

CURRENT WORLD SITUATION

By Pauline Mitchell, secretary of the Campaign for International Co-operation and Disarmament

World politics underwent a fundamental change in 1991 when the socialist Soviet Union and her East European allies joined the capitalist economic system. The country that President Reagan called 'The Evil Empire' and blamed for all the world's ills ceased to exist.

The change should have brought the world benefits, however we didn't get the 'Peace Dividend' that was promised by the reduction of arms expenditure – defence spending did decrease in the United States but the money went into domestic law enforcement. The disintegration of the Warsaw military pact did not cause a reciprocal gesture by the United States for the disbandment of the NATO military alliance.

The United States quickly made its intentions clear. It did not want to co-operate, it wanted to dominate. President George Bush senior laid this out in the Pentagon document of March 1992 dubbed 'The New World Order'. This document had plans for the whole world.

The first objective was to prevent the re-emergence of a new rival and 'must sufficiently account for the interests of the advanced industrial nations to discourage them from challenging our leadership or seeking to overturn the established political and economic order'. It also said that it must maintain the mechanisms for deterring potential competitors and that the United States was going to maintain NATO and extend its defence commitment and, it also must prevent the emergence of a European-only security arrangement. It had to prevent any hostile power from dominating a region's resources, and the United States would go it alone if unable to 'orchestrate' a coalition to protect United States interests – such as access to vital raw materials or Persian Gulf oil. This document was the forerunner of another 'The Project for a New American Century'.

The collapse of the Soviet Union came in the first year of the George Bush senior Presidency and there was a lot of gloating and patting oneself on the back! Each year the White House issues a National Security Strategy report, and the 1990 report called for military power to target the third world and primarily the Middle East as that was where the 'threats to our interest' were. Now there was a problem, because they could not use the excuse of the 'Soviet threat' anymore!

When the United States attacked Iraq in 1990 – it was said to be the consequences for Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. But this has always been under question. President Saddam Hussein met with the U.S. Ambassador April Glaspie in Iraq in July 1990 and told of the intentions to stop Kuwait from stealing Iraqi oil, the Ambassador said that it was an internal matter and the United States would not interfere. Other reasons for the attack was the United States determination to secure Iraq's oil for itself. And another was that the U.S. feared that Iraq would change its currency from the Dollar to the German Mark or the Japanese Yen and taking it out of the dollar market would seriously damage the U.S. economy as the Arab world had vast investments in the U.S.

Also in 1992 President Bush senior made it clear at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro that the United States way of life was not negotiable and it would not cooperate with the Kyoto protocol to reduce greenhouse gasses.

With the U.S. presidency change from republican to democrat in 1992, people hoped there might be a change in policy – but President Clinton oversaw the break-up of the Balkans and Yugoslavia and secured the vast minerals complex. Then there was the scramble for the newly available Caspian oil riches and the establishment of oil pipelines to the West. One of the pipelines was to go through Afghanistan but the Taliban government was being difficult so in 1997 officials from the Taliban government were flown to the United States to meet with officials from the U.S. oil giant UNICOL. The visit did not go well and the U.S. women's movement organised massive protests to voice their opposition to the Taliban's treatment of women.

In Africa there were skirmishes too, and in 1998 a chemical plant in Sudan was bombed because the U.S. said it was a chemical weapons factory – it wasn't – it was a pharmaceutical plant and the only source of vital medicines for poor countries. This was when President Clinton made his anti-terrorism speech in the United Nations saying it was their obligation to deny all support and sanctuary to terrorists. It was during this time that the Republican controlled U.S. Congress passed the 'Iraqi Liberation Bill' that virtually called for the overthrow of Saddam Hussein. However President Clinton failed to act on this one but he kept and extended the savage sanctions on Iraq.

Next came the Presidential election of November 2000, the most disputed in America's history, but republican George W. Bush was determined to be president. By the middle of his first year though, his popularity had fallen to an all time low. Then later in that first year came September 11th. A lot has been written and said about this tragic event and questions are still being asked ... but whatever the truth, the tragedy served the Bush 2 Administration well. The severe 'Patriot Act' was passed by Congress; President Bush Jnr. declared a 'War on terrorism' and told the world that if they weren't for the U.S. on this they were with the terrorists – effectively splitting the world in two along ethnic lines.

