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Complicity of the International Crisis Group

NATO'S ORIGINAL Secretary General, the first Baron Ismay, pledged in 1952 that 'not a ship, not a plane, not a gun' would the North Atlantic Alliance ever use for any purpose other than self-defence. 'There is no margin for aggressive adventure', he maintained. 'It never enters our thoughts.'¹ This Cold War posture did not long outlast the Wall. Beginning in 1992 with Yugoslav flyovers, NATO has ventured 'out of area' into Bosnia, Kosovo and Macedonia, post-invasion Afghanistan and Iraq, even Somalia and Sudan. Washington's preferred auxiliaries for its expansionary 'new world order', Alliance forces now deploy 'wherever they are needed'.² The instigators of these campaigns may have quit the stage, except for the odd cameo—Messrs Clinton and Bush laying claim to stricken Haiti; peace envoy Blair urging war on Iran. However, many of their counselors remain in situ, even retain an undeserved legitimacy.

A prominent example is the 'conflict prevention' outfit, the International Crisis Group. On the face of it, the ICG represents a particularly successful NGO incursion into geopolitical affairs. A mid-nineties spin-off from US establishment think-tank the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Crisis Group purports to offer 'new strategic thinking' on conflict situations, aided by a global monitoring network it runs across sixty countries, with links to lobbying operations in Washington, New York, Brussels and London. Half of its annual budget of \$16m comes from governments—mainly NATO members, including the US and Britain—while corporate donors include RBS, Chevron and BHP Billiton; billionaire financier George Soros is a leading patron.³ The organization styles itself as independent and non-partisan, but has consistently championed

NATO's wars to fulsome transatlantic praise. Kofi Annan spoke for the entire House when he lauded the ICG as 'a global voice of conscience, and a genuine force for peace'. The credulous Western media also has moments of sycophancy. The *FT* praises the group's 'hard-nosed realism', the BBC its 'masterful' and 'essential' research. The *Washington Post* likens its 'excellent reports' to investor credit ratings for conflict-prone states. Noting with admiration that 'there is nothing cut-and-paste about the research', the *Guardian* enthuses: 'Long may it continue to thrive.'⁴

Such commendation would seem no mean feat, especially given the dubious makeup of the Crisis Group board—a rogue's gallery even by the standards of international politics. Outgoing president Gareth Evans was the West's principal apologist for Suharto in East Timor while Australian foreign minister. Co-chair Thomas Pickering was a Reagan point man in Central America's dirty wars, as US ambassador to El Salvador and one-time intermediary for Contra gunrunners. (This would become a habit: in retirement Pickering sold arms overseas for Boeing.) The Executive Committee includes among its number Mort Abramowitz, self-confessed 'aggressive interventionist' and former State Department fire-starter who obtained Stinger missiles for the Afghan Mujahidin; earlier on, while ambassador in Thailand, he had been instrumental in the US policy of backing Pol Pot against the Vietnamese-installed regime. Also featured are stalwart peaceniks Zbigniew Brzezinski, Carter's National Security Advisor; seasoned neocon Ken Adelman; Richard Armitage, Assistant Defense Secretary under Reagan and Deputy Secretary of State under G. W. Bush; retired NATO general Wesley Clark, the bomber of Belgrade—alongside foreign friends: the likes of Aleksander Kwaśniewski, Polish promoter of NATO and EU accession. Little wonder that US Secretary of State Colin Powell, attending a 2003 ICG reception in the State Department, found the occasion 'something of a reunion'.⁵

¹ See the text of Ismay's talk to French correspondents on 12 June 1952 and his statement in Rome on 18 October that year, both available from the NATO website. I would like to thank John Sidel for his helpful comments on this article.

² NATO, 'Prague Summit Declaration', 21 November 2002. The Alliance has given logistical support to African Union peacekeepers since 2005.

³ Its 2008 annual report acknowledged the group was 'over-dependent on government grants'. ICG material available from its website unless otherwise stated.

⁴ 'In Praise of the International Crisis Group', *Guardian*, 23 March 2009.

⁵ 'I see so many friends here tonight with whom I have had the pleasure of working over the years', he added. The text is available from the ICG website.

These poachers turned gamekeepers retain an affinity with the ‘transatlantic link’. In the post-Soviet era, NATO may have lost an enemy but Crisis Group found it a role—firstly ‘humanitarian warfare’, later the War on Terror. The ICG’s Cold War veterans exploit their new-found peacemaker status to beat the drum for the Alliance’s onward march. From its capture of a united Germany in 1990, NATO has absorbed all the Warsaw Pact satellites. Neutral Yugoslavia proved tougher to crack, but a series of ‘crisis response operations’ have firmly pushed the Western Balkans towards both NATO and EU membership. The contribution of the ICG’s gunboat diplomacy to the generally permissive environment for Western military operations cannot be precisely gauged. Crisis Group claims that up to half of its recommendations are taken up, at least in part, within a year: doubtless over-generous, though official acclaim does imply distinguished service. Indeed, for newsrooms shorn of foreign correspondents, ill-served by the academic fashion for statistical models and game-theory abstractions, the ICG’s freely available, on-the-ground reportage passes for ‘independent’ authority—to all appearances with humanitarian credentials to boot. Yet a reappraisal of the group’s career, stripping away the usual pieties, will show its principals to be poachers still.

