

## Into the dark tunnel

*Damage-control is the dire need*

THE war we had dreadfully feared and yet thought wouldn't somehow happen, has got underway. There were early morning Cruise missile and Tomahawk air attacks with the limited and focussed objective of decapitating top leadership in Baghdad so that Iraqi resistance didn't take off at all. This fell short of full scale air strike which by the look of things seems some way off at the time of writing this editorial. And since ground operations follow the softening of command and control structures by repeated air strikes, one could also say that ground operations would take some time to start. Still the war has begun. It is an unjust war, unfair war and an unnecessary war; all this primarily because it is a war between Goliath and David. Essentially, it's invasive and primitively so into the new millennium redolent with a modernist temper of democracy, pluralism and liberalism. The UN has been diabolically undermined and even the gains in terms of internationalism and world order in the aftermath of the first and second world wars stand wiped off by an unrestrained superpower rewriting the code of international conduct by the might is right dictum.

We have heard of colonialism, imperialism and neo-colonialism; but this is rabidly imperious and chillingly broad-spectrum policing of the world. George Bush while declaring the war claimed that 35 governments were behind him; even though he didn't have to name them, one could say without any fear of contradiction that people in those countries were expressly opposed to the war. The fact that even the clarion call of the Pope, spiritual leader of the Christian community, has gone unheeded despite its highly pious and forceful exhortation -- those who waged war would remain answerable to God and history -- reflects very sadly on the sense of judgement of the man who rules from the White House.

In specific terms, how much support Bush and Blair can expect from the Middle East and the Arab world, even countries whose governments have allowed allied troops in? Not much really. With the war breaking out, the US credibility to the leaders of the countries is bound to tumble as their people's sentiments turn against the war. The thin line between recognising popular sentiments and alienating the US will be dissolved as people's wrath turns against their rulers as the war drags on. George Bush has described his attacks on 'targets of opportunity' as "opening stages to a broadened and concerted campaign". It's not going to be as short as the first Gulf war for sure; in that conflict the then coalition forces were united in their opposition to Saddam, because he had committed the sin of occupying an Arab state. That moral force is totally missing from the present military strike. The Arab world will grow more suspicious of the US than of Israel. The allegations of double standards against the United States on Israel versus Palestine question will be reinforced.

The fundamental point at issue is, as the war gets intensely more high-tech, the fear of casualties on the part of the superpower is diminished in direct proportion to that increasing in the country facing the war. This is the tragic lesson we must be prepared to learn from the current conflict. Since the first Gulf war Iraqi people have been so emaciated that at present sixty per cent of the population are in the grip of malnutrition, the women and the children being the hardest hit. But now that the oil-for-food programme is on hold due to the war and the spectre of people fleeing from the cities is rising, the dual problem of sheltering and feeding them can be nerve-wracking.

The concern over the fate of Iraqi people should override the rhetorical flourish and the psycho-physical warfare launched by the small coterie of coalition forces. Even though Bush waxed eloquent with his 'respect for Iraqi people and their faith' and *tenders* have already been floated for 'reconstruction of Iraq' one wonders what would be left to construct on after the war -- a devastated people and country!

The journalists are hardly privy to what happens at the war headquarters. They are even less so these days on what happens on the ground. In such wars they are given a very distorted view of collateral damages. In the last Gulf war they would be kept from visiting hospitals. The allied power only tries to impress the journalists with the pyro-techniques. It would be good to have a UN observers team assess the war damages courtesy an appropriate UNSC resolution.