Osama Bin Laden and Al Qaeda was immediately blamed and the countryside of Afghanistan was bombed. Then military action suddenly shifted and the Taliban government had to be overthrown because of its tyrannical regime. By the end of 2001 President Bush Jnr. had installed a special U.S. Envoy in Afghanistan and appointed Hamid Karzai as interim President – both men had been former consultants to the U.S. oil giant UNICOL – thus the building of the oil pipeline was assured.

Focus then shifted to Iraq, and there was the 'Iraqi Liberation Bill'! By this time the Internet had come into its own which enabled an unprecedented upsurge of world opinion against an attack on Iraq and for the first time huge protests took place before a war had begun. However, the Bush Administration was intent on invading Iraq. Also in the year 2000 Saddam Hussein had done what the United States had dreaded.

He had changed the trading currency in Iraq from the U.S. dollar to the European Euro, thus effecting all Iraqi investments in the United States. When the 'coalition of the willing' overthrew Saddam Hussein the first thing the U.S. did was to change the currency back into the dollar market.

The media has played a major part in warfare starting with Hitler's Ministry of Propaganda in World War II. In the 60's when the United States invaded Vietnam, reporters were there immediately sending stories and film back home – this played a significant part in turning public opinion against the Vietnam War. President Bush Snr. wasn't going to let that happen in Gulf War 1, so reporters were under very strict censorship. This brought forth a lot of criticism. During the second invasion of Iraq the Bush Jnr administration tried another way, this time the reporters were 'imbedded' with the U.S. troops – but that didn't work too well either. In both cases news that the United States did not want us to know got through, we learned of the U.S. turkey shoot – the burying of Iraqi troops alive in their trenches – the use of depleted uranium weapons – the use of chemicals and other banned weapons – we learned of torture, abuse, the deliberate targeting of infrastructure, the killing of civilians and we learned and are still learning of all the secret prisons. We also learned that the United States government – Bush Sr and Bush Jr Administrations paid Public Relations firms to manufacture stories to support the war and demonise Iraqi troops and today, the planting of false stories in the press to support U.S. actions has become official policy of the Bush Jr Administration. There is also the P2OG – The Proactive, Pre-emptive Operations Group –, which carries out covert military operations in other lands and stirs up trouble so the U.S. has an excuse to invade. We also know that private firms are being used to promote, support and execute military operations.

Today the world's people are being lied to and manipulated on a grand scale, especially by the United States government. What the United States does around the world affects everyone so concentration on its foreign policy cannot be avoided and it's a foreign policy that Australia and the industrialised world endorses.

Moves by the United States have always been made to further its own wealth and extend its own markets and today it has military installations in over 130 countries to watch over and protect its vital interests. Capitalist competition has now become capitalist monopolisation – globalisation – causing massive unrest between countries and within countries.

Since 1990 the United States has become more transparent and overt in its move for domination and this seems likely to continue with support from the 'coalition of the willing'. The only group of countries that could mount any sort of challenge would be the European Union and its Euro, but the EU belongs to the same economic system; they may use different tactics but have the same aims – to increase their riches and extend their markets. However both the European Union and Japan depend on oil imports, and U.S. control of these resources can keep them in check.

A protest movement that has become powerful lately is the anti-globalisation movement. The first huge demonstration a few years ago got a lot of publicity – perhaps because the demonstrators called for socialism, which must have shaken capitalist governments and industrial leaders to the core. Since then all meetings of

big business have been the focus of demonstrations and the focus for extraordinary protection measures by the authorities.

In the year 2000 an important meeting was held in Vancouver, Canada – it was a strategy session held by protest leaders to try to find ways to unite the anti-war movements and the anti-globalisation movements!

An exciting development but one which must have sent shivers down the collective corporate spines and activated the spies and saboteurs to keep them apart.

It has been said that the events of 9/11 changed things but in reality it didn't change things as much as speeded them up. It has allowed laws to be passed in every country ostensibly to combat terrorism, but these same laws can be used to protect the economic system and to stifle any opposition.

