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USA

Behind the ‘war on terrorism'

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The dreadful slaughter in New York, Washington and Pennsylvania handed the Bush administration a political gift of monumental proportions; an opportunity to launch a political offensive against all its opponents at home and abroad.

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For prior to September 11, the administration had been under siege diplomatically and politically. Now, quite logically from their own point of view, the Bush-Cheney team has seized on the crisis to turn the tables on all its critics, forcefully reasserting American leadership internationally. The scale of US global offensive is breathtaking. It amounts to a decisive attempt to push world politics to the right under US hegemony, and to crush all opposition to absolute US world political and economic domination. It thus throws down an enormous challenge to the left and the global justice movement, which have to understand and confront this new situation or face the possibility of devastating defeats.

Since Bush came to office his administration, the key figure in which is Dick Cheney - more a co-president than a vice-president - has been determined to push through its hard-right reactionary agenda. This has led to one conflict after another, notably:-

– international fury at the proposed missile defence system, leading to clashes especially with the European Union (EU), China, Russia and the Democrats in Congress.

– isolation internationally over withdrawal from the Kyoto agreement on world climate change

– criticism of the 'do nothing' policy on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which in effect gave the Israelis a free hand to terrorise the Palestinians.

– the stand-off with China over the spy-plane incident, a reflection of the Bush regime's hardening stance against China and stepped-up support for Taiwan.

– clashes with the Democrats, who threatened to use their Senate majority to veto the administration's defence spending plans in Congress.

– continual conflict with the EU over 'free trade' and the plans for a European Rapid Reaction Force.

In addition to this list, of course, the American government and corporations have been a prime target for the rapidly expanding global justice movement. Now the reactionary massacre of September 11th has thrown all the cards in the air. Bush and Cheney have launched an all-embracing political offensive, aimed particularly at throwing back the global justice movement, whipping the EU into line, targeting the third world and national liberation movements, defeating domestic opposition, crushing civil liberties in the US and internationally (while strengthening international police, military and intelligence cooperation), establishing harsher methods of dealing with immigration and asylum seekers, reasserting the US diplomatic and economic dominance in the Middle East, politically subordinating Canada, establishing the right of the US to station military forces in the former Soviet republics and isolating China. All this takes place within the overall framework of using this offensive to push forward key US economic objectives, particularly in relation to so-called 'free trade' - ie the right of entry for US corporations everywhere.

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The obstacles to global American success and formidable; the very scope and importance of what has been undertaken has created huge tensions within the Bush team, and with other sections of the US of political and, especially, financial elite, which are discussed below.

Reactionary mobilisation

The first payoff for the Bush administration has been at home. The weeks following the attacks have seen the biggest reactionary mobilisation in the United States since the McCarthy period in the 1950s. National TV networks gave non-stop coverage 24 hours a day, whipping up a frenzy of patriotism, often with racist overtones. Natural human sympathy with the victims and their families, and feelings of solidarity with, especially, the more than 300 firefighters who died, were shamelessly plundered by the administration and by an enormously powerful (and unanimous) mass media to create a nationalist wave. Here of course they were aided by the fact that these were all-too-visible deaths; the 200,000 who died in Iraq during the US Gulf war bombing, and those who have died in subsequent bombing and missile attacks (and during the sanctions blockade) were not on every TV channel 24 hours a day. This creates, as campaigning left wing journalist John Pilger pointed out, the "worthy dead" and the "unworthy dead".

In the US and Canada there were ceremonies, often with military participation, in virtually every town. The first baseball and football games to be held after the attacks started with the parading of the flag and 'God Bless America'. Congress rushed to give Bush carte blanche for military attacks, with only one person voting against in either House. As a result, Bush saw his approval rating soar to 88%; by contrast, Clinton, who oversaw a period of economic boom, never got above 73%. All questions of the legitimacy of the administration, which only nine months ago was ushered in on the back of barely-concealed electoral fraud in Florida, were buried. The Democrats have signalled very clearly that they intend to drop previous objections to using social security funds for military spending, doubts about the WTO and objections to the cost of missile defence. Former vice-president Al Gore said it all: "The President is my Commander in Chief".

