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19. The New World Order

Haim Bresheeth

In the wake of the Gulf War, it is clear that many things will never be the same in the torn and battered Middle East. But more importantly, the signs of a decisive sea change are not limited to that region; indeed, those signs point to far-reaching changes elsewhere. This chapter is an attempt to map the tremors rippling through the world political system; those tremors did not originate in this war, but much earlier, but their direction has been clarified through this conflict. For those reasons, this chapter attempts to use the war in the Gulf as a test case of the new US political initiative, the New World Order, a term supposedly denoting an age of democracy and prosperity. When closely examined, this New World Order is showing a surprising similarity to the old order and its aims, that is, control of the Third World. However, the means and mechanics have changed dramatically, and the chapter will attempt an analysis of the changes.

The Good Old Days — The Old World Order

When referring to the now famous, if somewhat elusive, New World Order (NWO), one needs to peek over one's shoulder at the fast disappearing old world order, the order of a world divided between the two blocs of East and West. The great divide between Western capitalism and Eastern European communism, as crystallized after World War II in the form of the Cold War, was, in hindsight, one of the most stable arrangements between opposing powers. Despite the dangers of nuclear conflict, always close at hand, the division of the world between the superpowers functioned as a stabilizing agent in regional and global spheres of influence. It is exactly by examining the flashpoints within this system that one can determine the amazing degree of collusion and agreement between the blocs on issues of sphere-of-influence control. One such dramatic case was the Suez crisis of 1956, where the two outdated empires of France and Britain, authors of the great Sykes–Picot Agreement, were trying to defend their colonial interests from the two newcomers to the region, the USSR and the US, not to mention the radical leader of Egypt, Colonel Nasser. Despite their differences, the two superpowers acted in unison, using their political might, backed by their military power, to

chase the invaders out of the Middle East, which was left open to the new struggle for control. The new regional order demanded the changeover from old to new empires, with the Middle East clearly identified by both sides as a region ripe for the picking, and the rules of that game required a clean slate. Once the new powers outlined the region as their newest sandbox, where the games of power balance are to be played, the spent forces of past empires had to take their hurried exit. Those rules have been adhered to throughout the long period of the Cold War. In outline they could be put simply as:

- Each player controls its own sphere of influence, that is, its immediate geographic and political continuum. In that sphere, it may do what it will; the other player may create noise and commotion about atrocities inflicted, but may not move militarily against the opponent. Political action against such irregularities may be taken as a token gesture, by using the UN and other international bodies, as long as the action taken is not injurious to the opposing side's vital interests.
- Areas outside the immediate sphere of influence of either side are considered a free-for-all. Atrocities of various kinds are allowed in those areas of 'prospecting'. However, once a substantial foothold is gained by one side, the opposition needs to look elsewhere.
- Once a significant number of countries in a region is taken by one of the sides, the other side is defeated, and is required to retreat partially. It may continue to aspire for control of the region in the future, but may act only through covert means. Actions allowed are guerrilla and undercover activity, and general destabilizing measures, but no direct military intervention.
- In areas immediately adjacent to one of the superpowers, the opposite side is barred from intervention, as those areas are considered the backyard of its foe. Action in those areas, against the wishes of the controlling superpower, is punishable by a nuclear threat.

One can see why game theories are important in the analysis of the Cold War era. Because mistakes may also happen from time to time, mechanisms of rules reinforcement and refereeing have been developed, including anything from coloured telephones to spy satellites. And so the global game was played, taking in a nation here, destroying a region there, over almost half a century. This arrangement allowed each side to inflict its own brutalities on unwilling, unco-operative populations under its control, without the other side intervening. While the West committed its atrocities mainly in the Third World, for example, in Algeria and Vietnam, the USSR concentrated on parts of its own empire which showed sign of stress. In global terms, this was a period of stability at the centre, with wobbles allowed on the periphery. Whenever the ripples reached too close to the centres of power, as in Hungary in 1956, or in Cuba in 1961, the rules took over, with both sides behaving according to the book.

