

# THE AMERICAN IMPERIUM ON THE THRESHOLD OF THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY : REALITY AND TRENDS

*On the threshold of the new millennium, the United States is preparing for a domineering role, both externally and internally.*

CÔME CARPENTIER DE GOURDON

The projection of the power of the United States worldwide appears to be submitted to a dynamic that is common to hegemonic or predominant nations throughout history. An evolution toward greater assertiveness abroad is mirrored by increasing authoritarianism at home as if a “hegemon” were required by the “political laws of Nature” to impose tighter control on domestic society, partly in order to hold dissent in check and partly to render the exercise of paramountcy more effective and less collegial. Though such an encroachment on federal and civic liberties by the Executive is fraught with difficulties in a country as vast, affluent and heterogeneous as the USA in which individualism is “de rigueur”, it is made possible upto a certain extent by the real or perceived threats, both internal and external that successive administrations, have invoked to justify their gradual annexation of the prerogatives of the other branches of government and of the local communities. Simultaneously, Washington has developed a series of strategic and tactical responses to some of the crises and challenges that confront modern industrial societies in general and American political and financial interests in particular.

We intend to review some of these strategic actions and the theories that underlie them, firstly in America's international policies and secondly, within the country itself.

THE SOLE SUPERPOWER SYNDROME: US FOREIGN POLICY

**I**n the ten years that have passed since the collapse of the Soviet Empire, a new attitude to the outside world has been devised by the American government. More than a policy, which would be too systematic or an ideology, which would be too theoretical for the American worldview, it is a new form of assertiveness that characterises Washington's behaviour abroad. Evolved under the Reagan years, it found its first manifestation in the Gulf War.

Operation Desert Storm evinced many of the features of the new American global policy. Acting in symbiosis with Britain and its Anglo-Saxon lesser cousins, (Canada, Australia and New Zealand), the USA tends to carry out its military interventions through the agency of NATO, which is now considered as the central military force for the projection of American power. This is buttressed in the Southern hemisphere by the ANZUS and former SEATO defence pacts and is enclosed by the pro-Western South American states such as Argentina and Chile. In the sensitive Middle Eastern area, America relies primarily on Israel and Turkey and, to a lesser extent, on the friendly but closely watched oil-producing Arab monarchies of the Gulf (always suspected of harbouring anti-western and anti-Israeli sympathies) to protect her economic and strategic interests from the radical Islamic and nationalist forces that oppose Western influence, perceiving them to be the embodiment of colonial exploitation.

It is both undeniable and revealing that the White House has tended to view with more or less equal hostility certain forms of Islamic fundamentalism. (However, it has often covertly or openly supported others, as is the case in Algeria, Afghanistan and Pakistan, and the secular nationalist parties that hold sway in Iraq, Libya, Algeria and Yemen. These inconsistencies can be explained by the multiple interests pursued by many components of American society, and by the country's confederates abroad, notably Saudi Arabia, and the other conservative, Arab monarchies that have developed a rationale and near-obligation to support the Islamic theocratic forces, to avoid being directly threatened by them. Consequently, the USA is often led to support organisations

and governments that attract the sympathy and the spontaneous generosity of their Saudi allies.

The long-standing geopolitical theories that have led the American ruling elites to establish the Trilateral Commission are finding their expression in a global defence system that rests on three pillars:

- The American continent from Cape Horn to Alaska
- Western Europe (including for reasons of strategic vulnerability, parts of the former Soviet Union such as the Baltic states, the Ukraine and most of the Mediterranean region)
- and the Far East, in an arc stretching from Northern Japan to the

**It is both undeniable and revealing that the White House has tended to view with more or less equal hostility certain forms of Islamic fundamentalism. However, it has often covertly or openly supported others, as is the case in Algeria, Afghanistan and Pakistan, and the secular nationalist parties that hold sway in Iraq, Libya, Algeria and Yemen.**

South Pole, with extensions (Diego Garcia, Pakistan and the Gulf States) in the Indian Ocean.

What threats are the American-Anglo-Saxon-Western European imperium faced with at the dawn of the new millennium?