Origins

ICG publicity invokes mismanagement of post-Cold War conflict as the imperative for its formation. Rwanda often features, although preparatory work within the Carnegie Endowment predated the 1994 genocide. In fact, the crucible for the new organization was not Africa but Europe. An ICG history, released in 2010 to celebrate the group’s first fifteen years ‘on the front lines’, acknowledges that Bosnia ‘essentially defined its early years’. The account opens with Carnegie president Mort Abramowitz in besieged Sarajevo in early 1993, reconnoitring NGO activity for George Soros’s Open Society network alongside PR-man-for-hire Mark Malloch Brown, shortly of the World Bank.

At that point, Washington was busily scuttling European attempts to manage the Yugoslav fissure. For the US, NATO’s preservation as ‘primary instrument of Western defence and security’ meant neutralizing Maastricht talk of EU capabilities.⁶ Crisis Group later acknowledged that America intervened in Bosnia ‘to save the Atlantic Alliance from

⁶ Patrick Tyler, ‘US Strategy Plan Calls for Insuring No Rivals Develop’, *New York Times*, 8 March 1992.

disintegrating'.⁷ The elder Bush administration actively deepened the crisis by encouraging its Bosnian Muslim client to renege on an EC-brokered cantonization deal. With Europe floundering, NATO's moment approached—it was already monitoring a UN no-fly-zone. Abramowitz acted as a bell-wether: his new organization would push for 'immediate action' by the 'international community'.⁸ In ICG literature the term rapidly boils down to Alliance members. A NATO summit in January 1994 confirmed their readiness to wage an air war against the Bosnian Serbs, while also agreeing new association arrangements with the ex-Eastern Bloc. It called the arrangements 'Partnership for Peace'.

Crisis Group took shape amid the build-up to NATO's air attacks on Bosnian Serb positions of August and September 1995. Abramowitz secured \$200,000 from Soros and dispatched Steve Solarz—co-sponsor of the Gulf War Authorization Act, and previously head of an influential Congressional committee on US Southeast Asia policy—to solicit donations from friendly governments. Initial talk of playing an active role in relief operations evaporated. A steering group in London in January 1995—attended by such luminaries as Bernard Kouchner, early exponent of the *droit d'ingérence*—defined an advocacy-centred agenda: 'to determine the forces driving conflicts and persuade the international community to take effective action'. The official history neatly captures the new organization's *esprit de corps*:

In many respects the new group was unique for what it was not: it was not designed to deliver humanitarian assistance; it was not a mediating body; it was not a human-rights organization; and it was not adverse [sic] to recommending international military intervention to end conflicts.

As board member William Shawcross explained in the *New York Review of Books*, the idea was 'to persuade governments to do what it believes has to be done—if necessary by taking military measures'.⁹

Armed with another \$1m from Soros, the ICG arrived in Sarajevo in February 1996 to supervise the US-sponsored Dayton Accords. The

⁷ ICG, 'No Early Exit: NATO's Continuing Challenge in Bosnia', 22 May 2001.

⁸ ICG, 'Fifteen Years on the Front Lines'.

⁹ William Shawcross, 'A Hero of Our Time', *NYRB*, 30 November 1995. The shifting Shawcross, who at the start of his career lambasted Nixon's bombing of Cambodia, would fervidly support Bush's 'shock and awe' assault on Iraq.

peace agreement allowed for a 60,000-strong NATO-led 'implementation force', initially on a one-year mandate, alongside a 'High Representative' tasked with floating the new state according to the Western prescription: free elections and a free-market economy. Crisis Group's curious choice for project director was Sir Terence Clark, Britain's man in Baghdad in the cordial years before the Kuwait invasion. Within weeks, Clark pushed for IFOR's mandate—not one-third complete—to be extended by 'at least six months'. This soon became two years.¹⁰ He also called for postponement of elections, arguing that likely wins for hard-line nationalists would undermine Bosnia's already shaky territorial integrity. Clark added that popular endorsement would make local elites 'even less receptive to meddling from outside'. The occupying powers rebuffed the call, but Crisis Group was pleased to have made a splash.¹¹