The US was not alone in being subject to this reactionary frenzy. With some honourable exceptions, the mass media in Britain chimed in behind the US, preparing the ground for British participation in the war, and for the passing of even more draconian attacks on civil liberties, particularly those of asylum seekers and refugees. And this reactionary mobilisation has been spurred by creating panic about the possibility of further terrorist attacks, including perhaps poisonous gas attacks, and paranoia about the possible existence of 'terrorist cells' on every street corner.

Global US objectives

American capitalism has a long agenda of demands to make the world safe for US corporations. These revolve around the destruction of 'protectionism' and trade barriers - in particular state subsidies for national industries, opening every country in the world to US products and financial institutions; the reinforcement and extension of patents and 'intellectual property rights' to include organic products, and natural organisms like the human genome and plants, and to protect the patents of US computer and drug companies; and the right for the US to station and use military forces in every part of the world. The reactionary agenda also includes forcing every major capitalist country to thoroughly "liberalise" its economy, ditching social protection, state ownership and state intervention in the economy.

It also includes dealing a decisive blow against the environmental movement, pushing aside objections to using lignite (the brown coal in which the US is rich) to fire new power stations, and to opening up oil production in the Alaska national park.

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The beauty of the 'war on terrorism' is that it both starts from the moral high ground of portraying the US as the victim, and utilises emotions over the slaughter in the US to appeal over the heads of national governments, strengthening the hand of pro-US forces in every country. Just a year ago commentators were saying that 'US foreign policy is drifting'. Now there is an over-arching project, the first significant one to replace the Cold War; and every nation can be challenged "are you with us or with the terrorists?"

The first results of this operation can now be seen. Instead of a giant global justice demonstration in Washington on 27/8 September, there was just a small (but courageous and important) demonstration against war and racism. A broad 'anti-terrorist' coalition has been created, stretching from Britain, to Russia, to Saudi Arabia and Pakistan - although not without difficulties and contradictions which we discuss below. Inside the European Union, the pathetic Blair government has revealed itself (again) as a totally subordinate agent of the United States. And Congress has now signalled that it will go-ahead with plans to "fast track" free trade negotiations, especially those at next month's World Trade Organisation meeting in Qatar - in particular US demands for an end to "subsidies" and other "unfair practices" which keep out US goods. By contrast the US will not reciprocate by supporting European and third world demands for an end to "dumping" cheap goods on poorer countries.

Conflicts within the Bush team

Over and above its wider global agenda, the US regime feels compelled to respond militarily at some level, for obvious reasons of simple national prestige. When Thatcher launched the war with Argentina, part of her reasoning was that the prestige of British capitalism had been sorely offended by the conquest of 'sovereign territory', the Malvinas islands. Not to fight back was to suffer a loss of face and to look weak.

However the scope of the US response has been hotly debated between the 'doves' and hawks' in the administration. The most hawkish is Paul Wolfowitz, assistant secretary of state at the Defence department, who modestly calls himself "a major international figure" and has talked menacingly about "ending rogue states". Wolfowitz is an old Cold Warrior, who 25 years ago was part of an advisory team to Gerald Ford, urging stepped up use of military power. In the first days after the attacks Wolfowitz, under the rubric of crushing what he called "every snake in the swamp", urged military strikes against Bin Laden and Afghanistan, but then Iraq and Hizbollah. British journalist Ed Vulliamy noted: "(The plans) were drawn up by Paul Wolfowitz - a highly intellectual right winger who rose through the State Department and Pentagon ranks under Ronald Reagan to become one of the chief architects of the 1991 Gulf War. Drafted with a small coterie of loyal aides, mainly consisting of civilian appointees at the Pentagon, the plans argue for open-ended war without constraint of time or geography and potentially engulfing the entire Middle East and central Asia...The plans put before the president during the past few days involve expanding the war beyond Afghanistan to include similar incursions by special ops forces - followed by air strikes by the bombers they would guide - into Iraq, Syria and the Beqaa Valley area of Lebanon, where the Syrian-backed Hizbollah (Party of God) fighters that harass Israel are based" (The Observer, 30 September).