These threats are threefold. The first and most immediate is posed by the possibility of terrorism by a wide array of America's enemies (left-wing revolutionaries, nationalists, religious extremists of various persuasions) against "western" economic and military assets and interests. It is obvious

that terrorism is one of the few effective defences left to the foes of Anglo-Saxon supremacy and it may hence be attractive for a growing number of opponents of the Western Alliance. Concerned by the prospect of this, the Clinton administration has formulated a series of controversial theories of defence, designed to legitimise the policies that it has already implemented in specific instances.

Against the terrorist menace, Washington expects that it must fight alone and resort to unilateral action with, what the Pentagon calls, "the use of overwhelming force to minimise United States casualties". The implications of this has led to the formulation of bizarre but subjectively logical concepts such as the notion of "pre-emptive reprisal" or "preventive relations". These are viewed as the most suitable method to destroy real or perceived threats

before they materialise, and therefore before they can harm American assets and interests. However, in spite of this aggressive strategy civilians are inevitably more exposed than military personnel to terrorist operations, partly because the US considers that it is always easier to protect the latter than the general public. This at least is the view held by Robert Gates, former director of the CIA.

In practice, that policy rests on the capability to wage, what Secretary of State Madeleine Albright has described as, “the war of the future”, ie, lightning assaults carried out mostly with aviation, cruise missiles and special forces on any targets that the Pentagon identifies as legitimate anywhere in the world, in obvious and inevitable disregard of international law and national sovereignty. To be able to implement that strategy, the United States has developed the means to strike with conventional and eventually, too, with unconventional weapons (electromagnetic, chemical biological and certain kinds of nuclear warheads such as neutron bombs), any location on the planet from their worldwide array of military satellites, land, air and naval bases, naval fleets, intercontinental ballistic missiles and long-range strategic bombers. The most recent illustration of that capability was given by the US strikes on “secret” but seemingly civilian targets in Sudan and Afghanistan in August 1998.

The second tier of real or potential enemies of American interests consists of those nation-states that do not accept US supremacy, and that strive to remain independent and behave in ways judged hostile or at least uncooperative. The Department of State tends to qualify them as “rogue states”; it usually links them with terrorist groups they are supposed to protect and abet, and seeks to isolate them within “*cordons sanitaires*” hampering them by several methods, of which the most common is the embargo, assorted with a number of commercial, technological and political sanctions.

Other tactics include the promotion of and support for internal opposition and separatist conflicts, which can also provide suitable motives for a direct armed intervention justified by concern for human rights and humanitarian problems. Such military attacks are, whenever possible, sanctioned by the UN Security Council and carried out by the “international community”, made up primarily of the United States and their close Anglo-Saxon, Western European, African and Latin American “ad hoc” allies. NATO in its new role is, in the words of Secretary Albright, “our institution of choice”, which enjoys the advantage of not being a “hostage” to UN resolutions. The North Atlantic

Alliance is therefore bound by the rules and resolutions of the world body only when convenient, and regards itself as free to act without its mandate at the discretion of the United States and their key-partners, as the 1999 attack on Yugoslavia has demonstrated.

Another tool for the control of rebellious states or individuals is provided by the relatively new special international courts. When politically expedient, criminal prosecutions can be launched against certain political or military

**Special courts may be set up to try suspects of human rights violations in some specific countries. These courts are however tightly controlled in their jurisdiction and, when not directly funded by the US government and its allies, they are at least partly financed by private benefactors, generally American foundations like the various Sörös endowments.**

leaders, in and out of power, such as General Pinochet or President Milosevic. Special courts may be set up to try suspects of human rights violations in some specific countries. These courts are however tightly controlled in their jurisdiction and, when not directly funded by the US government and its allies, they are at least partly financed by private benefactors, generally American foundations like the various Sörös endowments. They are hence forbidden to investigate and try cases other than those pre-approved by the American state which,

according to the same policy, opposes the creation of an International Criminal Court that could quickly turn into a double-edged sword for some western interests.

The same type of funding system is applied to the special UN commissions set up to deal with sensitive issues, such as the monitoring of Iraq's armament. UNSCOM is an outstanding example of a supposedly impartial, non-political organ of the "international community" almost solely dependent for its funding upon US largesse. A result of that status is that UNSCOM was infiltrated by Intelligence personnel of the Anglo-Saxon alliance which controlled it in the interest of their own governments and of their Israeli partner's strategic objectives.