Allied Force

The KLA insurgency and Serb clampdown in the Yugoslav province of Kosovo, gathering speed in early 1998, provided NATO with further opportunity for Balkan encroachment. On Capitol Hill, lawmakers had already conditioned the lifting of sanctions against Belgrade on 'substantial progress' toward the creation of an international protectorate over Kosovo.¹² The ICG endeavored to deliver it. After the North Atlantic Council asserted its 'legitimate interest in developments' in March 1998, Crisis Group designated Alliance involvement 'essential' and called for NATO deployment along the Albanian border, military exercises in neighbouring states, and a declaration by Clinton of US willingness to go to war.¹³ NATO did indeed undertake manoeuvres in Albania twice that summer, its brinkmanship culminating in authorization for air strikes in October. Despite a ceasefire, the ICG then presented the legal case for detachment of Kosovo from Belgrade and began serious planning for a 'robust' NATO occupation following the talks at Rambouillet, confident that the renewed threat of bombing would force Milošević's signature

¹⁰ ICG, 'Military Security Post-IFOR', 15 April 1996, available from Forced Migration website; 'Elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina', 22 September 1996.

¹¹ ICG, 'Why the Bosnian Elections Must Be Postponed,' 14 August 1996; 'Fifteen Years on the Front Lines'.

¹² Foreign Operations, Export Financing and Related Programs Appropriations Act 1996, cited in ICG, 'Kosovo Spring', 20 March 1998.

¹³ North Atlantic Council press release, 'Statement on the Situation in Kosovo', 5 March 1998. ICG, 'Kosovo Spring'.

to the Anglo-French draft text.¹⁴ The group subsequently defended NATO's aerial attack launched in March 1999 as 'abundantly warranted', blaming Belgrade for the impasse while staying mute about the allies' provocative insistence on freedom of movement across the entirety of Yugoslavia.¹⁵ The glaring absence of legal cover was, at most, regrettable. Gareth Evans later cautioned the UN Security Council not to 'drop the ball' again.¹⁶

NATO's illegal military action proved intoxicating. In mid-April, Crisis Group urged an escalation of the war effort: immediate ground-force invasion of Kosovo, most likely from Albania. The goal was 'an international protectorate, secured by NATO ground troops' without further negotiation with Belgrade. A resolution of Kosovo's 'final status' could wait, it said—the formula the West would subsequently settle on.¹⁷ A few weeks later the ICG once more raised the stakes. Fearing the allies might parlay with Milošević—'the Alliance is running out of targets to bomb'—it proposed invasion of Serbia proper, staged from the north through the province of Vojvodina. The consequences would have been explosive, but the organization had already made clear its desire for regime change in Belgrade and preferred wider war to a compromise peace that might keep Kosovo from NATO's grasp.¹⁸ In the event Milošević buckled on 3 June, to remain in power another sixteen months. This was nevertheless ICG warmongering of the first order.

¹⁴ ICG, 'Intermediate Sovereignty as a Basis for Resolving the Kosovo Crisis', 9 November 1998. The paper was prepared on its behalf by the Public International Law and Policy Group, another Soros-funded Carnegie outgrowth. ICG, 'Kosovo: The Road to Peace', 12 March 1999.

¹⁵ ICG, 'After Milošević: A Practical Agenda for Lasting Balkans Peace', 2 April 2001; 'War in the Balkans: Consequences of the Kosovo Conflict and Future Options for Kosovo and the Region', 19 April 1999. The military annex to the draft Rambouillet Accords stipulated that 'NATO personnel shall enjoy, together with their vehicles, vessels, aircraft and equipment, free and unrestricted passage and unimpeded access throughout the FRY including associated airspace and territorial waters. This shall include, but not be limited to, the right of bivouac, manoeuvre, billet and utilization of any areas or facilities as required.' Reproduced as appendix 2 of the House of Commons Select Committee on Defence's 14th report, 'Lessons of Kosovo', 24 October 2000. The MPs commented: 'if read literally, this could have permitted the stationing of Western forces in Serbia or even Belgrade itself'.

¹⁶ Gareth Evans, *The Responsibility to Protect: Ending Mass Atrocity Crimes Once and for All*, Washington, DC 2008, p. 146.

¹⁷ ICG, 'War in the Balkans'.

¹⁸ ICG, 'Milošević's Aims in War and Diplomacy', 12 May 1999.

In the meantime, Crisis Group had also attempted to bolster the Alliance's *casus belli* through a \$1.4m EU-funded research project into alleged war crimes in Kosovo, commenced in Tirana during the bombing campaign. A staff of 169 amassed over 4,700 witness statements, mostly detailing Serb violations. The report moves deftly from the 'fundamental principle that international humanitarian law applies equally to all parties to an armed conflict' to explanation of why NATO is entirely absent from its pages—a whitewash implausibly attributed 'to the difficulty of investigating [Alliance] violations and the lack of availability of direct witness evidence'.¹⁹ The ICG's famed capacity for meticulous research seemed rather to have deserted it.