## The 'Ugly Americans'



HASNAT ABDUL HYE

LAST time the Americans were given the sobriquet 'ugly' was during the Vietnam War. It was in a book of fiction by two American journalists who wrote not only about the horrendous atrocities inflicted on the hapless Vietnamese but also portrayed the cavalier way the war was conducted without regard for human lives. At the end of the book, the ruthlessness of the war efforts is shown equally matched by the indifference of the American public about the issues involved. Coincidentally, the provenance of the novel, "The Quiet American", by Graham Greene, is also Vietnam, but the time is before the American aggression, when the country under French rule was slow but steadily moving towards Dien Bien Phu, the nemesis of French colonial rule in Asia. The 'quiet' American in the novel is not 'quiet' at all. He is covertly carrying out sinister schemes to destabilize the French regime and to upstage the communists through steady infiltration and sabotage with a view to wresting control of the country through puppets. When his heinous crimes are revealed to his Vietnamese acquaintances (and, to add a touch of irony, a British correspondent) the 'quiet' American, the CIA agent holding a cover post in the American Embassy, pays the "wages of sin" with his life. The quiet American is obviously the ugly American of

another time, but roving the same land.

Fact can be stranger than fiction. Also, life can imitate art to an unimaginable degree. Even before the aggression against Iraq has begun, 'ugly' Americans are now all too visible, particularly in Washington. Of course, America never ceased to have ugly men in the government, business and defence. But these Americans were never so vicious, devious and morally corrupt as they are at present. What the world is witnessing now is a parody of Mad Max,

choose to be? Its practice of double standard is blatant and outrageous, to say the least.

It must be acknowledged at the same time, that America's record of humanitarian activities is not negligible. But contrasted against the enormity of the crimes against humanity, past and present, these humane acts pale into insignificance and become inconsequential. War against Iraq with its inevitable heavy tolls of civilian lives, will reinforce this impression and add to the legacy of America's evil deeds. It will be a great pity because

Lincoln's Gettysburg speech. Once again, he has proved himself to be the conscience of good-natured and God fearing Americans. Then, there is the courageous American diplomat who resigned from his service and post as a conscientious objector to the unjust war that was being hatched by President Bush and his fellow merchants of death. The picture of American peacenik, Rachel Corrie standing in front of a menacing bulldozer, driven by a rapacious representative of Israeli murderers will be engraved forever in the memory and minds of people

which like an ill wind, can bring good to no one. Its belated decision to declare the road map to peace in the middle east appears as a cruel joke. That no words of chastisement or warning have been issued to Israelis, for their continuous incursions into Palestinian areas and indiscriminate killing, has not gone without notice by the skeptics. To many, the real axis of evil is composed of America and Israel. American image and interests will continue to receive drubbing for its Israeli policy. When will it ever learn?

American arrogance and hypocrisy were manifest when it tabled resolution 1441 before the Security Council asking Iraq to disarm and to comply with UN inspection. America wanted to have automaticity attached to the resolution so that it would not need a second resolution to attack Iraq. Even before UN inspection started America began a massive military build up in the Gulf. Hindsight is not necessary to realize that all along Bush Administration's plan has been to attack under the doctrine of pre-emptive strike, with or without UN. Having failed to mobilize support for a second resolution authorizing war against Iraq, America simply chose to ignore the UN. To her the UN and the world community have become irrelevant. It has even castigated a respectable and responsible ally like France for its failure to toe the American line. The language used by President Bush and his hawks transgress canons of civility and elementary diplomacy. It roared angrily like a wounded animal from whose jaw a prey is about to be freed. Baring the fangs she is poised to deliver the deathly strike.

America now stands exposed as a ruthless and arrogant power bent on having its way, no matter what it may mean to others and to world peace. In its present incarnation after the cold war, America sends a signal of great danger to mankind. What it is pursuing in the name of containing dictators and fighting terrorism is nothing short of state terrorism. The number of ugly Americans may still be few but they are in the driving seat. The world must beware.

Hasnat Abdul Hye is a former secretary, novelist and economist.

