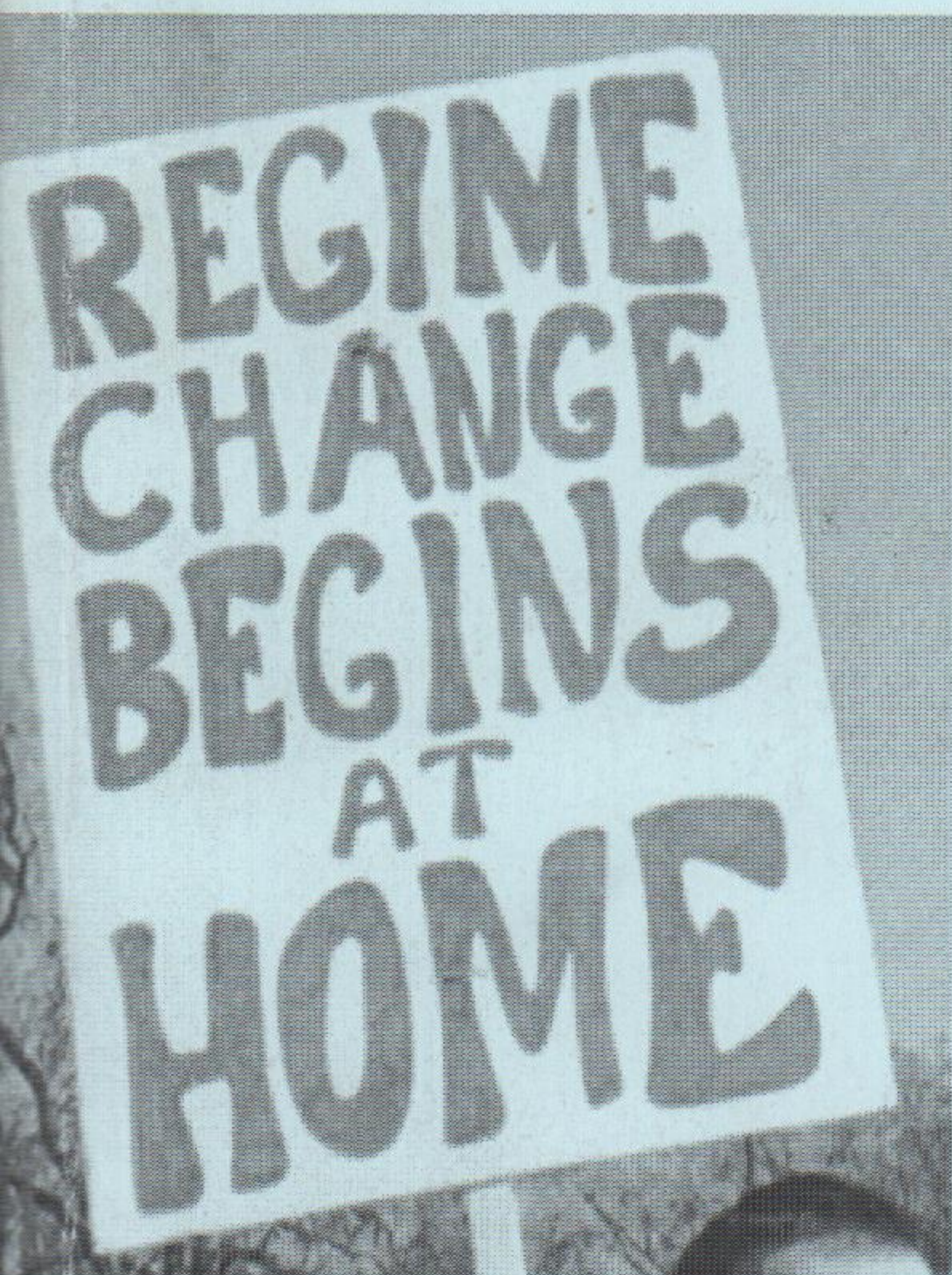


SOCIALIST FUTURE

review

SUMMER 2003 £3



The world after the invasion of Iraq

A special issue
with articles on:

- Globalisation,
war and the state
- America's 'Big
Lie' machine
- The project for
an Islamic
enlightenment
- Lessons from the
'Stop the War'
movement

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Socialist Future Review Summer 2003

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Regime change begins at home

The invasion and occupation of Iraq by US and British armed forces, carried out despite the largest co-ordinated protest against war in history, is a definite turning point in the affairs of humanity, as the articles in this special issue of *Socialist Future Review* try to explain. It signals a new period of imperialist wars and social revolution, the outcome of which will decide the subsequent fate of the planet. Despite appearances, the force of history is with those countless millions on every continent who opposed the drive to war in Iraq. Our weakness – and it is the key issue – is an absence of decisive, revolutionary leadership with a strategy for power that can inspire the masses of people into shaping the course of history for themselves.

Behind the attack on Iraq – whatever weapons of mass deception Bush and Blair may deploy – was a desperate desire by global capitalism to extend its economic reach. This inherent compulsion to accumulate capital has, in the period of intense globalisation, transformed objective political, economic and social conditions. In Britain and the United States in particular, traditional “politics” is openly an expression of the “values” of the market economy and the needs of the major corporations. In Bush’s White House it is almost impossible to put a cigarette paper between the corporations and the administration, as the article by Peter McLaren and Greg Martin shows (see page 18). The disillusionment with existing politics is reinforced by this process. What, after all, is the point in voting if leaders tell electors that the “market will decide” the distribution of everything from housing, pensions, jobs through to education?

The transformation of the global economy over the last 20 years through the emergence of the transnational corporation is what lies behind the dissolution of the old politics. Over the past decade and a half, the number of transnational corporations has skyrocketed from 7,000 to more than 40,000. Today, 50 of the top 100 economies in the world are TNCs; 70% of global trade is controlled by just 500

corporations. Nominally they have headquarters in the US, Britain, France, Japan, Germany, Switzerland, etc. Yet they operate on a transnational basis, moving production from country to country and allowing their component parts real autonomy to match local conditions. As Philip Bobbitt notes in his recent book *The Shield of Achilles*.

"The price [for liberalisation of finance and trade] these states were compelled to pay is a world market that is no longer structured along national lines but rather in a way that is transnational and thus in many ways operates independently of states."

Alongside this is the internationalisation of finance. Around \$1.5 trillion is exchanged daily on foreign exchange markets, only 5% of which are directly related to payments for traded goods and services. There is a new international division of labour, where British Airways has its ticketing done in India, while Dr Martens makes shoes in South China where workers are paid 20 cents an hour. As Walter Wriston, the former chairman of Citibank, explains:

"Money only goes where it is wanted, and only stays where it's well treated, and once you tie the world together with telecommunications and information, the ball game is over...For the first time in history the politicians of the world can't stop it."

Meanwhile, under corporate-led globalisation, one third of the world's children are undernourished and half the world's population lacks regular access to the most essential drugs. Some 100 million children live or work on the street while the combined wealth of the world's 200 richest people reached \$1.3 trillion in 1999; the combined income of 582 million living in the 43 least developed countries is \$146 billion.

Of course there were political aspects to the invasion of Iraq but in essence the reasons were economic. In the year before the invasion, the US economy saw the collapse of Enron, World Com and a number of other major corporations that had based themselves on fictitious rather than real capital. Their demise was a reflection of the downturn in the economy, which eventually became a recession. The Bush government slashed welfare spending and increased the arms budget to astronomical figures – a sure sign that war was coming. The rest of the capitalist world, meanwhile, continued to make this possible by financing a US government deficit that makes America the biggest debtor nation on the planet.

In another period, Iraq was used by the United States and Britain as a

proxy against the Iranian revolution in the war between the two countries that claimed more than a million lives between 1980-88. Western arms dealers fell over themselves to sell Saddam Hussein the latest weaponry and later ignored the use of chemical weapons against Kurds in the north. But in 2003, the US is the global cop for transnational capitalism. Bush is the sheriff and Blair is his deputy. The objective is to tear down regimes that, for a variety of reasons, resist complete integration into the world economy. Paul Bremer, chief of the US-led occupation authority, told journalists that Iraq needed to "move in a clear direction towards a liberal, market-run economy". (*Financial Times*, May 27). In the long term, "eliminating artificiality" through price "liberalisation" and privatisation were among the main goals of his administration. He added:

"We need to get out of situation where 60% of the people rely on the government to get their food. Our task is now to help the Iraqis rebuild their economy."

The increasing desperation to open up new markets and integrate other economies into the global system is now taking a military form. War is a display of internal weakness and division in the global capitalist system as a whole and its leading actor, the United States, in particular. As the pension plans of millions turn to dust and the rate of exploitation becomes more intense for those at work, the politics of the crisis become more and more authoritarian. In Britain, we have seen how the Blair government fabricated "evidence" about weapons of mass destruction and used a number of scare tactics – including putting troops around Heathrow – to intimidate parliament and popular opinion. It has proved easier for New Labour to do the former rather than the latter.

Millions who marched against the war stood up to the Big Lie techniques. This is a verifiable indication that growing numbers reject the status quo, do not accept what they are told by politicians and are prepared to take their demands to the streets. Moreover, many are clear that parliament is a weakened body that does not and cannot represent their aspirations and act as a democratic expression. The crisis that has enveloped the Blair government since the end of the invasion is testimony to the fact that this regime is simply not trusted on any serious question. Even former cabinet ministers like Short and Cook have confirmed that Downing Street is not so much the home of the prime minister but of the unelected *Il Presidente*. Blair feels no sentiment for ordinary, bourgeois democratic procedures because his regime is

different to what has gone before. He is much more at home with MI6 and MI5, the secret spy agencies who helped him concoct the case for war against Iraq.

This indeed is the management team of Britain PLC, as they so are fond of telling us. We are all employees of a large corporation. Parliaments and that sort of thing are relics from history. So the constitutional coup of June 12 was symptomatic. Blair abolished the office of Lord Chancellor himself, without reference to the cabinet, parliament or even the monarchy. Such was the rush that the position had to be reinstated the very next day because the House of Lords could not begin sitting without the Lord Chancellor's presence. No 10 officials were desperately rerafting the announcement after it was pointed out that the government could not unilaterally abolish the post. It would need legislation. The big announcement had to be changed because no one had realised," said one Whitehall official. "It was all so rushed and chaotic."

Despite the differences within the government over the Euro and other issues, New Labour presses on with foundation (for which read privatisation of) hospitals, the abolition of civil liberties, cuts in and commercialisation of education and the fire service, increased fares on the railways and the plot to allow untested genetically-modified food into our bodies. Whatever the tactical differences between Blair and Brown, they are united on the central nature of the role of New Labour in managing the market economy. Those like George Galloway who resist get witch-hunted and pilloried in the press. Galloway was suspended from New Labour for speaking out against the war while it was actually going on. He learnt of his suspension through the media and more than a month later had still not heard anything official on paper from his own party!

There are no compromises between what New Labour stands for and the aspirations of ordinary, working people. This is what the firefighters discovered in their nine-month campaign for a decent standard of pay. They were cruelly deceived by a leadership that in the end had no stomach for a fight with New Labour. Fire Brigades Union general secretary Andy Gilchrist soon found out that the government is not interested in compromise. At one point, he denounced New Labour at a speech in Manchester. Over the next 24 hours, the TUC, the media and the government came down on him like a ton of bricks. The following Monday planned strikes were suspended and the dispute was from then on the road to nowhere under a leadership that had lost whatever nerve

it had had. Now the FBU executive has persuaded a disheartened but in no ways defeated membership to accept a deal which opens up the service to management-imposed cuts in both jobs and fire cover. Gilchrist was right for the wrong reasons when he told the recall conference that voted for the useless deal: "If anyone thinks we can overcome the state with a few periodic strikes then they are living on a different planet."

First of all, you have to have the objective of "overcoming the state". Gilchrist and the rest of the trade union bureaucracy have never had any such intention. The more reactionary New Labour gets, the more angry their members get, the closer these "leaders" try and get to the government. They even invent distinctions between New Labour as a party and as a government that are more apparent than real to justify their policy of remaining affiliated to the organisation. Tony Woodley, the incoming general secretary of the Transport and General Workers Union, has bizarrely described any attempt to sever the link with Labour as a "right-wing agenda". He says he wants to "take Labour back into the party", whatever that may mean. Yet, rank-and-file members increasingly have little to do with the party's activities. Membership of New Labour, meanwhile, has more than halved from 450,000 to under 200,000. Woodley's plea for Blair to "start acting in the interests of working people" (*Independent*, June 2), would be laughable if it weren't so abject. The fact is that the party is as Blairite as the government and has abolished any structures that might have given the rank and file a say. Meanwhile, the "revolts" by Labour MPs are getting smaller and smaller as re-selection time approaches, with only 11 voting for an independent inquiry into the weapons of mass destruction issue.

The need is to go beyond New Labour, not deeper into it, as the bureaucracy is determined to do. They recoil from this task because moving beyond New Labour does mean overcoming the state, as Gilchrist puts it. It does mean creating new economic and political structures to replace the fraudulent system that passes for democracy. People's Assemblies in the community and democratic ownership and control in the workplace are a distinct possibility as a way forward. A new leadership in Britain has to identify our enemy as a social system, not individuals, a system that has a birth and death like any living organism. We have to grasp the contradictions within this system that offer a way forward and point to a solution to the crisis of humanity. There is tremendous potential contained in the advances in technology in relation to meeting human needs world-wide. We have to explain how

to unlock this potential through the liberation of technology from the control of profit-driven corporations. In this way, we can show how the future is contained in the present and demonstrate an alternative to both capitalist-led globalisation and its plan for a century of wars. The millions who marched against the invasion of Iraq were not simply making a protest. They were also demanding a voice, a say in how the country is governed. This social movement has already gone beyond New Labour. Meanwhile the US/UK occupation authorities are also confronted by the Iraqi people, who want self-determination and not the imposed rule of global imperialism. What this reveals is that the best-laid plans of Bush and Blair have more than a dose of wishful thinking about them and suffer when reality makes its inevitable appearance. Our responsibility is to put the issue of power, of who rules society at the top of the agenda. Power is posed every day in every struggle against oppression and exploitation from Britain to Iraq and the US. In his book, Bobbitt (see review page 8) concludes:

"If we wish to ensure the new states that emerge are market-states rather than chronically violent nation-states it may be that only war on a very great scale could produce the necessary consensus. We should not exclude the democracies from idealistic ambitions that could lead to conflicts on such a scale."

The status quo is, therefore, not an option. Regime change has to begin at home. ■

The pre-emptive attack on Iraq by the Anglo-American alliance resulted from a complex and contradictory process at the heart of which is the relentless drive to globalise the world economy on capitalist terms. The tremendous changes this process has created, both economically and politically, is recognised by non-socialists like Philip Bobbitt often more clearly than those who reject capitalist-led globalisation.

Globalisation, the state and revolution

BY PAUL FELDMAN

There is a tendency among those who oppose global capitalism to suggest, at least by implication, that the world was a better place before Bush and Blair and certainly when corporations did not have so much power. The hope is, perhaps, that we can change the policies of corporations and outlooks of governments and return to this disappearing period of history. We could go back to the time when national governments had a greater degree of control over economic affairs and the welfare of their citizens was a priority.

What Philip Bobbitt does is demolish these arguments. Bobbitt, a notable academic and advisor on security questions to the Clinton administration, has written an analysis of the modern state, its origins and the question of war.* He confirms in some detail how the state has changed and continues to change beyond all recognition. The nation/welfare-state is giving way to what he, and others, call the "market-state". The only difficulty, however, is that the new form of capitalist state lacks the legitimacy and authority that the post-World War Two nation-states established. For Bobbitt this means war, prolonged war at that, before humanity can create a new "society of market-states". Gloomily he contends:

"The pattern of epochal wars and state formations, of peace congresses and international constitutions, has played out for five centuries to the end of the millennium just past. A new constitutional

order – the market-state – is about to emerge. But if the pattern of earlier eras is to be repeated, then we await a new epochal war with state-shattering consequences...Yet we can shape future wars, even if we cannot avoid them. We can take decisions that will determine whether the next epochal war risks a general cataclysm." Among those cited as architects of the new constitutional order are Clinton, Bush and Blair. Bobbitt adds: "The nation-state [which he argues is a form developed only in the last quarter of the 19th century] is dying, but this only means that, as in the past, a new form is being born. This new form, the market-state, will ultimately be defined by strategic threats that have made the nation-state no longer viable. Different models of this form will contend. It is our task to devise means by which this competition can be maintained without its becoming fatal to the competitors."

