

► US used a 12-year-old Security Council resolution to justify war in Iraq, the Chinese are working with the Russians to ensure that a new resolution on Iran states that military intervention is not an option.

"We learnt our lesson from what happened in Iraq, and that's why we want to be very clear," said a Chinese diplomat at the UN last week, quoted in the *Washington Post*.

China and Russia already insisted that the UN Security Council resolution on North Korea cited Article 41 of Chapter 7 of the UN Charter, explicitly ruling out military force. The Chinese have played the role of honest broker between the US and North Korea, even persuading the Americans to talk directly to the North Koreans last week. Now the US has agreed to discuss banking sanctions in new six-party talks on the North Korean nuclear programme, while before

they said their decision to freeze Pyongyang's accounts in a Macau bank was non-negotiable.

China cannot rival US military strength of course, and the Chinese economy is subject to downturns like any other. Political unrest or environmental pressure could seriously slow or even reverse its high growth rates. But the Africa summit was an example of how China is using its "soft power" – the ability to gain support by cultural and political influence – while western powers are finding it ever harder to push their ideology that democracy is the only valid system of government.

Denouncing China for welcoming abusive autocrats such as Zimbabwe's Robert Mugabe, or the ruling clique in Sudan, makes no difference. The Chinese have the money and the commitment, and nothing can stop them. Enlightened diplomats at Britain's Department for

International Development are now trying to engage China on development in Africa, but the challenge is much wider.

Around the world, people can see that China's prescription for prosperity, which sacrifices individual rights and democracy for rapid growth, is working, because millions of Chinese people have better lives than before. It may not work forever, but the Chinese experience disproves the mantra that capitalism can flourish only in a democracy.

Those of us who value freedom of speech, and watch aghast as the Chinese block internet sites and lock up lawyers defending peasants and people with Aids, have to acknowledge that we are the ones on the back foot, needing new arguments and a new approach. ●

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Beliefs

A new McCarthy era dawns in America

Ziauddin Sardar



My friend Vinay Lal is a formidable intellect. An old-fashioned polymath, he teaches South Asian history at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). Always outspoken, Vinay relishes a good argument and marshals his case to devastating effect. After an hour in his company, I feel as if I have been hit by an intellectual Hurricane Katrina. So it does not surprise me to discover that he is being targeted by neoconservative jingoists who see him as highly dangerous.

To begin with, Vinay was put on a list of "Dirty Thirty" who were said to have entered into an "unholy alliance" with "radical Muslim students and a pliant administration" to turn UCLA into "a major organising centre for opposition to the war on terror". This was the outcome of a website set up by a handful of UCLA's alumni who invited students to spy on their professors and report their transgressions for a reward of \$100.

The student who earned his reward, the story goes, bumped into Vinay one day as he was leaving his office. "I'm looking for some Republican students," he said. "Do you know any?" My friend laughed. "Republicans are not part of my life," he replied. "You knocked on the wrong door." That, and a few articles he had written, was enough to have Vinay blacklisted, and charged with debasing education, politicising the classroom and indoctrinating the students.

Within a few months, Vinay appeared in the pages of *The Professors: the 101 most dangerous academics in America* (Regency Publishing), a list of "terrorists, racists and communists", who, as the jacket informs us, "want to kill white people", "support Osama Bin Laden",

"lament the demise of the Soviet Union", "defend paedophilia" and "advocate the killing of ordinary people". The book, written by the neoconservative ideologue David Horowitz, is basically an anthology of left-leaning academics, including such noted scholars as Howard Zinn, Noam Chomsky and Paul Ehrlich. Since its publication, numerous academics have been hounded out.

American universities are not renowned as sites of dissent. The campuses have hardly seen any opposition to the passage of the Patriot Act, the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, American detention camps, the practice of rendition, endorsement of torture by the Bush administration, and the increasing infringements of civil rights. In contrast, the corporate and right-wing takeover of American universities has continued apace, and is seldom critiqued, even by those on the left. Notice how many right-wing academics now occupy the corridors of power, whether at the White House, in the State Department, or in think-tanks. American universities, it seems to me, are dominated by right-wing zealots.

The university, however, still remains one of the few institutions in the US where a modicum of dissent can be articulated. This is precisely

why neo-cons such as Horowitz and Daniel Pipes, the former CIA agent who runs the website Campus Watch, are attacking the professoriate. The aim, says Vinay, is to "turn the American university into the ideological wing of the national security state".

What I find particularly insidious about Horowitz, Pipes and their ilk is the fact that their dastardly deeds are being done in the name of academic freedom. The Bill of Rights is being invoked to justify the enforcement of a political orthodoxy that, as Vinay says, has "gorged itself on the idea that American conceptions of freedom represent the apotheosis of human civilisation". The end result is an atmosphere in American universities of a witch-hunt reminiscent of the McCarthy era. Even giving a student a translation of the Koran can get you fired.

But much worse is yet to come. A consortium of major universities is developing software that automatically monitors "negative opinion" and informs the authorities, which in this case is the Homeland Security Department, the backer of the project. "Sentiment analysis", as it is called, has already begun at Cornell, Pittsburgh and Utah universities. Hundred of articles by American academics on such topics as President Bush, "axis of evil", Guantanamo Bay and global warming are being analysed. It doesn't matter where you publish – in the US or abroad, on the web or a newsletter – your negative, unAmerican views will be discovered. And the agents of Homeland Security will come knocking in the middle of the night on your academic door. ●
Vinay Lal's "Empire of Knowledge" is published by Pluto Press (£18.99)

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