## IN MY VIEW

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strutting on the world scene as a lone ranger, fighting against an adversary of its own creation. Only blaming arrogance of power can explain part of this macabre dance of death. The rest should be seen rooted in the American psyche, still mired into the siege mentality inherited from General Custer's last stand against American Indians. That heritage has been kept alive for Americans, generations after generations, through Hollywood films and by physical acts whenever necessary (and even if not necessary) to eliminate enemies using the most lethal of weapons. In line with this legacy America has the proud distinction of being the first to use the weapons of mass destruction, the nuclear bomb. It refuses to ratify nuclear non-proliferation treaty and maintains stocks of deadly biological and chemical agents. How much more hypocritical a country can

even at the height of the present crisis there is no dearth of voices of sanity and wisdom, counseling restraint and patience on the power that be. These voices may not be loud enough to drown out the baying for blood, but they can be heard nevertheless. These voices reassure the world that all Americans are not ugly and can speak out against actions that are ill-conceived, wrong and immoral.

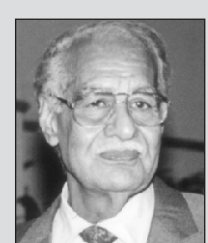
Jimmy Carter, the former president, is one such voice. When President Bush and his cohorts were going ahead with their deceitful and diabolical plan to attack Iraq, under one pretext or another, he saw through their machinations and exposed the hypocrisy involved. His exhortation to make a distinction between just and unjust wars will go down as one of the finest speeches ever made by an American President, perhaps the second best after Abraham

loving people. Though not related to Iraq crisis, her protest and ultimate sacrifice of life under the bulldozer is yet another instance of the desire by many Americans to see justice and fairness prevail where men and women are being slaughtered by oppressors and usurers, like the Israelis, out Herrod Herrod. Out numbered and outshone by ugly Americans in power, these few good men (and women) help restore faith in the enduring quality of human goodness.

It will take a long time for America to recover from the damage to its image wrought by the aggression against Iraq. It will suffer from a crisis of credibility to a degree that it has not experienced before. The American Government, supported by the majority of politicians of the two parties and the people in general, is already seen as a hypocritical and immoral force,

The failure of the Bush Administration to establish a casus belli for the war against Iraq is pathetic and resounding. It started with the argument for disarming Iraq and soon swung around to the pretext of regime change for the sake of liberating Iraqi people. Taking another twist the policy was touted to contribute to the fight against terrorism. Vain and deceitful attempts have been made to establish linkage between Iraq and Al-Qaeda and to prove that Iraq persists in maintaining stocks of weapons of mass destruction. The fact that the UN inspectors did not find any 'smoking gun' in their visits to more than three thousand sites in Iraq and that Iraq was dismantling lethal weapons like missiles and not toothpicks, did not matter with the war mongers. It could not be otherwise. The die had already been cast and the vengeful mind already made up.

## Unipolarity syndrome



KULDIP NAYYAR  
writes from New Delhi

THE cold war was any day better. It gave us peace for 60 years. Communist and non-communist blocs growled at each other. They barked but never bit. They did not stray beyond the line they had drawn between themselves. What kept the two sides within their pen was their healthy respect for the opponent's capability to retaliate.

The end of the cold war or, for that matter, the break-up of the Soviet Union not just ended the delicately poised international balance. It also left America all powerful and without any challenge. The multi-polar world became unipolar.

The situation provided Washington the best of opportunities to cast off dictatorships for which it had worked and to build up democracies in favour of which it had preached. It could have meant an era where the big and the small, the strong and the weak, could have felt the glow of freedom and fraternity.

The passage of time has, however, shown that America's sights were limited to demolishing the communist world, not so much for ideological reasons as for personal aggrandisement. Washington has not risen to the standard it was expected to attain. The talk of democracy has turned out to be only the means to remove the opposition, not to achieve the end of having a fully free world. One is the god that failed. The other has become the god itself.

It is wrong to assume that the

pendent and more viable. But it was no do-gooder. It wanted the different countries to realise that America America alone counted in the world.