But the real theatre of conflict was the Third World. Here it was that the differences between the two blocs showed themselves to be of great importance. In the countries of the South, it was becoming almost a norm for the activist and forward-looking sectors of the population to look to the USSR for assistance in training, planning and defeating the local dictator, and building in his stead a structural adaptation of the Soviet system. The USSR was supporting this tendency for decades, for its own reasons.[1] This was a situation where progressive forces in the South had an ally, a difficult one, but an ally nonetheless. Hence, despite the appearance of stability and normality at the centre, the real conflict was simmering in the background, reaching a dangerous flashpoint every now and then. So, if the danger represented by the USSR to the world dominance of the US can be placed at all, it is in this sphere that one has to search for it, in the challenge represented by the assistance given by the Soviet bloc towards reform and revolution in the South, towards resistance against the control of the Third World by the capitalist countries.

The Middle East as a Special Case

The Middle East was an irregularity. Despite its proximity to the Soviet Union, its oil reserves and the Suez Canal made it an obvious target for the US, so that it was destined to be disputed from the early stages of the Cold War. It combined large countries with massive populations and nothing to feed them, with small countries blessed with enormous resources. The US could accept some measure of Soviet control in the heavily populated and poor countries, such as Egypt, as long as the Soviets accepted US control of the smaller and richer Gulf principalities. Ideologically, it all fitted neatly,[2] which helped. But such a precarious balance was not to the liking of either side — the seeds of a larger conflict were there from the start, a conflict which would determine control of the whole region in a swoop. For obvious reasons, the existence of Israel in this region was complicating matters: without it, the struggle over the control of the Arab world would be somewhat neater.[3] But all in all, the rules were stuck to even in this treacherous region, with both superpowers operating with a lack of understanding of the Arab nations, originating from the racism of conquistadores, the racism of power. The assumptions on both sides were quite similar, though supposedly supported by two opposing world views; yet another similarity in the mirror of control dynamics, reflecting both sides.

On the whole, this period was a peaceful one in the two spheres of influence, with financial growth oscillating, but never dropping so low as to be of serious concern. With Third World resources acquired at ridiculously low rates, the economies of both superpowers have not suffered, despite the massive spending on armaments, and the sporadic skirmishes on the periphery of their empires. This picture changed in 1973, with the first oil crisis in the wake of the 1973 October (Yom Kippur) War. The rise of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and the financial power concentrated in the region demonstrated that all was not well; the continuation of Western economic growth and consumption was dependent on control of the Gulf

region and, hence, the Middle East. It was also dependent on the income from oil ending up in the West, specifically in the US, as far as the American policy-makers were concerned. But control of the Middle East in 1973 was not easy for the US — years had to pass for the situation to change sufficiently. Following the October War, the Western countries, and specifically the US, were targeted by the Arab oil-producing countries for oil-starvation measures, in order to bring about a resolution of the Palestinian problem. The hostility towards the US in the aftermath of the October War may not even be remembered, or fully appreciated, in the current wave of jingoistic euphoria.

The second element towards change in the Middle East overall control scenario was the gradual decline of Soviet influence in the region. The long-term decline of the Soviet economy, with the growing disillusionment of the population, was caused by the system's failure to deliver either basic freedoms or consumer goods. This was made worse by the continued failure of the USSR in the Third World, and specifically in the Middle East, where it moved from being a major role-player to being an insignificant one. The crisis had become deeper by the time the USSR got entangled in Afghanistan, with the economy in a downward spiral, and produced the necessary conditions for the arrival of radical reforms, perestroika and glasnost, and the end of an era. Not only was the Cold War over, but with it expired many of the functions of the Soviet bloc; one of the most important roles was that of an opponent, the 'other' in the game of two powers in conflict. Without an opponent, there was no game to be played any more. The military–industrial complex, that prodigious child of the Cold War, was in mortal danger, as was 'civilization as we know it'. For what is virtue without vice, and how shall our empire fare without the Evil Empire?

The Schism — Perestroika

What was threatened by the changes in the USSR was not just the continuation of a large industrial base and huge standing armies, but the whole basis for existence and the functioning of the existing order. Somehow, the great victory of capitalism over Stalinist communism was too perfect, by eliminating the antagonist from the stage. Without an opponent, the whole sacred conflict was thrown into doubt. After all, the dangers were real. Talk of the Peace Dividend was spreading even to the Republican Party, sending tremors through the American polity, and large cuts in the defence budget looked ominously close, almost inevitable. Discussions of the 'need to convert the US economy' were rife, sending the military–industrial complex barons into smoke-filled rooms to try and avert the coming peace crisis.