This plan ran straight into the general philosophy of the use of military power developed by Secretary of State Colin Powell. The Powell Doctrine, according to Ed Vulliamy, "roughly put is this; do not get involved in military intervention unless it's in the nation's vital interests; only intervene military if the political goals are clear and achievable; only use overwhelming force, properly built up".

This in the past has led Powell into bitter confrontation with former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright who wanted US intervention in ex-Yugoslavia as early as 1992. "What's the point of having this superb military you're always talking about if we can't use it?" she once screamed at him. Wolfowitz must be thinking the same thing today.

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In the present crisis, Wolfowitz has been out-manoeuvred by Powell, who first won over National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice, then Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, and then - decisively - vice president Dick Cheney. The imperatives of launching a broad-based international alliance came slap up against the logic of widespread military strikes. In other words, the long-term political goals of asserting American world leadership point, for the present time, at limited strikes against targets which can reasonably be held to have something to do with those alleged to have carried out the September 11 attack. According to Powell over-ambitious use of military power disrupts the other immediate fronts "international banking, policing, international justice (sic), public security, espionage and surveillance." As we discuss below, all-out military action now has been sacrificed to long-term economic and political objectives, with uncertain future results.

Nato and the problem of Europe

America's war on terrorism has the EU as a prime target. The reasons are clear. United States foreign policy has always faced a dilemma with the European Union (formerly EEC). In the Cold War period the US promoted European economic growth and moves towards unification, in particular as a bulwark against the Soviet Union, and with the hope that the Europeans would take on a higher proportion of West European "defence" spending.

However, this has created not only potential economic rivals, but in the post-Cold war period an alternative economic and social model, which while importing a lot from Anglo-Saxon neo-liberalism, still maintains important residues from the previous Keynesian social welfare period. In particular it threatens to create a political bloc capable of confronting the US on the world stage.

This account may seem surprising to some socialists, especially those in Britain who have seen the near complete destruction of the Keynesian social welfare model in their country (by both Tory and Labour governments). But it would be foolish to underestimate the survivals of social welfare and state provision which still exist in Germany, France, the Benelux countries, Scandinavia and to a certain extent Italy.

George Szamuely, writing in the London Observer (25 February 2001), argued: "The European Union, once a mere trading bloc, then a single market, is now evolving into a political federation with its own constitution and elected president. Armed with its own foreign and security policy, the EU could, in the not so distant future, emerge as a serious rival to the United States. Should the EU succeed in making the Russia's vast energy and mineral resources its own, it would become a continental superpower - the stuff of American nightmares".

This indeed seems to have been the agenda set forward by German chancellor Gerard Schröder in his May 7, 2001 speech, in which he strongly set out the case for European political integration and repeated his call for a European constitution. In reply, French president Jacques Chirac argued for "a United Europe of States" and not a "United States of Europe"; and Tony Blair called for a "European superpower, but not a European superstate". In any case, everyone seemed to accept that growing integration, even if it stopped short of a full-blown state, was inevitable. This is also strongly implied by the January 2002 introduction of the Euro as the working currency of 13 states, including France, Germany, Italy and France. A single currency means single interest rates, and from then it is a short step to single tax laws, all characteristics of statehood.

According to George Szamuely, the US is in reality bitterly opposed to European union: "Since 1945, successive US administrations have championed European unity without taking the idea seriously. By European unity Americans meant little more than a set of institutions to facilitate compliance with Washington's commands. Rather than have a dozen capitals to call, the President of the United States could convey his wishes with a single phone call to Brussels. The European Community was seen as a mechanism to ensure that Europeans paid their share of NATO's

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costs and did not wander off the reservation to pursue separate foreign policies. Nato ensured US supremacy over potential political and economic rivals.