I think this was well demonstrated last year in the Scott Parkin case. An American citizen in Australia for a 6 months holiday, half way through the holiday he was contacted by ASIO and then deported – all under the new anti-terror laws! Scott Parkin is an activist and spokesperson against multinational companies particularly the U.S. Co. of Halliburton. While in Australia he conducted a couple of workshops on non-violent protests and took part in some demonstrations against big business – Forbes Global CEO Conference in Sydney and against the U.S. Firm of Halliburton. A couple of days later ASIO said he was a 'threat' to national security. However he was not deemed a 'threat' when he was granted a visa – so the 'threat' must have been because of his actions here.

The prospect of 'threats' and 'terrorism' has been used frequently in our society. Unlike the propaganda during the Cold War where stories could be checked by seeking clarity from the Soviet government or from the United Nations – terrorism cannot be checked and it can't be dismissed or disproved and this is the danger.

In World War II Herman Goering said that the people could always be brought to the bidding of their leaders by telling them that they were being attacked and to denounce the peacemakers for lack of patriotism and exposing the country to danger.

There has been terrorism in Western countries but how much of it is in response to Western governments actions in other countries? And how much is the emphasis on terrorism being used to keep us, the ordinary people, off balance and pliable? Have we been scared into allowing governments to bring in harsh fascist type laws under the guise of anti-terrorism?

Propaganda has been building up to accept an invasion of Iran because of its nuclear facilities. Iran is not supposed to want nuclear power according to the United States and they have been deceitful in building and concealing things underground, but we should not forget that Israel bombed Iraq's half completed nuclear power station in the 1980's – perhaps that is why Iran was secretive!

Some weeks ago the U.S. Energy Administration said that the world could not afford to lose Iran's oil, but did not explain why and how the world would lose it. Iran has to export its oil on the world market its economy depends on it, so a more accurate account would be that the United States couldn't afford to lose Iran's oil.

Invading Iran would be very different from invading Iraq – Iran is much stronger militarily and its territory is much bigger. The scenarios on this happening paint a disastrous picture and nearly all the scenarios put forward say that nuclear weapons are likely to be used either by the United States or Israel or both.

Nuclear weapons have almost become acceptable weapons, especially by the industrialised world governments and there is no move to scale them down.

Then there is Syria, maybe that will be next. Syria is accused of sending terrorists across the border to Iraq, also about two years after the Bush Jr Administration came to power the United States Senate passed the 'Syrian Accountability Bill', so the U.S. has had Syria in its sights for some time.

Another country that would be in the U.S. sights would be Venezuela and its oil – actually the whole of South America, which is slipping away from U.S. dominance, so you can be assured that there is a lot of scheming and planning for that continent.

Leaders of the Western World have talked about an 'extreme and evil ideology' and the 'terrorist threat' and the terror cells that could exist inside our countries. This has led us to accept increased militarism and in turn a restriction of civil liberties and personal freedom. Torture and indefinite detention has become accepted. All the institutions that have preserved the peace and some morality are being replaced by a system that accepts no rules.

The doctrine of a pre-emptive strike has been accepted, this overturns the conclusions of the Nuremberg Tribunal that 'War is the Supreme Crime' and has elevated it to a viable form of foreign policy. The United States has nuclear weapons as part of its defence strategy and part of its 'first strike' policy and the other nuclear weapons countries are also depending more on their nuclear capabilities.

The United States though, has set itself up as a crusader against terrorism, above international law and above criticism, it has broken many international treaties since the end of the Cold War and refuses to sign others, it also holds the world body of the United Nations in contempt. It now intends to go further – the militarisation of space, called 'Full Spectrum dominance' – dominance of the sea, land and space, allowing it to control all the economic life, foreign governments and all dissent. Harold Pinter in his Nobel lecture in December 2005 said that the United States is now totally frank about its intentions. He also said that there were many thousands, if not millions, of people in the U.S. that were sickened, shamed and angered by their governments actions, but, he said, they are not a coherent political force ... yet! Today in the world at large, there are a lot of angry people as well – and the number is increasing but we are not a coherent force as yet. So we cannot be disheartened because there is a lot of activity that we don't hear about and no news can be just as debilitating as bad news and lead to inactivity.