In an ailing economy such as that of the US in the late 1980s, with a huge and growing external debt, the federal deficit growing each year, with the Savings and Loan collapse, and with serious failures in basic commodity production, such as automobile manufacture, the traditional cornerstone of the economy, talk about the Peace Dividend was getting an eager hearing. The need for such a

dividend was highlighted by a series of growing failures in the public services sector infrastructure, especially in education, health and social security areas. The call for converting to a peace economy could not come at a more apposite moment. Hence, the dangers to continued levels of substantial military spending were real enough. When one takes into account the centrality of defence and related industries in the US, the point cannot be overstated. The growing weakness of US commodity production, causing a deepening recession over the last decade, came because of the basic inability of the economy to compete with other, more efficient economies, such as those of Japan, South-East Asia and Germany. The military–industrial complex is essentially an enormous cartel of specialized monopolies, which have been milking the American tax-payer for over a generation. As competition is meaningless in this area, production can thrive, financed by well-connected administrations, the personnel of which end up on the boards of the major companies after their government stint. While this is working well for some, it does not work for the American economy as a whole. Hence, the call for a peace economy, a green and socially viable economy, was viewed with horror by those who had something to lose as a result. The historic chance to reshape the American economy was not even examined briefly, before being dropped quietly in the bin, by the most reactionary administration that the US had known for a long time. While the search for the Peace Dividend was dismissed as wide-eyed romanticism, the search for the next war and its dividend was started in earnest.

This time, there was no challenge to the US position, as the antagonist had removed itself from the stage, at least for the foreseeable future. For the first time it was possible to concentrate on the enemy without the tampering of a third party. Now the new role of the US as world sheriff has to not only be accepted by its industrial and trade rivals, but it has to be financed by them, as the US no longer is in a position to finance its own adventures, and looks to the main industrial and financial nation-states to fund this new role it has invented for itself. This is something which was pointed out by a number of commentators writing on the cost of the war.[4] The US seems to have been successful in turning this new role to a money-spinning device — the commitment by the various nations towards covering the cost of the war exceeded the cost to the US by US$7 billion–US$12 billion, quite an astronomical profit produced in a short time. But the strength of this new role is not simply in the 'profit' produced; rather, it lies in the long-term effects: the transfer of funds from competitors to the US, and the large contracts which are secured through offers which cannot be refused.

But in order to operate such a system, in which the US would be able to force the agenda, timetable and means of implementation, it was necessary first to find a threat significant enough, one which only the might of the US could quash. Another requirement was the plausibility in the internal American arena, one in which the struggle between Good and Evil is still headline news.

The Search for New Satans

So, the search for the big idea was started immediately, albeit with limited success. The war on the drug barons in Latin America did not quite catch on, as was the case with other limited offensives in the same region, such as the invasion of Grenada and the royal hunt for President Bush's friend, General Noriega, at one time Satan Incarnate, now totally forgotten. Something else was needed. The end of the bipolar system, brought about by the demise of the political muscle of the Warsaw Pact, and the weakness of the Comecon economies, had created a vacuum. The lack of the 'other', the major ideological and military antagonist, was a problem rather than a solution. It became clear that the role of antagonist is a demanding one; all applicants for the title had to stand up to measurement against a tough yardstick. An attempt by the US to cast Moammar Qaddhafi in that role was flatly rejected by the viewing public as absurd, and new talent searches were started for the coveted role, combining, if possible, the two essential elements of Hitler and the Antichrist.

That second recommended element has become all the more valuable as the temperature gradually rises towards the year 2000, with the inevitable religious hysteria picking up pace. People in the West, quite prepared to hear the name of God coming up every other sentence in Saddam's speeches, may have been less prepared for the growing number of references to the Almighty in President Bush's speeches, which seem, more and more, to use the leftovers from the Billy Graham speechwriters. The ridiculous nature of such utterances should not for one moment detract from the seriousness of this phenomenon. Neither Bush nor Saddam is, nor has ever been, a man of deep religious conviction of any kind. That both have decided to use a Holy War element as a basic tenet of their argument and propaganda is a frightening sign for the future. This is not limited to the leadership, but filters down to the fighting forces. An American bomber pilot, asked about the large number of civilian casualties caused by the allied bombing, replied: 'Well . . . I guess this is one of the advantages of living in a God-fearing, God-loving country like the USA. . . .'[5] An interesting comment, indeed, on the mass-murder of the 'other'.

