

Niwano Peace Foundation  
Commemorative address on receiving 20<sup>th</sup> Niwano Peace Prize  
Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> May 2003

*Iraq, War and Peace*  
**Dr Priscilla Elworthy, director, Oxford Research Group**

**I am deeply honoured by this award. I accept it in the name of those risking their lives for peace as the world reels from a terrible war. Although I would prefer to devote all my time to discussing some of the great current issues of peace, it is essential first to ask what we can learn from the Iraq crisis. We can learn some heartening things that I'll come to later, but first I want to outline four hard issues that need attention, wisdom and action now.**

**1. Alternative courses of action were not exhausted before the war began.** The leadership in the US and UK were not willing to look seriously at alternatives to military intervention in Iraq. As just one example, five American church leaders put to Tony Blair and George Bush a 'third way' between war and inaction. The plan included the pursuit of coercive disarmament with intensified inspections backed by a UN mandated multi-national force; the indictment of Saddam Hussein for his crimes against humanity; immediate massive humanitarian efforts enforced through the UN and NGOs for the Iraqi people; and commitment to implementing the 'roadmap' to peace in the Middle East, with a clear timetable guaranteeing a Palestinian state and a secure Israel by 2005.

I went to Baghdad in January of this year, talked to cabinet ministers, came back with an outline of a possible way out of the crisis, discussed this with insiders in Washington and London, and put forward a detailed proposal<sup>1</sup>. This went to Tony Blair, then to the British media and to the US, and no-one published it except the Guardian and the Quakers in the UK. Colleagues in institutes in various countries came up with well-crafted proposals for a non-violent way through the crisis, and got nowhere either in quiet talks with the protagonists or with the media. Options were limited to existing avenues, to extending the role of the inspectors, and mainly focussed on obtaining a UN resolution. It is as though, as soon as troops began to be deployed in autumn 2002, we allowed ourselves to become fixated with one set of options and ceased to be capable of lateral thinking. This agenda was set by a longer term plan.

**2. The issue of Iraq can only be clearly understood when set in context of the *Project for a New American Century*.**<sup>2</sup> When I first read about it in the mid1990s, I thought it was simply a piece of neo-conservative geo-political megalomania, and I have been too long in the business of international security to believe in conspiracy theories. But this is not a theory, it is a fact and it is happening now. It is a global strategic concept to ensure that every single major political centre in Eurasia understands that its relationship with the United States is more important than its relationship with any other political centre. In other words, that each is attached separately by a spoke to the American hub, and US global primacy is secured.

Those who originally designed the project – Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, Paul Wolfowitz, John Bolton and others - now occupy the main positions of power in the US administration. The concept

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<sup>1</sup> See *Costed Proposal for Iraq*, [www.oxfordresearchgroup.org.uk](http://www.oxfordresearchgroup.org.uk)

<sup>2</sup> [www.newamericancentury.org](http://www.newamericancentury.org)

works closely with US multi-nationals and relies on pre-eminent US military power, hence the power projection of Full Spectrum Dominance described on various US military websites. Here's the website of US Space Command: "*dominating the space dimension of military operations to protect US interests and investment. Integrating Space Forces into warfighting capabilities across the full spectrum of conflict.*"<sup>3</sup>

The policy has resulted in efforts to prevent a western European sphere of influence from Germany to Russia, or towards the Middle East, hence US hostility to any EU Security and Defence Policy. It also requires control of the belt of energy-rich states running East from Moldova through the Caucasus and the Caspian to the Chinese border. The intention is to extend the circle of US military bases around China for 'use in the future' since the liberalisation of the vast Chinese market is considered the endgame. Currently there are 13 known bases in this area, with 5 reported bases and 6 potential bases, a map of which is available<sup>4</sup>. President Bush seems to have absorbed the entire expansive strategy. For him regime change in Iraq is not the end, it is just the beginning.

There are nevertheless some significant voices in the US raising concern. Senator Robert Byrd, the oldest and longest serving US Congressman, said on 19 March 2003:

*"Instead of reasoning with those with whom we disagree, we demand obedience or threaten recrimination. Instead of isolating Saddam Hussein, we seem to have isolated ourselves. We proclaim a new doctrine of pre-emption which is understood by few and feared by many. We say that the United States has the right to turn its firepower on any corner of the globe which might be suspect in the war on terrorism. We assert that right without the sanction of any international body. As a result, the world has become a much more dangerous place."*

In order to understand the magnitude of these plans in context of the rest of the world, we need to be aware of the expenditure involved. President Bush has requested Congress to allocate an initial total of US\$62billion to be spent on military action in Iraq, in addition to US\$8bn for reconstruction. The Pentagon had initially requested US\$95bn and say that the war could cost twice what the President has requested. Laurence Meyer, former governor of the US Federal Reserve Board, suggests that this may merely be the first payment in a commitment lasting ten years requiring approximately US\$75bn a year. The US is therefore contemplating a project that could cost US\$750bn over a decade.