In his analysis of the crisis of the nation-state, he cites a number of functions that are undermined by economic, technological and cultural transformations. On national security, Bobbitt maintains that international terrorist organisations have access to weapons and technology which the nation-state is "too muscle-bound" to deal with. Dealing with the provision of welfare, he explains how the world market is no longer structured along national lines, "but rather in a way that is transnational and thus in many ways operates independently of states". Far from being dependent on local governments, the transnational corporation evaluates the state on the basis of whether its workforce has the necessary skills, and whether its infrastructure is good enough to attract investment. "At the macro level, this development applies to capital flows, in the face of which every country appears powerless to manage its monetary policy." Bobbitt acknowledges that a consequence of these developments is that the state seems "less and less credible" as a means by which a "continuous improvement of its people can be achieved". The inability of the nation-state to protect its own culture from globalisation is another key weakness. The result, according to Bobbitt, is the "disintegration of the legitimacy of the nation-state".

Bobbitt basically describes the sort of structures and role the state has taken on principally in the United States and Britain. Instead of existing to serve the welfare of the people (the nation), the market-state exists to "maximise opportunities"; full employment is no longer a goal, whereas flexibility of labour is; in the market-state, men and women are consumers not producers; politics is presented not in terms of competing

values but of the power relationships of the personalities involved. "This is characteristic of the market-state, with its de-emphasis on the programmatic and legalistic aspects of governance."

Bobbitt sees the challenges to the emerging market-state in military-strategic terms as the proliferation of nuclear weapons and the use of chemical or biological weapons. In economic terms and social terms, he outlines the danger of a trade war among developed states and/or the collapse of trade between richer and poorer countries, together with the transnational problems of protecting the environment. Then there is the potential conflict between the different types of market-states – the entrepreneurial (US and Britain – the withdrawal of the state); the managerial (Germany, France – continuing state intervention) and mercantile (Asian states like Japan, Malaysia).

His "what if" list is not at all fantasy land. For example, what if: North and South Korea collapse into a peninsular conflict; China does not peacefully resolve its differences with Taiwan; Japan rearms with weapons of mass destruction; nuclear conflict occurs in south Asia; a new incurable virus emerges; China disintegrates; the US economy suffers a sustained downturn; there is an Asian currency collapse; an anti-globalisation movement conducts a hi-tech war on capitalism; global energy supplies are disrupted in a major way. Bobbitt's scenarios are more exhaustive and all are possible. Some of them we are living through at the present time. His solution is most terrifying, however. Put simply, it is future peace through present war. He writes:

"We will seek a new constitutional order for the society of states...The bureaucratized nation-states struggling to satisfy the ever-escalating requirements of providing for the welfare of their ageing publics are increasingly being denied their axiomatic legitimacy by those very publics... So long as the state's legitimacy is a matter of ensuring the welfare of its citizens, then the globalisation and interdependence of the economy, the vulnerability and transparency of its security, and the accessibility and fragility of its cultural institutions, will increasingly deny the state that legitimacy,"

In perhaps the most sinister sentences in this extremely long book, Bobbitt insists:

"There is a widespread view that war is simply a pathology of the state, that healthy states will not fight wars... War, like law, sustains

the state by giving it the means to carry out its purpose of protection, preservation and defence."

He concludes: "If we wish to ensure the new states that emerge are market-states rather than chronically violent nation-states it may be that only war on a **very great scale** could produce the necessary consensus. We should not exclude the democracies from idealistic ambitions that could lead to conflicts on such a scale."

Bobbitt urges the use of the tactics of relentless air strikes, special forces teams and indigenous allies to deal with the threat posed by opponents of the market-state. "Out of this epochal conflict can come, some day, the consensus that will provide the basis for a constitution for the society of the new form of the state." He concludes:

"If these missions are avoided or postponed, a new, horrifying kind of conflict may emerge in which an authoritarian market-state challenges the contentment of the rest because they are weak, and because their weakness is a threat, enabling non-state terrorists and aggressors they cannot suppress to bring chaos everywhere. The market that encouraged this passivity will have destroyed the market-state."

This gruesome picture is actually what we are beginning to live through as the component parts of globalised capitalism come into conflict with each other, as well as those areas that are not yet integrated into the world market.

By showing the dangerous tendencies inherent in the emergence of "market-states", Bobbitt reinforces – inadvertently – the argument that globalised capitalism is tearing itself apart and that this threatens the future of humanity itself. Bobbitt's theoretical framework leads him to conclude that there is no alternative to current social relations. He shares with others, notably Francis Fukuyama, the notion that alternative political systems have run their course. History has pronounced on "communism", Bobbitt argues. The Soviet state was unable to provide for the welfare of its people and this was a key reason for its collapse, he says. The only game in town, therefore, is market capitalism. It alone can provide opportunities, services and goods for its citizens. The only barrier to further historical progress is that epochal wars are needed to give the emerging "market-state" their legitimacy.

The notion of progress through war is a deeply reactionary one; it is an

idea that far right forces have embraced before in history with catastrophic consequences for millions on every continent. Bobbitt ends up with this prognosis as a result of a one-sided approach to social history and development. While it is useful and even necessary to write a history of the state, an essential requirement is to establish the connections with the underlying economic processes at any given period of history. Bobbitt's failure to do so leads him to deal with political developments as if their source were simply internal to the state itself. The logic of the state and the logic of capitalist economic relations are not the same. Yet they are part of a contradictory whole, pulling in opposite directions. They are a dialectical unity and conflict, with the state interpenetrating economics and vice versa, leading to a transformation and the emergence of something qualitatively new. This is how capitalism itself came into being in Europe, with social revolutions in England and then France bringing a new ruling class to power. The state and social formations came into conflict and were transformed by armed struggle.

In his preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, Marx explained the relationship between what he called the "political superstructure" and the "economic structure" of society extremely well:

"In the social production of their life, men enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will, relations of production which correspond to a definite stage of development of their material productive forces. The sum total of these **relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which rises a legal and political superstructure** and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life process in general. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness.

"At a certain stage of their development, the **material productive forces of society come in conflict with the existing relations of production**, or – what is but a legal expression for the same thing – with the property relations within which they have been at work hitherto. From forms of development of the productive forces these relations turn into their fetters. Then begins an epoch of social revolution. With the change of the economic foundation the entire immense superstructure is more or less rapidly transformed. In

considering such transformations a distinction should always be made between the material transformation of the economic conditions of production, which can be determined with the precision of natural science, and the legal, political, religious, aesthetic or philosophic – in short, ideological forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out. Just as our opinion of an individual is not based on what he thinks of himself, so can we not judge of such a period of transformation by its own consciousness; on the contrary, this **consciousness must be explained rather from the contradictions of material life**, from the existing conflict between the social productive forces and the relations of production.

“No social order ever perishes before all the productive forces for which there is room in it have developed; and new, **higher relations of production never appear before the material conditions of their existence have matured in the womb of the old society itself**. Therefore mankind always sets itself only such tasks as it can solve; since, looking at the matter more closely, it will always be found that the tasks itself arises only when the material conditions of its solution already exist or are at least in the process of formation.” (emphasis added).

This theoretical framework, although almost 150 years old, remains valid for the contemporary world. The material productive forces have well and truly come into conflict with the existing relations of production – private ownership of production for profit – in a variety of ways. Productive capacity, driven on by the revolution in technology, is far greater than the possibilities that exist for people to buy all the goods that could be turned out. As a result, over-production leads to falling profits and the shutting down of capacity. Workers lose their jobs while others are subject to super-exploitation. In south China, workers are paid 20 cents an hour to produce Nike trainers. On the other hand, there remains a great unsatisfied need for commodities like food, shelter, transport and healthcare, not only in the advanced countries but especially in areas like Africa. Poverty levels are on the increase in every country while global corporations tune their production levels and marketing to areas of profitability. The conflict, therefore, is between what humanity can produce and the narrow organisation of this along the lines of private ownership in pursuit of profit.

At the same time, the “legal and political superstructure” that Marx refers to is in increasing conflict with the “real foundation” of society,

the "relations of production". Two imperialist wars in the 20th Century had their origins in the inherent need for capitalism to expand into new markets and the resistance of rival nation-states to their competitors. Capitalism itself drives to war – not the state, as Bobbitt believes. This urge is, of course, of necessity expressed through the state as we have just witnessed in the invasion of Iraq.

Corporate-led globalisation creates transnational forces that continue to undermine nation-state structures, as Bobbitt himself has shown. The real economic relationships in society were for more than a century disguised by political rulers through the use of various kinds of political facades and symbols. Institutions like parliaments and concepts of "democracy", "freedom" and "choice" have been used to blur the nature of the real power in society. Now the economic foundation has burst through the form and is seen for what it is. New Labour, for example, is the management team for the corporations in Britain, for Britain PLC as Blair's ministers like to call the country.

Globalised capitalism is in some ways attempting to do the impossible – to overcome its very nature, both in the way it produces and in how it manages its own organisation. The typical global corporation is owned by a variety of stockholders, including workers' pension funds, located in every major country. Ownership, therefore, is much more diffuse than early capitalism, when individual entrepreneurs were the norm. Capital is raised on international markets in a variety of forms. The corporations themselves engage in financial speculation. Production is organised through a highly-complex division of labour. Hierarchies are disappearing as the firm stresses the benefits of co-operative working through electronic communication. High-level strategic thinking and planning are used to try and create a smooth production process and look ahead to future trends. Centralised control is kept to a minimum and local units of the corporation are given relatively autonomous powers.

Bobbitt himself, as we have seen, describes in some detail how the nation-state is rapidly giving way to the "market-state", in which the functions of the state in terms of welfare, education, social security and so on are given up in favour of the market. For him, this is the working out of some sort of pre-ordained historical process, whereby the capitalist market economy is the end, beneficial result. This view is a challenge that the old "left" cannot answer. Bobbitt explains how in the nation-state, the "left" (i.e. Old Labour, reformist parties etc) was "always a *critical* organ in government, reproving, harassing, questioning the

status quo; it sought a governing role even though whenever Left parties held office, they quickly moved to the centre, co-opting (or being co-opted by) the right. Now with the discrediting of the Left in the market-state, this competitive critical function has been taken up by the media". This is truly an end of a period of history – the period when the "left" could win elections and carry out some reforms, sometimes in opposition to capitalist interests. Instead, we have New Labour, champion of the market economy and much praised by Bobbitt. This merging of the state, politics and corporate power is what we have to grasp. For helping our understanding, Bobbitt deserves recognition. His conclusions, however, are not only unacceptable but wrong. There are alternatives to his period of "epochal wars" and our task is to elaborate what they are and present them in an accessible form.

This merging of the state, politics and corporate power is what we have to grasp. For helping our understanding, Bobbitt deserves recognition. His conclusions, however, are not only unacceptable but wrong. There are alternatives to his period of "epochal wars" and our task is to elaborate what they are and present them in an accessible form. For the so-called market-state cannot succeed in overcoming the inherent contradictions of capitalism as a social system. The market cannot provide what the state once delivered because the bottom line for the corporations is profit. You only have to look at the pensions disaster that has struck millions in the US and Britain to see how the private sector is no fairy-godmother. Capitalism cannot deal with the environmental disasters it has created because each state and each corporation wants to maintain a competitive advantage. That's why Bush has refused to sign up to environment treaties. The market economy is not "virtuous" as Bobbitt maintains, but destructive of resources, indifferent to health and safety, exploitative of labour and unstable. Even Bobbitt has to acknowledge, as we have seen, that under certain conditions "an authoritarian market-state" might emerge that "challenges the contentment of the rest". Signs of this regime emerging are already apparent in Washington.

The major impediment to a free association of states remains the unbridled power of the corporations and their relentless drive to expand and accumulate. Alongside this are "parties" like New Labour which exist to facilitate the operations of the transnationals, with their emphasis on markets, consumers and competition above all else. The creation of a world society of states is dependent upon taking forward the social transformation that corporate-led globalisation has taken us to the edge

of. Giant corporations based on advanced technology clearly have the capacity to solve a number of pressing issues, including hunger. Instead, genetically-modified food is launched on to markets without any clear indication of the consequences. Farmers in poorer countries are already at the mercy of the bio-tech corporations. The existing order has, as Bobbitt has shown, lost its legitimacy and authority. Humanity cannot afford the consequence of a devastating period of war. The corporations are well on their way to capturing the state. Our objective is the democratic ownership and control of the corporations' productive and technological capacity alongside new forms of political representation. These will replace the discredited parliamentary systems that offer only war and destruction. ☺

* *The Shield of Achilles* Philip Bobbitt. Penguin Books £9.99

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Updated: 13 June 2003

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Our say

New Labour, lies and lies

The fact that the New Labour government lied about Iraq's so-called weapons of mass destruction in order to provide a pretext for invading and occupying that country should surprise no-one. After all, being economical with the truth comes naturally to Blair and his ministers.

BECTU vote on New Labour link a step forward

The decision by BECTU, the entertainment industry union, to ballot members on the organisation's link with New Labour, is an important step forward in the growing discussion taking place about alternatives to the Blair government.

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The 21st Century Art section has reviews, listings, articles and a contemporary art gallery with featured artists

The logic of the "Big Lie" is that people will accept a lie as truth if it is big enough and is told often enough by authoritative sources. The Bush regime is manipulating the US population into an epoch of imperialist war. Peter McLaren is a Professor in the Division of Urban Schooling, Graduate School of Education and Information Studies, University of California, Los Angeles. He is the author and editor of 40 books on education and critical social theory. Greg Martin, is a doctoral candidate at UCLA, involved in adult literacy and political activism.

The 'Big Lie' machine devouring America

BY PETER MCLAREN AND GREG MARTIN

Following the outbreak of World War II, Trotsky presciently remarked that the reactionary character of imperialism was expressed most clearly by its organic descent into fascism. Faced with internal economic stagnation and decay, capital seeks to delay its demise by creating conditions for fascism and imperialist war to flourish. How long capital can continue to sustain itself, even as the innocents of entire nations are sacrificed to its unending gluttony for profit, is difficult to predict. But the outcome is not, he explained. Capital, in this degenerate and imperialist phase, is no longer concerned with being an internal progressive force – far from it. Indeed, out of absolute necessity, capital becomes a regressive force, a weapon of subjugation, drawing the whole world into its shadowy orbit of deceit and conquest.

More than 60 years after this analysis, grappling with a sharpening and deepening social crisis, the US ruling class is today unleashing a raging torrent of reactionary violence, repression, terror and death to create the necessary conditions for its own regeneration. Brandishing its weapons of mass destruction, the wartime US imperialist state led by the Bush gang has emerged as an indispensable guarantor of super-profits for its own wild-eyed bourgeoisie. Yet, the imperial reach of the US differs from that of Britain a century ago in that America does not practice colonialism but relies on dependent and satellite states,

resorting to armed intervention when the natives get restless and start refusing to buckle down. Whereas the British empire was based on a singularly British purpose, the US is based on a universalist conviction that the rest of the world should follow its example of free market capitalist democracy. Long before Bush took power in January 2001, the present architects of US foreign policy at the Project for the New American Century (PNAC), recognised the need to maintain the dominant position of US capitalism by advancing such American values through a policy of "peace through strength". But the brute reality is that one imperialist state can only expand its power at the expense of another and what is emerging today is not "security" or "world peace" but new imperialist centres of rivalry as evidenced by the two-day summit that included Russia, France and Germany held in Russia on 11-12 April 2003.

At the same time, the conditions that foster fascism cannot be ignored here on US soil. This is especially so considering the scary success of the Bush gang and its propaganda campaign, which has led people to forget the actual conditions that make its emergence and victory possible. Forgotten are the transnationals who are flooding the market with cheap and subsidised food and forcing millions of farmers into bankruptcy, including thousands per week in the US. Forgotten are the million urban homeless and unemployed and those cannot afford medical insurance. Forgotten is the environmental degradation in the "Homeland", and the toxic waste we are dumping not just on Native American lands but also exporting to developing countries as the solution. Forgotten is California's energy crisis that was stage-managed by Kenny Boy Lay, the darling of Bush – still free even after the collapse of his company, Enron.

The tragedy of 9.11 catapulted infamously the unpopular Bush/Cheney/Scalia/Thomas right-wing that rode into power by stealing the 2000 US election, onto the stage of world history. Seizing upon the fear and sympathy afforded by September 11, Bush & Co. declared an open-ended 'War on Terrorism,' with the right to wage war on any perceived enemy, domestic or foreign, for any reason, at anytime, and by any means – including nuclear weapons. With a jaw-jutting and arrogant sneer, Bush declared an ultimatum to the world: "You are either with us or for the terrorists."