Needless to say, that even when both sides in a war such as the Gulf conflict are made of God-fearing, God-loving warriors, this fact makes very little difference in quelling the carnage. The infinite capacity of the God-fearing and/or -loving crowd to always enlist God on their side has been demonstrated too many times to be in need of description here. We can only conclude that gods are good news for wars, and wars must be good news for gods (who are normally on the same side as big business). I hope my concern can be seen for what it is, rather than a spurious anti-religious point.

While talking in Europe about fundamentalism, one may be forgiven for thinking that this is a problem specific to the Muslim world. Indeed, in the West, most importantly in North America, this is a problem of immense proportions. The different sects organize, indoctrinate and direct a number of believers larger than in the Muslim world. Speaking normative English may make TV evangelists more palatable to Western audiences, but their message is

as blind, racist and irrational as their equivalents' in the Arab world. Here we have neo-Neanderthalism clothed in suits, wielding the most developed technology of death at its opposite numbers. While the technology is brand new, the argumentation, reasoning and sentiment are straight out of the Stone Age.

But of the high requirements from the new Antichrist, that carrier of racist hatred operating as some lightning rod for the difficult emotions collecting in the bosom of the failed empire, one major requirement was crucial — this new Satan had to be easy to defeat, he had to be a straw man. This is a complex requirement, as it relates this new bogeyman to the old one, the Vietcong, and the people of Vietnam. The need to cleanse the wound of Vietnam was central to American life during the last decade. Hollywood producers were busy rewriting history, with a flair and cheek worthy of Joseph Stalin, re-educating the American public; the trauma of Vietnam had to be excised, but the sociotherapy supplied by the movies was somewhat limited. This massive infrastructural effort of reworking history had a major flaw — it did not relate to any reality. A real-world situation had to be found, in which the US knocks down a Third World straw man, after having spent time and money building him up. It is interesting to note how important this became for a nation looking down on what they call the 'Arab obsession with honour'. The number of American public figures rhapsodizing about 'the shame of Vietnam' having been wiped off the slate is evidence enough of the depth and centrality of that particular trauma.

Unfortunately, it was not only the international public of the war entertainment shows which was caught up in the crude stereotyping by both sides, but also some dominant figures within the left. While the media represented the war as a struggle between fascism and democracy, those left pundits, trapped by the duality of description, have translated this into a struggle between fascism and imperialism; in this conflict between two supposedly opposing evils they chose, regrettably, the imperialist side.[6] It is vital to point out the fallacy behind this argument. Any presentation putting Iraq and the allies on an equal footing, as opponents in some abstract struggle, is ignoring the basic differences in size, origin, power and function between the two opponents. One should not confuse the respective roles of the dog and its favourite louse; they might be in conflict temporarily, but they are not opponents. But more centrally, the presentation of the conflict as being waged between fascism and imperialism is assuming the distinctive separateness between the two, rather than perceiving them as two parallel, interdependent machineries of capitalist control of the Third World. Normally both facets are synchronized, as was the case in Greece in 1947, or in Chile in 1973, or, indeed, in Iraq until the Gulf War, with the Iraqi army fulfilling its assumed role in the struggle against fundamentalist Iran, perceived by the US as inherently hostile to its aims in the region. Moreover, Saddam's fascism, pointed out and decried by the left and Kurdish nationalists for decades, was not a problem for imperialism throughout the 1970s and 1980s; rather, it was thought of as an asset. To present the war as some kind of Armageddon

designed to defeat fascism is a travesty. This can best be seen by the position adopted by the US and UK, after the war, towards the Kurdish and Shi'i rebels against Saddam. It is clear that the allies have now reverted to backing Saddam, the fascist of yesterweek. Is he less of a fascist now, when he massacres whole towns and villages in his campaign against the opposition forces? If the war was indeed what Halliday (see Chapter 21) and others have argued, it has been a terrible fiasco, with fascism backed as it was before, and the losers being, as usual, the Third World civilian population.