It should not be lost on impartial observers that "ad hoc" international courts are similar in purpose and nature to the special courts set up within authoritarian states in order to try the political crimes committed by "enemies

of the state". The repressive function of both kinds of tribunals appears clearly, even if the selective justice system sponsored by the self-proclaimed "international community" invokes the somewhat shaky legal precedent of the Nuremberg trials in which, for the first time in modern history, the victors of a war endeavoured to judge, condemn and execute the vanquished according to principles partly borrowed from the Soviet system of "ideological justice". In Nuremberg, as in The Hague, one cannot escape the conclusion that such justice cannot be objective as it is bound to be overshadowed by political considerations, and features many of the characteristics of old-fashioned witch-hunts.

It must be noted that "rogue states" — whose list is periodically updated and modified according to the reviews conducted by the American military intelligence establishment and among which we currently find Iraq, Yugoslavia, North Korea, Libya and Sudan, with Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan regarded as "border-line" cases — have one thing in common. They have severely limited military potential and obsolescent armaments which make them, comparatively, an easy target to control through a combination of sanctions and pressures and, occasionally, force, with little risk for the US-led alliance. On the other hand, very large economic and military powers such as India or Brazil do not fit easily into that category, despite their nationalist traditions which generally incline them to chart an independent course in foreign policy.

The two latter countries may in fact qualify, at least potentially, to enter the third category of US adversaries, which includes Russia and China in the medium or long-term. Both these nations have an imperial tradition that puts them squarely at odds with America on a number of issues. Indeed, certain policies and designs of the US administration directly harm some of Moscow's and Beijing's vital interests and can hence be expected to be resisted separately and jointly.

The magnitude of these countries poses a different type of challenge to the Pentagon which can hardly contemplate military interventions of the kind carried out in Iraq or Yugoslavia. An arsenal of covert and overt measures has thus been put together. It includes fostering domestic unrest and engineering the break-up of rebellious regions such as the autonomous republics of Tatarstan and Chechnya, or certain areas of Siberia in Russia. General Lebed, the governor of Krasnoïarsk was confidentially, it seems, invited in 1998 to try for

independence with America's blessings, is in keeping with the strategy which helped bring about the implosion of the Soviet Union.

In China, Washington keeps a close watch on the age-old separatist tendencies in Turkestan (Xinjang) and in the greater area of Tibet, as well as in the mountainous tribal provinces that border Burma and Indo-China. The pro-democracy movements, popular among the student and business communities are also beneficial to American interests and can therefore be profitably harnessed. An even greater threat to China's unity and military potential is, however, posed by the latent resentment of Beijing's imperial rule in the country's south-eastern maritime provinces, stretching from Canton to Shanghai, traditional merchant lanes of the Pacific, which are prone to listen to the pro-American siren songs of the overseas Chinese from Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia.

From a wider perspective, Washington has traditionally aimed at encircling China and Russia while working to keep them at odds with each other. In the case of China this function is performed by South Korea, Japan, Taiwan and the former SEATO members; they all host US defence installations or have military cooperation agreements with America.

In regard to Russia, the encirclement is nearly complete, since NATO has co-opted new members in Eastern Europe and has extended the "Partnership for Peace" within the bounds of the former USSR. The Pentagon has also spun, from its Stuttgart European Command, through the "Joint Contact Team Program" a net of bilateral military alliances with thirteen countries to date, including former Soviet republics in the Baltic, the Caucasus and the Central Asian regions. These are complemented by defence cooperation agreements with Pakistan which, like many of these pacts, links directly the defence chiefs of staff and intelligence heads of both countries, thus providing direct coordination between the Pentagon and the Pakistani Supreme Command.

In economic terms, the benefits of this policy to the American military-industrial corporations are tangible and large. A direct result has been the rapid growth of US arms sales to all the countries concerned by that long-term regime of "military exchanges". The nations that purchase equipment tend to become increasingly dependent, in financial, political and strategic terms, upon the supplier, who remains an indispensable, permanent purveyor of spare parts, maintenance and training. The Pentagon is conversely assured of finding ready clients for its material and gets in return a powerful incentive to push for the

development of new generations of weapons (and lobby Congress for funds) in order to retain its critical superiority over any potential rivals.

That constant American technological “creep” is partly funded by foreign weapon sales, and partly by the domestic tax-payers which cannot argue with the need to remain ahead of the competition. The vertical and horizontal

**The nations that purchase equipment tend to become increasingly dependent, in financial, political and strategic terms, upon the supplier, who remains an indispensable, permanent purveyor of spare parts, maintenance and training. The Pentagon is conversely assured of finding ready clients for its material.**

military build-up is therefore a self-perpetuating process; it has all the characteristics of a vicious circle as it feeds an accelerating arms-race among the military client-states. This is becoming quite visible in Central and Eastern Europe under American sponsorship.