The story we are being told here, in the home citadel of US imperialism, is that this unapologetic Crusade, which is being waged on a number of different fronts (e.g., Afghanistan, Colombia, Iraq, the Philippines and United States), is all about protecting "our way of life" and defending the

"free world" from evildoers. But beneath this overblown rhetoric lurks what Dr Joseph Goebbels, the notorious Nazi propaganda chief, called the art of the "Big Lie". The logic of the "Big Lie" is that people will accept a lie as truth if it is big enough and is told often enough by authoritative sources. Whereas Goebbels' lie laid the foundations for the Holocaust, the Bush regime is manipulating the US population into an epoch of imperialist war that threatens to kill millions of the world's poorest people. To take just one glaring example, before the invasion of Iraq, the Secretary of State presented evidence from the CIA and US intelligence community to the United Nations Security Council of Iraq's alleged "Weapons of Mass Destruction". The so-called "clear proof" of this stockpile was calculated to create public support for a war, deemed in violation of international law. Yet, not a single chemical, biological or nuclear weapon has been found in its bloody aftermath. But wait: poll after poll reveals that President Bush is not in any political danger. Over 70% of Americans, content with an increased sense of security and a low US casualty count, now believe that the war was justified regardless.

Suffice to say, the 24-hour-a-day "No Spin Zone" ideological manipulation and monopolisation techniques of the imperialist rulers and their lackeys in the corporate media (e.g. FOX News) have played a critical role in getting people to identify with ideas that are not objectively in their interests (e.g. nationalism, racism and war). Echoing the rise of fascism in Germany, the Bush regime and its bourgeois apologists are using ultra-nationalist propaganda to create "public opinion".

This is based on a generalised fear (e.g. sudden "Fatherland" terror alerts, stories about duct tape) and programmed ignorance (e.g., formalised schooling and monopoly control over content in the print and mass electronic media). In this claustrophobic, flag-saluting world, a narrow form of patriotism is being used by a cabal of right wingers including media pundits, religious fundamentalists and government officials to witch hunt and brand people who express opinions critical of US policy as unpatriotic, anti-American, and even as traitors who give 'aid and comfort' to the enemy. Steve Rendall reports in "Extra!" that in a recent tirade, radio talk show host Rush Limbaugh could barely hide his disdain for anti-war demonstrators: "I want to say something about these anti-war demonstrators. No, let's not mince words, let's call them what they are: anti-American demonstrators." For his part, Bill O'Reilly, host of Fox's *The O'Reilly Factor*, put it like this:

Once the war against Saddam begins, we expect every American to

support our military, and if they can't do that, to shut up. Americans, and indeed our allies, who actively work against our military once the war is underway will be considered enemies of the state by me. Just fair warning to you, Barbra Streisand, and others who see the world as you do.

Building upon this ultra right-wing sentiment, popular talk show host, Michael Savage of MSNBC, even called for the restoration of the Sedition Act to silence dissent. Sean Penn has to pay around \$125,000 to take out a full page anti-Bush ad in the "New York Times", and that is what it costs now to see dissent appear in the mainstream press. The US media is so effective that, according to a New York Times/CBS News Survey, 42% of the American public believes that Saddam Hussein was directly responsible for the attacks of September 11 and that 55% of Americans believe that Saddam directly supported al-Quaida.

Perhaps the most pathetic lie used to mobilise patriotic solidarity for US warfare and sacrifice is the shop-worn slogan "Support Our Troops". As was the case in Vietnam, working-class youth are fighting and dying in a war that does not serve their interests (or recognise their sexuality), let alone the Iraqis. Aside from the physical injuries, psychological trauma and other long-term health effects that these young soldiers will undoubtedly suffer, what kind of hellish fate awaits upon their return? The whole country is a mess, with ever-growing numbers of the poor being pauperised, with barely enough food to eat. Not only this but Fred Samia, a Vietnam Vet awarded seven decorations including the Purple Heart, reports the difference between being "exalted" and "cajoled" by recruiters and politicians during the war and his return to indifference and neglect. His experience is not unique with the plaintive pleas of Vietnam vets for help with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and Agent-Orange-caused illness denied for years by the Pentagon, much the same way the Department of Defence has dismissed Gulf War vets' complaints of depleted uranium, biological and chemical related illnesses. For thousands of veterans, these wars are never over and continue to take lives. Vietnam War vets not only have the greatest percentages of homelessness (the equivalent of 17 infantry divisions on the streets every night), substance abuse and divorce but also, tragically, a suicide rate that has eclipsed in total the number of those who died in actual combat. Tellingly, the Bush administration cut billions from veterans' benefits the same day the illegal invasion of Iraq began but did not hesitate to subsidise the US auto industry by supporting fat tax breaks for purchasers of high-profit, gas-guzzling SUVs and light trucks.

September 11 has not stopped police brutality and murder by racist cops, the building of more jails than schools, attacks on affirmative action, Bible Belt bigotry against gays, poverty, job and food "insecurity", sexism, animal slavery and slaughter or the flawed and barbaric system of capital punishment. Take for example the recent killing of Alberta Spruill, a quiet church going 57-year old black woman living in Harlem, under the pretence of fighting the "war on drugs". Spruill, a proud union member of DC 37 Local 1549, was preparing for work at 6 a.m. when NYC police, acting on a "tip" and using a "no knock" search warrant, set off a deafening concussion grenade in her apartment. After the cops launched an all-out Gestapo-style commando raid, Spruill breathlessly explained that she had a serious heart condition but was dragged out of her home and handcuffed anyway before being taken to the hospital, where she was pronounced dead upon arrival an hour and a half later.

Spruill's death is reflective of the Shock and Awe terror campaign being waged daily in inner-city neighbourhoods all across the US, which must be understood as a domestic extension of the imperialist's invasion and colonial occupation of Iraq. At the very heart of this is the fact that for the past 25 years, including the period in which Reagan was ranting about an "evil" Soviet empire, the US has been the world's most aggressive jailer, with a greater proportion of its population in prison than any other country including Communist China - and it is growing, right alongside the prison-industrial complex.

It is not a secret that capitalism thrives on divide and conquest strategies and tactics, and when in crisis it ratchets up racism and oppression. But the consequences always have a scale effect and with "failing" schools, no jobs and no hope, youth in America's segregated inner-city communities are not only being sent to jail in record numbers but are also dying like flies on the blood-soaked streets. In Los Angeles, where the political leadership of much of the black left such as the Black Panthers was assassinated during the 1960s, gang violence has reached epidemic proportions, with over 50 people killed a month, an average higher than in the Palestinian occupied territories. When drive-by shootings are not claiming the lives of America's inner-city youth, the toxic emissions from industrial plants surely will. A 2001 Harvard School of Public Health study estimates that there are 2,800 asthma attacks, 500 emergency room visits and 41 preventative deaths a year due to carbon dioxide emissions and high levels of mercury that are poisoning the water. The responsibility for this dangerous assault on human health has been traced directly to Crawford & Fisk coal burning electrical power

plants in Chicago, owned by Edison International's Midwest.

Authorised by the draconian Patriot Act, the newly created Department of Homeland Security along with its secret thought police now has the right to wiretap anyone's phone it wants without a court order, to search any home without a warrant, to hold anyone in jail for 30 days or more without filing any charges (with no phone call "privileges") and to secretly monitor people's finances, purchases, library or internet use with sophisticated electronic and computer eavesdropping equipment. It has even been reported in the press that the Pentagon, through the Defence Advanced Research Projects Agency or DARPA, is now soliciting bids to develop a digital super diary, known as Lifelog, that "records heartbeats, travel, Internet chats, everything a person does".

What this signals is that the ruling class has dispensed with all pretence to bourgeois democracy. Yet, with the building of this modern Gestapo-like security state, what is exposed is a dictatorship of capital, with the Bush regime operating by command rather than by openness and full-fledged participation. By extension, the concept of liberty and freedom for all is turned on its head, with ordinary working people "freed" from the burden of secure employment, pensions, affordable housing, health care and civil rights, whilst the ruling class rakes in grotesque amounts of money with no limit, regulation or legal obstruction. The plain fact is that the state is committed to the class rule of the bourgeoisie and that imperialist wars are fought solely to advance only the interests of the capitalist class.

Although this stage-managed shift meshes perfectly with the hegemonic plans of the Bush gang, it is not a question of "ethical policy" but of historical and economic necessity. Confronted with a crisis of overproduction, US monopoly capital must override the remnants left of bourgeois democracy in order to re-establish conditions of profitability. Officially, the US fell into recession in March 2001 and has been mired in slow growth ever since. So the state is acting in the immediate interests of its own home-based corporations to produce a loyal and compliant labour force ready to super-exploit.

In the past, the Democratic Party has situated itself as a viable political alternative to the Republican Party through its advocacy of capitalistic reforms on a whole range of issues such as abortion, education, welfare and civil rights. But lest we forget, the spotlight was already on Clinton's globalisation strategy (e.g., the Battle for Seattle) and its cruelties long before Bush came to power. In fact, under Clinton/Gore, the US took a

greater share of control over NATO, the IMF, and the World Bank as instruments of ruling class hegemony. Additionally, Clinton was responsible for driving down the standard of living for US workers by signing the Welfare Reform Act in 1996, which forced welfare recipients, mostly women of colour with dependent children, into low paying, dead-end jobs that provide no benefits such as childcare or healthcare. Aside from this slave-labour/union-busting measure, Clinton also paved the way for the garrison police state that Bush, Ashcroft and Co., are now gleefully fortifying, by signing into law the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty and Antiterrorism Act in 1996. This deadly piece of "tough on crime" legislation gutted the writ of *habeas corpus*, which has existed for centuries, by eliminating federal constitutional review of state death penalty cases, and leading to a tripling of the rate of executions. It also authorised the government to deport immigrants based on secret evidence and made it illegal for anyone to support even the lawful activities of an organisation labelled "terrorist" by the State Department.

Not only was the Democratic Party silent about the dramatic rollback of democratic rights and the whole rotten system of corporate corruption exposed by the collapse of Enron and the telecommunications industry (which amounted to the theft of millions of dollars of working people's pensions), it also offered support for the imperialist war in Iraq. From the outset, the Democratic Party did not oppose this predatory war in principle, with establishment liberals such as Ted Kennedy only wanting a larger coalition of allies to attack Iraq. Just about every other Democrat, such as Senate Democratic Leader Tom Daschle, gripped by electoral fear and bourgeois patriotism, adopted a bi-partisan stance of "unity" to protect capitalism's interests, albeit by advocating a speedy war of last resort (with fig leaf cover provided by the UN) that minimised US casualties. This "unity" has an objective class basis: it is founded on the fact that both major parties share the same economic interests. If there is any doubt about where the allegiance of the Democratic Party lies, consider the bi-partisan support to imperialist war when, on April 4, the House voted 414-12 while the Senate voted 99-0 to approve the additional \$75 billion requested for the military budget. The total amount spent on militarism by the US nearly exceeds that spent by the other 191 countries in the world combined.

Closely related to this, the glum and muddled leaders of organised labour were engaged in phoney opposition to the war in Iraq, criticising Bush's plans on the basis that he did not build an international coalition similar to one his father led against Iraq during the 1991 Gulf War, killing

an estimated 150,000 Iraqis. This deplorable position, adopted by the AFL-CIO, the nation's premier labour organisation, should come as little surprise given its unwavering support for past imperialist wars. Despite a lame call for more open debate about the war, AFL-CIO president John Sweeney has clearly betrothed his heart to the Prince of Darkness, George Bush, our Commander-and-Chief, when he labels Iraq a "global terrorist threat" and asserts "America certainly has the right to act unilaterally if we need to do so to protect our national interests". This explicit statement of endorsement is shameful and unprincipled given that the Bush administration has brazenly used the so-called war on terrorism as an excuse to advance corporate interests under the cover of "national security" by repeatedly attacking workers. Only last year Bush deployed the anti-union Taft-Hartley Act during the Pacific Maritime Association employer lockout at 29 West Coast ports to force International Longshoremen and Warehouse Union workers into compulsory arbitration.

As if that is not dire enough, the Bush gang is sharing the spoils of imperialist war with companies that have close ties to the Republican Party, including the biggest contract so far to Halliburton, a company formerly run by Vice-President Dick Cheney; the infamous contract with Bechtel to rebuild Iraq's infrastructure; the scandalous, no-bid contract for cell phone service in Iraq to the already bankrupt World Com and the contract with the union-busting Stevedoring Services of America for operating the port of Umm Qsar in Iraq, all offering high profits worth billions of dollars. This warped tale of justice is accented by the fact that the US government is subsidising companies with massive bailouts and tax cuts even as Congress passes a law to prevent individuals from getting out of debt through personal bankruptcy. This buttressing of the rate of profit, through the theft of surplus labour from an already besieged workforce, is occurring right when the government is using the economic downturn to justify the shedding of thousands of unionised jobs and to cut key public services, including education and health.

Of course, the Byzantine world of the US labour movement does boast some prominent dissenting voices and a growing number of local unions and wider union organisations have adopted anti-war resolutions. But even a cursory check reveals that, whilst plenty of discontent exists at the base of American society, the US labour movement has not delivered on any of its vague promises, acting only to bargain over the price of labour power. Moreover, aside from its support for Bush's war plans, the pro-capitalist AFL-CIO continues to be an instrument of US foreign

policy, with its government subsidised international programmes sabotaging left-wing unions and politics overseas. Take for example, the AFL-CIO's financial support for the Confederation of Venezuelan Workers (CTV), which is allied with Venezuela's business elite against the leftist government of Hugo Chavez.

No, people are not dancing in the streets, nor sitting on the stoops of their crumbling tenement houses toasting the Bush administration, they are fighting for their lives. Right here in the bloated white belly of the imperialist beast. Given the blatant contempt of the US ruling class and our so-called political representatives toward the working class, workers must overcome the still persistent illusion that as imperfect and corrupt as it is, bourgeois democracy, US-style, represents the best of all possible worlds. They must organise with more determination than ever to fight the Bush/Cheney junta and its imperialist agenda. Even though the state has assumed a more violent and oppressive character, the situation is not altogether bleak or without opportunities. For example, mass participation in the anti-war movement is just one indication of the latent but explosive potential to create broad opposition to imperialism in the United States. Movements like this provide a glimpse of how a mass uprising of people might be developed to weaken US imperialism and to get rid of production for profit along with its attendant antagonisms including patriarchy, national oppression (e.g., Black, Chicano, Puerto Rican, Native American, Hawaiian and other oppressed and indigenous peoples) and white supremacy.

The lesson is clear, if the US anti-war movement is to grow any larger to curb future wars in Iran, Syria, Korea or Venezuela, it must confront its real tasks of defeating national chauvinism, racism and attacks on the Third World. The only historic force that can put a stop to capitalism, which has entered a dark and escalating period of imperialist (not just US) war, is the international working class.

Along these lines, the only way we are ever going to win "peace" or the right to a decent education or job is through the linking of our struggles with all the victims of the vicious ruling class and the transnational corporations that our respective heads of government – Bush, Blair and Howard – speak for. ☸

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The Project for The New American Century sets out how to uphold American imperialist political supremacy as the global cop of global capital.

Policing the world for the corporations

BY PHIL SHARPE

The views and policies of the Bush administration are influenced by an important right-wing think tank called the Project for The New American Century (PNAC). This was established in 1997 and was originally concerned with what a defence policy document argued was the decline of military spending and the connected lack of political initiative in relation to the American government's global responsibilities.¹ This view was articulated in a summary form in a June 1997 statement of principles.² It argued that "American foreign and defence policy is adrift". The answers to this problem were contained in four foreign policy demands. Firstly, a call for significant military spending expenditure increases. Secondly, a need to "strengthen our ties to democratic allies and to challenge regimes hostile to our interests and values". Thirdly, the promotion of the cause of political and economic freedom abroad. Fourthly, America has a "unique role" in upholding an international system based upon its security, prosperity and principles.

