

Full Spectrum Democracy

Ken Coates

The imminent war on Iraq will probably destroy that country, although the process could possibly take longer than the Americans and British appear to think. However that may be, it is also likely to undermine the credibility of the United Nations as a system of international law and world governance.

American diplomats have certainly accomplished short-term miracles of persuasion in securing the agreement of the Security Council to resolution 1441. But all the backstairs intrigue will become a negative quantity as it is subjected to the glare of daylight publicity, during the attempts to provide a pretext for war. If the Security Council loses what moral authority it used to have, other institutions are also jeopardised. Already the predatory doctrine of counter-proliferation is supplanting the careful agreements that were involved in nuclear non-proliferation, substituting brute force for conviction, even though such force has never been sanctioned by any duly constituted authority. The Non-proliferation Treaty has functioned imperfectly, but where it has worked it has represented a victory for persuasion and understanding. Counter-proliferation has opposed those processes, substituting the brute compulsion of the stronger. The rule of the strong encourages cunning and sycophancy, not peace.

We have already drawn attention to the fact that resolution 1441 imposed upon the Iraqis the duty of presenting a comprehensive report on their preparations for the manufacture of weapons of mass destruction, as well as on any present stocks which they may have. It rapidly became known that the Americans intercepted the resultant Iraqi dossier when it was handed over to the United Nations. What has not been widely reported is that more than 8,000 pages of this dossier (out of 11,800 pages) were suppressed when the meagre residuum was made available to non-permanent members of the Security Council. Thus such members will never see the vast majority of the evidence which

Ken Coates is Editor of The Spokesman and Chairman of the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation.

the Iraqis have submitted for their consideration (see Peace Dossier page 71).

Meantime, the weapons inspectorate report two ‘finds’ on the ground in Iraq. The first consists of eleven empty shell cases, and could only be taken seriously by people who were deranged. The second consists of voluminous notes belonging to an Iraqi professor. Had these already been declared? In the light of the suppression of more than 8,000 pages of an 11,800 page dossier, it will be hard to know. But in this case non-compliance is an action of the US administration, not the Iraqis.

The United States is militarily the preponderant world power. Economically, it also has considerable clout, although this is less far-reaching than is sometimes assumed. But the arbitrary usurpation of decisions which properly belong to others is detonating an overwhelming movement of worldwide resistance, which represents a potentially far greater power than all that awesome military force.

American primacy had been emerging before the end of the Cold war, and was theorised by Zbigniew Brzezinski in his influential tract: *The Grand Chessboard*. Brzezinski had been President Carter’s National Security Advisor in Afghanistan, through the confrontation with the Russians in which the United States played a major role. Here it was that the first volunteer Arabs raised the flag of Islam against the Russian invaders. Brzezinski wrote to Carter to insist that the Russians could be defeated in Afghanistan, thus, he thought, redressing the American defeat in Vietnam which weighed so heavily on the self-image of American leaders. More: Brzezinski began to draw wider lessons:

‘... how America ‘manages’ Eurasia is critical. Eurasia is the globe’s largest continent and is geopolitically axial. A power that dominates Eurasia would control two of the world’s three most advanced and economically productive regions ... About 75 per cent of the world’s people live in Eurasia, and most of the world’s physical wealth is there as well ... Eurasia accounts for about 60 per cent of the world’s GNP and about three-fourths of the world’s known energy resources... Eurasia is thus the chessboard on which the struggle for global primacy continues to be played.’¹

The rules of the new chess game are altogether very different from the old rules, however. For Brzezinski,

‘Eurasian geostrategy involves the purposeful management of geostrategically dynamic states and the careful handling of geopolitically catalytic states, in keeping with the twin interests of America in the short-term preservation of its unique global power and in the long-run transformation of it into increasingly institutionalized global cooperation. To put it in a terminology that hearkens back to the more brutal age of ancient empires, the three grand imperatives of imperial geostrategy are to prevent collusion and maintain security dependence among the vassals, to keep tributaries pliant and protected, and to keep the barbarians from coming together.’²

Extrapolating from this theme, Brzezinski told us that for the Americans,

‘The most dangerous scenario would be a grand coalition of China, Russia, and perhaps Iran, an ‘antihegemonic coalition united not by ideology but by complementary grievances’.’³

Alongside this bold political project, the American military devised the brutally clear doctrine of ‘Full Spectrum Dominance’.

‘The ultimate goal of our military force is to accomplish the objectives directed by the National Command Authorities. For the joint force of the future, this goal will be achieved through full spectrum dominance – the ability of US forces operating unilaterally or in combination with multinational and interagency partners, to defeat any adversary and control any situation across the full range of military operations.

The full range of operations includes maintaining a posture of strategic deterrence. It includes theatre engagement and presence activities. It includes conflict involving employment of strategic forces and weapons of mass destruction, major theatre wars, regional conflicts, and smaller-scale contingencies. It also includes those ambiguous situations residing between peace and war, such as peacekeeping and peace enforcement operations, as well as non-combat humanitarian relief operations and support to domestic authorities.

