

Crisis of the Globalist Project and the New Economics of George W Bush

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July 15, 2003

(Prepared for the McPlanet Conference, Berlin, June 27, 2002. The original version of this piece will appear in the Fall issue of New Labor Forum.)

"Capitalism constantly erodes man and woman's being-in-nature (creature) and being-in-society (citizen) and, even as it drains them of life energy as workers, it moulds their consciousness around one role: that of consumer. Capitalism has many "laws of motion," but one of the most destructive as far as the environment goes is Say's law, which is that supply creates its own demand. Capitalism is a demand-creating machine that transforms living nature into dead commodities, natural wealth into dead capital."

Walden Bello, McPlanet Conference, Berlin, 27-29 June 2003

I would like to thank the Heinrich Boll Foundation, ATTAC Germany, and all the other organizers of this conference for inviting me to this very important meeting. What I would like to do in this introductory talk is to discuss the key elements of the global conjuncture. I would like to paint, in broad strokes, the global political and economic context in which we must situate our environmental activism.

Let me begin by taking you back to 1995, the year the World Trade Organization was born. The offspring of eight years of negotiations, the WTO was hailed in the establishment press as the gem of global economic governance in the era of globalization. The nearly 20 trade agreements that underpinned the WTO were presented as comprising a set of multilateral rules that would eliminate power and coercion from trade relations by subjecting both the powerful and the weak to a common set of rules backed by an effective enforcement apparatus. The WTO was a landmark, declared George Soros, because it was the only supranational body to which the world's most powerful economy, United States, would submit itself. In the WTO, it was claimed, the powerful United States and lowly Rwanda had exactly the same number of votes: one.

Triumphalism was the note sounded during the First Ministerial of the WTO in Singapore in November 1996, with the WTO, International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Bank issuing their famous declaration saying that the task of the future was the challenge now lay in making their policies of global trade, finance, and development "coherent" so as to lay the basis for global prosperity.

THE CRISIS OF THE GLOBALIST PROJECT

By the beginning of 2003, the triumphalism was gone. As the fifth Ministerial of the WTO approaches, the organization is in gridlock. A new agreement on agriculture is nowhere in sight as the US and the European Union stoutly defend their multibillion dollar subsidies. Brussels is on the verge of imposing sanctions on Washington for

maintaining tax breaks for exporters that have been found to be in violation of WTO rules, while Washington has threatened to file a case with the WTO against the EU's de facto moratorium against genetically modified foods. Developing countries, some once hopeful that the WTO would in fact bring more equity to global trade, unanimously agree that most of what they have reaped from WTO membership are costs, not benefits. They are dead set against opening their markets any further, except under coercion and intimidation. Instead of heralding a new round of global trade liberalization, the Cancun ministerial is likely to announce a stalemate.

The context for understanding this stalemate at the WTO is the crisis of the globalist project--the main achievement of which was the establishment of the WTO--and the emergence of unilateralism as the main feature of US foreign policy.

But first, some notes on globalization and the globalist project.

Globalization is the accelerated integration of capital, production, and markets globally, a process driven by the logic of corporate profitability.

Globalization has had two phases: the first lasting from the early 19th century till the outbreak of the First World War in 1914; the second from the early 1980s until today. The intervening period was marked by the dominance of national capitalist economies characterized by a significant degree of state intervention and an international economy with strong constraints on trade and capital flows. These domestic and international constraints on the market, which were produced by the dynamics of class conflict internally and inter-capitalist competition internationally, were portrayed by the neoliberals as having caused distortions that collectively accounted for the stagnation of the capitalist economies and the global economy in the late seventies and early eighties.

As in the first phase of globalization, the second phase was marked by the coming to hegemony of the ideology of neoliberalism, which focused on "liberating the market" via accelerated privatization, deregulation, and trade liberalization. There were, broadly, two versions of neoliberal ideology—a "hard" Thatcher-Reagan version and a "soft" Blair-Soros version (globalization with "safety nets.") But underlying both approaches was unleashing market forces and removing or eroding constraints imposed on transnational firms by labor, the state, and society.