The Need for Conflict

But the situation was driven by deeper layers still. The constant double-speak in the West about peace, harmony and democracy should not confuse one about the real motive forces behind the current version of market-economy capitalism. The main engine of such economies is, by definition, a chaotic, unplanned, rampant form of conflictual market forces, constantly eliminating large numbers of players from the economic board. While the basic chaos at the heart of the capitalist economy was already pointed out by Marx, the current form of market economy is an extreme version of that general principle. Large and small companies go out of business with amazing rapidity, adding to the risks of other companies, and to the dire conditions in the labour market. However, this total dependence on conflict, which is at the heart of the system, is camouflaged by the ideological propaganda, and by the constant stream of Newspeak phraseology, a commodity which even the weakened US economy manages to produce cheaply and efficiently.

Hence, the new Eden is represented for the masses of media consumers as a conflict-less environment, a harmonious form of capitalism where everybody wins, nobody loses, and everyone gets tanned on the beach.[7] While there is no doubt that the dream-mongers of capitalism have hit a raw nerve (or shall we say pay dirt) at the heart of this naive space-of-desire called Western civilization, the sophistication of which must be somewhat lower than is normally assumed and argued, the logical strength behind this argument does not hold water. It is interesting, however, that a society based and dependent on conflict is putting forward a projection based on the total elimination of conflict. Since conflict as such had a bad press, despite its centrality to the specific dream now operating, its importance cannot be admitted outright. Children would not fall for this naive ploy. Adults, however, seem more adept at self-delusion and at tolerating incongruities; after all, they have had more practice.[8]

But behind those fault-lines of Western civilization's daydreams and projections of utopia lie deeper,. more meaningful fissures. I refer here to the First World versus the Third World or, more accurately, the North–South conflict. The Gulf War could be termed the first North–South military conflict, one with object lessons and repercussions for decades to come. With the poetic quality evident in history from time to time, the end of the East–West

conflictual system is celebrated, on a massive scale, by the launch of new hostilities in the North–South arena. . . . While this is hardly new, being based on many centuries of racism and colonial/imperial exploitation, the North–South debate had to play second violin to the Cold War for decades. Now, at last, the West can really get into it.

The need for military conflict with Third World regional powers must represent a relative strengthening of key countries in the South, a process which threatens the continued hegemony of the US. Here the Newspeak must be translated to unravel the system of values behind the carnage meted out non-selectively: 'collateral damage' actually refers to women, children and men burnt alive; 'surgical strikes' hides the fact that for every bomb hitting a military target in Baghdad, a city of quite a few millions, a large number of other bombs cause 'collateral damage'; 'command and control installations' and 'strategic targets' refer to all water, sewage, electricity and communications systems, food stores, energy production, bridges, roads, vehicles and trains, oil and other production facilities . . . one is left wondering what exactly is excluded from this; the next generation of technological marvels from the US might be capable of targeting mountain goats and chick-pea harvests, thus plugging an important hole in Western defensive capabilities.

Another important term, heard in almost every single interview with American and British troops in the Gulf, is: 'We only came here to do a job, and we will leave when it is completed.' This is new, but centrally important, for a number of reasons. Operation Desert Storm can rightly be called a job — it was paid for by clients, who, according to this argument, required a job to be done. Second, the two front runners in the coalition, the US and (Great) Britain, now have professional armies in operation, rather than conscripts, another lesson of Vietnam. For those 'professionals' this is just another job, and they are naturally eager to complete it, so as to be ready for new assignments.

Admirable professionalism, indeed. This is the philosophy developed during the Reagan years, with the Rapid Deployment Force (another euphemism), and other such forces in other Western nations. Another area of linguistic slippage was the Wild West, with American generals talking of 'Indian country' and similar enlightening expressions. You cannot teach (some) old dogs new tricks, it seems.