A clear instance of the Pentagon’s method to control and contain Russia was provided by the recent crisis between Moscow and NATO about the occupation of Kosovo.

Washington’s long-standing policy to keep the Kremlin out of that region was manifested in NATO’s “request” to Eastern European nations like Romania and Ukraine (which are not members of the Alliance) to bar Russian planes from overflying their territories on their way to Yugoslavia. As always, these coercive pressures created widespread resentment, and fear that the USA is deliberately putting Russia in a corner to force her to acknowledge and submit unreservedly to American supremacy.

No review of American geostrategy may be comprehensive without the Islamic factor. The relationship of the US foreign affairs establishment with the Muslim fundamentalist forces has been ambiguous since World War II, when the State Department came to regard the religion of Prophet Muhammad as the staunchest bulwark against Communism in Asia and Africa. The economic importance of the oil-producing kingdoms of the Gulf also made the Islamic factor impossible to ignore in the global power equation. The doctrine evolved into anti-Soviet military pacts in the Near and Middle East during the fifties that the Anglo-Americans built to replace the British paramountcy of the pre-war years.

However, violent “anti-west” commotions in Iraq and Iran taught Washington to be wary of Persian or Arab secular nationalism, and convinced some of its policy-makers that Muslim religious radicalism might be better used against the old “Great Game” enemies: Russia, China, and to a lesser extent, the European former colonial powers, such as France and Germany.

Since then, the American government has made little effort to hide its intent of weaving a belt of Islamic states, more or less hostile to Russia and militarily dependent upon the Pentagon, on the southern flank of the Slav heartland, from Bosnia to Kashmir. That strategic design matches the economic gamble for control of the vast fuel reserves of Central Asia, stretching between Syro-Iraqi Kurdistan and formerly Soviet Kazakhstan. An additional benefit for the USA is to drive a wedge between Eastern Orthodox and Western Latin Europe in order to keep the continent divided, and relatively weak, and hence in continued need of American protection and mediation.

It is well known that to facilitate the construction of the UNOCAL pipelines from Turkmenia and Uzbekistan through Afghanistan and on to the port-terminals on the coast of Pakistan, the CIA encouraged Pakistan’s ISI and Saudi Arabia’s Secret Service to finance and arm the Taleban militias. It directly showered its bounty on them, through various aid programmes, designed officially to combat drug-production and trade, while deliberately ignoring the very traffic in narcotics that funded the Mujahidin’s struggle, so that they might conquer the country’s territory, and protect the building and operation of the aforesaid project, on behalf of their mentors and bankers in Islamabad and Riyadh. Thus it was expected that the various other Afghan factions, more or less receptive to Russian or Iranian influences, would be unable to block or hamper the huge American-Japanese-Saudi investments.

An independent or Pakistani Kashmir is also a desirable prospect for the proponents of that geopolitical doctrine, as it would provide better access to the Muslim territories of China, erstwhile USSR and India, from Pakistan. A clear link can be seen with the renewed attempts by Pakistan-backed Islamic guerillas to seize a larger part of the northern state from India in the first semester of 1999, perhaps hoping to capitalise on the pre-electoral instability ensuing from the fall of the BJP-led government.

On the other gradient of what Zibniew Brzezinski called “the arc of crisis”, the Balkans are the theatre of a joint Anglo-American-Turkish offensive

against the Slav and Greek orthodox states that are regarded as traditional allies or vassals of Russia. The economic chapter of that plan consists mainly in the creation of the so-called "Corridor 8" to be financed by the IMF and comprising giant oil and gas pipelines, a superhighway and a high-speed railway line. "Corridor 8" which originates in Bulgaria's East, would connect across Turkey the Caucasian-Caspian energy producers to the Adriatic terminals, through Kosovo, Montenegro and Albania, with the western European market. Just like the "Afghan connection" it would allow the mostly Anglo-American oil companies to export Central Asian oil and gas, bypassing entirely the Russian and Iranian territories.