"Once the cold war ended, transatlantic conflicts that had been suppressed for the sake of Allied Unity broke out into the open. Trade disputes between Europe and the US multiplied at a furious pace. Americans responded by trying to think of ingenious ways to keep NATO - and there American dominance over Europe - going in perpetuity. Nato was to have new missions. It would operate 'out of area' and crusade for 'peace', 'democracy' or oil interests in the Caucuses or the Gulf. Europe would have to sign on for these imperial adventures: Nato was all they had, and had always been an American show." (ibid)

This explains US hostility to an independent European military force. Bush says he "accepted" the idea of a European Rapid Reaction Force as long as "Nato continues to be the primary way to keep the peace in Europe", as long as there is "joint command" (ie with the US), and as long as Nato members "bolster their defence budgets".

Now the "new war on terrorism" provides an excuse for tying Europeans to Nato. Contrary to what was expected at the beginning of the crisis, the US has invoked Clause 5 of the Nato constitution, which obliges member states to come to the aid of any member under attack. This clause was clearly written to provide for mutual defence in case of an attack by the Soviet Union, and its use today is a fig-leaf for obliging the Europeans to toe the American line.

In the last period the Europeans have demonstrated a disturbing political independence, generally greeting the election of Bush with undisguised dismay, launching open attacks on the US over missile defence, the Kyoto treaty on world climate change, and sometimes being inclined to be very critical of Israel. Very different position on the South African racism conference were adopted by the US and the EU states.

Vitally, the European Union has shown itself willing to go to the brink with the US on some trade issues, leading to some secondary mutual bans on imports - let's not forget that the movement against "McWorld" initiated by French farmers' leader and anti-corporate campaigner Jose Bové started as a protest against the banning of the import of Roquefort cheese into the US. Most of all the EU refuses to give up its Common Agricultural Policy, which Washington sees as an unfair subsidy to farmers and a block on American imports.

There are other vital economic and political issues at stake. The Europeans have pushed for the normalisation of relations with Libya, Iran and Iraq. French and German companies have restarted trade with Baghdad, and in the wake of the Lockerbie trial normal relations have been established with Libya - including direct air flights and a joint banking venture between HSBC (strong in the UK) and a Libyan bank. There has long been competition between Europe and the US for political and economic influence in the Middle East. Now the US will by attaching some states to its "anti-terrorist" alliance, and pressuring and intimidating others, disrupt European access and influence to its own benefit.

Now the Bush team has a political agenda which can cut a swathe through European obstructionism - those who are not with us are with the terrorists. In this they will have the backing of Blair government in Britain, whose simple pro-American stance borders on naiveté. A pro-European government which wants Britain to enter the Euro zone is giving uncritical backing to the main force which wants to wreck it.

Equally the US will hope to enlist the support of right wing pro-American forces, for example the new British Conservative leader Ian Duncan-Smith who advocates British entry into NAFTA, and perhaps Italian premier Silvio Berlusconi who has gone so far as to repeat Samuel Huntingdon's nonsense about a "war between civilisations", particularly the Christian world and Islam.

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Asylum seekers, immigration and civil liberties

As must now be obvious to any serious observer, Islamic fundamentalism - and the terrorism which it sometimes (though by no means always) gives rise to - stems from the desperation of the hundreds of millions of the oppressed in the Muslim countries, and from the lack of more socially progressive political forces to advance their cause. That desperation is not confined to those countries. Decades of neo-liberalism, third world debt, 'structural adjustment', and IMF-World Bank 'conditionalities' which had broken up state protection and provision, have greatly deepened the impoverishment of the third world. This has been reinforced by the collapse of the Soviet Union and the eastern bloc, which has subjected millions more to penury and devastating wars.