The New West versus the Old East — Occident meets Orient Part II (when hi-tech met fundamentalism)

An important aspect of the conflict and, indeed, of the New World Order, is the role of technology. While the US has sold billions of dollars of armaments to the Gulf countries (every single one of them being a bastion of democracy and civilization-as-we-know-it), the really efficient, lethal armaments, such as laser-guided (surgical-strike) bombs, were kept from the hordes, just in case. . . . This policy has paid dividends — the equations being: fewer Western casualties = fewer war casualties; high technology = surgical and accurate

strikes; new technology = Western civilization.

In this media war, the pictures of surgical strikes, with their phallic overtones, establishing the new genre of techno-porn, are equated with the Just War slogan. The new weapons can be seen, like an image in an obscene video game of mass destruction, to perform a job, a function. When looking at the now-normalized images of the laser-guided bomb hitting the air-vent of the air-raid shelter, how many Western viewers actually remembered the 'collateral' being destroyed by this modern toy of annihilation? Hence, the new technology attained impressive cultural heights during this war, a modern Ark of Jehovah, striking the infidels with sacred ferocity. By the use of technology, the allies not only avoid the need to dirty their hands, they even manage to provide good family entertainment without offending the viewing public. Was there ever a higher goal, a loftier aim? The new humanity of the NWO is killing more, faster, cleaner, and without even admitting that killing is taking place. May this be termed a temporary solution, leading if need be to the next, inevitable and regrettable stage?

The role of technology in this war is central, and operates on a number of levels, all related to the ideological argument behind the NWO. In the struggle between North and South, a modern version of the Occident versus Orient struggle, technology has always been the tool of the North, a tool both offered to the other side selectively and at great cost, and denied it, when the interests of the North demand this. The technology of armaments and of the modern infrastructure is one of the main agents creating dependency in the developing world, and of deskilling its population. The latest technology is usually kept for the exclusive use of Northern countries; the out-of-date devices, no longer useful, are sold to the Southern countries at great cost. This normally requires substantial training and back-up services, supplied by the exporting power. But there are other, less obvious functions of the technological gap.

The crisis in the Gulf was unique in the degree of live reporting allowed by the new technology, exclusively controlled by the North. This capacity for immediate reaction and audience control has resulted in a dual success. Audiences in the West were provided with mass destruction turned into mass entertainment, the global video game, in which we lose vision on the point of impact, hence retaining all the excitement of a race, but without the blood and gore, without the reality. The second result was a global realization that the Iraqi forces are surrounded by the most advanced system ever conceived by humanity, a system so total in its capacity that a urinating soldier can be identified, at night, from the distance of a mile away, according to one American general. This omnipotence, real and imaginary, was a crucial part of building the picture of a just war, in which our side makes no mistakes, only hits the correct targets. Even the many cases disproving this argument seem to have failed to puncture the underlying picture of ideological supremacy projected by the massive disinformation machine operating out of Western capitals during the war. The main effect was of turning huge audiences into voyeurs of the new techno-porn, while at the same time allowing them the illusion that all this enormous destructive power is somehow 'surgical', supposedly healing the

Iraqi polity and society. In that way, technology supplied both the means of destruction and the means of marketing it for millions of consumers who became, by viewing, innocent onlookers of the greatest media show on earth; what it lacked in realism, it padded with rehearsed dramatic creation, in the best tradition of Hollywood. The way the media functioned during this war surely supplies the closest example of an update on Orwell's Ministry of Truth in *1984*. As a sign for the future, it should worry us all.

Pax Americana — The New World Order

It is tempting to try and understand the reasoning and mechanics of the NWO not only through analysing the political and financial determinants, but also through the more ephemeral concepts of ideological construction. It seems to this writer that the NWO is interpreting the US in a dual role, that of the Wild West sheriff combined with the powerful godfather of the Cosa Nostra. One of the roles, that of sheriff, is more suited to the needs of the American public. The role of the Mafia gangster, selling his protection racket dearly to the rich and vulnerable, is more descriptive of both motive and method in the current crisis.

While the US cannot offer many other qualities to the world around it, nor control economies financially through American interests in the way it used to, it is still the most substantial military power and the largest producer of military hardware. The creation of an international Wild West scene, or a 'rotating conflict environment', happens to suit the needs of the US at this particular juncture. This mode of control will both supply a much-needed market for US commodities and will create a new market for a relatively new commodity, that of the protection racket. Such markets will guarantee the supremacy of the US, by weakening its allies/competitors, now finding themselves required to finance an international mafioso. It will also ensure the US control over Gulf oil, by leaving a substantial military presence in the area, and maybe even transferring to the region some of its global command functions,[9] if recent rumours are accurate. Such a foothold would guarantee not only the flow of oil, and of dollars, to the US, but also will leave the American economy in control of the pricing structure, something it has not had for the past couple of decades.