Conveyancing

The ICG saw an unparalleled opportunity in Kosovo to resurrect the League of Nations mandates; or perhaps older colonial models. It applauded Security Council Resolution 1244 for giving protectorate-like status to Kosovo under UN auspices, and pointed to the relative absence there—compared to Bosnia—of 'entrenched and experienced local authorities equipped and determined to resist foreign interference'. The group wanted the KLA subdued, elections put off. Envisaging a long-run peacekeeping presence, it invoked lessons in occupation from the age of empire:

Bosnia's experience as an Austro-Hungarian protectorate, like the later experience of the mandated territories, shows that when properly administered a protectorate can provide security, stability and economic growth in the protected region.²⁰

There was no mention of Archduke Ferdinand's bloody demise, nor the international complications that ensued. But the choice of exemplars indicates greater ambition than merely the annexation of Kosovo. On the day the NATO bombing ceased, European leaders sealed a Stability Pact—mooted by Joschka Fischer in the midst of the war, and launched with pomp at a summit in Sarajevo—to usher the whole Balkan region

¹⁹ ICG, 'Reality Demands: Documenting Violations of International Humanitarian Law in Kosovo 1999', 27 June 2000. For a comparison, see Amnesty International, "Collateral Damage" or Unlawful Killings? Violations of the Laws of War by NATO during Operation Allied Force', 5 June 2000.

²⁰ ICG, 'Let's Learn from Bosnia', 17 May 1999; 'The New Kosovo Protectorate', 20 June 1999.

into the panoply of Euro-Atlantic structures, including the EU and WTO. Crisis Group thereafter attempted to hurry along the economic changes required for assimilation. The West exerts a considerable pull on peripheral areas, but the ICG proved reluctant to leave integration to democratic decision. In Bosnia it advised continued strong-arming by the High Representative to push through market liberalization, condemning what it perceived as ‘international appeasement of local officials’.²¹ In Kosovo, it urged the UN Mission to ‘press ahead with privatization’ of Tito’s socially owned enterprises and guarantee investors that a future sovereign Kosovo would not challenge their illegally acquired rights.²²

NATO’s Balkan swoop is now near complete. Albania and Croatia entered the Alliance in 2009; Macedonia and Montenegro will follow suit. Post-Milošević Serbia is a bilateral ‘partner for peace’ and gives KFOR troops free passage through its territory. Crisis Group chairman emeritus and UN special envoy Martti Ahtisaari guided Kosovo to a quasi-independence that amounts to EU and NATO custody. An international steering committee stacked with Western interests retains ‘all necessary powers’ to fit out Kosovo for its free-market future. In effect, the ICG noted, the Europeans have ‘catch-all discretion in how much power they can take from Kosovo’s authorities’. It happily endorsed the Ahtisaari plan, announcing in May 2007 that there were anyway ‘no good alternatives’ to it. The group wants Alliance peacekeepers to provide ‘strong support’ to EU police restraining Serb enclaves in the North. Whether they can hold Kosovo together remains to be seen. Meanwhile, from its Sarajevo headquarters, NATO is readying the Bosnian military for Alliance membership. The ICG proposes giving Bosnia fast-track entry into NATO and the EU while the territory remains under a UN mandate.²³ It has lobbied the allies to prolong their troop commitments, scolding Rumsfeld

²¹ Conditions were so inhospitable even McDonald’s could not get a foothold, it deplored. ICG, ‘Is Dayton Failing? Bosnia Four Years after the Peace Agreement’, 28 October 1999; ‘Bosnia: Reshaping the International Machinery’, 29 November 2001.

²² ICG, ‘Kosovo: A Strategy for Economic Development’, 19 December 2001. The Kosovan sell-offs got underway in 2004. Crisis Group also successfully advised UNMIK and KFOR to ‘implement a rapid and categorical takeover’ of Kosovo’s Trepca mining conglomerate, sitting on one of the richest mineral deposits in Europe. ICG, ‘Trepca: Making Sense of the Labyrinth’, 26 November 1999. See also Neil Clark, ‘The Spoils of Another War’, *Guardian*, 21 September 2004.

²³ Srećko Latal, ‘Dayton Anniversary Finds Bosnia in Dire Straits’, *Balkan Insight*, 30 November 2009.

in 2001 for talking of US draw-downs and more recently touting the local amenities to NATO generals:

The Alliance might lease one of several extensive former military ranges in western Bosnia for live-fire exercises it cannot easily conduct elsewhere in Europe. Areas in that region are well suited for tank manoeuvres and mountain training (the latter useful for troops deploying to Afghanistan), sparsely populated and connected to Adriatic transport hubs.²⁴

Providing a shooting range for NATO seems a sad destiny for the conflict-scarred region, a decade after Blair backed war over Kosovo ‘not for territory but for values’.²⁵ Yet Washington will no more relinquish its Balkan gains than any of its Cold War encampments.

