

Dear Prime Minister

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE PRIME MINISTER RE AUSTRALIAN INVOLVEMENT IN IRAQ

We are writing this open letter to you to express our opposition to Australian participation in a war in Iraq that does not have Security Council endorsement. While we accept that you believe your actions are in the national interest, we cannot agree. In our judgment Australian involvement in a US initiated war, which lacks UN sanction, is not in Australia's national interest.

How can being responsible for the probable loss of 100,000 civilians over a six-month war be in Australia's national interest?

How can a war without UN sanction, which will inevitably fuel long term hostility among many Muslim nations towards the West in general and Australia in particular, be in Australia's national interest?

How can a war, which is likely to provoke more numerous and violent responses from terrorists be in Australia's national interest?

How can contributing to increased instability in the Middle East be in Australia's national interest?

How can the alienation of Australia from many of its Asian neighbours as a result of our involvement in a war with Iraq be in Australia's national interest?

The identification and neutralisation of weapons of mass destruction is a goal to which we all subscribe. But we are already moving down that path now without loss of life and at considerably less cost than would be incurred with a massive air and land attack on Iraq. Until the international community judges that the present strategy is fruitless, we should focus our energies on maximising the likelihood of its success.

Some of us old enough to remember Vietnam see a number of similarities. We were confronted then with the domino theory: "If we don't stop them here they'll become stronger and move further south, and then further south again until we are in imminent danger of invasion." The flaws in this theory have long since been exposed, and yet there are striking similarities between it and "rogue states": "If we don't stop Saddam we will have to contend with North Korea, and if we don't stop North Korea we will have to contend with country X ... then country Y and so on and so on".

In our view Mr. Prime Minister, you are digging a very deep hole for this nation from which it will be difficult to emerge. The "coalition of the willing" may disparage the position of "old Europe", but we believe "old Europe" is making the correct call.

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