

# FPIF Statement on the War

by Miriam Pemberton, FPIF military affairs editor | March 20, 2003

In 1996 Foreign Policy in Focus set out to build a network committed to the goal of making the U.S. a more responsible world leader. By “responsible” we meant a government vigorously pursuing the unfinished business of building international norms and institutions capable of preventing war and advancing political and economic justice.

During the past two years our government has taken us resolutely on a march in the opposite direction. It has gone out of its way to tear up international agreements and undermine international institutions. Since 9-11 the pace of the march has accelerated. Security has been used as the pretext for a multi-pronged assault on civil liberties, a draining of the public treasury, and the appearance of new U.S. military bases and troops in nearly every continent of the world.

Today we find ourselves at the place where, logically, this march has been leading us all along: a preemptive and illegal war. The international norms for waging war that the U.S. signed on to when it helped craft the UN charter have clearly not been met. Iraq has not attacked us—the perception held by remarkable numbers of Americans that it has notwithstanding—and poses no imminent threat to do so. Our government has been cynically seeking the gloss of UN approval for an action it has made clear all along it would reserve for itself the right to take, approval or no. This doublespeak has been one of the means by which it has undermined the success of the international community’s chosen course of inspections; withholding key intelligence data from the inspectors is another.

The stakes in this war extend far beyond the irreducible facts of the Iraqis as well as Americans who will be killed, electively. The Bush administration has committed this nation to a course it has never in its history taken before. Preventive wars against possible threats will now be official U.S. foreign policy. War with Iraq, in other words, is only the debut of a program whose goal is permanent U.S. global military domi-

nance. This is not hyperbole; it is now enshrined, codified, in U.S. national security doctrine.

As we move into war, dissent from this program will be more difficult. The administration will be working even harder to manage the news, and control the national conversation on this war. Patriotism, we are already being told, requires unquestioning support for the war now being fought in our name. We reject this. FPIF’s reason for being is to insert progressive voices into the public debate on foreign policy: in the various publications and electronic forums on our website, and in the promotion of the experts in our Think Tank Without Walls in print journalism, radio, TV and public forums around the country and abroad. This mission is now more important than ever.

Our hope is that citizens will find materials from FPIF useful in the discussions they will be having in the weeks to come at the bus stop, on their college campuses, at the water cooler, in the supermarket, in letters they will write to their newspaper editors, and at public forums and demonstrations.

The administration’s cynical attempt to use the United Nations for its own ends has failed. The UN stood up to crushing pressure, and said no. So did the millions of citizens of the international community who have turned out in the streets around the world, and the millions of Americans who have joined them. This international force, as the *New York Times* put it, is now the other superpower.

Senator Robert Byrd said yesterday in a speech to the Senate that “After the war has ended, the United States will have to rebuild much more than the coun-



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try of Iraq. We will have to rebuild America's image around the globe." The wealth of international support for the U.S. following 9-11 has been squandered, turned to dismay and disgust. The task of making the U.S. a responsible world leader must begin again. Please join us.

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