We must compare this to the costs of building international security in other ways. In the year 2000, world leaders estimated that it would require between US\$25bn and US\$35bn annually to raise levels of health and welfare in Africa to Western standards.<sup>5</sup> UNESCO estimate that all the world's children could be educated if we were to spend \$7bn per annum for ten years.<sup>6</sup> Clear water and sanitation could be provided for everyone in the world for \$9bn annually.<sup>7</sup> HIV and AIDS now

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<sup>3</sup> [www.spacecom.mil](http://www.spacecom.mil)

<sup>4</sup> For a map of these bases, see *A Never-Ending War?* by Paul Rogers and Scilla Elworthy, Oxford Research Group, March 2002.

<sup>5</sup> Henry Porter, *The Observer*, 30<sup>th</sup> March 2003, p8

<sup>6</sup> UNESCO *Facts and Figures 2000*

<sup>7</sup> United Nations Development Programme, Human Development Report 1998 <http://hdr.undp.org/reports>

claim 5,500 lives a day around the world – more than the Black Death<sup>8</sup> - and twelve million children in Africa have already been orphaned by the disease<sup>9</sup>. Kofi Annan has called for \$10bn annually to address the AIDS epidemic<sup>10</sup>.

**3. A convincing case still has to be made as to how a brutish dictator who has established an all-powerful regime can be dislodged without the use of force.** The Iraqi people have been terrorised by Saddam Hussein for 22 years through torture, executions, disappearances, detention without trial and ethnic cleansing of Kurds and Shias. Western governments attempted to dislodge Hussein from within, by supporting and arming opposition groups. The result was that these groups fought each other rather than the regime

A systematic non-military route was not tried. With sufficient support from western governments and western media, a ‘people power’ campaign of civilian resistance would have been possible, using lessons learned in the Velvet Revolution in Eastern Europe and the peoples’ uprising in the Philippines in the 1980s. This would include funding satellite television and radio stations, to break Saddam Hussein’s control of the media and give the Iraqi opposition a means to mobilise resistance.

Rather than inspecting only for weapons of mass destruction, the UN could have brought in large numbers of inspectors to monitor civil rights reform, building on the changes the Iraqis said had already begun, namely to introduce a multi-party system and continue to abolish the laws restricting civil and political rights. Under this arrangement sanctions and the Oil-for-Food programme would have been removed, enabling ordinary Iraqis to get enough to eat and build up their infrastructure, especially medical services. The Iraqi diaspora, consisting of hundreds of thousands of professionals, could have returned to Iraq with guarantees for their safety, possibly provided by an agreement whereby any violations of their security would entail the arrest of Saddam and the immediate sequestering of oil revenues.

Commercial arrangements for the extraction and export of Iraqi oil would have returned to an open tender and bidding basis when an elected government was in place. In the meantime, negotiations with oil companies would be overseen by the UN, in an essential demonstration that the West was not interfering in Iraq in order to control oil supplies.

Such an agreement would not have included the establishment of US military bases in Iraq, but would imply the final dismantling of any remaining chemical or biological weapons in Iraq, a residual UN inspection force, and a UN resolution making clear that any return to the development or deployment of weapons of mass destruction was prohibited and that this prohibition would be enforced. This would be the prelude to negotiations for the establishment of a Middle Eastern zone free of weapons of mass destruction.

**4. My fourth observation is closely linked to the last, namely that there is as yet no language for most people, including politicians and the press, about the skills and power of nonviolence.** Whereas we all now know about endangered species or hunger or re-cycling, there is no similar

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<sup>8</sup> Henry Porter, *The Observer*, 30<sup>th</sup> March 2003, p8

<sup>9</sup> World Bank, <http://www.worldbank.org/afr/aids/>

<sup>10</sup> UNAIDS, <http://www.unaids.org/>

strategy for ordinary people to know what they can actually DO about peace. It's all still a bit vague, seen as desirable but impractical.

The first step, obviously, is to examine nonviolence, what it is and what it is not. In combat you are risking your life to kill others; in nonviolence you are risking your life (if necessary) so that no one else will be killed. This requires rigorous training and deep conviction; the effect it has on violent, cruel or angry people is more powerful than more violence. It affects them at a profound level. It is the force of Satyagraha, developed by Gandhi and entirely successful in driving the British out of India. The practitioner renounces the use of force, voluntarily and on principle, and replaces it with determination combined with compassion, combined with courage. Gandhi himself said:

*'What Satyagraha does in such cases is not to suppress reason but to free it from inertia and to establish its sovereignty over prejudice, hatred, and other baser passions. In other words, if one may paradoxically put it, it does not enslave, it compels reason to be free.'*<sup>11</sup>

This is the power Martin Luther King taught and used to vast effect in de-segregating the deep South. It is what Aung San Suu Khi used when she walked unarmed straight up to the machine guns of Burmese soldiers who had been ordered to shoot the demonstrators she led. It is what Nelson Mandela developed during 27 years in jail and used to prevent a civil war in South Africa on his release. It was the power behind the 'Velvet Revolution', which brought down the Iron Curtain.

