**A Distillation: The Iraq War and its Aftermath**

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The invasion of Iraq and its aftermath were indisputably of seismic political significance - whether in the UK or in the international sphere. However, efforts to ascribe the event with the quality of a paradigm-shift in terms of law are doomed to failure; the consequences have been too complex and diffuse.

Nonetheless, politically seismic events cannot but have effects on the development of the law. And the invasion’s extremely toxic political legacy has clearly affected the nature of legal developments since. This paper identifies two examples of this in international law. The first of these is the death of the so-called “pre-emptive” strike doctrine in the *jus ad bellum*, which, while it did not pertain directly to the use of force in Iraq, was a significant casualty of the invasion due to its guilt-by-association with the now-defunct Bush Doctrine. The second of these is the expansion of the extraterritorial application of human rights law by the European Court of Human Rights. This expansion, or perhaps more appropriately the clarification of past restrictions, was as much a political response to the invasion as a logical redefinition of the Court’s jurisprudence on its own jurisdiction.

The Iraq episode teaches us that political and legal developments are often inextricably linked, and that the tenor of public debate - whether domestically or internationally - can strongly influence the manner in which the law changes. While it is easy for those engaged in the academic study of the law to focus primarily on the legal system and its complexity, the consequences of the Iraq debacle remind us that the system exists in an environment of politics, and that it can therefore be shaped by individuals.