With this objective in mind, it makes sense to build a string of small client-states occupied by NATO forces in the Southern Balkans, and to gradually compel other powers such as Yugoslavia to join that sphere of American influence, thus shutting Moscow literally out in the cold. Those high stakes account for the bitter struggle, in fact a renascent cold war between the Pentagon and the Kremlin for the control of the Serbian-Albanian region.

The plan devised for the occupation of the province of Kosovo by NATO is in any event highly problematic at best, and could turn out to be as ill-conceived as was the bombing campaign on Yugoslavia. Thus it comes to mind that if an exiguous territory inhabited by less than two million people calls for the deployment of more than fifty thousand soldiers equipped with highly sophisticated material (who are still not numerous enough to prevent violence between the rival indigenous communities), all the military and financial resources of the US-led coalition would be insufficient to secure an area of the size of Turkey, should such a country be engulfed by civil war. And we won't even go into the sheer costs of rebuilding the infrastructure of Yugoslavia devastated by the NATO assaults.

As a general rule, it is fairly obvious that when an opportunity arises, the White House and the Department of State would rather see larger countries break up into smaller states; US experience in Latin America has shown this to be in keeping with their interests. Since the early nineteenth century, Washington has intervened on several occasions in the southern continent to engineer or support the break-up of its Hispanic neighbours, Mexico, Colombia and Greater Peru into smaller nations popularly known since as, "Banana Republics".

The Machiavellian high-risk game of Washington with a variety of violent Islamic fundamentalist movements in areas as far apart as Algeria, Bosnia, Turkey, Afghanistan or Pakistan is well documented in various scholarly books and reports that have come out in the last few years. It is enough to refer to the book by French General Alexandre del Valle, (*Islamisme et Etats-Unis*, Paris 1997) prefaced by General Gallois, one of De Gaulle's main strategic policy advisers who authored *Le Sang du Pétrole*, a major historical study on the same subject.

As all prior attempts to achieve universal power, the American exercise in one-upmanship is fraught with peril, as it is bound to generate a growing resistance that will manifest itself in long and bloody conflicts. The very logic of their policy forces the United States to repress all the states or organisations that harbour the potential of becoming powerful enough to pose a challenge and that may hence be inclined to reject the overlordship of the "world's only superpower". It becomes vital for Washington to prevent the planet from becoming bipolar again and to compel all governments, unless they are strategically negligible, to accept integration in the unified economic and military command and control system, culminating in Wall Street and at the Pentagon.

**The White House and the Department of State would rather see larger countries break up into smaller states; US experience in Latin America has shown this to be in keeping with their interests. Since the early nineteenth century, Washington has intervened on several occasions in the southern continent to engineer or support the break-up of its Hispanic neighbours.**

Just as Napoleon or Hitler could not let any European nation remain outside of their hegemony, just as the Chinese empire in order to enforce continued submission among its subjects could not admit the existence of any foreign equal states, the American imperium is under the rather uneasy obligation to nip in the bud any semblance of indiscipline. Naturally, the wars intended to crush rebels must be presented in the media as police operations required to uphold human rights and to prevent genocides and crimes against humanity. As a result, we are witnessing a proliferation of these alleged abuses

which justify the use of force against their real or presumed perpetrators, and eventually against any of their allies or sympathisers.

Obviously, such a domineering policy is bound to be upheld in the end by all administrations, even though it is especially irksome when articulated and implemented by as scantily respected a US President as Bill Clinton, and by aides reputed as dour, fractious and arrogant as Vice-President Al Gore, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright or Secretary of Defence William Cohen. Such a policy is not easy to “sell” in the multi-ethnic and litigious society of the United States, which includes many long-standing and vocal critics of their country’s global imperialism, on the left and right wings of the political spectrum. Various methods are therefore employed to justify the controversial political, commercial and military policies of the government in the eyes of the electorate. F Whitten Peters, as acting Secretary of the Air Force, described these aggressive actions as forming part of “learning new kind of military operations in a new world.”

The ever-growing reality of terrorist menace against all US interests and assets both inside the country and abroad is hardly challengeable. It is significant that in February of 1999, the US Space Command, located under Cheyenne Mountain, Colorado Springs, took drastic measures to “harden” and protect its 600 communication satellites against possible “laser attacks by hostile powers”; and that in June, after putting all its missions in the Persian Gulf region in a state of high alert, the State Department closed its embassies in a few African countries on the grounds that they were threatened by terrorists and could not be adequately defended. These initiatives take their place within a wider strategy to make the continental US and American vital interests worldwide better protected against any challenges.