The election of the Bush administration in 2000 represented the possibility for the practical implementation of this policy. Important figures in the Bush White House, such as Donald Rumsfeld and Vice President Dick Cheney, were particularly influenced by the views of PNAC. It was no surprise, therefore, that the PNAC claimed credit for the Bush doctrine of the necessity for pre-emptive military action against so-called rogue states, set out in 2002 in the infamous "axis of evil" speech. A PNAC article said that the Bush doctrine represented the acceptance of the aims and principles of the PNAC.³

A prevailing view in some left-wing circles of the role of the PNAC is

that it has encouraged a unilateralist foreign policy, as shown over the military action against Iraq, and that this advocacy of unilateralism is connected to upholding American imperialist economic and political interests against rivals, such as France and Germany.⁴ However, this view is often simplistic in its analysis, because the truth is often more complex and contradictory than the orthodox view about the PNAC and the Bush administration allows for.

In a PNAC policy review paper, Robert Kagan attempted to provide an historical perspective of the relations between Europe and America.⁵ He comments: "It is time to stop pretending that Europeans and Americans share a common view of the world, or even that they occupy the same world. On the all-important question of power – the efficacy of power, the morality of power, the desirability of power – American and European perspectives are diverging."⁶ This divergence is shown by the apparent European government's preference for the role of international co-operation, such as upholding a role for the UN, and the importance of the agreement of international law and arriving at peaceful consensus. In contrast, the USA government seems to prefer unilateral measures and is more ready to resort to military action in order to realise its objectives.⁷ This difference in ideology and perspective is explained, according to Kagan, by the military and political decline of Europe, and this was shown by the inability of the major countries of Europe to intervene in Bosnia and Kosovo without American support and initiative.⁸ In contrast, the collapse of the Soviet Union "vastly increased America's strength relative to the rest of the world". This meant that American governments enhanced their political capacity to use military force in global terms. A "power gap" opened up between Europe and America, and the result is increased tensions in political relations, which first intensified under Clinton.⁹

Kagan then makes an important conclusion from this analysis. The result of these tensions is not that Europe is responding to American domination by creating a rival power. Instead "their tactics, like their goal, are the tactics of the weak. They hope to constrain American power without wielding power themselves". Europe does not have the military and political capacity to carry out a global role, only America can act in global terms. For European integration has not been accompanied with the rise of a European global power. Hence, Europe has to accept, however reluctantly the global tasks of America. But an ideological tension has resulted between Europe's sense of mission and commitment to international co-operation and negotiation and America's willingness

to act unilaterally. The paradox of this situation according to Kagan is that the European post-modern world of peace and harmony can only be maintained by America's willingness to use its military power to uphold its global supremacy against any challenges: "America's leaders, too, believe that global security and a liberal order — as well as Europe's "postmodern paradise — cannot long survive unless the United States does use its power in the dangerous, Hobbesian world that still flourishes outside Europe."¹⁰

In material, economic, political, and ideological terms, Kagan argues that America is willing to continue to carry on the responsibility for the global security of the world without any help from Europe. Indeed Europe is generally not willing to accept such a role. However, this creates the possibility for diplomatic tension between Europe and America because of seemingly irreconcilable strategic views of the world. The result could be a political split between Europe and America. Kagan is horrified at such a possibility: "To those of us who came of age in the Cold War, the strategic decoupling of Europe and the United States seems frightening." To Kagan, the answer is on the one hand that Europe could increase its military expenditure to help develop a "strong" America and co-operate more fully in America's global tasks. On the other hand, and this is very significant, Kagan calls upon the Bush administration to be more willing to accept the help of Europe, and recognise that multilateral action is often necessary rather than unilateralism. Kagan concludes optimistically:

"But after all, it is more than a cliché that the United States and Europe share a set of common Western beliefs. Their aspirations for humanity are much the same, even if their vast disparity of power has now put them in very different places. Perhaps it is not too naively optimistic to believe that a little common understanding could still go a long way."¹¹

This policy review shows that the views of the PNAC differ greatly from the caricature presented by some of their critics. Far from the PNAC welcoming the tensions between various European governments and the Bush administration, Kagan's paper tries to explain why these tensions are not an expression of irreconcilably opposed national and international interests. He does not deny the importance of strategic and ideological differences between Europe and America. But the theoretical basis of his whole argument is that these differences can be overcome.

Indeed he is even prepared to criticise the Bush administration for intensifying these differences by a high-handed suspicion of the motives of help from various European governments, as at the time of the military occupation of Afghanistan. The main premise of Kagan's view that Europe and America can draw closer together is that they have a common interest in opposing threats to the "liberal democratic" – i.e. capitalist – supremacy of the global economic and political system. Despite the significant ideological differences between Europe and America about the conduct of foreign policy strategy and diplomacy, they are transcended by the material and political interests that Europe and America have in uniting against any challenge to the present global system of the world economy and its connected political arrangements.

What such an analysis can start to show is that the very political and military domination of American imperialism is connected to the character of the global world economy. This does not mean that this is a smooth process without its contradictions and problems. For the very international and global character of the world economy is based upon an increasingly antiquated nation state system. So the role of America as the policeman of global capital creates political problems at the level of the role of nation states. It is for this reason that France and Germany in particular are reluctant to accept the domination of American imperialism. In contrast, Kagan cannot readily accept the contradictions in this relationship between the nation states and the emergence of a central apex for global capital. This is why he calls in an almost illusory fashion for a contradiction free construction of a global world order based upon Europe's acceptance of American might and hegemony.

Specifically, Kagan has also provided a plausible explanation as to why America was so determined to go to war with Iraq despite European opposition. Indeed it is interesting in this context that two PNAC statements made sympathetic noises towards Europe during the war in Iraq, despite seemingly deteriorating relations between Europe and America. The first statement of March 19th 2003 calls for a role for Europe in the process of providing resources for the task of Iraqi reconstruction.¹² Comment is also made to the effect that the American government requires international support for its actions in Iraq, and this could suggest the need to rebuild its links with European allies. The second PNAC statement of March 28th 2003 suggests the rebuilding of American and European relations after the tensions concerning Iraq. To this end it calls for joint work and participation in the rebuilding of Iraqi infrastructure.¹³

One former American strategist who is concerned about the possible detrimental effects of a tendency towards unilateralism by the Bush administration is Joseph S. Nye. In his book *The Paradox of American Power*, he locates his concerns within the context of globalisation that represents the necessity for international co-operation: "Globalisation — the growth of networks of world-wide interdependence — is putting new items on our national and international agenda whether we like it or not. Many of these issues we cannot resolve by ourselves. International financial stability is vital to the prosperity of Americans, but we need the Cupertino of others to ensure it." ¹⁴ So an exclusive emphasis upon unilateralism is an antiquated criteria of American domination, because it downgrades the necessity for political co-operation with international organisations like the United Nations and the European Union.

Thus the global economy shows the necessity of multilateralism and unilateralism is ultimately self-defeating. The choice is between working with others, as in the war against terrorism, or to be unilateralist. But unilateralism represents a political arrogance which undermines the "soft-power" of America, which is its ability to promote its ideological and cultural values.

This point has to be understood in relation to the global economy being based upon not just the increasing domination of the market, but also the development of a post-industrial society, which has an increasing emphasis upon the cultural potential to influence others. Hence the role of unilateralism could be to undermine the "soft power" of America, and so alienate other nations from acceptance of American hegemony within the global economy. So if America acts in an arrogant unilateralist manner this could be self-defeating and encourage other countries to act against America: "Nonetheless, if American diplomacy is unilateral and arrogant, our preponderance would not prevent other states and non-state actors from taking action that complicate American calculations and constrain our freedom of action." ¹⁵

Despite Nye's considered argument in favour of multilateralism, the Bush administration is not likely to reject the advantages of unilateralism. This is not because the Bush presidency is arrogantly and dogmatically against multilateralism. Although, the recent "victory" in Iraq has obviously created a type of triumphalist euphoria. Nevertheless, the Bush administration wants to repair its relations with its European allies on its terms. This means that whilst trying to bring about some type of multilateral Cupertino with Europe. The Bush administration will also be trying to retain the advantages of unilateralism, such as the

possibility of decisive action against adversaries. This is the very essence of the Bush doctrine. Hence the problem with multilateralism from the standpoint of the Bush doctrine is that whilst it is worthwhile in economic terms of realising international co-operation, there is still the political necessity to act quickly and decisively against political antagonists like Iraq. This is why the political risks associated with unilateralism, such as alienating allies, cannot be entirely discarded because of its advantage of decisiveness. However, in the interests of global economic stability multilateralism will still be an important aspect of the Bush administration's policies. In other words, there is not a smooth and harmonious relation between the requirements of economics and politics, and the resultant contradiction is expressed in the strategic dilemmas of the Bush administration

An important international strategic document produced by the American government in 2002 outlines the views of the Bush administration about the role of America in the world, and its approach towards both allies and adversaries.¹⁶ The very beginning of the document seems to play down the possibility of the renewal of great power rivalries, and suggests that this era finished with the end of the Cold War. The document comments that "America is now threatened less by ...states...we are menaced less by fleets and armies than by...technologies in the hands of the embittered few".¹⁷ The enemy is identified as terrorism, which is against the aim of developing a global economy based upon free markets and free trade.

The main problem for the Bush doctrine is that the process of its implementation has created tensions between the American government and some of its European allies. There is a constant contradiction between what the doctrine is committed to theoretically – the building of international support for a global world economy based upon a process of political consensus between nation states – and the practical implementation of this economic and political aim. This point is illustrated by the following comment: "While our focus is protecting America, we know that to defeat terrorism in today's globalised world needs support from our allies and friends."¹⁸ But this formal internationalist aim has been undermined by how various governments in Europe have interpreted the war against terrorism and have been critical of the war against Iraq as part of this process. This is just one indication of how the Bush administration has had difficulty in obtaining support for its role as the world's policeman.

The tensions, inconsistencies and contradictions of the Bush doctrine

are primarily a conflict between economic and political imperatives. Economically, the Bush administration seems to consider it counterproductive to act according to a narrow national self-interest of what would be purely to the advantage of the American economy. Instead the view is advocated that "a strong world economy enhances our national security by advancing prosperity and freedom of the world". Thus the role of America as an important part of the world economy is to encourage measures that will develop the world economy as a whole. This is why measures such as free trade are promoted as necessary for all of the world economy: "Policies that strengthen market incentives and market institutions are relevant for all economies... emerging markets, and the developing world."¹⁹

So economics is not defined in terms of competing national economic rivalries, but instead it is conceived that each part of the world economy should help each other in terms of the promotion of measures to develop a global economy based upon the domination of the market. In this context, Europe and Japan are not considered as economic rivals to America, but rather economic growth in Europe and America is represented as a necessary part of the development of the world economy: "A return to strong economic growth in Europe and Japan is vital to US national security, we want our allies to have strong economies for their own sake, for the sake of the global economy, and the sake of global security."²⁰

What this shows is that the Bush administration is serious about facilitating the development of a global economy based upon the role of the transnationals. For only the transnationals can express this objective capacity to dominate an increasingly integrated world economy in exploitative terms. In this context, the Bush administration want to provide the political conditions for what they consider to be the continued advances of a globalised world economy. In this context tensions and splits between the governments of the advanced capitalist countries is not considered to be conducive to creating the best economic climate for further international economic growth by the Bush administration.

However, contradictorily, the political policy that the Bush administration is most committed to in relation to upholding the requirements of the global economy is that of pre-emptive action against so-called rogue states. The view of the policy document is that not only do these "rogue states" sponsor terrorism, have no regard for international law, and seek to build weapons of mass destruction, but

also "squander their national resources" for the personal gain of dictators. An important objection to these states is, therefore, that they are not economically and politically conducive to the requirements of the development of the world economy.²¹ While the document calls for the building of international strategic alliances against them, it is also committed to pre-emptive military action against the rogue states and their potential weapons of mass destruction. The Bush administration will act unilaterally if necessary in order to carry out the logic of pre-emptive action.²²

Such a problematical diplomatic logic occurred in relation to the situation over Iraq, where some of European allies did not recognise the necessity for pre-emptive action. In contrast, the Bush administration was adamant that military action would have to take place in order to effect a regime change. Consequently, unilaterally carrying out a political and military measure that was considered ultimately necessary in the interests of the global world economy only succeeded in antagonising important allies. This shows that there is not a smooth and harmonious relationship between economics and politics. Instead political actions can have the effect of undermining important dominant economic interests, even though these political actions were designed to consolidate the power of the interests of capital within the world economy.

The rest of the strategic policy document continues to commit the America government to the role of international institutions and upholds economic and political co-operation with long time rivals such as Russia and China. Possibly the question of China shows the most apparent policies differences between the PNAC and the Bush administration. Gary Schmitt, one of the main theorists of the PNAC, argues that China has been trying to construct an anti-American bloc and was friendly towards "rogue states" like Iran, Iraq and North Korea.²³ Furthermore, a Pentagon report had outlined that the Chinese military was strategically hostile towards the role of America in East-Asia, and was building up its military capability in a manner that posed a "real threat to the region's peace and stability". Schmitt calls for the Bush administration to build up its military defences in the East-Asia in order to oppose China and castigates what he characterises as the present "let well enough alone" policy of the government.²⁴

The inherent contradictions in American foreign policy flow from the conflict between the objective imperatives of the globalised capitalist economy and the structures of nation states and their governments. To

see the PNAC project as simply the expression of a developing American empire is to smooth over these contradictions. The PNAC project is to uphold American imperialist political supremacy as the global cop of global capital. This view is articulated in the conception that only American imperialism has the capacity to act internationally on behalf of global capital. But the result of trying to carry out its perspective leads to tensions, as with Europe over action against Iraq. Hence the PNAC project of trying to reconcile the particular interests of America as a capitalist nation state with the global interests of capital represents an unrealisable attempt to trying to bring about political unity within a world economy of irreconcilable contradictions

Capitalist nation-state structures are under tremendous strain from the globalisation process. This creates problems of legitimacy and authority domestically, as well as new enemies globally in the form of terrorist movements hostile to the new world order. The need to integrate countries like Iraq into the world economy results from the inherent requirement for capital to expand year on year, country by country.

Driving this process is a crisis of capitalist-led globalisation, expressed in surplus productive capacity in America, Europe and Japan and overwhelming government, corporate and personal debt. Alongside this is an internationalised financial system that staggers from one calamity to another, driven essentially by speculation. While Bush invaded Iraq, several hundred thousand American workers lost their jobs. Capitalism as a social system is incapable of overcoming these difficulties and will increasingly resort to war, both to try and rally domestic opinion and to destroy surplus capacity. It is the world of international exploitation of labour by transnationals that Bush and the PNAC are committed to defending despite any tactical differences. It is the struggle of labour and the oppressed of the world for their own regime change that will defeat the Project for a New American Century. ■■■.

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The United Nations has no other option than to accept the dominant role of American imperialism as the main upholder of the economic and political stability of global capital. This was what prompted the strategists of the Bush administration to calculate that any UN opposition to war with Iraq would be temporary and shallow.

The use and abuse of the United Nations

BY ROBERT SILVER

It was the American government of President Roosevelt that encouraged the formation of the United Nations after the Second World War.¹ The post-war world envisaged by American imperialism was based upon the dismantling of the colonial empires of its rivals, the development of free trade, and the creation of international organisations like the International Monetary Fund and the United Nations. These international organisations were considered crucial for the prospect of ensuring American national interest and domination of the world economy. They were also viewed as vital for ensuring global economic and political stability. The development of the Cold War between the US and the USSR, however, meant that the UN became instead an expression of this international polarisation.

Within Western Europe, American imperialism relied on NATO to uphold an important military presence against the Soviet Union. The US also used its economic might through the Marshall Plan to help ensure that countries like France and Italy did not become "communist". In this context, the role of the UN seemed to have become peripheral with regard to American interests. But it was to have an important role in providing international legitimacy for the US military role in Korea. The limited political power of the UN was shown when the US commander blatantly ignored UN resolutions and conducted military operations north of the 38th parallel, with a view to conquering all of Korea.²

The unequal relationship between the UN and American imperialism is vividly illustrated by the diplomatic process connected to the Korean war. For the Soviet Union eventually tried to use its veto on the question of

Korea. But America simply organised a meeting of the Security Council without the Soviet Union in order to legitimise its military intervention in Korea.³ This established an important precedent. In Korea, America utilised multilateral support in order to give international authority to its actions, whilst not ruling out unilateral measures if necessary.

As Stephen Ryan explains: "Browbeaten by the US, the UN Security Council passed three resolutions which legitimised US intervention in Korea under UN authority, though it is probable that the United States would have taken military action even if the UN had not adopted these resolutions."⁴ Thus while the United States considered that UN support was helpful in the Cold War struggle against "communism" it was not going to be restricted by any UN resolutions.