The result is a huge tide of refugees and economic migrants, to which has now been added more than a million on the Afghanistan/Pakistan border. While migrants from many countries try to enter North America and Europe, the US in particular is the target of migrants from Mexico and Central America. The imperialist powers face two ways on this issue. On the one hand, the labour of the migrants - to a greater or lesser extent - is needed. This is particularly true for the US, but also for some European countries (Germany and Italy) which face demographic decline and a future labour shortage. On the other hand, reactionary political forces have utilised the immigration issue to whip up a tide of racism. The imperialist states themselves want above all to be able to control this flow of migrants, strengthening reactionary immigration controls.

The new 'war on terrorism' is being used to strengthen border controls, and push through a raft of measures restricting movement of citizens, and the right to organise politically. This has been already prefigured in the British anti-terrorism law, passed last year, which potentially criminalises all dissident political activity, and has already established a list of banned organisations. 'Those who are not with us are with the terrorists' becomes a banner to demonise and de-legitimise all political protest. The measures being passed in the US and Britain - suspiciously similar - will enable the 'fast track' extradition of 'terrorist suspects', indefinite detention without trial of asylum seekers and indeed anyone trying to cross borders who is considered suspicious, the seizure of bank accounts, the banning of organisations as 'fronts' for terrorism and unlimited powers to launch all-round surveillance of communications. Through this the repressive powers of the state are being strengthened, although many of these things already existed in Britain. No wonder some US Congress members are saying these measures breach the US constitution.

Basic elements of 'normal' bourgeois democratic rights are being throttled. Many Muslim and other ethnic minority groups in the major capitalist states are facing a tide of racism, including a flood of physical attacks often unreported in the press. Openly racist caricatures of Arab and other Middle East peoples are widespread in the capitalist press. It is not by accident that the first significant demonstration in the US against government policy was 'against war AND racism'.

Social dislocation in the third world has created not just migrants but massive instability, reflected for example in the permanent chaos in Afghanistan and the wars in ex-Yugoslavia, Chechnya, the Congo and elsewhere. For the imperialist powers, there is a permanent need to dispose of military forces capable of holding these conflicts in check, and pushing them back insofar as they threaten any vital economic interests. A good example of this is the recent British military action in Sierra Leone. In a world of third world chaos, permanent imperialist military intervention becomes the norm. We can be sure that the action being planned against left wing guerrillas in Colombia, previously justified by the 'war against drugs', will now fall under the rubric of the 'war against terrorism'.

Military power and 'missile defence'

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In the aftermath of the fall of the Soviet Union and the end of the 'cold war', a 'peace dividend' of reduced military spending was widely expected. Now the US intends to pump billions more into its war machine. The Bush administration will be able to sweep aside all objections to its 'missile defence' programme and new equipment for every military service. This attachment to grotesque amounts of military power is entirely logical, and has a very precise political-strategic objective. From Reagan onwards American administrations have understood very well that military power translates into political and economic power. Despite the cost, there is a massive dividend to being the world's only superpower. The ability to quickly put forces in the field and strike anywhere means that the US is always a factor to be taken into account politically; and political domination translates into economic access.

The 'Son of Star Wars' missile defence programme is about ensuring absolute world military dominance for the foreseeable future. In June the US announced that it would have lasers, the 'shoot down' part of the system, in place in Alaska by 2005 - much sooner than anyone thought. Together with the anti-missile shield, the US is developing a long range bomber - developed from space shuttle technology - capable of entering space and arriving at any point on the earth's surface within 30 minutes. You don't need to much imagination to see what this combination means. In fact the US is preparing to be able to carry out a first nuclear strike against any nation without fear of retaliation. This in itself will constitute a n enormous threat to any other rival nation.

Neither is there much doubt which nation the US sees as its main long-term rival - China. With the economic catastrophe in Russia, no other nation seems to have the population and resource base to challenge US hegemony in the long-run.