#### INTERNAL EVOLUTION IN THE UNITED STATES

**T**he growing will of the United States to affirm their planetary supremacy inevitably fosters the fear of the violent rebellions that any enterprise of imperial conquest arouses. The national concern about present and future foreign foes is mirrored by the government’s worry about American internal opposition and revolt, triggered in part by the ultra-liberal economic policies espoused since the days of the Reagan presidency, at the cost of the majority of the population for the benefit of the rich. Popular discontent,

hitherto held in check largely because of the overall prosperity of the economy, is bound to rise fast in the wake of any financial downturn, and revolutionary agitations, though they are still far too marginal to be really dangerous, could spread across the country.

It appears that at least one prominent faction of the American security and defence establishment expects that, in a crisis or even a major natural emergency, external opponents of the country's policies and activities will link up with domestic "rebels" in an all-out war on the US ruling groups and their assets and interests.

The weapons of that hostile coalition will almost certainly include terrorism, rendered more lethal by the rebels' probable access to chemical, biological and, perhaps also, tactical, nuclear (suitcase-sized) arms. It is against this threat that the American executive has been gearing up, planning in the process to suspend civil liberties in order to assume total emergency powers if a national crisis of any kind requires such a decision.

Let us review some of the several Executive Orders (EO) and Presidential Decision Directives (PDD) promulgated since Bill Clinton came to power in 1992, many of which have been classified and are therefore not available even for Congressional scrutiny.

- EO 10995 provides, "in case of a national emergency" declared by the President, for all communication and media to be seized by the Federal Government. The First Amendment would be simultaneously suspended.
- EO 10997 and 10998 provide for the seizure of all electrical power and fuels, food resources, farms and farm equipment.
- EO 10999 enables the government to seize all vehicles and take control of all highways, seaports, waterways, railways, airports and public storage facilities.
- According to EO 11000 all civilians may be drafted to carry out work under Federal supervision. In that context, it should be noted that the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has built detention (concentration) camps in all the ten districts into which the national territory is divided for security purposes. This is in keeping with a policy adopted during World War II that provided for the internment of Japanese-Americans and other minorities whose loyalties were held to be dubious. There are indeed many precedents for ethnically or culturally

determined policies in American history whose constitutionality was shaky, to say the least.

- EO 11051 empowers the Director of the Office of Emergency Planning, nicknamed the “Security Czar”, to put any and all Executive Orders into effect on behalf of the President “in time of increased international tension or financial crisis”. This considerably broadens the scope of the pre-conditions needed to proclaim martial law.
- EO 13010 empowers the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to take control of all government agencies on the President’s directive. Bill Clinton has put FEMA under his direct authority by removing it from the supervision of the Congress.
- EO 13011 signed on July 16, 1998 set up a new consolidated information system to manage “Federal Information Technology” in order to link all information held by the civilian departments of government with the Intelligence resources of the National Security agencies. That monitoring system has global ramifications.
- EO 12919 signed by Clinton on June 6, 1994 is entitled “National Defence Industrial Resources Preparedness”; it places the entire scientific, industrial and commercial system under the control of FEMA in times of emergency.

**The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has built detention (concentration) camps in all the ten districts into which the national territory is divided for security purposes. This is in keeping with a policy adopted during World War II that provided for the internment of Japanese-Americans.**

The latter EO empowers the National Security Council under the President’s leadership to take control of and distribute all resources, goods and services nationwide. This order actually recapitulates and overlaps most of the others, and establishes the basis for the instant assumption of all powers by the President through the NSC and FEMA without Congressional approval.

It must be recalled at this point that since December 11, 1994, by virtue of Executive Order 129338, the United States is in a state of emergency which Clinton has extended and renewed every year until the date of this writing.

Clinton justified the imposition of emergency by the “unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy and economy of the USA posed by the proliferation of nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons (‘weapons of mass destruction’) ...” It may be seen that there is only a small slip between the cup of emergency provisions and the lip of martial law enforcement.

Mention must also be made of EO 13083 which Clinton issued in May 1998 and which in effect is intended to enable the Federal State to take over all powers of state and to assume most of the attributions of the other two branches of government “in case of need”. That provision was justified by the White House on the grounds of “federalism” but raised vast opposition, despite the President’s attempt to avoid attracting attention. Under pressure from many quarters, he suspended it on August 5, 1998.

