Editorial Introduction

Arthur Piper & Maithrie White

War is a strange limbo. While the bombs rain on Baghdad as we write, while the ceaseless images of a technological war parade on screens across the globe, while we are transfixed by military and political information without content, we are asked to respond by the patriotism of silence. Everything is suspended outside the theatre of war where death is meted out to the liberated. The after sales service comes with a lifetime guarantee of democracy.

Yet for the first time in recent history, the patriotic have not been satisfied with silence. Global reaction from people of all walks of life has been powerful, angry, informed, vocalised and active. Demonstrations both before and during the war against Iraq are a salient feature in news coverage. They offer an alternative, parallel history that will sit alongside the official version of events. The "comfortable, smooth, reasonable, democratic unfreedom [of] advanced industrial civilization" that Marcuse outlined in the 1960s is now the subject of active, practical criticism – of a post-Marxian nature, of course. While no protest could stop the war, when it is over its history will be balanced between two series of event-pictures – battle and resistance. It will remain a contested war; and that is a significant if small victory.

But it is important to remember what is being contested and what is at stake. What is being contested is the right of the world's remaining military super power to take "preventive" action against those it perceives as a threat. This is a new policy position announced by the United States government in the National Strategy Report in September 2002. In a recent interview published on ZNet, the US academic Noam Chomsky said: "The new norm is 'preventive war' (notice that new norms are established only by the United States)… This is not pre-emptive war; there is a crucial difference … Pre-emptive war is a response to ongoing or imminent attack. The doctrine of preventive war is totally different; it holds that the United States – alone, since nobody else has this right – has the right to attack any country that it claims to be a potential challenge to it. So if the United States claims, on whatever grounds, that someone may sometime threaten it, then it can attack them." Chomsky concluded that the announcement of the new policy "sent shudders around the world, including through the US establishment, where, I might say, opposition to the war is unusually high. The National Strategy

Report said, in effect, that the US will rule the world by force, which is the dimension – the only dimension – in which it is supreme."

What is at stake is the potentially dire consequences for world peace that could result from such a policy. It is against the background of such an exercise of force that the battle for resources takes place in its broader context. That is partly because the war for Iraq, the battle for Baghdad, cannot be said to be a war or a battle in any true sense. When the overwhelming technological military superiority of one side over the other is as great as it is today, the event is simply an invasion. But it is an invasion that reaches to the core of this issue of *Situation Analysis:* "The Battle for Resources". Replacing the term "battle" with the word "invasion" may present a clearer perspective of both history and a possible though uncertain future. Throughout history successive invasions have been for both resources *and* sovereignty. The cold war, the world wars and the varied colonial expansions reveal consistent features of a historical process: invasion, conquest, occupation, despoiling of resources, domination and later, perhaps, revolution. Colonising and neo-colonising ventures can hardly be placed under the banner of a "battle" for there is no ongoing battle for resources. The stripping of wealth, culture, and dignity, helps create global demarcations of them/us, savage/civilised, 3rd/1st and developing/developed worlds. Has a "battle" for resources been really possible when hegemony and control is maintained through the sustenance of these ancient dichotomies? Even the invasion of Iraq was cocooned in the rhetoric of past invasions and "civilisation" has once more been pitted against "savagery". "Good" pitted against "evil" acquired historical potency through the resurrection of the weighted phrase "axis of evil".

The recent phenomenon of popular protest might supplant the ailing UN in its role as the global board of directors and resist sovereignty through direct action. The visible global uprising in the face of impending war indicates the possibility of a genuine battle both for resources and against global sovereignty. The February marches, where millions protested against war in cities around the world, possibly signify something beyond mere antiwar demonstration. As one marcher asked a *Guardian* reporter: "Is it possible that we are witnessing one of those sea-changes in political consciousness, akin to the one that abolished the transatlantic slave trade?" Who can tell? Perhaps the demonstrations reflect the failure of party politics and the rise of a more individualistic issue-based form of democracy. The refusal to accept the delivered rationale for war is perhaps one symptom of a potential for resistance beyond the war. Or perhaps, more pessimistically, the resistance will sink like water into sand once the more visible conflict has subsided.

Philip Goodchild, who argues that the predominant spirit of the age is shaped and determined by the structure of capitalism, sounds this timbre of

pessimism in the opening article of this issue of Situation Analysis. This is characterised by the conflict between economics and ecology. As the world increasingly mortgages itself to the future through its consumption of the planet's finite resources, it is creating a debt that it will be impossible to repay. Only after the inevitable collapse of the current system will there be "the possibility of human agency making a difference." He concludes: "In the meantime, political activity is merely a preparation for what is to come – and it will find its most fruitful form in the construction of embryonic alternatives to global capitalism."

Irene Gendzier charts the history of the development of US foreign policy both before and during its "war on terror" in the Middle East and its relationship to oil reserves and world energy resources. While it was written during the US build up to the ongoing war in Iraq, it incisively plots the intricate but consistent policy decisions that stretch from the late 1970s to the present historical situation.

Mary Midgley examines the metaphorical language that reveals the hidden history of our attitudes to science and nature. In questioning the de-mystifying view of nature inherent in the predominantly atomistic world picture of Western science, she asks whether a more biological, quasi-religious description of the world might be better suited to our dependence on its existing finite resources. She draws on James Lovelock's concept of *Gaia* in this specially edited extract from her recent book *Science and Poetry*.

Kevin DeLuca asks whether activists can adequately respond to "the privileging of the issue of jobs that seems to so easily defeat environmentalism, [in a way] that does not abandon wilderness". His case study of Julia "Butterfly" Hill, who lived for two years up a 1000 year-old redwood, shows how environmentalists can wage effective "imagefare" through the media to present alternative and nuanced pictures of the environment.

Johanna Gibson takes a look at how Western intellectual property law has misunderstood indigenous Australian concepts of group property, and how the law is changing in an attempt to de-commodify collective historical artefacts. While she emphasises the challenges of commercialisation in a global economy, she concludes that the 1992 Convention on Biological Diversity offers an "important opportunity for legislative recognition of indigenous interests by devising a regime through consultation that is culturally appropriate".

Husam I. Abuaisha analyses the battle for symbolic resources that is now - against the backdrop of global media - an inextricable part of the battle for material resources. Through a discourse analysis of political speeches by leading figures in the American and Israeli administrations, Abuaisha not only exposes the rhetorical and ideological devices which those administrations have in common, he also suggests the way in which the so-

called "war on terror" is targeted at those who are already suffering the most: the Iraqi and the Palestinian people. However, he also makes the important point that the "war on terror" is not simply a war of the west against the (middle) east, but that the divisions between "old" Europe and the US which have emerged over the issue of Iraq constitute an internal threat within the Western world itself.

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