War on Terror

With the exception of a few start-ups in Algeria, Central Africa and Cambodia, the ICG remained confined to the Balkans during the Clinton–Blair era of ‘humanitarian warfare’. The lack of impetus for further expansion early on may be partly explained by turnover at the top. Crisis Group’s first president, UK charity executive Nicholas Hinton, died of a heart attack only 18 months into the job. His replacement, one-time Médecins Sans Frontières director Alain Destexhe, exited after a similar period—the official history refers obliquely to ‘internal frictions’, tartly adding that the Belgian liberal ‘resigned to devote himself more fully to his political career’. But Gareth Evans, acting president from 1999, thrived in the role for a decade. He had been at the forefront of Australia’s neo-liberal reform from 1983 to 1996, as a member of both Hawke’s and Keating’s Labor governments. A student leader at Melbourne in the mid-sixties, he had agitated against censorship but in favour of Australian involvement in Vietnam. His stint as Attorney-General in 1983–84 put to rest the former law student’s libertarian pretensions, while during a subsequent three-year spell as Resources and Energy Minister he made an obliging U-turn on promised legislation for Aboriginal land rights—anathema to the mining lobby—a factor in earning him the sobriquet Minister for Mates.

²⁴ ICG, ‘Bosnia’s Incomplete Transition: Between Dayton and Europe’, 9 March 2009. Gareth Evans, ‘Sorry, the Boys Should Darn Well Stay in Bosnia’, *International Herald Tribune*, 25 May 2001.

²⁵ Tony Blair, ‘A New Generation Draws the Line’, *Newsweek*, 19 April 1999

In spite of a grating personality and frequent temper tantrums, he was elevated to the Department of Foreign Affairs in 1988, where his tenure was defined by the special relationship with Suharto. In his first year, Evans negotiated the Timor Gap treaty divvying up East Timor's offshore oil. 'The only practical way to assist the people of East Timor is to work through the Indonesian authorities', he reassured the Australian Upper House, adding that 'there is no binding legal obligation not to recognize the acquisition of territory that was acquired by force.' He deflected criticism of his murderous ally even after the massacre of at least 400 unarmed people in Dili in 1991—'an aberration, not an act of state policy'. Though the death toll in occupied East Timor was proportionately higher than in Cambodia under Pol Pot, Evans's moral outrage was confined to safer targets: 'How many more Kuwaitis are to be killed, maimed, raped . . . before we say that enough is enough?', he railed after Saddam's invasion. In this case, the threshold was easily reached: Hawke had already despatched a couple of frigates to the Gulf.

After Labor crashed to defeat in 1996 and again in 1998, Evans sought escape from the doldrums of opposition. When an official bid for the top job at UNESCO fell flat, old friends on the international circuit got him the ICG ticket as a fall-back, and Evans set about it with gusto. He quickly obtained Soros money for new postings: to Sierra Leone, on the occasion of Britain's return to its former colony; to the ex-Soviet states of Central Asia, calling for more NATO joint military exercises; and to Colombia, aiding the US-sponsored counter-insurgency war that future ICG chair Thomas Pickering had just reignited as Clinton's Undersecretary of State. Evans also latched onto a facile re-branding of interventionist doctrine known as the 'responsibility to protect', combining in 2000 with Michael Ignatieff and Klaus Naumann, the NATO general who despatched the Luftwaffe over Yugoslavia in 1995, in a Canadian-sponsored commission. The panel succeeded in getting an emasculated version of 'R2P' adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2005. This was later utilized by Russia during its 2008 assault on Georgia, much to Evans's irritation.²⁶

The *attentats* of 9/11, however, provided Evans with an improved platform on which to build a global role. He promptly endorsed the US

²⁶ 'There was no Security Council resolution giving it legal authority for military intervention', Evans complained, concluding, with straight face, that 'vigilante justice is always dangerous'. Evans, 'Russia and the "Responsibility to Protect"', *LA Times*, 31 August 2008.

attack on Afghanistan, adding that ‘pressure will obviously build for action against Iraq’.²⁷ Within weeks, the ICG initiated ‘a major series of new terrorism-related reports around the world’, opening regional offices in Amman and Islamabad. Crisis Group beat the International Security Assistance Force to Afghanistan. The campaign in the Hindu Kush marked the Alliance’s debut outside the European hinterland and its first ground offensive, notwithstanding previous ICG efforts to escalate the Kosovo war. NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer staked the Alliance’s ‘evolving relationship with Asia’—the neighbouring states of Iran, Pakistan, China, as well as nearby India—on this increasingly unwinnable war.²⁸ Bush initially restricted non-US troops to the capital, most as a security detail for Karzai—a role NATO honed in Republika Srpska shielding the extreme nationalist Biljana Plavšić from her rivals—while American forces targeted Taliban holdouts. The ICG lobbied for ISAF to be greatly expanded in size and operational remit, preferring ‘international boots on the ground’ to Washington’s reliance on co-opted warlords.²⁹ There are now over 85,000 ISAF troops under Alliance command—including a couple of hundred from NATO’s new Balkan partners—concentrated in the restive South and East.