Never did one suspect that in its battle for supremacy America would one day supplant the United Nations itself. Whether other nations, including "his master's voice" Britain, would allow Washington to "reform" the body is in the realm of conjecture. But America has struck the first blow, going to war without the backing of the

publicity, America positioned troops long before the UN inspectors gave even their preliminary report on the possession of weapons of mass destruction by Saddam Hussein. It is apparent that President Bush had decided to intervene whatever the reports. For him, the Security Council was meant only to endorse what he or, for that matter, America had demanded: the disarming of Iraq. If people are not too optimistic about the future of the UN it is understandable. Bush wants the US to be

laid down the rules for settling international disputes in the future: if the UN does not toe the US line, ignore the UN.

There has never been any illusion about Saddam. He is a ruthless dictator who does not bother about human rights and democracy. That he has been able to bring Bush and Tony Blair to his level is not a mean achievement. Like them, he too will go down in history as a person who created confusion among his accusers and made them equally irresponsible. Could they not wait

the entire humanity. The credibility as well as the durability of the UN concerns all, not the Muslims alone. The world has to have an order which reflects consensus, not conflict. America and Britain have thrown the dictum to the wind. They have done worse: they have thrown down the gauntlet to all the democracies in the world. It is for them to pick it up. I have not been able to make out why New Delhi has been dragging its feet. Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee himself said in parliament that any unilateral action by America would be suspect. Why keep quiet now? India cannot afford to be a spectator. It should mobilise countries from NAM to throw their weight behind the side for peace, along with Russia, Germany and France.

In fact, it is difficult to discern the reasons for lack of protest in India. A few, small meetings have taken place to criticise America but those too at the prodding of activists. The fervour and passion shown by the people in the west -- they came on the streets in hundreds of thousands -- is missing. Not raising their voice against injustice is not the ethos of our nation. Probably, this sumps up the achievement of the BJP-led government that has completed five years in the saddle.

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## BETWEEN THE LINES

**Still one grey lining in the dark clouds is the transparency with regard to America's move. Nothing is hidden from the public. There is no hedging. There is no apology. The UN has been pushed into the background in broad daylight. Both the Congress and the Senate of America and the British parliament have endorsed the war. It is not only unfortunate but revolting.**

attack by terrorists in New York and Washington in September 2001 hardened America's tone and tenor. It was already acting as a tough and self-righteous country. The attack gave it a justification to suppress dissent, opposition or what it did not like in any part of the world. Increasingly, the US was seen trying to cure the symptom -- terrorism -- and not the disease -- the grievance. Through economic, political and social ties it could have made nations more inde-

international community. Sensing an opposition in the Security Council, not expecting to get even the majority of non-veto members on its side, America took the law into its own hands. It became the "arbiter," without any UN sanctions and it decided to attack Iraq.

One does not have to go back to the example of the League of Nations, which collapsed after Japan's aggression. The UN can go the same way. In the full gaze of

synonymous with the UN.

Still one grey lining in the dark clouds is the transparency with regard to America's move. Nothing is hidden from the public. There is no hedging. There is no apology. The UN has been pushed into the background in broad daylight. Both the Congress and the Senate of America and the British parliament have endorsed the war. It is not only unfortunate but revolting. The two leading democracies have

even for a month for the UN inspectors' categorical report? Why were Bush and Blair in such a hurry? Heavens would not have fallen if they had waited for the procedure of obtaining the UN sanctions to come to an end.

It is surmised that the Islamic world will be infuriated. Some Muslim leaders have the knack of giving a religious tinge to every problem concerning Muslims. The problem of war and peace affects

## The war after war with Iraq

TIMOTHY GARTON ASH

AS the second Persian Gulf war begins, we peer into the sandstorm, straining to discern the outline of the new world beyond. Like most new worlds, this is actually a mix of old and new.