There was a constant tension for American imperialism between multilateral and unilateral imperatives within a Cold War context. Both the unilateral and multilateral approach were considered appropriate for upholding the interests of American capitalism in economic and political terms. Hence it was changing circumstances which generally dictated which approach was considered most suitable. On the one hand, American imperialism needed co-operation in the struggle against the USSR, and to this end created the international NATO. On the other hand, the US dominated the UN and the IMF in order to maintain its economic and political power. Indeed, it was prepared to act against its allies in terms of upholding a perceived national interest. Thus the American government caused a potential sterling crisis when it undermined the 1956 British and French invasion of the Suez Canal.⁵ Various American governments have also expressed suspicions about the French policy of having an independent nuclear deterrent within NATO.⁶

It was in relation to Vietnam that American imperialism had to act unilaterally. President Johnson was unsure of getting support within Congress for military intervention in Vietnam. Only the manufactured Gulf of Tonkin incidents ensured Congress backing for America to intervene in Vietnam in the mid 1960s.⁷ The American government could not risk being stifled by the UN. Consequently, in contrast to Korea, there was no question of trying to create further controversy by seeking UN support for the American role in Vietnam. Indeed, the American government was explicitly opposed to UN involvement concerning Vietnam. As early as August 1964 UN secretary-general U Thant proposed to the American government that they should arrange meetings with North Vietnam. North Vietnam had indicated some willingness to enter into such talks, but the Johnson administration

rejected such a proposal.⁸ The basically unilateral action by America in Vietnam became a precedent that justified the Reagan administration's invasion of Grenada because of the installation of a pro-Soviet regime that replaced the government of Maurice Bishop.⁹ Furthermore, what was an essentially unilateral military action was taken against Libya in 1986. This situation also created a precedent by being an act of intervention against a sovereign nation state in terms of a "war against terrorism".¹⁰ The increasing frequency of American unilateralist military action led even the normally pliant UN to protest against American military intervention against Panama in 1989, which it denounced as a violation of international law.¹¹

Despite this increasing tendency towards unilateralism, American administrations were still prepared to work within the UN. However, this process did not necessarily result in multilateral co-operation. Rather what resulted was contradictory. On the one hand in 1973 the American government did support UN resolutions calling for a cease-fire between Israel and Egypt. But this conciliatory role of America within the UN could be said to be dictated by the need for American imperialism to maintain Arab goodwill and the maintenance of oil supplies.¹² On the other hand, Reagan's government in 1982 vetoed a UN Security Council resolution calling for the Israeli army to withdraw from the Lebanon.¹³

Thus there was an increasing tendency in the 1970s and 1980s for the UN to try and assert an independence from American imperialism. The result was that American unilateralism seemed to become the norm rather than the exception. This resort to unilateralism was particularly pronounced under the Reagan administration, which resorted to increasingly militaristic measures in order to pursue Cold War objectives. Aijaz Ahmad explains these growing differences between American imperialism and the UN in terms of the UN temporarily becoming influenced and pressurised by the revolutionary upheavals of the 1960s and 1970s. The UN was no longer a reliable instrument of American foreign policy:

"The use of the UN to legitimise American military designs is as old as the Korean war of the 1950s. Then, in the period of the revolutionary upsurges of the next 20 years, this unholy alliance receded. For a transitory moment in the mid-1970s, just about the time of the liberation of Vietnam, the UN had even tried to catch up with the revolutionary temper of the times. Thus in 1974 it enacted a Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States which proclaimed

that member nations had the right to 'regulate and exercise authority over foreign investment' and to 'regulate and supervise the activities of multinational corporations' even to 'nationalise, expropriate or transfer ownership of foreign property.'¹⁴

But as Ahmad is aware this period of "radicalism" of the UN did not last long. The UN and American imperialism became fully reconciled in relation to their united response to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1991. The UN resolution condemning the Iraqi invasion was carried virtually unanimously, with only Yemen abstaining. The legitimacy of UN resolutions allowed American Imperialism to build support for an American-led coalition force against Iraq.¹⁵ A second resolution was required in order to carry out offensive action against Iraq, and it was considered essential for consolidating Arab support for the military aims of the coalition.¹⁶ This situation seemed to overcome the political problem of the absence of UN diplomatic support in the 1970s and 1980s. In return, the Bush administration felt obliged to keep to the letter of the UN resolutions. This may be one reason why they did not act to overthrow the regime of Saddam Hussein, for which there was no UN mandate.¹⁷

The Clinton administration was even more committed to acting within the auspices of the UN. This is connected to their particular interpretation of the imperatives of globalisation. To the Clinton administration its priorities were economic, and this meant political support for the globalised world economy and its institutions such as the World Bank, the World Trade Organisation and the IMF. The main concerns of the Clinton government were introducing the NAFTA free trade treaty, and facilitating the integration of Russia and China into the market-dominated world economy. Given these priorities close ties with the UN were developed, and America helped to lead UN-sponsored military and political intervention in Somalia, Haiti, and Bosnia. However, despite this commitment to multilateralism, the Clinton government was still prepared to carry out unilateral military action in Kosovo, despite the lack of UN support for this action.¹⁸ Indeed, such an action can be perceived as another precedent for the Bush Jnr administration's move back towards unilateralism as the most coherent policy for upholding American supremacy within the global economy.

The question is what has happened in order to create what is a serious crisis in the relations between the UN and America in relation to Iraq? The UN has generally followed the approach of American foreign policy towards Iraq. The UN imposed punitive sanctions upon Iraq and sent

arms inspectors into the country. Yet despite this important convergence in the objectives of the UN and American imperialism a diplomatic crisis developed. Why? The momentum for war against Iraq has come from the right-wing ideologues of the Project for the New American Century (PNAC) within the Bush administration who believed that the failure to overthrow Saddam Hussein in the Gulf war of 1991 was a mistake. It was September 11th 2001 which created the momentum for this view, and by August 2002 the decision was finally taken by the Bush administration for the overthrow of Saddam Hussein's regime.¹⁹

However Bush and his close supporter Blair initially agreed to pursue such an objective using the UN. But the French government was already reluctant to support military action, and so called for an initial resolution sending the UN inspectors back to Iraq.²⁰ Only a second resolution could actually legitimise military action. The result was the compromise resolution 1441, which did not explicitly endorse military action without a second resolution.²¹ However, what was increasingly apparent was that France, Germany and Russia were against war, and so the dynamic was created for the United States to take unilateral military action: "Although US public opinion marginally favoured a second resolution, the Bush team felt that the first resolution provided enough political and legal authority for war. For Washington, a second resolution was optional not imperative, and perhaps might only be a complication," is the view of a *Guardian* book on the subsequent invasion.²²

With the threat of a French veto, and with the majority of the UN Security Council against the use of force at that point, the United States and Britain had to bypass the UN in order to carry out war against Iraq. Two major questions arise from this situation. Firstly, why was the Bush administration so determined to alienate the UN and its allies in order to inaugurate war against Iraq? Secondly, does the apparent UN defiance of the American-UK axis represent a new golden age for the authority, prestige and role of the UN?

Firstly, the adherents of the PNAC have provided the most cogent explanations of differences between the Bush administration and Europe on the question of Iraq (the views of the PNAC are elaborated in another article in this issue). In his book *Paradise and Power*, Robert Kagan, a chief PNAC ideologue, explains that a different approach on the question of Iraq was already developing between European and American governments in the period of Clinton's Presidency.²³ The approach of Europe was to try and bring about the reintegration of the existing Iraqi regime within the international community.²⁴ In contrast, the Clinton

administration recognised the importance of military measures against Iraq, and carried out bombing assaults in 1998 without UN authorisation.²⁵ Furthermore, it was Clinton who inaugurated plans to destabilise Iraq, and the development of a missile defence system against so-called rogue states.²⁶ Clinton had drawn the conclusion from NATO multilateral intervention in Bosnia and Kosovo that military action was more effective when freed from European and UN constraints.²⁷

Consequently, the tensions between the Clinton administration and Europe became a seemingly irreconcilable strategic difference when the Bush doctrine of pre-emptive action against the "rogue states" was announced. For this standpoint seemed to conflict with the multilateral and diplomatic approach of Europe, which was based upon trying to avoid military conflict. Kagan maintains: "But many Europeans, including many in positions of power, routinely apply Europe's experience to the rest of the world, and sometimes with the evangelic zeal of converts. The general European critique of the American approach to rogue regimes is based upon this special European insight. Iraq, North Korea, Iran, Libya — these states may be dangerous and unpleasant, and even, if simplistic Americans insist, evil. But Germany was once evil once, too. Might not an 'indirect approach' work again, as it did in Europe? Might it not be possible once more to move from confrontation to rapprochement, beginning with co-operation in the economic sphere and then moving on to peaceful integration? Could not the formula that worked in Europe work again with Iran. Might it have even worked with Iraq?"²⁸

It is significant that in this very comment about the strategic differences between Europe and America, Kagan accepts there are common aims and objectives. Both Europe and America want the so-called rogue states integrated into the global economy. However there are differences about how to realise this aim. For Europe the increasingly unilateral approach of America is unnecessarily belligerent; to recent American administrations the standpoint of Europe is increasingly indecisive. What this shows to Kagan, is that whilst Europe and America agree that the ultimate aim is to strengthen the global capitalist economy, an important strategic difference has developed about how America realises its dominant role in the post-Cold War world. This means that the tendency towards unilateralism becomes disputed by Europe. But, to American administrations this imperative for unilateralism is connected to the logic of the end of the Cold war: "The end of the Cold War was taken by Americans as an opportunity not to retract but to expand their reach, to expand the alliance they lead

eastward towards Russia. to strengthen their relations among the increasingly democratic powers of East Asia, to stake out interests in parts the world, like Central Asia, that most Americans never knew existed before." ²⁹

In other words, the general political cohesion of the Cold War period when Europe and America were generally united against the USSR has been replaced by tensions concerning increasingly divergent strategic views about how to administer the global economy.³⁰ The increasing long-term economic dominance of America is combined with the enduring ideology of the necessity for America to ensure the economic and political stability of the world. This has led American imperialism to consider itself as an unchallenged global defender of the "liberal international order".³¹ Says Kagan:

"Differing perceptions of threats and how to address them are in some ways only the surface manifestation of more fundamental differences in the world views of a strong United States and a relatively weaker Europe. It is not just that Europeans and Americans have not shared the same view of what to do about a specific problem such as Iraq. They do not share the same broad view of how the world should be governed, about the role of international institutions and international law, about the proper balance between the use of force and the use of diplomacy in international affairs."³²

So although differences between Europe and America would remain about how to conduct international relations, American imperialism was still confident that its war against Iraq could not be decisively challenged by the UN and Europe because of an apparent pre-eminent strategic role: "Can the United States prepare for and respond to the strategic challenges around the world without much help from Europe? The simple answer is that it already does." ³³ Hence the strategists of American imperialism were prepared to carry out war against Iraq despite the reluctance of the UN and Europe, because it was acknowledged that the UN and Europe would have no alternative than to ultimately accept the logic of what the American military was doing, which was to bring about the overthrow of the Iraqi regime of Saddam Hussein as the basis of the reintegration of Iraq into the world economy. Kagan concludes that the political logic of events concerning Iraq does not mean that the American government should make it a habit to act unilaterally, but the possibility to act unilaterally remains if multilateral support is not forthcoming as occurred over Iraq. ³⁴

It is significant that Kagan does not describe the tensions between Europe and America over Iraq as the expression of inter-imperialist rivalries:

"Indeed...the Europeans have not sought to check the rising power of the American colossus by amassing a countervailing power of their own. Clearly they do not consider even a unilateralist United States a sufficient threat to make them increase defence spending to contain it. Nor are they willing to risk their vast trade with the United States by attempting to wield their economic power against the hegemon. Nor are they willing to ally themselves with China, which is willing to spend money on defence, in order to counterbalance the United States. Instead, Europeans hope to contain American power without wielding it themselves. In what may be the ultimate feat of subtlety and indirection, they want to control the behemoth by appealing to its conscience." ³⁵

The estrangement of both the later Clinton and Bush Jnr administrations from the UN was not because the UN was starting to defy American imperialism. Instead they were an expression of the discontent of American administrations with the cumbersome and bureaucratic character of the multilateral procedures of the UN. For the multilateral approach of the UN had become a hindrance to the capacity of American imperialism to act as a global cop in the interests of global capital. Established at a period when the nation-state model of governance was at its peak, the UN has succumbed to the acceleration of the globalisation process. The US and its partners will act with or without the UN because their actions reflect the demands of the global economy as a whole, not those of any particular region or group of nations. Even though the attack on Iraq was declared in breach of international law, Bush and Blair effectively wrote their own rules. They were prepared to endure a political fall-out with other capitalist states and even reduce the UN to a spectator. Bush and Blair are, after all, the chief protagonists of the unfettered market economy, following in the footsteps of Reagan, Thatcher and Clinton. If France, Germany and Russia had other ideas, it was because their economies have yet to endure the full impact of globalisation. As a trade unionist on strike in France against pension cuts noted, the country was going through its "Thatcherite revolution" – 20 years after it started in Britain.

The period of apparent UN defiance and opposition to the Bush administration on the question of Iraq was brief. In relation to the

process of the economic and political reconstruction of Iraq, the UN Security Council voted 14-0 (with Syria absent) for a resolution that gave formal legal legitimacy for the US-UK occupation of Iraq for an indefinite period. Hence, "the vote was seen as victory for the Bush administration after failing to persuade the council to authorise the war".³⁶

Furthermore, the UN has no objection to the control of the Iraqi economy by the transnational companies. On the contrary, what it is concerned to ensure is that the mechanisms of economic control are as international as possible. In this context, the Bush administration is happy to oblige, and is willing to ensure that important crumbs from the table should go to its estranged allies. The day after the resolution was passed, representatives of a 1,000 companies met in London with the giant Bechtel corporation to see what contracts were on offer.

What these recent developments amply indicate is that the UN has no other option than to accept the dominant role of American imperialism as the main upholder of the economic and political stability of global capital. Indeed, this understanding was what prompted the strategists of the Bush administration to calculate that any UN opposition to war with Iraq would be temporary and shallow. For common interests are what ultimately unites American imperialism with the major powers at the United Nations. ☛

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The American and UK governments were determined to carry on with their aggressive political approach, regardless of the level of protests generated against it. This created a real challenge for the anti-war movement and all those in struggle against the Bush-Blair axis.

Leadership and the anti-war movement

BY PHIL SHARPE

The massive demonstrations world-wide on February 15 against the US-UK drive to war against Iraq seemed to many an irresistible pressure that would result in a retreat by Washington and London. Instead, as we know, the invasion was launched in March and the Saddam Hussein regime overthrown in a relatively short period. Hopes of some that the United States and Britain would become bogged down in a "new Vietnam" proved short-lived.

Vietnam was an entirely different struggle. The American ruling class was initially united about sending the troops into Vietnam and only began to show splits in the wake of serious military reversals. The Vietnamese liberation forces were an expression of the popular aspiration for national self-determination. This meant that political support translated into a formidable military force that was able to win significant victories over the USA armed forces and its proxies. The Vietnamese had already defeated the French and were armed with modern equipment. In contrast, the Bush administration knew that Iraq was a country with its own internal divisions, which it could exploit for military advantage. In Iraq, American and British troops were never confronted with an armed force that was comparable to the Vietnamese national liberation army. Furthermore, United Nations sanctions had weakened the military capability and resolve of the Iraqi troops, and the army lacked capable and resolute leadership. The Saddam dictatorship, which had engaged in military adventures for more than 20 years, proved incapable of rallying his ill-equipped army.

The aim of Bush and Blair is to develop an aggressive approach that

upholds the interests of global capital against any national and regional opposition. On this basis possible further military action is envisaged against "rogue states" like Iran, Syria and North Korea. They were determined to carry on with their aggressive political approach, regardless of the level of protests which were generated against it. Their stance has created a real challenge for the anti-war movement and all those in struggle against the Bush-Blair axis. The Stop the War Coalition (STWC) helped to bring millions on to the streets of Britain in the countdown to war – far fewer once the invasion was under way. How has it tried to come to terms politically with and develop the initiative in the context of rapidly changing events?

A bulletin posted on the STWC website after the military action ended, claimed: "There can be few victories which have turned to ashes so quickly. The Iraqis have not welcomed the occupying US and British forces and there have been widespread demonstrations in the country against the occupying armies which have resulted in scores of Iraqis being killed." The bulletin adds: "We have entered a new phase of the campaign following the end of the war, but there is very large bedrock of support remaining on which we can continue to build. The slogan 'End The Occupation Now!' is obviously the central question here. It is also the slogan being raised by millions of Iraqis so fits very much into international solidarity."