Professor Michael Nagler, founder of the University of California Peace and Conflict Studies programme, estimates that nearly one third of the world's people have practised some form of nonviolence for the redress of grievances,

*'This is the concept of 'people power'. The idea is that the power of an aroused populace is greater than the power of the state, since the state depends on the consent and the cooperation of its citizens. And when citizens rise up, as they notoriously did in the Philippines twice in recent memory, the state is powerless to stop them. But people power is only the tip of the iceberg. The real nonviolence, in my understanding, is person power. That is, the power of the single individual.'*<sup>12</sup>

So, what do individuals do?

- Caoimhe Butterly is a 24-year-old Irish woman who went to Palestine in December 2001. She walks up to Israeli Defence Force tanks to stop them destroying Palestinian homes. She runs into the line of fire to protect civilians. She confronts soldiers to stop them shooting children, for which she herself was shot in the left thigh by the IDF.
- Fifteen years after her father was killed in the bombing of the Conservative Party Conference in 1984, Jo Berry decided to go and meet Patrick MaGee, the man who planted the bomb. She had the courage to reconcile with him. Now they work together to build bridges between those who have suffered in the troubles in N. Ireland.

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<sup>11</sup> M.K. Gandhi quoted in *The Search for a Non Violent Future*, Michael Nagler, Berkeley Hills Books, 2001 p65

<sup>12</sup> Russell Schoch *A Conversation with Michael Nagler* mnagler@igc.org

- The Rev. Eta Yamada was the head priest of the Buddhist Temple on Mount Hiei. In 1969 he organised the Movement to Light Up a Corner of the World in Japan, dedicated to building a society in which people can trust and respect each other.
- The singer Peter Gabriel founded Witness in 1992, having realised that videotaped images gave incidents impact and immediacy that words could not. He began putting cameras in the hands of local people on the frontlines of conflicts. The recording of police brutality during the marching season in N. Ireland forced a change in police policy, and Witness have provided footage as evidence to the War Crimes Tribunal in Yugoslavia.<sup>13</sup>

Even if everyone cannot carry out such remarkable work themselves, they can support those who do, through an initiative we have set up called Peace Direct, which links support groups with those on the frontline of conflict who are working non-violently to prevent killing or to re-build shattered societies<sup>14</sup>.

### **The tide of non-violence**

In practising or supporting non-violence, we are moving with a tide which I believe is flowing faster and more powerfully, albeit more quietly, than the momentum of fear-based military intervention described earlier. Over the past year we have witnessed a worldwide uprising of people questioning the very validity of war. In a huge global public conversation the world is asking: Is war legitimate? Is it illegitimate? The whole world is now having this critical and historic dialogue listening to all kinds of points of view and positions about going to war or not going to war.

Dr. Robert Muller, former assistant secretary general of the United Nations, now Chancellor emeritus of the University of Peace in Costa Rica, stunned an audience in March this year with his most positive assessment of where the world stands now regarding war and peace.

*"I'm so honoured to be here," he said. "I'm so honoured to be alive at such a miraculous time in history. I'm so moved by what's going on in our world today."*

Dr. Muller went on to say, *"Never before in the history of the world has there been a global, visible, public, viable, open dialogue and conversation about the very legitimacy of war. What will be the consequences? The costs? What might be peaceful alternatives? What kind of negotiations are we not thinking of? What are the real intentions for declaring war?"*

All of this, he noted, is taking place in the context of the United Nations Security Council, the body that was established in 1949 for exactly this purpose. He pointed out that it has taken us more than fifty years to realize that function, the real function of the U.N.

Well, for my part, I'm so honoured to be *here*. This is indeed a great honour from the Niwano Peace Foundation. I would like to accept it in the name of all those unarmed heroes and heroines, often unknown and unsung, who consciously risk and give their lives for people they may not even know. I say today that we respect their courage and we know their power. May I conclude with a quotation from the Dalai Lama:

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<sup>13</sup> This and other stories are recounted in *War Prevention Works, 50 stories of people resolving conflict* Oxford Research Group, 2001.

<sup>14</sup> See website [www.peacedirect.org](http://www.peacedirect.org)

*"A central teaching of most spiritual traditions is – what you wish to experience– provide for another. Look to see now what it is you wish to experience in your life and in the world; then see if there is another for whom you may be the source of that.*

*If you wish to experience peace – provide peace for another. If you wish to know that you are safe, cause others to know that they are safe.*

*If you wish to better understand seemingly incomprehensible things; help another to better understand.*

*If you wish to heal your own sadness or anger; seek to heal the sadness or anger of another.*

*Those others are watching for you now. They are looking to you for guidance, for help, for courage, for strength, for understanding and for assurance at this hour. Most of all - they are looking to you for love."*