According to Isobel Hilton: "The Republican party is divided between the hardliners who see China as a potential enemy and the business lobby pursuing its usual agenda of trade no matter what. (The same dilemma, on a smaller scale, presents itself over Cuba.) Among Bush's advisers, there is a perceptible difference between the more conciliatory State Department and the hard-line military." Despite these differences Bush has leaned towards the hardliners: "Since Bush came to power, he has antagonised the Chinese through his cavalier approach to the warming relations with North Korea, through his enthusiasm for missile defence, his commitment to arms sales to Taiwan and his decision to pursue a resolution in Geneva censuring China for human rights violations....The issue, though, is more sensitive if it is read in conjunction with missile defence. The Chinese regard the US missile defence proposals as aimed at neutralising China's long-range nuclear arsenal, a system that, as yet, poses little direct threat to the US. A more urgent cause of friction, though, is in the related area of theatre defence.."(Guardian, 3 April 2001) In other words, missile defence is seen as threatening China's capacity to confront Taiwan and India with short-range missiles.

Successive administrations have developed a strategy of being able to fight two major wars simultaneously and win - most models made the two wars as being against Russia and China. Defence spending cutbacks since 1990 put this objective in question. Defence Secretary Rumsfeld this year found himself in sharp conflict with the Joint Chiefs of Staff over his review of defence spending, and his decision to abandon the 'two wars' criterion. Although defence spending was to rise, most of it would be taken up by the missile defence project. Now the block on military spending will be lifted: the US will have the missile defence shield and a huge increase in military hardware for all four major US armed services.

Equally, Democrat objections to increased defence spending will be overcome. In his July 18th testimony to the Senate budget committee, Paul Wolfowitz faced a grilling over the decision to increase defence spending to $329 billion - eight percent higher than last year. This decision was particularly controversial because of the then projected $21 billion to be taken out of the Medicare and social security funds. Budget committee chairman, Democrat Kent Conrad, told Wolfowitz he would stop defence spending increases if it meant taking money out of federal health or social security funds. Conrad's objections are now in the dustbin.

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Canada

In his September 16 speech to Congress, Bush conspicuously omitted Canada from the list of the US's supportive allies. This was meant to turn up the heat on Canadian premier Jean Chretiénne, whohadstated that Canada held no blank cheque for US on militaryaction. In addition, the US is now pushing for an agreement for joint sovereignty of US/Canadian borders. This would mean free movement between the two countries, but an effective US veto on who could be admitted to Canada. The latter has long been economically dominated by US corporations, but now faces the threat of gradual political integration into the US: a state which cannot control its own borders is in the process of disappearing. In turn, politically marginalizing Canada reinforces absolute US political hegemony over the NAFTA bloc. Of course, there will be no free movement over the border with Mexico, and no deal with Mexican president Fox over legalising all Mexican immigrants in the US.

Contradictions in the alliance

There are enormous difficulties about constructing a lasting alliance for the 'war on terrorism'. Outside of its British satrap, the US has cajoled everyone else into the alliance using a mixture of threats and promises. Pakistan, Iran and the dreadful Vladimir Putin of Russia see supporting a strike against Afghanistan and the unloved Taliban regime as the price for US economic political aid and political support. Just a few weeks ago, Iran and Pakistan were on the State Department list of countries sponsoring or harbouring terrorists, and relations between Russia and the US were strained over missile defence. Now, with dollars glittering in their eyes, these countries are happily snuggled up within a US-led alliance. Putin of course is doing a quid-pro-quo in relation to Russia's dirty war in Chechnya. With Grozny still in ruins, and the Chechnyan population still terrorised by the Russian army, the West will turn an even blinder eye, and even dignify these outrages with the title of being part of the war on terrorism.