There then follow details about the campaign to defend MP George Galloway from New Labour's threat against his party membership, with STWC supporters urged to email Blair with their protests. There is no analysis of the fact that despite the massive numbers on the streets, the invasion and occupation of Iraq went ahead. There are no thoughts about the changed political situation. The perspective, as we have noted, is simply applying protest and pressure to end the occupation of Iraq by British and American forces. But it is inadequate to claim that it is business as usual. For making this claim effectively means that the anti-war movement becomes nothing more than an expression of nostalgia about the February 15 protests.

The leadership of STWC as an organisation is provided by a coalition of the old guard Stalinists of the British Communist Party, and the Socialist Workers Party. In the aftermath of February 15 demonstration this leadership was content to go with the flow and call for more mass marches and local actions. But of course, the beginning of military action began to pose new challenges about how to develop the anti-war movement. Primarily, it meant the need to develop a real and conscious

struggle against the New Labour government which, after all, was a joint sponsor of the invasion.

So how did the STWC leadership respond to this? The answer is that the leadership tried to respond in terms of business as usual rather than recognising what was new and challenging about the situation. For they had effectively called for a U-turn by the New Labour government. This was actually an unrealistic approach that did not accept the full commitment and support of New Labour as a government for an attack on Iraq. In practice, this meant the STWC became an appendage of the Labour "revolt" against the war plans. But, the superficial nature of this revolt was shown in that with a few exceptions, the Labour "rebels" were silent during the war, and made no calls for its end. Consequently, STWC leaders became politically paralysed restricted by their refusal to go beyond the politics of the Labour left.

In the April issue of the SWP's *Socialist Review* journal, after an uncomfortable reference to the situation in Iraq, the editorial ends with the usual call for mass protests in order to put pressure on Blair to stop the war: "This is a weak and divided government whose future is as uncertain as the military campaign in Iraq. The more we protest, strike and demonstrate against it the more we increase the likelihood that it will be defeated – raising the prospect of an end to the war in Iraq. As the bombs rain down in Baghdad and as the suffering continues there is no time to lose."¹

This comment only goes to show that the call for more protests was a cover for the vacillating stance of the SWP once the war had actually started. The protest politics of the SWP are used to gloss over the crucial issue that faced the anti-war movement, which was the need to truly become an anti-imperialist current that defended Iraq by calling for the overthrow of the New Labour government. Instead, to the SWP, this one-sided opportunist emphasis on the importance of protests became a way of avoiding the necessity of developing a principled and flexible politics in to respond to a changing situation. This is not to suggest that mass protests are unimportant, but they require political leadership based upon revolutionary strategic principles and objectives if they are to have a long-term significance.

For the SWP, however, the call for more protests had become a convenient device to try and disguise the indecision, lack of direction and poor leadership in a situation of actual war. To the SWP, it was as if time stopped before March 19, 2003 when war started. What was actually required was a strategy that emphasises the need to bring down

the New Labour government and replace it with a government based upon democratic structures of genuine mass participation.

The SWP editorial could not even call for the removal of Blair and was instead content to repeat its utopian and ineffective call for protests to put pressure on Blair to stop the war. In this context, the editorial even expresses the hope that the government will be somehow "defeated" and so the war will be stopped.² But this view is expressed almost as a despairing hope rather than representing a perspective with any real political content. For the only way that Blair can actually be defeated is by bringing down the New Labour government. Hence the word "defeating" is used in an ambiguous and abstract way, an empty generality which could mean a variety of things to different types of people. It is the use of radical language to gloss over the actual unwillingness of the SWP to call unambiguously for the bringing down of New Labour. So this use of the term "defeating" Blair is another way of trying to keep pressure politics attractive to those in the anti-war movement – just at the point when many must have questioned the point of pressuring New Labour.

The SWP's politics is based on the moral and ethical assumption that war is immoral and needs to be opposed. So peace becomes the only possible and required outcome of this stance. In contrast, revolutionary Marxism shows that the contradictory nature of capitalism means that war is an integral aspect of the existing social relations, and is an attempt to displace these contradictions. Hence the only way to realise peace is by revolutionary struggle against the imperatives of global capital. But to the SWP, this approach is for the long-term, and the immediate and realistic short-term aim is to struggle for peace, and to therefore carry out protests and make demands for peace. Thus when war breaks out, the SWP are disorientated because capital has not acted according to what they thought was possible. This approach represents an idealist outlook, one of trying to modify the actions and policies of capital without directly and decisively opposing the present system. Reality has its own logic, however, and those who are not prepared for a sudden turn of events find themselves in political crisis.

In order to provide ideological comfort to their supporters, the SWP editorial describes New Labour as a "weak" and "divided" government.³ This view is not without its truth, but if not understood in its contradictory aspects it becomes formal and dogmatic. For it is increasingly obvious that the New Labour government has become politically unstable and liable to splits and differences. But it is precisely

this context which explains why Blair was so willing to support Bush and go to war against Iraq. For Blair understood that with the increasing disaffection of traditional supporters, the only way to sustain New Labour is to become even more openly imperialist, nationalist and chauvinist. Furthermore, Blair recognises alongside Bush that war is becoming central to upholding the interests of global capital. This is why to consistently oppose war is to oppose New Labour and to call for a revolutionary alternative. Instead, the SWP considers that the futile tactic of trying to "change the mind" of New Labour could somehow stop the war.

In the May issue of *Socialist Review*, an article by John Rees attempts to provide an overall evaluation of the Stop the War movement.⁴ Rees, one of the main leaders of the STWC, begins with a description of the impressive scale and scope of the national and international demonstrations, and he argues that: "We now know the profound impact that this movement had on the British government. Tony Blair warned both civil servants and his family that he might lose his job and contingency plans were drawn up to bring British troops back from the Gulf." This comment seems to be an expression of radical defiance, an indication that even if the anti-war movement did not succeed in its aims it still came very close to realising its objectives.

Such a view may have the desired effect of consoling some supporters of STWC about the apparent narrowness of their defeat. What it does not explain is why they were defeated, and what this indicates about the connected limitations of protest politics. For what Rees cannot explain is why such high levels of militancy and campaigning were ultimately unsuccessful and even put on the defensive by the actual advent of war. The inability of Rees to outline a cogent answer to these points is that he does not recognise that Blair and Bush are prepared to take political risks, and are committed to ruthlessly ensuring that their strategic and military tasks are practically realised in the best interests of global capital.

Rees seems to agree with the common sense and pragmatic view that New Labour policy is flexibly defined by nothing more than spin and public opinion polls. Consequently he considers it was possible to get New Labour and Blair to back down over the war. But New Labour policy is more coherent than an expression of popularity contests. It is actually dictated by the contemporary requirements of global capital, which is why Blair was so adamant in his support of Bush and the overthrow of the Iraqi regime. Regardless of what he might have said to the media,

Blair was prepared not to back down, and this is precisely what caused a problem for the STWC leadership.

In his article, Rees seems to acknowledge the necessity for the anti-war movement to go beyond its protest origins and preoccupations: "This is an important point: the anti-war movement is not only a protest movement taking action out of principle, it is also a movement powerful enough to actually change the political course of British society."⁵ Rees' comment is actually strong on rhetoric and sadly lacking in real theoretical and political content. For in practice, Rees rejects the perspective of mobilising to defeat the New Labour government. A general call to "change the course of British society" is absolutely meaningless. New Labour is, after all, the government. Only a call to go beyond it can connect the protests to a coherent and strategic vision to transform society in a democratic and participatory manner.

Rees might suggest that what he is advocating will facilitate the anti-war movement's transformation into an ambitious political entity. Firstly, he argues: "One obvious solution is that the supporters of the organised left grow in numbers. The more the socialist organisations grow the greater the clarity and mobilisation capacity of the whole movement grows."⁶ But the question of political coherence is not merely provided by increasing numbers, because the primary question still remains of what concrete politics and policies can take the movement forward. Rees advocates putting pressure on New Labour to change its policies. Consequently his call for more socialist influence is actually a call for building the influence of opportunist politics with the aim of influencing existing "British society".

Rees also calls for greater trade union and working class involvement in the anti-war movement. But this is not made in terms of the political development of an alternative to New Labour, but rather of using the trade unions in terms of an organisational capacity for pressure group politics: "Each trade unionist has the power to organise greater numbers around them. They have, potentially access to funds, mailing lists and audiences that the unorganised lack. More than this, such activity **brings pressure directly to bear on the Labour government.**"⁷ [emphasis added]

This patronising description of the role of trade unionists is an expression of how Rees envisages the role of the working class. He wants to encourage a new layer of activists to be involved, who will be prepared to help with the donkey work. Rees' elitist view towards trade unionists is connected to his pressure group mentality. He considers that

politics is all about the implementation of pressure by a presumably unthinking rank and file. The invasion of Iraq, together with a whole range of reactionary New Labour policies, has produced a tangible shift away from the Blair government. Many trade unions are facing calls from below for an end to affiliation to Labour. Voters have deserted Blair in droves. One of the least publicised marches during the war was of 10,000 Muslims in the East End of London. They protested outside the offices of a local MP who backed the invasion and may well put up a candidate at the next election.

Rees tries to make an adjustment to these developments by writing: "On the left, in the unions, among the Muslim community, hundreds of thousands of people want to see a radical alternative to New Labour." Rees's call for a "genuine pole of attraction" built by "broader forces" than the existing Left seems an expression of the present diverse and plural aspiration to go beyond the limits of New Labour. The actual political content is to try and channel mass struggles into the organisational needs and political requirements of the SWP. For the only organisation that Rees presently envisages being built as a necessary political organisation is the "revolutionary" party, defined exclusively as the SWP. In this context the anti-war movement is considered to be a united front that acts to facilitate the process of building the SWP.

This point is diplomatically absent from the Rees article on the development of the anti-war coalition but is constantly articulated and defended by articles on the party question.⁸ Movements such as the STWC are considered as essentially reformist from which the SWP is differentiated as revolutionary: "But genuine unity of action depends on separation on matters of principle such as reform and revolution. We cannot properly determine those immediate issues on which we can unite unless we also properly, and organisationally, separate over matters of principle."⁹ The anti-war movement is envisaged as one homogenous reformist bloc, and only the SWP is considered to be revolutionary.

Two conclusions emerge from this viewpoint. Firstly, it is necessary to accommodate to the perceived unmoving reformist consciousness of the STWC participants. Secondly, the only way that rigid reformist ideas can be transformed into revolutionary ideas is by organisational recruitment into the SWP. Thus the SWP does not effectively consider the necessity to develop politics that relates to people in struggle and tries to challenge the limitations of existing ideas and practices. For ideas and social practices have a constant process of self-movement which shows the possibility for often seemingly entrenched reformist and reactionary

views to be transformed into a potentially revolutionary standpoint. Real revolutionary politics acts to facilitate the process of transforming existing views, and overcome the accommodation to existing dominant ideologies and acceptance of reformist ideas. Instead the SWP seeks to accommodate to presumed fixed reformist ideas as the organisational basis to win the maximum number of people to its party political ranks. This is why the SWP considered the STWC movement as a convenient political vehicle. It obtained a leadership position that enabled it to accommodate to what it considered to be reformist consciousness and at the same time obtain maximum political influence for the possibility of recruiting to the "revolutionary" organisation.

In practice, however, the SWP was increasingly tailing behind the spontaneous emergence of a popular mood, which was that of the need to challenge the reactionary politics of New Labour. This point is illustrated by Rees's view that the Labour left rebellion could have stopped the war: "The critical moment came around the time of the second vote in the House of Commons on Tuesday 18 March. Accident had some role to play in all of this. Had Clare Short resigned alongside Robin Cook, thus ensuring the backbench rebellion was even larger than it was, Britain might well have been forced out of the war."¹⁰ This type of wishful thinking perpetuates the myth that the Labour left can somehow transform New Labour and overcome its present reactionary character. It expresses an ideological illusion that Blair does not represent the party, and that it is still politically productive to try and maintain the Labour Party.

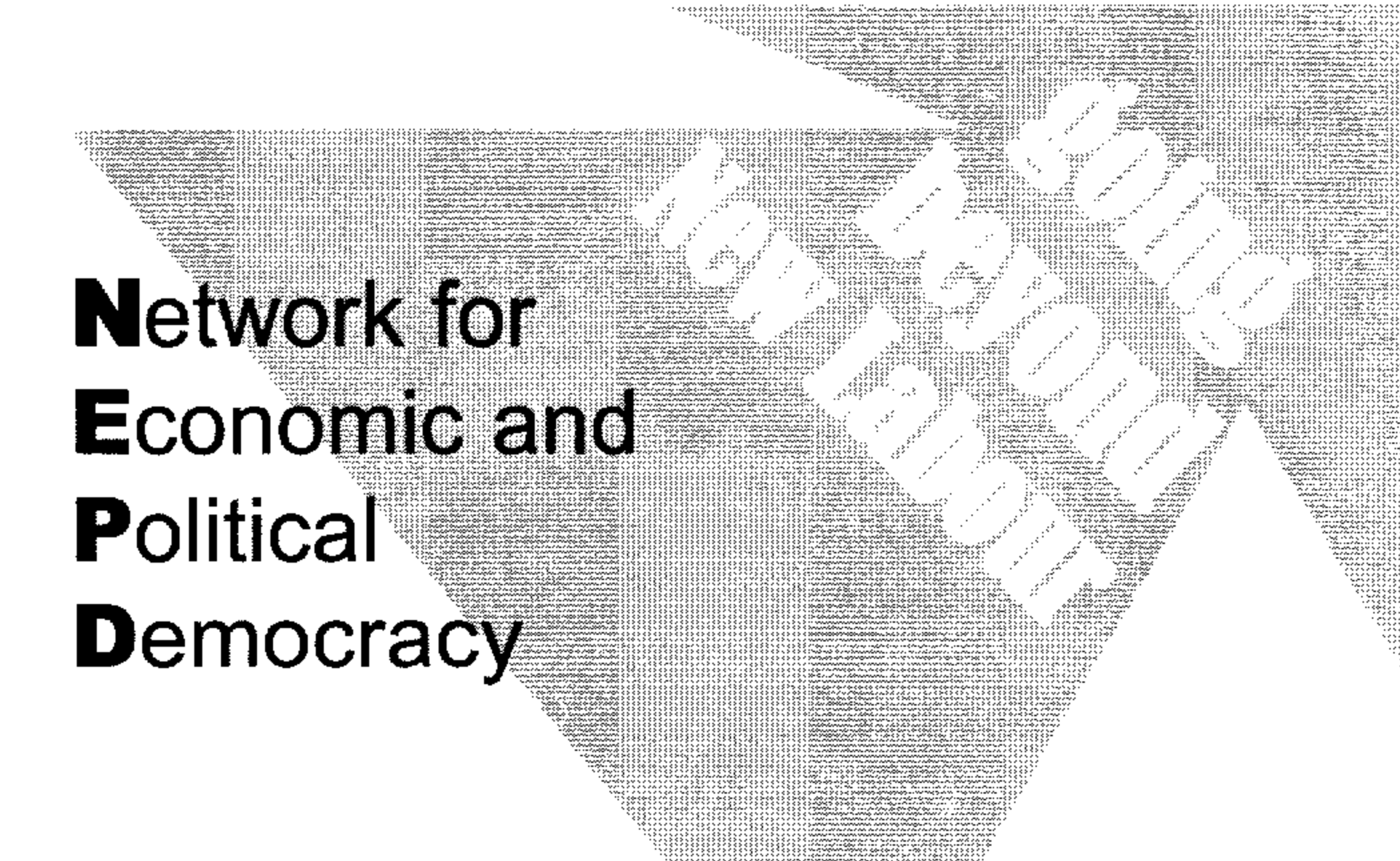
The plurality and diversity of the anti-war movement represented people who had illusions in the UN, but it also had more militant and anti-imperialist sections which came to represent the dominant mood of the anti-war movement after the war had started. For it was shown conclusively that the UN could not stop war, and that instead the Bush and Blair administration had effectively by-passed it in order to start the war against Iraq. In this context, the demonstrations of March and April, whilst smaller, were more militant and increasingly expressed a mood of opposition to the politics of New Labour. Hence it was not surprising that placards were evident in March and April calling for regime change in Britain. Thus the spontaneous enthusiasm of the marchers was beginning to articulate a mood of both defiance and the need for political alternatives to New Labour.