THREE MOMENTS OF THE CRISIS OF GLOBALIZATION

There have been three moments in the deepening crisis of the globalist project. The first was the Asian financial crisis of 1997. This event, which laid low the proud "tigers" of East Asia, revealed that one of the key tenets of the globalization—the liberalization of the capital account to promote freer flows of capital, especially finance or speculative capital -- could be profoundly destabilizing. The Asian financial crisis was, in fact, shown to be merely the latest of at least eight major financial crises since the liberalization of global financial flows began in the late seventies. How profoundly destabilizing capital market liberalization could be was shown when, in just a few weeks'

time, one million people in Thailand and 21 million in Indonesia were pushed below the poverty line.

The Asian financial crisis was the “Stalingrad” of the IMF, the prime global agent of liberalized capital flows. Its record in the ambitious enterprise of subjecting some 100 developing and transitional economies to “structural adjustment” was revisited, and facts that had been pointed out by such agencies as the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) as early as the late eighties now assumed the status of realities. Structural adjustment programs designed to accelerate deregulation, trade liberalization, and privatization had almost everywhere institutionalized stagnation, worsened poverty, and increased inequality.

A paradigm is really in crisis when its best practitioners desert it, as Thomas Kuhn pointed out in his classic *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, and something akin to what happened during the crisis of the Copernican paradigm in physics occurred in neoclassical economics shortly after the Asian financial crisis, with key intellectuals leaving the fold--among them Jeffrey Sachs, noted earlier for his advocacy of “free market” shock treatment in Eastern Europe in the early 1990s; Joseph Stiglitz, former chief economist of the World Bank; Columbia Professor Jagdish Bhagwati, who called for global controls on capital flows; and financier George Soros, who condemned the lack of controls in the global financial system that had enriched him.

The second moment of the crisis of the globalist project was the collapse of the third ministerial of the WTO in Seattle in December 1999. Seattle was the fatal intersection of three streams of discontent and conflict that had been building for sometime:

- Developing countries resented the inequities of the Uruguay Round agreements that they felt compelled to sign in 1995.
- Massive popular opposition to the WTO emerged globally from myriad sectors of global civil society, including farmers, fisherfolk, labor unionists, and environmentalists. By posing a threat to the well being of each sector in many of its agreements, the WTO managed to unite global civil society against it.
- There were unresolved trade conflicts between the EU and the US, especially in agriculture, which had been simply papered over by the Uruguay Round agreement.

These three volatile elements combined to create the explosion in Seattle, with the developing countries rebelling against Northern diktat at the Seattle Convention Center, 50,000 people massing militantly in the streets, and differences preventing the EU and US from acting in concert to salvage the ministerial. In a moment of lucidity right after the Seattle debacle, British Secretary of State Stephen Byers captured the essence of the crisis: “[T]he WTO will not be able to continue in its present form. There has to be fundamental and radical change in order for it to meet the needs and aspirations of all 134 of its members.”

The third moment of the crisis was the collapse of the stock market and the end of the Clinton boom. This was not just the bursting of the bubble but a rude reassertion of the classical capitalist crisis of overproduction, the main manifestation of which was massive overcapacity. Prior to the crash, corporate profits in the US had not grown since 1997. This was related to overcapacity in the industrial sector, the most glaring example being seen in the troubled telecommunications sector, where only 2.5 per cent of installed capacity globally was being utilized. The stagnation of the real economy led to capital being shifted to the financial sector, resulting in the dizzying rise in share values. But since profitability in the financial sector cannot deviate too far from the profitability of the real economy, a collapse of stock values was inevitable, and this occurred in March 2001, leading to the prolonged stagnation and the onset of deflation.

There is probably a broader structural reason for the length of the current stagnation or deflation and its constant teetering at the edge of recession. This may be, as a number of economists have stated, that we are at the tail end of the famous "Kondratieff Cycle." Advanced by the Russian economist Nikolai Kondratieff, this theory suggests that the progress of global capitalism is marked not only by short-term business cycles but also by long-term "supercycles." Kondratieff cycles are roughly fifty to sixty-year long waves. The upward curve of the Kondratieff cycle is marked by the intensive exploitation of new technologies, followed by a crest as technological exploitation matures, then a downward curve as the old technologies produce diminishing returns while new technologies are still in an experimental stage in terms of profitable exploitation, and finally a trough or prolonged deflationary period.