In Europe, the prostration before the US, into which even the German government has been dragged (despite the barely concealed US contempt for Schröder and his foreign minister Oskar Fischer), may not survive the military attack on Afghanistan. Already, US attempts to calm down Israeli repression against the Palestinians so as not to antagonise Arab states in the alliance have largely failed - although of course it has succeeded in preventing an all-out offensive by the Israelis.

After a strike on bin Laden and the Taliban, the basic question will reassert itself: what is the 'war on terrorism' about? Who are the terrorists who the alliance will stand together against? Iraq? Libya? The FARC in Colombia? The PLO? This is the major problem that the whole project faces. The alliance has been constructed around a short-term objective, when US objectives are medium- and long-term. There is little agreement between most members of the alliance about who terrorists are, or even the importance of terrorism as a problem.

A lot will depend the attitude of the European Nato members. For the moment all feel they have to stay with the anti-terrorist alliance, but have cautioned, especially at the September 26 Nato meeting, against widespread military action. Their emphasis was on the 'national security' aspects of anti-terrorism. Whether they will gradually resist all-round US attempts to bend them to an American agenda remains to be seen. Political backbone when dealing with the US has not in the past always been forthcoming. As George Szamuely puts it: "America's contempt is not entirely undeserved. Europe has passed up one opportunity after another to pursue an independent foreign policy. Britain can always be relied on to follow Washington's line. It cheerfully joined the bombing of Baghdad, sanctioned neither by international law nor United Nations resolution. After some harrumphing, the Germans too got on board. Sanctions on Iraq have been a total disaster. Former UN arms inspector Scott Ritter has written that by 1997 "Iraq had been disarmed. Iraq no longer possessed any meaningful quantities of chemical or biological agent, if it possessed any at all, and the industrial means to produce these agents had either been eliminated or were subject to stringent monitoring. The same was true of Iraq's nuclear and ballistic missile capabilities". Yet the European Union

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voices no serious opposition to the US-led sanctions regime.

"Europeans repeatedly rejected US demands to bomb Serbia, correctly foreseeing the present mess in the Balkans. But, after years of cajoling from Washington, they finally gave way. Closing the Danube to commercial traffic damaged European, not American, interests. America wants to incorporate the Baltic States into Nato. Europe is opposed, not wishing to antagonise the Russians needlessly. Americans look set to win."

Economic implications

The world economy had already tipped into recession before September 11. Now the immediate consequence of the attack is to deepen that process. Already British Chancellor Gordon Brown is using this, and the extra British military spending caused by the war, to warn of tax increases - in effect a 'war tax'. In the US the administration is raiding the pension funds, guaranteed as sacrosanct during the election campaign, to finance vastly increased military spending. There is a conundrum here for Bush, and one that leads to difficulty either way. The temptation is there to go in for a new round of Reagan-style military Keynesianism, attempting to utilise state funds to spend America out of recession and towards a new 1980s-style boom; already Bush has announced a $75 billion injection into the economy. On September 14th, three days after the attacks, Congress appropriated $40 billion in emergency spending and then approved, in record time, a $15 billion rescue for airlines. General pump-priming is opposed by Federal Reserve chairman Alan Greenspan and many others in the US financial elite. If pump-priming is used, it will be in a very different context to the 1980s, when huge amounts of lending from, especially Japan, was sucked in to finance the budget deficit. These resources do not exist now. Military Keynesianism threatens a gigantic inflation of 1970s proportions which could lead to the same consequence, a 1974 type crash. Immediately though the effects will be recessionary, leading to thousands of job losses, which have already started in the airlines. World trade will slow. Tourism will be undercut. The consequences, as ever, will be borne by working people.