It is also significant that the US government has been able to justify the maintenance of a state of emergency by invoking the threats posed by a succession of terrorist states, to wit Iran, Libya, Iraq, Yugoslavia, and by a variety of foreign drug-dealers and freedom fighters. One cannot escape the conclusion that the American Executive sees in the indefinite extension of that status a convenient premise for the immediate promulgation of an authoritarian dispensation, should that become advisable “in the interest of national security”. Up to now, the USA has been living under as many as eleven simultaneous national emergencies at one time.

Finally it must be pointed out that the nature of the threat or challenge that could trigger the imposition of an authoritarian presidential rule on the country is nowhere defined. Thus a major financial crisis, a giant computer-breakdown caused by the Y2K effect or a large-scale terrorist hit on a financial, military or industrial centre could technically provide a good enough reason to suspend civil liberties and take control of the nation’s infrastructure.

Without necessarily sharing the prejudices of many Right Wing Republicans against him, it must be admitted that Clinton has shown, since he came to office and even before, an extraordinary ambition and an almost worrisome desire for power. Many of Bill Clinton’s sympathisers were dismayed by his absolute refusal to resign, no matter how embarrassing the financial or sexual scandals against him. In his situation, most of his predecessors would have been relieved to step down, but he obviously has a different frame of mind.

In a nutshell, we will try to review the various practical dispositions adopted by the military and security forces of the USA to implement the strategies devised by the Executive. To go into any great details would require exceeding the scope of this paper whose aim is to demonstrate that the Government of the United States is willing, in the name of national security and national interest to adopt illegal and extra-constitutional measures in order to enforce its decisions at home and abroad.

It is well-known that the US Forces of the three services and of the Marine Corps are training for urban warfare possibly to be waged in American cities; for this purpose, exercises and manoeuvres have been carried out during the last few years in some metropolitan centres. All these preparations are conducted under the MACDIS (Military Assistance for Civil Disturbance) programme, issued on February 4, 1994 as DODD 3025.12 which has also led to the repositioning of vast stores of armaments, food rations and other supplies in various secret locations scattered throughout the country, specifically in order to deal with insurgency-type situations.

The Department of Defence's Civil Disturbance Plan is code named "Garden Plot" as part of the overall anti-insurrectional sections of the same department's OPLAN; it entails the deployment of special forces and other military units throughout the country. Advance teams and sophisticated equipment have been installed or reinforced in fifty-two cities on US territory in the last two years. Test-case scenarios of heavy-handed interventions by special forces against religious or political dissident groups have been enacted on several occasions as in Waco, Texas, when Federal marshalls attacked and destroyed the Davidian Commune of David Koresh in 1993. The policy is broadly the same, whether the perceived "rogue element" is in Afghanistan or on the North American continent. New preparatory measures are being adopted to respond to "domestic attacks with weapons of mass destruction" as announced by Secretary William Cohen in March of this year, noting that "the front lines are no longer overseas". It is obvious that the repeated assertion by the US government that NBC (nuclear, biological and chemical) terrorist attacks — using weapons that have already been smuggled into the country — may be imminent, fosters an atmosphere of paranoia.

A very important component of the "Garden Plot" programme is that it empowers Washington to readily use military force in sensitive regions such as Eastern Europe, in particular and possibly against Russia, if a local government

in a former member-nation of the Soviet Union calls for help or simply if the Pentagon decides that such an intervention is warranted. It is also significant that since 1996, the members of many Marine and other Special Forces units were asked to fill questionnaires to find out if they would be ready to operate against (and fire on) American citizens at home, if ordered to do so. The obvious object of these surveys is to identify the personnel that can be relied on.

OPLAN's definition of "civil disturbance" is rather disturbingly broad, as it singles out as targets of "Garden Plot" operations "resistance groups, religious organisations or other persons considered to be non-conformists", allowing the executive the exclusive authority to define the enemies that should be

**A very important component of the "Garden Plot" programme is that it empowers Washington to readily use military force in sensitive regions such as Eastern Europe, in particular and possibly against Russia, if a local government in a former member-nation of the Soviet Union calls for help.**

eliminated within the country and abroad. And we see that Washington is resorting with increasing frequency to the "wild west" device of putting huge prices on the heads of suspects of any nationality it wishes to arrest. Unfortunately, such methods only contribute to making the world gradually more rebellious and dangerous because they feed the vicious circle of violence and high-handed, unlawful repression in which

the current administration seems to find some satisfaction, perhaps because it provides ready excuses for the enlargement of the scope of its powers in time of danger.