The trough of the last wave was in the 1930s and 1940s, a period marked by the Great Depression and World War II. The ascent of the current wave began in the 1950s and the crest was reached in the 1980s and 1990s. The profitable exploitation of the postwar advances in the key energy, automobile, petrochemical, and manufacturing industries ended while that of information technology was still at a relatively early stage. From this perspective, the "New Economy" of the late 1990s was not a transcendence of the business cycle, as many economists believed it to be, but the last glorious phase of the current supercycle before the descent into prolonged deflation. In other words, the uniqueness of the current conjuncture lies in the fact that the downward curve of the current short-term cycle coincides with the move into descent of the Kondratieff supercycle. To use the words of another famous economist, Joseph Schumpeter, the global economy appears to be headed for a prolonged period of "creative destruction."

ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS AND CAPITALIST LEGITIMACY

I have been talking about moments or conjunctural crystallizations of the crisis of the globalization project. These moments were manifestations of fundamental conflicts or contradictions that were unfolding unevenly over time. A central smoldering contradiction was that between globalization and the environment. I would now want to devote a few words to how the environmental crisis has proven to be a central factor unravelling the legitimacy of the globalization project, indeed of capitalism as a mode of economic organization itself.

Both before and after the World Summit on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, the sense was that while the world environmental situation was worsening, consciousness of this fact was leading to the creation of the global institutional and legal mechanisms to deal with the problem. The Rio Summit's agreeing on Agenda 21, a global program for environmental improvement that would have counterpart country programs, seemed to mark a major step forward in terms of global cooperation.

The late eighties and early nineties were, moreover, a period when a number of multilateral environmental agreements were inked and appeared to be making headway in reversing the global environmental crisis, like the Montreal Protocol putting controls on the production of CFCs to preserve ozone layer, and the CITES Treaty putting tough controls on trade in endangered species. Also, with the coming to power of Bill Clinton and Al Gore in 1992, an environmentally correct administration seemed to be in place.

Several moves stalemated this process.

First, the establishment of the WTO. As Ralph Nader put it, the WTO placed corporate trade "uber alles," meaning practically all dimensions of economic and social life except for national security. In other words, laws protecting natural resources and the environment needed to be changed if they were seen as imposing standards that were seen as unfair to foreign trading interests. In a series of landmark cases—the tuna-dolphin case between the US and Mexico, the turtle-shrimp controversy pitting the US and Asian countries—it seemed that national environmental laws were being subordinated to free trade. The thrust seemed to be to bring environmental protections in different countries to the lowest common denominator rather than to bring them up to the highest standards.

Second, the aggressive push by corporations to exploit advanced food technology and biotechnology alarmed environmentalists and citizenries all over. The EU's ban on hormone-treated beef from the US--enacted in response to popular demand in Europe--continued despite the WTO's viewing it as illegal. Likewise, genetic modifications in agricultural production coupled with resistance to ecolabelling on the part of US firms such as Monsanto triggered a consumer backlash in Europe and other parts of the world, with the precautionary principle being invoked as a powerful weapon against the US corporations' criterion of "solid science." Also, the aggressive effort by US biotech firms to extend patenting to life forms and to seeds led to strong resistance by farmers' groups, consumer groups, and environmentalists to what was denounced as the "privatization" of the aeons-long interaction between nature and communities.

Third, the strong resistance of the US industrial sector to acknowledge the fact of global warming, at a time when the speed of the melting of the polar ice caps was accelerating, was perceived as a brazen attempt to put profits ahead of the common interest. This perception could only be reinforced by the successful corporate effort to stalemate a collective global effort to effectively deal with global warming during the Clinton

administration and finally to kill it when the Bush administration refused to sign and ratify the already weak Kyoto Protocol on climate change.

The aggressive anti-environmental posture of US corporations was one of the factors that led to a great distrust of business even within the United States, with 72 per cent of Americans surveyed by Business Week in 2000 saying that business “has too much power over their lives,” leading the country’s prime business weekly to warn: “Corporate America, ignore these trends at your peril.”

