

**PEACEWORK**

Timor. This former Portuguese colony was under a UN trusteeship for two years between the withdrawal of Indonesian occupation forces and the establishment of an independent, democratically elected government last year. While much smaller than Iraq, East Timor in many ways presented an even more formidable challenge than Iraq: It is one of the poorest countries in the world, one-third of its population lost their lives in the initial Indonesian invasion and occupation in the late 1970s, and much of the country's infrastructure was destroyed in a scorched-earth policy by Indonesian occupation forces and their East Timorese collaborators as they withdrew in September 2000. Despite some logistical problems, the UN operation in East Timor has widely been hailed as a major success and the new East Timorese government has emerged as a strong and democratic US ally.

Should the Bush administration decide it does not want any Americans to stay in Iraq under UN command, it could simply withdraw US forces and not contribute to the peacekeeping operations. While the United States is indispensable in certain kinds of military operations, such as those requiring rapid power projection, there are more than adequate forces available for deployment in Iraq from other UN member states for the peacekeeping and administrative operations necessary to maintain order and oversee the transition to a democratic government. There are quite a few countries, including major Western European allies, which are currently unwilling to contribute troops under what they see as an illegal US occupation, that would be quite ready to submit forces under a legitimate UN operation.

4. Such a campaign is winnable.

Public opinion polls published dur-

ing the first week of July indicate that 60% of the American public believes that the United Nations should take leadership in post-war Iraq. Not surprisingly, there is strong support from liberals who have traditionally been skeptical of US unilateralism and have supported a stronger role for the United Nations. However, there is also strong support from some moderates and conservatives who believe that there should be greater burden-sharing in the cause of nation-building and that it should not primarily be Americans who sacrifice lives and resources to bring greater freedom and stability to Iraq.

This could finally lead Democratic members of Congress and presidential aspirants, who have largely supported the US invasion and occupation of Iraq, to distance themselves from the policies of the Bush administration and join the majority of Americans who support giving the United Nations the leading role in Iraq. The Bush administration has been able to get away with its policies toward Iraq up to this point because only smaller parties, like the Greens and Libertarians, have been willing to voice their opposition. With the Democrats joining the call for turning over administration and peacekeeping to the United Nations, the Bush administration would find itself far more isolated politically than it has been up until now.

The Bush administration is already finding that popular support for its policies in post-invasion Iraq is significantly



US troops, Baghdad © Rick McDonald and Mary Trotochaud

less than during the actual invasion itself, particularly given the growing realization by the American public that they were misled regarding the threat Saddam Hussein's regime posed to the United States and the world. There are already concerns among Republican leaders about facing an election year with American soldiers coming home from Iraq in body bags week after week with no clear end in sight.

Bush administration officials may decide that fighting off reasonable proposals for UN administration may call into question their last remaining credible rationalization for the invasion: the desire to bring stability and democracy to Iraq. In insisting that the United States, not the international community, has the right to determine the future of Iraq, it would only increase uncharitable speculation regarding the actual US motivation for controlling that oil-rich country. The administration may find that it would be in its favor to cut its losses and acquiesce to domestic and international pressure. ☐

## The New Lords of Africa

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Warlords. They have a bad name but not all they do is bad. Their basic premise is that a good gun is better than a good law. Then there is the horsetrading: you give me oil, I will give you aid for AIDS

treatment; horsetrading can work when bureaucrats fail. Some warlords are grubby, others are imperial: as in Liberia, the warlord can descend from the heavens and declare it's time for the old order to go. Then there is the domestic warlord: the cowboy or the caudillo, always riding something—a horse, a tank—to an unknown destination.

Although warlordism is not new, it has had to adjust to new settings, like interna-

tional treaties and whatnot. And it has had to become far more complex and indirect in its horsetrading. Bush is becoming a warlord who can handle it all. Two cases come to mind. One is the current visit to Africa, where Bush wants access to oil and the installation of US military bases and troops to make the region secure against terrorism. The second is the Bush administration's handling of the World Trade Organisation Doha declaration giving poor

countries the right to override pharmaceutical patents in public health emergencies. At the top of the list for horsetrading in Africa are oil and military bases or, at the least, troop stations. In return, Bush is offering aid for AIDS victims and enhanced access to US markets. This is horsetrading at its best. The fine print on the offer of US market access has some notable features: the benefits for African producers are actually neutralised by the distortions resulting from US government subsidies to its farmers; these subsidies are larger than many African economies, and they are three times as large as total US aid to Africa as a whole.