The STWC leaders have interpreted this militant mood as a willingness for support for an endless diet of demonstrations, meetings and more

protests. Certainly there will be dedicated support for continuing the campaign against the occupation of Iraq. Also the prospect of more militaristic action by the representatives of global capital will generate the potential for future mass anti-war struggles. But it is also important to understand that the rapid growth and mass scope of the anti-war movement expressed an opposition to the old and a desire for the new. The anti-war movement was an important beginning of increasing discontent with existing political structures and the spontaneous articulation of the need for the development to an alternative. In this context, the movement is a worthy ally of the global anti-capitalist movement. The SWP has attempted to reduce its character to reformism. Instead within the shell of apparent protest, was the emergence of a social movement with a yearning for a better world. This is what we must build on to go beyond New Labour and in so doing go beyond global capitalism. ☸

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Ziauddin Sardar's overarching project is to transform Islam and the west both from within and without. Sardar argues for a form of Islam and a balance of civilisations which could lead to an alternative future to that being offered by today's leaders of the major states. The question is, however, does his critique provide a truly in-depth examination of the dogmas he is challenging?

The quest for an Islamic Enlightenment

BY CORINNA LOTZ

Shortly after September 11, Ziauddin Sardar spoke for many millions of people, east and west, when he said: "To be a Muslim nowadays is to live perpetually on the edge, to be constantly bruised and bloodied from the harsh existence at the margins, to be exhausted by the screams of pain and agony that no one seems to hear. We, the Muslims, live in a world that is not of our own making, that has systematically marginalised our physical, intellectual and psychological space, that has occupied our minds and our bodies by brute force."

Many of the essays in this compilation* were written before September 11, but they examine aspects of thought and culture that remain extremely relevant. September 11 and what Bush and Blair describe as the "war against terror" have given a greater relevance and urgency to Sardar's quest for a future different from that on offer in the wake of the war against Iraq. Sardar takes on what he calls western thought with a mixture of enthusiasm and anguish. His polemic embraces many aspects of contemporary thought and culture from an Islamic point of view. As so often, the most dynamic voices opposing the prevailing ideology often come from those who live within it, but who have an outsider's perspective. "While a committed Muslim, he is totally pluralistic," we learn from his colleagues, Gail Boxall and Sohail

Inayatullah. "While orthodox himself, he is out of orthodoxy. While living in the west, he is not of the west," they say, in the introduction to this collection of writings from 1979 to 2002. They go on to describe Sardar as "the argumentative and demanding voice from the margins, always deliberately on the periphery, that plays havoc with the centre. In this sense, Sardar has placed himself as the Other – the dialectical opposite of the dominant mode of thought and action, whether in the west or internally within Islam". His overarching project is to transform Islam and the west both from within and without. Sardar argues for a form of Islam and a balance of civilisations which could lead to an alternative future to that being offered by today's leaders of the major states. The question is, however, does his critique provide a truly in-depth examination of the dogmas he is challenging? Does it go beyond "the criticism of weapons" and supply us with the "weapon of criticism"?

Sardar's Islam is not simply a religion in the narrow sense of the word. For him, as indeed for many Muslims, it is a "worldview, a vision of a just and equitable society and civilisation, a holistic culture". Sardar wants to extend Islam to make it "an invitation to thought for discovering a way out of the current crisis of modernity and postmodernism". The Salman Rushdie affair was crucial, he believes, because Khomeini's *fatwa* issued on 14 February 1989 "brought not only a death sentence for Rushdie but it also made me redundant as an intellectual for implicit in the fatwa was the declaration that Muslim thinkers are too feeble to defend their own beliefs". He sees the challenge of being a Muslim today as "the responsibility to harness a controlled explosion, one that will clear the premises of all the detritus without damaging the foundations that would bring down the House of Islam".

This aim sums up the bottom line. Everything can be challenged and thrown up for debate except the fundamental tenet of every religion – the existence of God. With it comes an instinctive hostility to secularism. His concept of Muslim civilisation, he writes in "Reconstructing Muslim Civilisation" (1984), "is no more fixed to a particular historic epoch or geographical space than the teachings of the Qur'an and the Sunnah. The Muslim civilisation is a historic continuum". He presents a flower-shaped drawing to illustrate the challenges facing the "ummah" (body of believers). At its core is the Islamic world view. The primary task, he believes, is the "development of a contemporary theory of Islamic epistemology". For Sardar,

epistemology, or the theory of knowledge, is "nothing more than an expression of a world view".

This is a nodal point in opening the discussion for anyone seeking to challenge the ideology of the status quo. He is absolutely right to stress the importance of epistemology, or as he says, "a way of knowing", "the major operator which transforms the vision of a worldview into a reality". An emancipation project – liberation from the ideology of the status quo – must disrupt and break up the dogmas which entrap thought in the existing social and political structures. As Sardar writes: "epistemology and societal structures feed on each other". Here those unfamiliar with Islamic concepts must be ready to have their preconceptions and prejudices broken up.

Sardar sees Shari'ah (or Islamic law) not as the image we have received from the media – barbaric forms of punishment carried out in the Saudi Kingdom, by the Taleban and other rulers. He actually condemns the "blind following" of Shari'ah rulings from the past which he says threatens to "suffocate the very civilisation of Islam". Instead he believes the Shari'ah should be set free to allow it to develop as "the primary contribution of Muslim civilisation to human development" – a problem-solving methodology. What he doesn't examine in any convincing way is how and why Shari'ah is used to justify the practices of stoning "adulteresses", cutting off limbs and executions, or indeed the oppression of women and minorities. Indeed, the connection of the "fundamentalist" interpretation of Islam with the rule of clans, tribes and cliques in places like Nigeria, Afghanistan and Pakistan is not explored or examined. It is simply dismissed as an oversimplified view of the Shari'ah.

Sardar analyses the rise of what he calls "mindless fundamentalism" as a reaction to "imported and imposed European nationalism and modernity," which, he writes, "disenfranchised a large segment of the global Muslim community – the ummah – and took it to extremes of poverty and social and cultural dislocation. Fundamentalism emerged as a gut reaction against modernity and pushed more extreme elements in Muslim communities to the other extreme". Thus the rise of what Sardar calls "Islam-as-fundamentalism" was in response to what Sardar rightly describes as the transformations of the last decades, the largest material changes human life has ever experienced. He insists that those who suppress ethnic minorities in the name of a national majority are planting the seeds of their own destruction. He sees the answer to this, and the "Eurocentric" outlook as a reform of Islamic thought,

transcending "all cultural boundaries and not limited and confined by a single parochial outlook".

But here, as everywhere in Sardar's body of thought, the political and cultural constructs are presented in what becomes, in the last analysis, a free-floating limbo. He summarises the different challenges that faced various national and Islamic reform movements in Egypt, Lebanon, Turkey and Pakistan. He condemns them all for taking "European political theory with the nation-state as its base" as the model to follow. But what were the underlying historical and social forces which gave rise to these national movements? Sardar refers to "western economics", but he does not define **what** that economics is. It is of course, the capitalist economic system, but this is not stated explicitly. Instead we have the use of the word "western" and "European" to cover a multitude of sins.

And here we arrive at the nub of the problem. Just as political movements are seen largely as devoid of an economic environment, so Sardar's view of the problems of the intelligentsia are separated from the social history of civilisation. The existence of social classes and class conflict never enters his account. His erudite description of "the making and unmaking of Islamic culture" describes the flourishing and decline of Islamic culture of its golden age from an open to a closed society, but we are never shown the social or economic reasons for its decline. Sardar freezes the opposites "Muslim and non-Muslim", "west and non-west" into generalised abstractions. These are pasted over complex social realities and obscure the real course of events. The idea of a total separation of culture and ideas which fall neatly into "west" and "non-west" is simply not a real description of the course of history. Sardar actually admits as much himself when he writes about Malaysia and Singapore:

"Global capitalism.... Does not really care whether I am Muslim, Christian, secularist, Pakistani, male, black or whatever: it simply demands that I buy."

The idea of a "pure" culture, whether Islamic or western is in any case a nonsense. Art, science and technology – civilisation in fact – invariably arise from a co-mingling of the discoveries and achievements of many cultures. The great Islamic mathematicians, between 900 and 1300 AD, for example, drew their knowledge from ancient Greek and Hindu scholars before them. They were able to do this only after the ruling caliphs and wealthy individuals paid for Arabic translations of

Greek and Hindu research to be created at centres like the House of Wisdom in Baghdad. The Greek mathematicians in turn had drawn on Babylonian and Egyptian discoveries.

Sardar wants an Islamic Enlightenment but he joins with the same post-modernists he takes delight in deriding. For Sardar the Enlightenment is essentially a western rationale whose purpose is solely for the imperialist colonisation of the non-west. The achievements of the philosophers, mathematicians and theoreticians of the 17th and 18th Centuries are not associated, in this view, with any advance in the social knowledge of humanity. It is a little strange for someone as familiar as Sardar with the history of mathematics to forget that the Italian mathematicians of the early Renaissance built heavily on the discoveries of the Muslim thinkers that preceded them and whose culture is enshrined in the language of mathematics to this day in words such as algebra and algorithm. Sardar, for example, depicts "Modernity", as the "European imperial adventure that began with Columbus and has its roots in the 17th century philosophical movement dubbed 'the Enlightenment'."

Even while reverting periodically to the often stale terms of "modernity" and "post-modernity" Sardar sees the world in constant movement as an interconnected and interdependent unity, a refreshingly holistic point of view. But this outlook is limited to a reformist approach. In the one paragraph where he discusses revolutionary transformation openly, he dismisses the idea as simply "replacing one tyranny with another", as a "single act of violence". The way that Sardar recognises the importance of thinkers like Karl Marx provides a fascinating insight into the strengths and weakness of his outlook. "There is," he writes, "perhaps no more poignant example of how an intellectual who was influenced by other intellectuals finally reaches down even to the most remote peasant." In this way he recognises the supreme importance of theoretical struggle but overlooks the fact that Marx didn't only spend most of his life in libraries. Sardar's idealised view of the intelligentsia manages to miss the historical fact that Marx was deeply engaged with others in the practical revolutionary struggle to build political movements.

In fact, Sardar believes that what he calls "the grand narrative of secularism" has also been a failure. He makes an urgent call for a united front between Muslims and Christians against what he calls "the fire of secularism". He views postmodernism as a dangerous form of secularism which undermines religion. He believes that the religious outlook is in

deep crisis – believers are "on the verge of extinction", he told an audience in 1990. But while Sardar dislikes the secular aspect of postmodernism, he joins enthusiastically with many postmodernists in rejecting what they both refer to as "metanarratives" – the materialist and historical explanations provided by a Marxist approach. Just as he uses "west" as another word for globalised corporate capitalism when it is convenient, he identifies postmodernism with corporate capitalism, but only when it suits his particular argument! For example, he writes:

"After consigning living history to archaeological sites, satirising it into 'magical realism', postmodernism transforms tradition into a commodity and markets it as such...The search for Roots often ends up as a television series: as a series of images or pastiche, of some romantic past."

He then goes on to deconstruct this process in witty comments on consumer capitalist marketing and image making.

One of the most important areas of Sardar's thought is his investigation of futures studies. He sees the future as already colonised, "an occupied territory whose liberation is the most pressing challenge for the peoples of the non-west if they are to inherit a future made in their own likeness". He denounces the new industry of futures studies for simply looking forward to a time when "corporations will continue to dominate and they will have new theories and tools to maintain their domination". But then the same lumping together that characterises Sardar's method takes over:

"The future is being colonised by yet another force. Conventionally this force was called 'westernisation', but now it goes under the rubric of 'globalisation'. It may be naïve to equate the former with the latter – but the end product is the same."

He identifies globalisation with liberal democracy and a "total embrace of western culture". But surely we are experiencing the universalising process of **global capitalism** rather than "western civilisation and culture" here. The corporations have no trouble absorbing and digesting many "traditional" lifestyles and traditions. Indeed in the frenzied need to seduce consumers, they need to incorporate and reflect them in their products, as we have seen in the music industry and advertising using "ethnic and streetwise culture". Muslim women may chose to wear veils with Nike logos, drink Coca Cola and eat McDonalds burgers and other products made by global

corporations, "western" and "non-western" owned ones.

If we want an alternative future to the rule of the global corporations, we need to identify things clearly. Otherwise we could succumb to the gloomy scenario which Sardar conjures up, of a "new kind of colonisation that goes beyond physical and mental occupation to the seizure of our being and hence total absorption". He is right to demand that "futures studies must be openly incomplete and unpredictable, and must thus function as an intellectual movement rather than a closed discipline, working in opposition to the dominant politics and culture of our time. But, in Sardar's eclectic mix, there follows a demand to "resist and critique science and technology (the most powerful agents of change and thought), globalisation (the most powerful process of change and thought) and linear, deterministic projections (the official orthodoxy) of the future itself".

As so often, a strong thought lies side by side with a hopelessly retrograde one. He calls for only "resistance" to the very forces which we must **capture and liberate** from the control of the global corporations. Science and globalisation are, it is true, largely at the service of and under the control of corporations. But they are created and sustained by ordinary mortals, workers and professional people, who all suffer from the extreme alienation which Sardar describes so well. Sardar rejects the idea that "culture is what people do", saying it is a "a mental outlook, a world view". But in reality, culture is both what people do and how they see things. The mental and physical are brought together in the social practice of millions of human beings to create cultures.

Contrary to Sardar – it is not simply "the west versus the Muslim world" – Muslims are not the only Other. Knowledge and society are actually bigger than notions of west and non-west. Sardar's idea of The Other tends to be defined and constrained by the very postmodern notions that he criticises. In other words, the Other is seen as permanently oppressed, on the margins, never to be transformed into the Other of itself. We need to develop a view of the Other which is the Other of global capitalism. The corporate-led globalisation process shows the potential is there is to look after the planet and its inhabitants. Human history is not simply the result of the quest for profit. Our individual and social existence provides evidence of this, with or without the belief in God or an afterlife. It *is* possible to understand and modify the world in which we live along other lines.

"Religious suffering" Marx wrote, "is, at one and the same time, the

expression of real suffering and a protest against real suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people". The idea that we cannot alter this "heartless world" in a fundamental way is itself a dogma which could imprison us. The biggest challenge is to unite the vast majority of people who are alienated by the forces of global capitalism and appropriate what should be ours in any case. Sardar is absolutely right to stress the key role of a "world view". This means being ready to question our own assumptions, extending our knowledge and being aware of what we do - in other words, understanding the role of theory as a transforming agent. We must search for the answers to the questions he asks if we are to challenge and change the status quo. Sardar's writings are an excellent contribution to this discussion. ■■■

* Islam, Postmodernism and Other Futures, A Ziauddin Sardar Reader, Pluto Press £14.99 paperback

The two-state solution proposed in the US-proposed "Road Map" has no future. The Israeli state is no longer viable, either economically or politically, while the Palestinians do not even have a state to call their own. The way forward must lie in a radically different approach, based on an appeal to both Jews and Palestinians to develop a common way forward within a single state.

The Road Map to hell and back

BY KATE MCCABE

In April this year, the US government agreed to grant Israel \$9 billion in loan guarantees and \$1bn in aid. But the delegation from the finance ministry that received the news was disappointed – they were hoping for a \$12 billion package, on top of the \$3bn in military aid Israel receives annually from the US. Israel is already the biggest recipient of US foreign aid, receiving nearly \$3 billion annually and without it the state of Israel would collapse.

It is this client relationship with the US that is behind the Prime minister Ariel Sharon's agreement to read out a speech virtually written for him by White House staff at the Road Map conference in Aqaba. Israel is under more pressure from the Bush White house than from any previous US administration to move towards a settlement with the Palestinians.

This is not to say that justice and liberation for the Palestinians features strongly in Bush's Road Map – it is a compromise that, even if it reaches the final stages, will leave the Palestinians with little more than a small enclave, with limited economic potential. It is likely the Palestinians could be as dependent on aid in the long term as Israel has been since its foundation in 1948.

As with the Oslo Accords, the key issues of the right to return of Palestinian refugees and the issue of Jerusalem are left until the final phase, to be completed in 2005 – and many would say, if ever. Nonetheless, the Road Map recognises all the resolutions passed by the

United Nations on the Arab-Israeli conflict, including those stating that Israel must return to its pre-1967 borders and that West Bank illegal settlements should be dismantled. Of course this could be seen as just another manoeuvre by imperialism to do down the Palestinians – just another element of the “re-colonisation” of the Middle East.