American officers at computer screens send "e-bombs" to fry Saddam Hussein's command equipment thousands of miles away; the intergalactic fight scenes in "Star Trek" look like 19th-century realism by comparison. But then I watch British foot soldiers in Kuwait preparing for hand-to-hand combat. A sergeant-major urges one young squaddie to bark elemental cries of hatred as he stabs and stabs again with his bayonet at a stuffed dummy of the enemy. This scene could be the eve of Agincourt in 1415: one man being psyched up to kill another by forcing sharp metal through his guts.

So also with the politics. There is something rather new: America feels so confident of its own military power and moral rightness that it will march into the most explosive region in the world with just one effective ally (two if you count Australia). And something very old: the United Nations diplomacy finally came down to a conflict between Europe's oldest adversaries, England and France.

Again as at Agincourt in 1415.

Over the last few weeks, the geopolitical West of the cold war has collapsed before our eyes. No one can know what the shape of the new world will be. As Prime Minister Tony Blair said in his speech to the British Parliament on Tuesday, "History doesn't declare the future to us so plainly." But we can already see three broad ideas competing for the succession to the cold war West. I'll call them the Rumsfeldian, the Chiraco-Putinque and the Blairite.

The Rumsfeldian idea if idea is not too dignified a word is that American might is right. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld sees the United States as a City on a Hill. As the hyperpower of the free, it must strike back at international terrorism, the new international Communism. It may also end up spreading democracy to places like Iraq, and thus make the world a better place. If some allies want to come along to help, that's fine. If not, you work around them.

The Rumsfeldian vision is half right and therefore all wrong. It's probably true that the United States can now win most wars on its own. But it can't win the peace on its own. And victory in the war against terrorism is all about winning the peace in Iraq, in the wider Middle East, and beyond.

The Chiraco-Putinque idea if idea is not too dignified a word is

that American might is dangerous. President Jacques Chirac of France believes it is unhealthy for any single state to have so much power, but it's particularly dangerous if that state happens to be America (rather than, say, France). France's mission is to construct an alternative pole: Europe, which, in Gaullist geography, includes Russia. Seeing the Franco-German-Russian (and Chinese) continental alliance pitted against the American-British-Spanish (and Australian) maritime one in the recent diplomatic battle makes me think again of the war of super-blocs in George Orwell's "1984." He called them Eurasia and Oceania.

The Chiraco-Putinque vision is half right and therefore all wrong. It's true that it is unhealthy for any single power, however democratic and benign, to be as preponderant as the United States is today. But for France to make common cause with Vladimir Putin and a semi-democratic Russia (the butcher of Chechnya), as well as a nondemocratic China, to bring temporary succor to Saddam Hussein is not the brightest way to move toward a multipolar world. Anyway, you won't unite Eurasia against the United States. Even in this crisis, half the governments of Europe put trans-Atlantic solidarity before their grave doubts about the wisdom of the Bush administration's approach to Iraq.

That leaves Blairism. Tony Blair's idea is that we should recreate a larger version of the cold war West, in response to the new threats we face. What he calls the "coming together" of weapons of mass destruction and terrorism should frighten us as much as the Red Army used to. The way to deal with American unilateralism is not rivalry but partnership. Partners are not servants. Last September, as the Bush administration began its push for action on Iraq, Europe should have said "with one voice" that it would help Washington confront terrorism and weapons of mass destruction, provided that it went down the United Nations route and restarted the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. Europe and America should always work together through the international institutions of the post-1945 world.

Mr. Blair's idea is completely right. The trouble is the execution. He made two big mistakes over the last year. The first was not to do more last September to try to bring Europe to speak with one voice. Instead, he became almost a part of the internal administration argument in Washington, while neglecting Berlin and Paris as they swung together in an antiwar waltz.

The second error was to forget that partnership also involves sometimes saying no. One has the feeling that Mr. Blair is that kind of

very decent Englishman who will always say no to drugs and never say no to Washington. If you have a stronger European voice, it's more credible that you might say no, and hence less likely that you'll have to.