Although the Afghan insurgency includes many an old Mujahidin friend of the ICG’s Cold War meddlers, the organization seems to have no more of a grasp of the occupation’s ineradicable unpopularity than the allies themselves. Crisis Group proposes a political overhaul—more checks on the executive—but keeps faith in the rotten Karzai, envisaging that the client president could somehow reform his own venal administration.³⁰ It characteristically calls for more troops and long-term occupation even while acknowledging that NATO air strikes are antagonizing the host population. The group has stridently opposed any suggestion of

²⁷ Text of speech at Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington DC, 14 November 2001; available from ICG website.

²⁸ The Brookings Institution, ‘Afghanistan and NATO: Forging the 21st Century Alliance’, 29 February 2008; available from the Brookings website.

²⁹ See the ICG Senior Vice-President Mark Schneider’s testimony to the House Committee on Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia, 2 April 2008; available from ICG website.

³⁰ After the 2009 election debacle, the ICG commented: ‘With the legitimacy of his presidency now in doubt, Karzai faces a critical test of his willingness to end his dependence on corruption and cronyism in favour of building a genuine political legacy’. The group made a scapegoat of UN Mission chief, Kai Eide, forced out earlier this year. ‘Afghanistan: Elections and the Crisis of Governance’, 25 November 2009.

unilateral withdrawal or a negotiated peace, trusting in Obama's surge to deliver an improbable victory.³¹

Going global

Crisis Group's enrolment in the War on Terror generated double-digit growth in state funding, with contributions hitting the \$2m mark in 2001, \$4m in 2003 and rising to \$7.5m by 2008, according to its Annual Reports. This made possible the organization's growth to forty countries by 2003; fifty by 2005. Relations with some allies can go through bad patches—despite their helpful spadework on Jamaah Islamiyah, two Indonesia analysts were thrown out by Megawati's intelligence chief in the run-up to the 2004 elections, after making mention of military corruption as well as questioning tactics on Aceh and Papua—but the group steadfastly supports America's own war efforts. To track ICG advocacy across its extensive network of projects, while instructive, is beyond the scope of the present essay. What follows instead focuses on the geopolitical hotspots where Crisis Group has issued arguably its most provocative war counsel to date.

The ICG pitched into Israel–Palestine in 2002, dallying with neocon visions of American 'anti-terror' operations in the West Bank. Its Middle East lead, former Clinton aide Robert Malley, had just collaborated with former Arafat adviser Hussein Agha in an exculpatory account of the Camp David talks: 'an opportunity that was missed by all, less by design than by mistake'.³² Old hands in the 'peace process', Malley and Agha proceeded to set out future ICG policy in *Foreign Affairs*—without alarming that particular readership. They recommended that the Bush administration impose 'a full-fledged, non-negotiable final settlement', its contours similar to Clinton's last-gasp parameters of December 2000. Their plan guaranteed the Israelis that there would be 'no return to the 1967 borders': Tel Aviv would retain the 78 per cent of Palestine seized in 1948–49, annex the bulk of its West Bank colonists in exchange for Arab-heavy territory into which Palestinian refugees could flow, and disgorge the remainder for a disarmed and disjointed Palestinian 'state', to be policed by US-led peacekeepers—25,000 of them, in the official

³¹ Samina Ahmed, 'Talking to the Taliban is Foolish', *FT*, 24 July 2008. ICG, 'Afghanistan: New US Administration, New Directions', 13 March 2009.

³² Hussein Agha and Robert Malley, 'Camp David: The Tragedy of Errors', *NYRB*, 9 August 2001.

ICG version, the same number wanted for Afghanistan at the outset. They noted that Israel could be further reassured of its security by an invitation to join the North Atlantic Alliance.³³ Crisis Group further speculated whether an international force, rather than simply locking down the Palestinian Authority, might actually supplant it: mostly likely as part of any peace accord but possibly as prelude, to impose reform on Ramallah and spare Israel ‘perilous and costly’ incursions into the West Bank. It casually cited the proposal of former Clinton adviser and AIPAC deputy director Martin Indyk, for ‘an American-led trusteeship’ in Palestine. ‘The only catch’, explained Indyk in the *Washington Post*,

is that it will require the United States and its allies to confront Palestinian terrorist organizations, exposing US troops to the suicide bombers while they engage directly in the kind of military actions in Palestinian cities and refugee camps that have earned Israel international opprobrium.³⁴

The backlash for relieving its proxy in a shoot-out against Hamas would very probably surpass anything the West has incurred in the region to date, but the Crisis Group package won official endorsement: ‘ammunition’ for the ‘peace camps’, said Blair, and ‘far more attractive for all than the status quo’.³⁵

Given its willingness to implant NATO on the West Bank, the ICG was hardly to be daunted by the 2003 Anglo-American invasion of Iraq. The group officially reserved its position, but Evans lent his approval to the weapons-inspections charade at the UN, writing in the *International Herald Tribune*:

What most of the international community will now support, and properly so, is a tough-as-nails resolution making it clear that while destruction of the regime may not be its objective, destruction of Iraq’s weapons capability certainly is—and that, in the event of non-compliance, that objective will be achieved by whatever military ferocity it takes.

