his relative by a reversal of the erroneous court decision. Nevertheless they were prepared to spend substantial effort to achieve a merely symbolic recognition of the innocence of their relative.

the gullible, and the patriotic. But the war justified by nothing but false arguments, has not put an end to terrorism. It has increased it manifold.

So, if political arguments cannot defeat terror, then, can it be defeated by logical argument?

Before answering this question we shall illustrate the difference between logical and political arguments by a simple example.

A (a non-politician) wants to boil some water in an electric kettle.

He pours some water into the kettle and presses the on switch. But the kettle does not switch on.

To find out why the kettle does not work A decides to use logical argument. So, he begins to look for the reasons why the kettle does not switch on.

He starts by checking if the kettle power cord is plugged into the electric socket. So, he looks at the plug at the end of the kettle's power cord and sees, with his own eyes, that it is not plugged in into the mains socket.

Then he makes a logical deduction that to make the kettle work he needs to insert the plug into the socket.

He inserts the plug into the socket and switches the kettle on. The kettle is working.

The problem is solved!

B (a politician) would try to solve the same problem using political (rather than logical) argument.

He would also look at the plug at the end of the kettle power cord to see whether it is plugged in or not. But having seen, with his own eyes, that it is not plugged in, he would draw a different conclusion.

His argument would be as follows: "If the kettle is not plugged in, then it would mean that it is my fault. This cannot be true!"

So, he will say, "It is a lie, that the kettle is not plugged in! And, anyway, there must be some other reason why the kettle is not working. We must find out the truth! We must get to the bottom of this problem! We must not leave a stone unturned! The Nation must unite behind their leader! Nothing should weaken our resolve!"

And this will be the start of a never ending inquiry into the "controversial" issue of why the kettle manufacturers make kettles that do not work.

So as we see, the purpose of logical argument is to discover the truth. The purpose of political argument is to achieve a political objective. And in the above example the objective was to shift the blame from the politician onto somebody else.

And this is why political arguments never lead to solutions, but evolve into unresolvable controversies and conflicts.

Now that we understand the difference between political and logical arguments, we shall seek to answer the question, how logical argument can be used to defeat terror.

For an example of application of logical argument to resolution of the Middle East Conflict see: www.truth-and-justice.info/2005/middle-east-settlement.html .

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