The object lesson taught to the (Third) World through the submission of the Iraqi army, state and infrastructure is designed to leave its mark on political leaders elsewhere. What was done once can be done again. So with a big stick, and distinctly without a carrot, the US plans to run the neighbourhood efficiently and without trouble. It will obviously be necessary to have a shoot-out every now and then, just to make people realize how important protection really is, but that is the way of the world. Countries with large sums owing may be tempted to think about defaulting on their debt, so having Stormin' Norman and his band around may just help them to forget such silly ideas. Never mind about the fact that the largest debtor is indeed the mafioso himself.

Can It Work?

What was described above is just about plausible, and suits the events better than many other, less outrageous theories. There is no doubt that on the sand table in the White House this looks like a goer. However, things hardly turn out like that in reality.

The marks of weakness of this approach are written all over it, and current events are proving this weakness. The most important one is the long list of promises and counter-promises made by the US to all and sundry during the crisis. In order to achieve the coalition building, President Assad was lured with a *carte blanche* in Lebanon, and a vague promise of Israeli withdrawal from the Golan, including some solution to the Palestinian question. Israel was kept out of the war by the promise of funds in the future, and the very promise not to call a peace conference in the near future. Egypt is looking forward to much more than the writing off of its debt to the US, and so it goes on. The contradictions in the Middle East are so intense that even with the best will in the world, it is not possible to pay all the promissory notes given in a hurry, in an hour of need.

Sometimes it is the very success of the professed war aims which leads the US into endless trouble, and the case in question is that of Saddam Hussein himself. Having set him up as the straw man, and having knocked him down, as the myth required, the US now faces the problem of how to help Saddam stay in power without losing face. The fall of Saddam may well lead to even greater instability than currently, with Shi'i Islamist forces, the very forces Saddam was built up to stop, gaining control of Iraq, later to threaten the rest of the Gulf. The US administration is undecided about the presentation of its policy in this area. On 28 March, President Bush again encouraged a rebellion against Saddam Hussein, in a television interview: '. . . there is another way . . . it is for the Iraqi people themselves to remove Saddam. . . .'[10] This he said at the time that the US gave Saddam a go-ahead to use helicopters against the Kurds and Shi'is! The contradiction between the real aims of the US and its public relations position have been pointed out by Frank Gaffney, an ex-advisor in the White House, who called the Bush position 'an incitement to rebel' and decried the way in which 'we then abandon them to their fate. People all over the world, minorities in the Middle East . . . in Syria . . . are looking at this betrayal by the Americans. . . .'[11]

The Kurdish uprising, being crushed as these lines are written, is a serious problem for the US planners, as to assist the Kurdish forces in gaining control over the North of Iraq and in setting up their own state would bring the US into sharp conflict with its old and new allies, Turkey and Syria, who are too worried about their own Kurdish minorities to allow any level of political autonomy to the Kurds in Iraq. This will underline the continued support by the US of Saddam or his replacement, helping to repress both the Shi'i and Kurdish forces. While I think this is likely to succeed in the short term as, without support from outside, the rebels are no match for Saddam's forces, it does not bode well for the future. This position will guarantee total alienation from the American position in the region in both the Shi'i and Kurdish camps. Trouble ahead.

An additional complication has resulted from the long period the emir of Kuwait spent away from his country, between 2 August 1990 and the end of the war, together with his whole government. This has not added to his popularity. The opposition forces, having forged themselves in the struggle against the Iraqi occupation, seem to have got strange ideas during those long months. Some of the leadership is calling for democracy, others for the rights of women. God only knows where all this is going to end. . . . It is clear that structural changes are due to be demanded in Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries. As the war was supposedly fought for democracy, is it possible to dismiss this call for very long in the liberated zone?