³³ Agha and Malley, ‘The Last Negotiation: How to End the Middle East Peace Process’, *Foreign Affairs*, May–June 2002. The territorial prescriptions are Western standard: see Edward Said’s clear-eyed analysis, ‘Palestinians under Siege’, *LRB*, 14 December 2000. Malley and Agha expected no ‘grand diplomatic initiative’ from Obama, but hoped for a public-relations boost in the Arab world. ‘Obama and the Middle East’, *NYRB*, 11 June 2009.

³⁴ Indyk, ‘A US-led Trusteeship for Palestine’, *Washington Post*, 29 June 2002. See also ICG, ‘A time to lead: the international community and the Israel–Palestine conflict’, 10 April 2002; ‘Middle East Endgame’, 16 July 2002.

³⁵ Reproduced among other choice comments from 2002 on the ICG website.

In a warning shot at dissenters, Evans added that ‘if other key players now resist this course, it will be much harder for them to complain about the United States flying solo.’³⁶ For an organization pledged to avert ‘unlawful deadly force in conflict’ to give tacit approval for yet another illegal US-led assault was lamentable. The outcome certainly made a mockery of the pieties of R2P: the occupation has proved more deadly than many of the group’s *causes célèbres*.³⁷ The ICG thereafter seemed out of its depth in Baghdad, an arena too unstable for methods honed in the Balkan theatre. It thought a UN political front on non-military affairs might ‘de-Americanize’ the occupation, accepting that the UN could thereby invite reprisals. The group stuck with this approach in the aftermath of the August 2003 attack on the UN compound—punishment for special representative Sergio Vieira de Mello’s relatively low-gear collaboration—arguing in macabre fashion that a valuable and dangerous supporting role merited ‘compensating responsibility’. Despite astonishing maladministration the ICG retained sympathy with America’s ‘thankless’ task, quoting back the Pentagon’s own counter-insurgency manual as it would later also do in Afghanistan.³⁸ This proved a winning strategy for the ICG itself: ‘I don’t know what I’d do without Crisis Group’s legwork, expertise and insights,’ said BBC Defence and Security Correspondent Rob Watson in 2008, upon receipt of its latest Iraq briefing.

With Baghdad taken, the ICG has trained its sights on Tehran and Pyongyang. It calls for a revamped non-proliferation regime with built-in ‘intrusive inspections’ and ‘stronger enforcement capacity’, and would impose these conditions on target states ahead of time. Neither the proximity of Israeli and US forces, nor growing American and French interest in the ‘tactical’ use of nuclear weapons, relieves the burden on Iran ‘to demonstrate its peaceful intentions and disprove persistent, indeed growing doubts’. Should the Iranians not settle for proposed ‘concessions’ that fall short of NPT entitlements and are hedged by threats and

³⁶ Evans, ‘Disarming Saddam is Enough’, *IHT*, 16 September 2002. William Shawcross, still on the ICG board, argued explicitly for regime change. See Shawcross, ‘Let’s Take Him Out’, *Guardian*, 1 August 2002.

³⁷ By July 2006, the estimated death toll was over 650,000. Gilbert Burnham, Riyadh Lafta, et al., ‘Mortality after the 2003 Invasion of Iraq: A Cross-sectional Cluster Sample Survey’, *The Lancet*, vol. 368, issue 9545, 21 October 2006.

³⁸ ICG, ‘Annual Report 2004’; ‘War in Iraq: Political Challenges after the Conflict’, 25 March 2003; ‘Governing Iraq’, 25 August 2003; ‘What Can the US Do in Iraq?’, 22 December 2004. NATO soon overcame its invasion angst, setting up a train-and-equip mission for the Iraqi army in 2004.

delays, it calls for additional sanctions ultimately leading to the ‘imposition of land, air and sea interdiction regimes to prevent Iranian import of nuclear or dual-use technologies’. It would be tricky to seal Iran in this manner, but the affront is clear. Crisis Group has noted that such action would be ‘in some respects similar to a blockade, which is traditionally regarded as an act of war’, yet is willing to risk retaliatory strikes on US targets in order to preserve Israel’s regional nuclear monopoly. The hypocrisy, or rather ‘controversial question’, of the Israeli bomb is safely parked on the other side of a general Middle East peace, which—left to the ICG to mediate—amounts to the never-never.³⁹ In 2007 Evans once again stoked the fires, explaining in the *IHT* that while the Crisis Group plan removes the necessity for an immediate strike,