At the same time, developing countries felt that the US was using environmental arguments to slow down their development with its position that the greenhouse gas emissions of developing countries needed to be also subject to substantially the same restrictions imposed on the developed countries before Washington would sign the Kyoto Accord. Indeed, such suspicions were not unfounded, since Bush administration people were targeting China, whose rapid development was seen as a strategic threat to the US. Environmentalism was being deployed in the US’s effort to maintain its geo-economic, geopolitical edge.

By the early 2000s, then, the global consensus represented by the Rio Summit had unraveled, and it all but collapsed under the massive corporate greenwashing campaign that was unleashed at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (also known as Rio+10) in Johannesburg in September 2002. “Sustainable development,” a vision that attempted to reconcile economic growth with ecological stability fell by the wayside, and Herman Daly’s apocalyptic image of an economic system marked by hyper-growth outstripping in record time an ecological system created over aeons seemed closer to realization as US, European, and Japanese capital worked closely with a pollution-friendly government to make high-growth China both the workshop and wastebasket of the world.

A few years ago, many agreed with economist Herman Daly that ecological deterioration is due to the inexorable drive of the man-made system of production to fill with geometric speed the limited space created over eons by nature. From this perspective, slower growth and lower rates of consumption were the key to environmental stabilization, and this could be achieved through policy choices supported by the public.

Increasingly, this analysis is giving way to the more radical view that the main culprit is an unchecked capitalist mode of production that unceasingly transforms nature's bounty into commodities and incessantly creates new demands. Capitalism constantly erodes man and woman's being-in-nature (creature) and being-in-society (citizen) and, even as it drains them of life energy as workers, it moulds their consciousness around one role: that of consumer. Capitalism has many "laws of motion," but one of the most destructive as far as the environment goes is Say's law, which is that supply creates its own demand. Capitalism is a demand-creating machine that transforms living nature into dead commodities, natural wealth into dead capital.

Environmentalism, in short, has regained its radical edge over the past decade, moving the critique of globalization to a critique of the dynamics of capitalism itself.

THE NEW ECONOMICS OF THE GEORGE W. BUSH

The interlocking crises of globalization, neoliberalism, capitalist legitimacy, and overproduction provide the context for understanding the economic policies of the Bush administration, notably its unilateralist thrust. The globalist corporate project expressed the common interest of the global capitalist elites in expanding the world economy and their fundamental dependence on one another. However, globalization did not eliminate competition among the national elites. In fact, the ruling elites of the US and Europe had factions that were more nationalist in character as well as more tied for their survival and prosperity to the state, such as the military-industrial complex in the US. Indeed, since the eighties there has been a sharp struggle between the more globalist fraction of ruling elite stressing common interest of global capitalist class in a growing world economy and the more nationalist, hegemonist faction that wanted to ensure the supremacy of US corporate interests.

As Robert Brenner has pointed out, the policies of Bill Clinton and his Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin put prime emphasis on the expansion of the world economy as the basis of the prosperity of the global capitalist class. For instance, in the mid-1990s, they pushed a strong dollar policy meant to stimulate the recovery of the Japanese and German economies, so they could serve as markets for US goods and services. The earlier, more nationalist Reagan administration, on the other hand, had employed a weak dollar policy to regain competitiveness for the US economy at the expense of the Japanese and German economies. With the George W. Bush administration, we are back to economic policies, including a weak dollar policy, that are meant to revive the US economy at the expense of the other center economies and push primarily the interests of the US corporate elite instead of that of global capitalist class under conditions of a global downturn.

Several features of this approach are worth stressing:

- Bush's political economy is very wary of a process of globalization that is not managed by a US state that ensures that the process does not diffuse the economic power of the US. Allowing the market solely to drive globalization could result in key US corporations becoming the victims of globalization and thus compromising US economic interests. Thus, despite the free market rhetoric, we have a group that is very protectionist when it comes to trade, investment, and the management of government contracts. It seems that the motto of the Bushites is protectionism for the US and free trade for the rest of us.