#### CONCLUSIONS

The United States is torn as is often the case with imperial powers that base their ascendancy on ideals hovering between the messianic tradition of their polity and the exigencies and conveniences of "real politik". While on the one hand missionary crusading for capitalism, individual freedom and competitive consumerism is an essential part of the country's traditional vocation; on the other, the cynicism of international relations and the lure of

power and wealth determine the policies of the government, acting in symbiosis with the “trans-national” corporation that share many of its attributes.

As a result, American interventions and activities abroad tend to provoke suspicions and concern. The first disquieting element is the revolutionary, messianic and hence apocalyptic claim of the USA to represent the final and most perfect form of human organisation. Thus, the American public and private heralds are called by their own faith to engineer the take-over of all other (necessarily inferior and comparatively primitive) societies in order to bring about their Utopia of liberalism, their boundless enrichment (with the resulting increase in economic inequality), their unceasing and rapid technological transformation and internationalism, which mostly means the collapse of all lesser states’ borders and the ever wider opening-up to American influence. As a matter of fact, Washington promotes globalisation and trans-national interventionism outside, but remains fiercely nationalistic (and selectively protectionistic) at home.

The second misgiving stems from the discovery of the dark side of that radiant new moon: the violence, the vulgarity, the individual isolation, the esurient acquisitiveness, the reckless opportunism and the rather primitive materialism, generally inseparable from superstition, that the American socio-cultural model seems to enshrine.

In this regard, it is difficult to deny that many of the evils that the US authorities are officially pitted against, such as the arms and drug trades, are in fact closely intertwined with the nation’s polity. A number of credible testimonies backed by abundant in-depth research leads one to the conclusion that certain sectors of the “National Security Establishment” reap and utilise the proceeds of illegal transactions in narcotics and weapons, domestically and internationally to finance many of their covert and paramilitary actions worldwide. Some of that clandestine reality became apparent in the light of the investigations of the Iran-Contra affairs in the late eighties when it was leaked that Colonel Oliver North’s subversive operations in support of various guerrilla groups were partly financed by drug-deals. Despite the efforts made to prevent these embarrassing disclosures, it became obvious that the “North network” was not the result of an isolated individual initiative but fell into a much larger habitual pattern of US clandestine policy.

Depositions by former police officer, Michael Ruppert and by certain other former Special Forces officers about drug and arms-smuggling conducted

on board military planes and submarine vessels confirm the recurrent stories about the large-scale introduction of narcotics into the USA through certain restricted use of seaports and airfields like Mena in Arkansas. All those reports support the increasingly widespread suspicion that the CIA and some of its sister-agencies are far more involved in certain criminal activities of that type than the country's moral code can afford to condone.

Both inside and outside the country, there is a widespread perception that the economic and military system of the USA is disproportionately influenced by certain privileged Judeo-Christian minorities to the detriment of other sections of the population. The fundamental international policies of the country are often seen to be dictated by the interests of Israel in particular, and of the Jewish community in general, arousing, as a result, a persistent antagonism amongst Muslim and other communities. What has been described as an undemocratic imbalance has led, in the eyes of many, to an oligarchic injustice, unfortunately feeding the renascent flames of anti-semitism within America and in other parts of the world.

A clear instance of that malaise is to be found in the unrelenting and illegal military activities of the USA and Britain against Iraq, in violation of the UN charter. It is difficult to argue with the contention that Washington's obsessive determination to bomb Iraq almost daily and prolong a paralysing embargo year after year reflects Israel's regional strategic designs.

The gradual but inevitable coming to light of the less edifying facets of American power and wealth is already arousing a great deal of hostility, not entirely justified but inescapable, in the rest of the world, towards the governments and the financial industrial system of the USA. It is also making more and more Americans deeply cynical about their rulers and disillusioned with their political and economic structures. It is high time for those who wield power and authority in the country to take stock of that unpleasant situation and consult with their allies and adversaries, before an economic downturn in America generates even more resentments and conflicts, in order to relieve some of the dangerous tensions that affect the current geopolitical system.