Tehran would be disciplined by knowing that if Iran made any move toward building a nuclear weapon through the production of weapons-grade fissile material, or any hardware in which to put it, all hell would break loose. A full range of economic sanctions would take immediate effect, and military options would be on the table.⁴⁰

Nuclear-armed North Korea, meanwhile, has if anything attracted even sterner wrath. In May 2003, a Council on Foreign Relations ‘task force’ chaired by Abramowitz and featuring Solarz—then ICG vice-chairman—threatened Pyongyang with the same ‘serious consequences’ leveled at Iraq.⁴¹ Crisis Group followed up with an ultimatum poorly disguised as a ‘phased negotiation strategy’ later that summer. It opens with the familiar dance of conditional US security assurances, but talks are restricted to a six-month window—the necessary time for American reinforcements to amass in the South, the briefing explains. If the DPRK were not to surrender its bomb in time, then further sanctions and interdictions and potentially full-scale American invasion would follow, provided that China and Japan could be brought to acquiesce. ‘Any military conflict on the Korean peninsula would be a catastrophe’, the ICG humely observed; however:

balanced against this is the prospect of Pyongyang proliferating and supplying other countries and terrorist groups with fissile material and nuclear bombs, making no city in the world safe. If the chances of such harm

³⁹ ICG, ‘Dealing with Iran’s Nuclear Programme’, 27 October 2003; ‘Iran: Is There a Way Out of the Nuclear Impasse?’, 23 February 2006.

⁴⁰ Gareth Evans, ‘It’s Not Too Late to Stop Iran’s Bomb’, *IHT*, 16 February 2007.

⁴¹ Mort Abramowitz, James Laney, et al., ‘Meeting the North Korean Nuclear Challenge’, Council on Foreign Relations Task Force Report no. 45, May 2003.

occurring are real, the military option, however horrifying, must be kept on the table.⁴²

The ICG is raising the stakes for a population that has lived under the threat of nuclear attack since the sabre-rattling of Truman and MacArthur. Evans retired from the group in 2009 but continued the nuclear hypocrisy as co-chair of a committee reporting to this year's NPT review conference. All the cherished double standards survived his further scrutiny: the US and Russia must reduce their vast arsenals, though full disarmament 'cannot at this stage be credibly specified'. States that exercise their right to withdraw from the NPT should face 'punitive consequences', while the acceptable renegades—Israel, India and Pakistan—deserve to have full access to the lucrative world nuclear market.⁴³ Counter-proliferation is the West's preferred pretext for military action in the new century, and Evans and his ICG are incendiary part-players. They may still get the usual recognition for such labours: both have come within a whisker of the Nobel Peace Prize.⁴⁴

Only a political and media mainstream complaisant about NATO adventurism could mistake Crisis Group for a muscular but essentially peace-loving NGO, as though it were the armed wing of Amnesty International. The organization scarcely seems non-governmental at all. Its relentless championing of the Balkan and Afghan campaigns, together with an enthusiasm—outstripping most Alliance members—for the opening of new fronts, more resemble the functions of a Pentagon outwork. Given the service records of the personnel who clutter the group's higher echelons, the likeness is hardly coincidental. New ICG president Louise Arbour has not changed direction. She already advocates an extended stay for the US and NATO in Bosnia; doubtless

⁴² ICG, 'North Korea: A Phased Negotiation Strategy', 1 August 2003.

⁴³ Evans and Yoriko Kawaguchi, International Commission on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament Report, 'Eliminating Nuclear Threats: A Practical Agenda for Global Policymakers', November 2009. Klaus Naumann again featured among Evans's collaborators. The retired general had made his own distinctive contribution to disarmament in a think-tank paper on NATO's future, contrarily arguing that 'the first use of nuclear weapons must remain in the quiver of escalation as the ultimate instrument to prevent the use of weapons of mass destruction . . . since there is simply no realistic prospect of a nuclear-free world.' Naumann et al., 'Towards a Grand Strategy for an Uncertain World', Noaber Foundation, 2007, pp. 94–7.

⁴⁴ See Lars Bevanger, 'Nobel Prize Winner to be Revealed', 13 October 2006, on the BBC website.

other strategically useful sites will be similarly commandeered.⁴⁵ Arbour of course has form of her own: chief prosecutor at the Hague tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, she enjoyed a productive collaboration with NATO partners while the Alliance waged an illegal war over Kosovo with perfect impunity. The scales of justice do so uncannily align with the balance of power in international politics. Getting them even is no small task, but throwing out bad counsel would be a start.

⁴⁵ Louise Arbour, 'Bosnia's Continuing Chaos', *Foreign Policy*, 18 November 2009.