Challenges for the global justice movement

The attack on the United States, and the 'war on terrorism' subsequently declared, constitute historic events which massively up the stakes for the Global Justice Movement. This movement is feared by the world's capitalist leaders, because of the breadth of its support and the depth of its demands. There has been a lot of debate on the left - mainly pointless - about whether this movement is just 'anti-corporate' or more generally 'anti-capitalist'. The point is that this movement is in motion and that the one generally leads to the other. Now this process of maturing and widening the movement is threatened with derailment. The example of the projected 27-9 September demonstrations in Washington has already been given. Equally, there was a projected demonstration mainly against privatisation outside the British Labour Party, conference on 30 September organised by the Socialist Alliance, the Green Party and trade unions. This would have been very big, but had to be turned in part towards an anti-war position, probably severely reducing the turnout to around 6,000, although the driving rain all day makes a precise judgement difficult.

It is clear that one factor in limiting the scope of US opinion has been an assessment of popular opinion in the West. Opinion polls show that there is not public support for all out war. A majority in the UK favour ending military action once Bin Laden has been captured or killed. Tony Blair has gone out of his way to insist that the ordinary people of Afghanistan are not the enemy and will not be targeted. Some relatives of the New York dead have spoken out against creating more victims among ordinary people. In the two weeks after the attack a wide anti-war mobilisation took place across American campuses. Students held dozens of meetings and demonstrations against the threat of war, in what UK journalist Matthew Engel reporting from Oberlin college in Ohio, described as "echoes of the 1960s anti-Vietnam war movement". This wave of mobilisation seems to have subsided a little, precisely in response to a

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diminution of stated US war aims. Widespread attacks would probably revive it quickly.

It should be said that the response of most public figures in the global justice movement has been good. Naomi Klein wrote an excellent article in The Nation, syndicated across North America and George Monbiot has been to the fore on anti-war protests in Britain and writing in the UK Guardian. Others weighing in on the mass media include Tariq Ali, John Pilger, Leo Panitch on Canadian TV, Seamus Milne in the Guardian, Robert Fisk in the Independent and Sunday Independent - in other words, the usual suspects. But the question at issue is the effect not on the leaders of the Global Justice Movement, or left wing public figures, vitally important though their stand is, but on mass support, and public opinion in general. The point is that it forces the Left and the Global Justice campaigners onto the back foot, making them fight on a much more unfavourable terrain. Those of us in Britain have the dubious 'privilege' of having had to confront war mania three times in the last two decades, during the Malvinas war, the Gulf War and again during the attack on Serbia. In the face of the terrifying power of the mass media and its reactionary consensus, it is very difficult to get a hearing and to mobilise widespread opposition.

But there is another side to this conundrum. First, the very nature of the 'prolonged war' declared by Bush and Blair creates major difficulties for the capitalist leaders. Zapping Bin Laden and the Taliban is one thing, moving onto Iraq or other states like Libya, would cause the 'alliance' to fragment. Much more opposition would emerge in Europe and the third world. Extending the 'war against terrorism' to Colombia, for example, will be seen through by wide layers of potential supporters of the anti-capitalist movement.

But there is an inescapable problem - and opportunity - for the Left here. The global justice movement has reached a certain level of development, easily combining anti-corporate campaigners, opponents of third world debt and hard-core anti-capitalists, including Marxists. Now, the Left would be crazy to put down ultimatums that all these people take a clear stand 'against imperialism'. But the minimum for staying together is a mobilisation against war and racism, and in defence of civil liberties. And rejection of the ludicrous idea that the main problem in the world is 'terrorism'. Through this a section of the global justice movement's wide support can be led to make the links much more explicitly, towards a de facto understanding of the nature of imperial power. For - in theory - it is not so much of a conceptual leap to go from understanding the nature of the corporations, to understanding the nature of the state which defends them. But in the face on the barrage about terrorism, this will not be such an easy task. In the first stages of the campaign, especially as military action against the Taliban starts, it will be difficult. As the true scope of the 'war against terrorism' becomes clearer the task will get easier.

The Bush regime and its British supporters have set themselves an enormous task. In their real long-term objectives they have no guarantee of victory. They will face powerful obstacles. The Left has to stand fast now, however temporarily isolated, to maximise its gains in the medium and long-term.

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