However, this is actually missing the point. It is not recolonisation by imperialism that is on the agenda but rather a desperate desire by the multinationals, and their political representatives Bush and Blair, to have a “stable” world – a world fit for business. Israeli commentator and peace activist Yuri Avneri wrote of the Road Map:

“Why this sudden enthusiasm for personal intervention in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict? There is a purely political aspect: in Afghanistan, anarchy reigns. In Iraq, all the high-sounding plans about a ‘democratic Iraqi government’ have been shelved. In the United States, ugly news-stories are circulating, insinuating that the administration deliberately deceived the public about the existence of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction.

“Bush needs an uncontested achievement in the Middle East. What could be more beautiful on television than the picture of the President of the United States standing between the Prime Ministers of Israel and Palestine with a background of blue sea and soaring palms, bringing peace to the two suffering peoples? For this purpose, Bush has set in motion a brutal steamroller that crushes all opposition, Palestinian or Israeli. Bush practically dictated all four speeches himself.”

This is all true as far as it goes, but to really understand we need to go beyond the political considerations to the economic driving force behind them. Why did the US go to war in Iraq in the first instance and why do they need an “achievement” in the Middle East? There’s nothing in it for the US in terms of its national survival – it could just as easily ignore the region altogether. In reality it is about trying desperately to create a safe operating environment for global capital, not only because of oil reserves but also because of the huge potential of the Middle East to develop into an unfettered market for the goods produced by global corporations.

The Road Map makes a great point of the need for the Arab regimes to re-establish the economic and trade links with Israel established

after Oslo but broken off when the Israelis went to war on the Palestinians. Israel's economy is extremely important to the global corporations, particularly in the area of hi-tech research and development. It is the link in the Middle East to the world economy. Israel boasts many high technology companies in fields such as telecommunications equipment, software, semiconductors, biotechnology and medical electronics. In 2000, high technology and technology-rich products accounted for some 70% of Israeli exports. Leading global companies like Intel, Motorola, IBM, Microsoft, Alcatel and 3Com all have research and development facilities in Israel. Intel and Motorola also manufacture advanced products and many other corporations have bought out local companies, acquiring their patents and human talent.

There were some 100 Israeli companies trading in the US in 2000, mainly on the NASDAQ market of technology stocks. This represented the second-largest number of foreign firms appearing on the American stock markets, exceeded only by Canada. Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) has played an increasing role in the Israeli economy from the 1980s onwards. It took off in the 1990s and reached its peak at the turn of the century. In 1999 FDI in Israeli – virtually all of it in the hi-tech sector – reached a record \$3.7 billion, up from \$2.4 billion in 1998.

Motorola set up the first major R&D presence in Israel, and today develops and manufactures communications equipment and semiconductors with annual sales of over \$1 billion up until 2001. Motorola was followed by IBM, which expanded its sales and technical support facilities into a major presence in Haifa in the late 1970s, and Intel started with an R&D facility in Haifa and now operates two semiconductor fabrication plants, one in Jerusalem and the other in the "development town" of Kiryat Gat. In 2002, Israel sold its third-generation mobile phone licences for a fraction of the price achieved at the height of the telecoms boom in countries such as Germany and Britain. However, the make-up of the three successful companies demonstrates the extent to which Israel is an integrated part of the global economy. The three successful bidders were Cellcom Israel, Partner Communications and Pelephone Communication. Cellcom is owned by US company BellSouth, Brazil's Safra group and Israel's Discount Investment Corp, while Pelephone is jointly owned by state-run Bezeq Israel Telecom and Shamrock Holdings, the US investment arm of Roy Disney. Partner's main shareholders include France Telecom's Orange.

The basis of Israel's achievements in the hi-tech sector is its highly-educated population. Twenty percent of the workforce are graduates, the highest proportion in the world after the U.S., compared with 17% in Canada, 12% in Britain and 8% in Italy. Israel has the world's highest percentage of engineers (135 per 10,000 people compared to 85 per 10,000 in the US). More than a million new immigrants have come from the former Soviet Union over the past decade and they have an even more impressive educational profile than the average Israeli: 2.3% have second and third degrees compared to 1.2% of the general population. Russian immigrants are especially proficient in R&D disciplines such as advanced materials and new industrial processes which complement the country's traditional expertise in software, semiconductors, medical equipment, biotechnology, electronics and communications.

However, the Israeli economy is now in deep crisis. According to the Bank of Israel, 2002 was the worst year since 1953 and projections for 2003 suggest little improvement. The national unemployment rate was at over 10%. In some so called "development towns" for example in Galilee and the Negev desert, it is closer to 20%. These settlements are largely populated by Middle Eastern and more recently-arrived Russian Jews. In Palestinian-Israeli municipalities the figure is even higher. There are no exact figures on the number of redundancies that have taken place in the hi-tech sector, but it is estimated that up to 16,000 of the country's 80,000 high-tech workers have lost their jobs. Many of these skilled workers are leaving Israel for posts in other countries.

Apart from the effects of the world recession, the local factors causing the collapse of the Israeli economy are the sharply increased cost of defending the settlements, the withdrawal of foreign investment and the collapse of tourism since the collapse of the Oslo Accords and start of the present Intifada. Policing the Intifada has cost Israel around \$2 billion. Tax revenues have fallen and so the cost of the war has led to a squeeze on the welfare state. The US is trying to reduce its aid to Israel and Bush has held on to the right to withhold further payments of the current aid package if the Israeli government fails to implement an austerity programme.

There is no doubt that the Palestinians have suffered the most from the Intifada. All the new institutions and infrastructure set up after the Oslo Accords have been completely destroyed. Almost 10,000 Palestinians are in jail. Over 2,000 men, women and children have been killed and thousands injured. Towns and villages have been smashed by Israeli attacks. The settlement programme has continued with even

more land and water seized. The livelihood of Palestinians has been destroyed. Those who relied on jobs in the infrastructure are out of a job. Those working in agriculture have had neither the peace to cultivate crops nor access to markets in order to export what they have grown. The many thousands of Palestinians who work in Israel have been unable to travel to work. Educational institutions have been closed for months on end. A massive wall is being built round the West Bank to keep the Palestinians out of Israel.

Quite apart from the collapse of the economy, Israelis are paying a terrible price for the policies of Sharon in other ways. As the commentator Yuri Avneri says:

"Fear stalks the streets, the malls and the buses. Private watchmen, one hundred thousand of them, are everywhere...If the armed Intifada ends, who can be said to have gained from the 32 months of bloody struggle? The objective answer: it is a draw. ...But when there is a draw between two sides, one of which is a thousand times stronger than the other, it is a fantastic achievement for the weaker."

Despite the Bush administration's attempts to impose a settlement there is no confidence whatsoever amongst Palestinians that it is any more than words. Before the international media circus that followed Bush to Aqaba had time to get back to their home countries, the Intifada had broken out anew. The armed organisations rejected the agreement signed up to by Palestinian Prime Minister Abu Mazen. Almost immediately there was an attack on an Israeli army post by armed militants, followed by an Israeli assassination attempt on a senior Hamas political leader. A suicide bomb then killed 16 in Israel, with the Israelis responded with a slaughter of their own, using US-supplied rockets and helicopter gunships. Sharon, leader of the right-wing Zionists who run Israel, is godfather of the settlements; he purposely set out to undermine the Oslo Accords by speeding up the rate of development and he regards all of the West Bank and Gaza as part of the biblical land of Israel. His hatred of Palestinians is both racist and pathological. He provoked Hamas because he desperately needed an excuse to avoid a settlement with the Palestinians, even in terms of the so-called Road Map.

Many Palestinians believe that it is only the continued uprising that will force Israel to move. At the same time, young men killing

themselves and Israeli civilians on buses and in cafes and discos is not a viable way forward. Nor do the Zionists offer any peaceful perspective for the Jews who live in Israel. Their dream of a homeland free from persecution in Europe has produced a nightmare state, based exclusively on a particular ethnic group. Its Arab citizens are denied basic rights and treated like second-class citizens. In South Africa, this used to be called apartheid. The Israeli state is no longer viable, either economically or politically, while the Palestinians do not even have a state to call their own.

Even while Colin Powell, the US Secretary of State was in the area pressing for a cease-fire, Sharon showed his regime's contempt and arrogance by assassinating yet another leading member of Hamas, Abdullah Qawasmeh. His death came as Palestinian Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas was holding talks with militants to persuade them to agree a ceasefire against Israelis as required by the Road Map. Kawasmeh was shot while standing at the entrance to a mosque. "This is another proof that the Israelis are...continuing the assassinations," Cabinet minister Yasser Abed Rabbo said. "These operations are meant to obstruct any success of the dialogue to reach a truce," he added.

The way forward must lie in a radically different approach, based on an appeal to both Jews and Palestinians to develop a common way forward within a single state. The two-state solution has no future. It is the Road Map to hell and back. ❧

Some commentators, both Kurds and non-Kurds, have claimed that the recent war waged against Iraq will have positive benefits for the Kurdish people. If this is so, it would be the first time in their history that the Kurds have gained anything from a foreign power. Their struggle has been and will continue to be one of disappointment and betrayal by imperialism.

Kurds wait on favours from America

BY JOHN EDEN

There are those who suggest that things will be different for the Kurds in Iraq in the wake of the overthrow of the Saddam Hussein regime by the US-UK invasion. *The Guardian* (April 11), reprinted an article by Stavros Lygeros from the Greek paper *Kathimerini*, in which he wrote: "Nothing is settled, but the most likely scenario is that the Kurds will benefit, their quasi-state in northern Iraq made stronger and larger. The Americans will support them because they realise that the Kurds see them as liberators, Kurdistan will not only be a more friendly environment but a lever for exerting pressure on surrounding countries. Washington is trying to reassure the Turkish leadership. But everything points to the fact that the Turks will have to swallow a bitter pill. The only other option is out right recklessness." Another article in *The Guardian* by Helena Smith (April 9th) notes that "for although – under US pressure – Kurdish leaders in Iraq have sought to play down any desire for self-determination, the prospect of a post-war settlement further entrenching the autonomy they enjoy is making the Turks increasingly edgy".

But even the moderate gains of "autonomy" in the area of the British and America-created no-fly zone, were only accomplished at the expense of mass ethnic cleansing from other areas of northern Iraq dominated by a Kurdish population. This happened after the 1991 uprising against the Saddam Hussein regime, when the Kurds were driven from their main cities, the oil centres of Kirkuk and Mosul, to the remote mountain areas close to the Turkish and Iranian borders. This became their "autonomous Kurdish

state" which was developed through the use of oil revenues redirected to the northern region from the UN oil-for-food programme which covered the whole of Iraq.

This revolt, encouraged by the American and British governments, was savagely suppressed while London and Washington stood by and did nothing. Prime minister Blair acknowledged this before and during the recent war, and accepted that British governments had previously betrayed the Kurds. The British in particular have a history of betraying the Kurds. At the Cairo conference of 1921, Britain locked the Kurds into the prison of the Iraqi state and later ordered the RAF to bomb Kurdish villages into submission. Desperate for some recognition by imperialism, the current Kurdish leaders forget this episode. In *The Observer* (March 14) the Prime Minister of the Kurdish regime of Sulaymaniyah March wrote: "Today, Blair speaks for enslaved Iraqis." What hope for the Kurdish people when this "leader" spreads such illusions in imperialism? Further he writes:

"Under the shelter of British and US war planes, and facilitated by Turkey, Iraqi Kurds are building a better society, one that respects human rights and free media and values the rule of law. The rights of ethnic minorities are respected, the rights of women are protected."

This is the same Turkey that so savagely persecutes their own Kurdish population. He is not the only Kurdish politician who spreads such illusions in imperialism despite the almost 100 years of betrayal. Listen to the words of the leader of the Patriotic union of Kurdistan (PUK) Jalal Talaban. In her article, Helena Smith says:

"This, he [Talaban] says, patting his ample girth, is the moment he has waited for, for half a century. This is the first time a big power like the USA is coming to liberate our country, gives us the Iraqi people the right to self-determination and replace dictatorship with a democratic federative system. That is my dream."

During the recent war the Kurdish troops of the "autonomous" region fought alongside American Special Forces against the Iraqi army, which soon collapsed. The oil cities of Kirkuk and Mosul were retaken by the Kurds. Control of these towns is seen by the Kurds as vital to the stability of an independent state of Kurdistan or a genuine Autonomous Kurdish regime of Iraq. For this reason the control of these cities has become a very contentious issue. The Turkish government is totally opposed to any Kurdish control of these towns. Not only do they want the right to continue brutally suppressing the Kurds in Turkey but they also want the right to do it in Iraq. The Turkish government uses the claim the Turkoman minority is being

"oppressed" by the returning Kurds as a justification for intervening there.

The real reason the Turkish government is opposed to Kurdish control is that it would inspire their own Kurdish minority to seek unification in a state with the Iraqi Kurds. Another reason is the Turkish ruling class wants to annex this oil rich area for themselves. Turkish politicians are quite aware that "the prison of the Iraqi state" means exactly that – and no Kurdistan. Talking about sending Turkish troops into "Iraqi Kurdistan" recently to prevent the Kurds seizing Kirkuk and Mosul, the Prime Minister of Turkey and the leader of the Islamic government, Tayyep Recep Erdogan was reported in *The Guardian* (April 9) as saying they while they did not rule out using force, "entering northern Iraq will not be on the agenda as long as Iraq's territorial integrity is preserved and there is no move aimed at seizing the oil of Mosul and Kirkuk."

The joint action of the Kurdish and American troops came about because Ankara did not allow the US passage through Turkey of 60,000 troops of the most sophisticated armoured division in the US army. The 4th army is completely computerised, and is known as the digital division. Passage was needed from the ships anchored in the eastern Mediterranean sea across Turkey into "autonomous" Iraqi Kurdistan. The aim was to set up a northern front which at the time the Americans said was vital to their plans to defeat the Saddam Hussein regime. The US did not want to involve either the Turks or the Kurds in any action as it would involve a change in the political and military balance in the area, and complicate their plans to dominate the area for strategic military and economic reasons.

The refusal of the Turkish government to allow the Americans vital access shocked Washington. Relations between the two governments soured rapidly. Turkey had since the Second World War been a staunch ally of American imperialism; now it was pursuing its own national self interests. Although the two governments have since talked of reconciliation, in reality the relationship has truly changed. In the end, the Americans could only open a northern front with lightly armed special forces and needed the support of the Iraqi Kurdish fighters.

All the countries that claim a part of "Kurdistan" – Iraq, Turkey, Iran and Syria – are hostile or potentially hostile to the USA. The Americans have made it clear they want regime change in three of these countries, and governments compliant to their interests. It is possible that under these conditions a temporary alliance of the Kurds and Americans may appear. Just as Syria and Iraq were created by French and British imperialism respectively at the conclusion of the First World War, a Kurdish state could arise backed by US imperialism aimed at those hostile to it in the region. The ruling elites

of these "hostile countries" have themselves to blame that they long ago made enemies of the Kurds, instead of giving the Kurds their right to independence, their own state or real autonomy within their states, and making them allies. We would be obliged to support a Kurdish state formed in these circumstances, even if at this moment it is a hypothetical question.

More likely, however, is that the Kurds will once again be the victims of imperialist manoeuvres. The United Nations resolution lifting sanctions on Iraq in fact weakened the position of the Kurds in the north. Hoshyar Zebari, a spokesman for the Kurdistan Democratic Party was quoted in the *Financial Times* (May 23) as saying: "The resolution will not motivate the political forces in the country to form an interim government, because the coalition [US and the UK] is going to run the country and they don't need partners." In addition, the resolution removed from Kurdish control Iraqi oil revenues which were earmarked for the Kurdish region, made up of three northern provinces, under the oil-for-food programme.

Under the new resolution, all Iraqi oil revenues minus 5% earmarked for a compensation fund for Kuwait, will go into a trust-fund like entity that is mandated to spend the money "for the benefit of the Iraqi people". Zebari said he it was still unclear what would become of the 13% quota on Iraqi oil revenues dedicated to the Kurdish north. "They seem to want to put it all in a national pot. This will be a great disadvantage for us." He added: "Before 1991 we were the most backward area in Iraq and now we are the richest place in the country. This is something we want to hold on to." Zebari's dream of ultimately obtaining 25% of all Iraq's oil revenues is not what the occupying powers plan, however. While chaos raged in Kirkuk and Mosul, US troops rushed to occupy the oil fields. The occupiers propose to privatise the country's oil industry and bring in the transnational corporations to exploit the reserves. Self-determination for the Kurds is the last thing on their agenda. ■

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