If Mr. Blair had gotten the European side of his strategy right, there is just a chance that Saddam Hussein would have yielded to the united pressure of the West. I remain unconvinced that this particular war at this particular time is necessary or prudent. I now hope against hope that our victory will be swift and sure, and that the consequences in the Middle East will be positive.

I am totally convinced, however, that the Blairite vision of a new postwar order of world politics is the best one available on the somewhat depressed market of world leadership. It follows that it would have been a major setback, not just for Britain but for the world, to lose him over this war. The trouble is, of course, that to realize the Blairite vision you need Paris and Washington to sign up for it. With Jacques Chirac in one place and Donald Rumsfeld in the other, the chances don't look good. But does anyone have a better idea?

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## War maybe quick, but is it wise?

BOB HERBERT

NOW that U.S. strikes against Iraq have begun, we should get rid of one canard immediately, and that's the notion that criticism of the Bush administration and opposition to this invasion imply in some sense a lack of support or concern for the men and women who are under arms.

The names of too many of my friends are recorded on the wall of the Vietnam Memorial for me to tolerate that kind of nonsense. I hope that the war goes well, that our troops prevail quickly and that casualties everywhere are kept to a minimum.

But the fact that a war may be quick does not mean that it is wise. Against the wishes of most of the world, we have plunged not just into war, but toward a peace that is potentially more problematic than the war itself.

Are Americans ready to pay the cost in lives and dollars of a long-term military occupation of Iraq? To what end?

Will an occupation of Iraq increase or decrease our security hereatome?

Do most Americans understand that even as we are launching one of the most devastating air assaults in the history of warfare, private companies are lining up to reap the riches of rebuilding the very structures we're in the process of destroying?

who'll be watching on CNN and cheering them on.

It's not unpatriotic to say that there are billions of dollars to be made in Iraq and that the gold rush is already under way. It's simply a matter of fact.

Back in January, an article in The Wall Street Journal noted: "With oil reserves second only to Saudi Arabia's, Iraq would offer the oil industry enormous opportunity should a war topple Saddam Hussein. But the early spoils would probably go to companies needed to keep Iraq's already rundown oil operations running, especially if facilities were further damaged in a war. Oil services firms such as Halliburton Co., where Vice President Dick Cheney formerly served as chief executive, and Schlumberger Ltd. are seen as favorites for what could be as much as \$1.5 billion in contracts."

There is tremendous unease at the highest levels of the Pentagon about this war and its aftermath. The president and his civilian advisers are making a big deal about the anticipated rejoicing of the liberated populace once the war is over. But Iraq is an inherently unstable place, and while the forces assembled to chase Saddam from power are superbly trained for combat, the military is not well prepared for a long-term occupation in the most volatile region in the world.

What's driving this war is President Bush's Manichean view of the world and messianic vision of himself, the dangerously grandiose perception of American power held by his saber-rattling advisers, and the irresistible lure of Iraq's enormous oil reserves.

Polls show that the public is terribly confused about what's going on, so much so that some 40 percent believe that Saddam Hussein was personally involved in the Sept. 11 attacks. That's really scary. Rather than correct this misconception, the administration has gone out of its way to reinforce it.

I think the men and women moving militarily against Saddam are among the few truly brave and even noble individuals left in our society. They have volunteered for the dangerous duty of defending the rest of us. But I also believe they are being put unnecessarily in harm's way.

As a result of the military buildup, there is hardly a more hobbled leader on earth at the moment than Saddam Hussein. A skillful marshaling of international pressure could have forced him from power. But then the Bush administration would not have had its war and its occupation. It would not have been able to turn Iraq into an American protectorate, which is as good a term as any for a colony.

Is it a good idea to liberate the people of Iraq from the clutches of a degenerate like Saddam Hussein? Sure. But there were better, less dangerous, ways to go about it.

In the epigraph to his memoir, "Present at the Creation," Dean Acheson quoted a 13th-century king of Spain, Alphonso X, the Learned:

"Had I been present at the creation I would have given some useful hints for the better ordering of the universe."