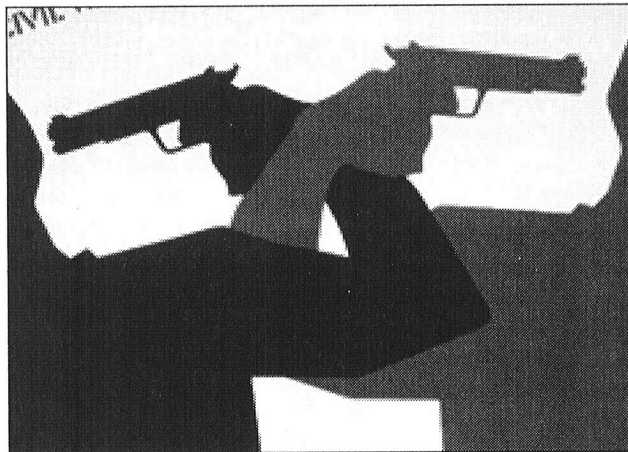
US investment in oil production is being presented as a tool for development. This is not the first time this has happened, so we have some evidence on the matter. Again, the fine print does not look as good as the headlines. Oil has been a devastating fact for development in Africa: it has concentrated wealth and produced disincentives for any other type of development. Nor has it helped democracy, since entrenched elites lose much more than office if they lose control over the government. The economic shadow effect of oil is largely negative, and it all winds up creating more poverty. Oil-rich Nigeria and its 100m poor are exhibit number one.

What does the US get out of it? Today the US relies on Africa for 15% of its oil imports. The estimates are that by 2005 this will rise to between 20% and 25% of US oil imports. To this we should add the high quality of some of the African oil and the better transport distance from the Atlantic coast compared to the Middle East. Finally, if the US can also set up military bases and station troops to make sure everything is quiet, even if not peaceful, then we have a nice military-economic linkage.

One might say that Africa is special—that is, especially vulnerable—when it is horsetrading with imperial warlords. But we see similarly crafted fine print if we go digging into some of the WTO agreements that supposedly are victories for the interests of people in the global south. It also tells us something about why aid for AIDS might be the one item in the horsetrading that might actually bring benefits to Africa—and it has nothing to do with the noblesse oblige of imperial warlords.

Every time countries of the global south have politically organised to see some of their interests reflected in the WTO declarations, the work of elaborating the details takes a peculiar turn. Sheer power trumps politics. The only time that politics can trump sheer power is when larger sectors of global civil society get involved in the fray, and do so with very well-defined goals in mind. Dissecting the case of the WTO Doha declaration illuminates each of these issues.

Global south countries did organise themselves effectively at the Doha meetings to resist some of the more damaging



**Civil War, Lex Drewinski, Silkscreen, 1997, Berlin, Germany. Courtesy of Center for the Study of Political Graphics <[www.politicalgraphics.org](http://www.politicalgraphics.org)>**

resolutions proposed by the global north. They succeeded in introducing the notion of options to override patents on pharmaceuticals. In the context of WTO and intellectual property rights this is almost subversive of global capitalism and “morally” wrong because it will damage the public collective interest of both poor and rich in supporting costly research. This was an important victory, especially since countries such as Brazil, India and Jordan have formidable pharmaceutical capabilities and are able generically to produce many of the drugs now under patent.

There was a second victory for the global south at the meeting. The WTO recognised that some of the poorer countries lack the resources to produce these medicines. Paragraph 6 of the Doha declaration is quite clear on this. These were the headlines.

But the horsetrading started soon after. The WTO designed a list of “approved diseases” that justify overriding patents on pharmaceuticals crucial for countries lacking the capabilities for generic production.

The list turns out to exclude just about all major diseases for which the global north firms have developed medicines. Left on the list are mostly diseases for which these firms have not—one is tempted to insert “bothered to”—develop medicines or for which treatment is so old as to be off-patent. Dr Mary Moran of Médecins Sans Frontières reports that almost all of the major causes of mortality and morbidity in Africa for which patented western drugs exist have been excluded from the list of drugs poor countries can acquire outside the intellectual property rights framework.

There is one exception to these defeats: drugs for treating HIV/AIDS. There are two important political lessons to be learnt from this case. Worldwide NGO mobilisation played a crucial role in making the large pharmaceuticals desist in their efforts to prevent poor countries from importing the far cheaper generically produced HIV/AIDS drugs. What matters politically is that global protests by civil society helped poor countries get what they needed from the most powerful countries in the WTO: overriding the patents of AIDS treatments held by the most powerful corporations in the world. This success is particularly significant as it is one of the few serious diseases that were not eliminated from the list.

The second lesson is that warlords will not simply leave it at this. The latest war the US is now preparing is a major attack on the WTO itself: they don’t want it any more. Another attack is targeted against “progressive” NGOs and their growing influence. Two components illustrate the matter. The American Enterprise Institute, an influential thinktank closely associated with the Bush administration, launched the attack with a conference in Washington co-sponsored by the Australian right-wing thinktank, the Institute of Public Affairs. At least 42 senior representatives of the Bush administration attended. Secondly, the US Agency for International Development is now moving to grant more contracts to private firms instead of NGOs.

Warlords can go along with laws and international treaties if these do not interfere. When they do interfere, the horsetrading begins. And when this is not enough, well, there are always those guns. ☪