Another central feature of the NWO is the dependence of the richest producer nations on the protection supplied and forced by the US. Indeed, both Germany and Japan are bound by their post-war constitutions to minimal military forces, of a defensive character only. However, it is hardly likely that those powerful nation-states will continue to willingly depend on the US for protection. Both have started building up their military capacity; at the prices charged by the current mafioso, this trend is hardly surprising, and is likely to intensify. The US is prepared for such an eventuality, even if only for the reason that the need to spend heavily on defence will structurally weaken their economies. But one should not assume this as a matter of course; knowing what the two economies were capable of in the past, it is rather more likely that they might defeat the US in its own backyard, that of the military–industrial complex.

Now, there are a few people in the State Department who could tell the sheriff, if he was in a listening mood, that the NWO is not going to work, and why, as they have studied the region in some depth over the years. It is not clear, however, that they are going to be asked. The war has reinforced the process of foreign policy-making at the White House, with a little assistance from the Pentagon boys, and some advice from the arms lobby. This is not a caricature, but a strengthening of trends which have been there for a while.

To conclude, and without resorting to trying to forecast the future, a tendency always tempting but never wise, it is possible to outline some of the features of the next decade, as resulting from the Gulf War. The US is likely to dominate and force international agendas, in a bid to stop its serious industrial and financial decline. This *modus operandi* will throw up localized and regional conflicts, and is likely to intensify the general level of both bellicose activities and of global rearming, leading to a more conflictual world environment. In such conditions, the development of the South will slow down dramatically, with investment redirected towards the new prospecting potential in the ex-Comecon countries. The weakness of the UN, and its inability to confront the US efficiently, will further demarcate such developments. While it is impossible to forecast the results of such a complex system of conflicting tensions, it is almost certain that the coming decades are going to be witnessing a greater level of instability, with flare-ups building up to unforeseen consequences. New risks and new types of risk-taking will direct political decision-making, leading to the strong probability of periodic massive campaigns on the lines of the Gulf

War, decimating large numbers of the population of the South in the process. Not a promising future.

However, with the problems resulting from this approach, one can expect a heightening of the tension in Third World countries, with both nationalism and fundamentalism gaining ground in the local populations. In the conflictual environment which will result, anti-Americanism is a near certainty; this in turn may well lead to populist Southern leaders taking a position against American interests. If such attempts are synchronized, they may cause a real operational problem for the NWO.

Notes

1. The USSR was as interested in controlling resources in the Third World as was the US, if for somewhat different reasons. The Third World arena supplied the USSR with an arena where support for progressive change was undermining the hegemony of world capitalism, and making its further spread more difficult. This was an area where the USSR offered a real alternative to Western capitalism, holding the promise of modernizing the societies involved, even if not able to modernize their markets and economies at the same time.
2. The 'friendly understanding' over this area is pointed out by Noam Chomsky (*The Fateful Triangle*, London, Pluto Press, 1983, pp. 17–18) when talking about US control of Saudi Arabia, and the USSR's acceptance of it.
3. The support offered to Israel by the US, as argued by Noam Chomsky in *The Fateful Triangle*, is hardly a result of the Jewish lobby, and more a result of the Israeli contribution to the furtherance of US aims in the region, and in other regions, such as Black Africa and Latin America. But this alliance with a country hostile to the rest of the nations in the region has complicated long-term US objectives in the Middle East. Israel is rather an unusual feature in the Third World, paralleled only by the South African Republic.
4. For example, Dennis Healey in the *Guardian* (22 March 1991). In the same article, he points out that the rearming of the region following the war is about to begin.
5. CNN Television newscast from Riad, 18 January 1991.
6. For example, Fred Halliday, in *Marxism Today*, February 1991.
7. This might create problems for commentators trying to explain the violent nationalist clashes and conflicts within the Soviet empire following the democratization and 'capitalization' of those societies, which have become more, rather than less, conflictual in the wake of the changes.
8. This avoidance of facing the centrality of conflict within Western culture may well be evidence of the deep disagreement with conflict as an organizing principle, and may point to some yet unused reservoirs of popular disenchantment within capitalist societies.
9. As reported in the *Guardian*, 28 March 1991.
10. Bush on CNN television, 28 March 1991.
11. Frank Gaffney on Channel Four News, 3 April 1991.

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