The label full spectrum dominance implies that US forces are able to conduct prompt, sustained, and synchronised operations with combinations of forces tailored to specific situations and with access to and freedom to operate in all domains – space, sea, land, air, and information. Additionally, given the global nature of our interests and obligations, the United States must maintain its overseas presence forces and the ability to rapidly project power world-wide in order to achieve full spectrum dominance.²⁴

The use of such power can be fine-tuned, as Colonel John A. Warden II of the US Air Force, explains in his paper ‘The Enemy as a System’²⁵. This represents a thorough-going revision of the thinking of Clausewitz and Napoleon, and begins with a severely rational examination of how to achieve the objectives of the United States.

‘At the strategic level’, says Colonel Warden, ‘we attain our objectives by causing such changes to one or more parts of the enemy’s physical system that the enemy decides to adopt our objectives, or we make it physically impossible for him to oppose us. The latter we call strategic paralysis. Which parts of the enemy system we attack ... will depend on what our objectives are, how much the enemy wants to resist us, how capable he is, and how much effort we are physically, morally, and politically capable of exercising.’

But what is the enemy ‘system’? Warden offers a simplified model of five rings. At the centre is the leadership or brain. In the next circle are the organic essentials, food, energy, and so on. Thirdly, there is the infrastructure, of vital connections and skeletal essentials: roads, air fields, factories, transmission lines. The fourth ring is the population which is sustained by these essentials, and is necessary to sustain them. Lastly, and in fact least important for many purposes, is the circle of the fighting mechanism.

The purpose of modern war is not to confront arms, or kill soldiers. If this process could be avoided altogether, that would be fine by the controllers of modern war, provided only that they could exercise their will over enough of the other rings to bend the enemy leadership to their own purposes.

Colonel Warden explains these categories with a series of intricate diagrams. But such diagrams are not necessary for us to realise that within this model, American Generals do not think about conventional battlefield conquest. What they care about is the destruction of the enemy system, if not by the liquidation of its leadership, then by cumulative damage to the essentials which sustain it.

‘We must not start our thinking on war with the tools of war – with the air planes, tanks, ships and those who crew them. These tools are important and have their place, but they cannot be our starting point, nor can we allow ourselves to see them as the essentials of war. Fighting is not the essence of war, nor even a desirable part of it. The real essence is doing what is necessary to make the enemy accept our objectives as his objectives.’

All this adds up to a fairly clear imperial charter. If it took time to arrive in the understanding of European political leaders, this was partly because it was accompanied by attempts to revise the constitution of Nato, and by the hope that Brzezinski’s goal of ‘long-run transformation ... into increasingly institutionalized global cooperation’ might be part of a mutually acceptable world order, if only for the rich countries, the old imperial powers.

The advent of George Bush put paid to this hope, which was always somewhat platonic. Firstly, the new President made short work of declaring his right to pre-emptive action. His Nuclear Posture Review made chilling assumptions of the need for first strike nuclear strategies. He wasted no time in indulging the consensus of lesser States about the need for global co-operation to prevent damage to the environment, and at once repudiated the Kyoto protocols outright. Not only did he greet the proposals for an International Criminal Court as unacceptable, but he immediately embarked upon a series of measures aimed at sabotaging any powers which the Court might claim in order to judge American citizens. These and a series of other actions, including the unilateral repudiation of Treaties, made it impossible to believe that the President shared Brzezinski’s desire for internationally institutionalised global co-operation, on any other basis than that of naked imperial power. All this comes to a head in the American decision to attack Iraq, with the blessing of a cowed and fearful United Nations if it is available, but on its unilateral initiative if not. Detailed plans were announced to install General Tommy Franks as the controller of occupied Iraq, explicitly modelling his anticipated regime on that of General MacArthur in occupied Japan after 1945. Various other proposals have been canvassed involving a number of other nominees.

Evidently, the factional differences within the American political and military establishments have not resolved themselves. But the destruction of the Iraqi Government will not be likely to moderate belligerence, either in the Bush administration, or even in any foreseeable replacement, until the peace movement in the United States can assert itself.

After Iraq, there is the unresolved problem of Korea, which may not be brought to a head quickly, because it seems that the United States is not yet ready

to take on the task of destroying China. But once it is installed in Baghdad, the likelihood of further military adventures in the Middle East becomes greater, not smaller. Iran is an old adversary to the American establishment. The likely turbulence which will break out in the Arabian peninsula may well invite military responses from the Americans, though this will terrify some of their British allies.

Meantime concern all around the world extends far beyond the numbers of convinced pacifists or even the critics of the misdeeds done in the name of globalism.

Full Spectrum Dominance commends itself to builders of empires because it seems to be as permanent as they think their ugly monuments to be. But nothing is less permanent than domination. It is more evanescent than the fear and misery it generates. We should remember Shelley's *Ozymandias*, or Ramses III. The poet came across the ruins of a great monument in the desert: he found 'two vast and trunkless legs of stone' and 'a half-sunk shattered visage'. Nearby, there stood a pedestal which said:

'My name is Ozymandias, king of kings;
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!'

But that was all...

'Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away.'

What may be hoped to be more permanent than domination is the antidote it will generate: human sympathy, creativity, solidarity. That is why, if the Porto Alegre process did not exist, we should have to invent it.

Footnotes

1 *The Grand Chessboard*, Basic Books, New York, 1997.

2 *Ibid*, p.40.

3 *Ibid*, p.55

4 United States Department of Defence: *Joint Vision 2020*, 30th May 2000.

5 'The Enemy as a System' can be located on the internet at
<http://www.airpower.au.af.mil/airchronicles/apj/warden.html>