- The Bush approach includes a strong skepticism about multilateralism as a way of global economic governance since while multilateralism may promote the interests of the global capitalist class in general, it may, in many instances, contradict particular US corporate interests. The Bush coterie's growing ambivalence towards the WTO stems

from the fact that the US has lost a number of rulings there, rulings that may hurt US capital but serve the interests of global capitalism as a whole.

- For the Bush people, strategic power is the ultimate modality of power. Economic power is a means to achieve strategic power. This is related to the fact that under Bush, the dominant faction of the ruling elite is the military-industrial establishment that won the Cold War. The conflict between globalists and unilateralists or nationalists along this axis is shown in the approach toward China. The globalist approach put the emphasis on engagement with China, seeing its importance primarily as an investment area and market for US capital. The nationalists, on the other hand, see China mainly as a strategic enemy, and they would rather contain it rather than assist its growth.

- Needless to say, the Bush paradigm has no room for environmental management, seeing this to be a problem that others have to worry about, not the United States. There is, in fact, a strong corporate lobby that believes that environmental concerns such as that surrounding GMOs is a European conspiracy to deprive the US of its high tech edge in global competition.

If these are seen as the premises for action, then the following prominent elements of recent US economic policy make sense:

- Achieving control over Middle East oil. While it did not exhaust the war aims of the administration in invading Iraq, it was certainly high on the list. With competition with Europe becoming the prime aspect of the trans-Atlantic relationship, this was clearly aimed partly at Europe. But perhaps the more strategic goal was to preempt the region's resources in order to control access to them by energy poor China, which is seen as the US' strategic enemy.

- Aggressive protectionism in trade and investment matters. The US has piled up one protectionist act after another, one of the most brazen being to stall any movement at the WTO negotiations by defying the Doha Declaration's upholding of public health issues over intellectual property claims by limiting the loosening of patent rights to just three diseases in response to its powerful pharmaceutical lobby. While it seems perfectly willing to see the WTO negotiations unravel, Washington has put most of its efforts in signing up countries into bilateral or multilateral trade deals such as the Free Trade of the Americas (FTAA) before the EU gets them into similar deals. Indeed the term "free trade agreements" is a misnomer since these are actually preferential trade deals.

- Incorporating strategic considerations into trade agreements. In a recent speech, US Trade Representative Robert Zoellick stated explicitly that "countries that seek free-trade agreements with the United States must pass muster on more than trade and economic criteria in order to be eligible. At a minimum, these countries must cooperate with the United States on its foreign policy and national security goals, as part of 13 criteria that will guide the US selection of potential FTA partners." New Zealand, perhaps one of the most doctrinally governments to free trade, has nevertheless not been offered a free trade

deal because it has a policy that prevents nuclear ship visits, which the US feels is directed at it.

- Manipulation of the dollar's value to stick the costs of economic crisis on rivals among the center economies and regain competitiveness for the US economy. A slow depreciation of the dollar vis-à-vis the euro can be interpreted as market-based adjustments, but the 25 per cent fall in value cannot but be seen as, at the least, a policy of benign neglect. While the Bush administration has issued denials that this is a beggar-thy-neighbor policy, the US business press has seen it for what it is: an effort to revive the US economy at the expense of the European Union and other center economies.

- Aggressive manipulation of multilateral agencies to push the interests of US capital. While this might not be too easy to achieve in the WTO owing to the weight of the European Union, it can be more readily done at the World Bank and the IMF, where US dominance is more effectively institutionalized. For instance, despite support for the proposal from many European governments, the US Treasury recently torpedoed the IMF management's proposal for a Sovereign Debt Restructuring Mechanism (SDRM) to enable developing countries to restructure their debt while giving them a measure of protection from creditors. Already a very weak mechanism, the SDRM was vetoed by US Treasury in the interest of US banks.

- Finally, and especially relevant to our coming discussions, making the other center economies as well as developing countries bear the burden of adjusting to the environmental crisis. While some of the Bush people do not believe there is an environmental crisis, others know that the current rate of global greenhouse emissions is unsustainable. However, they want others to bear the brunt of adjustment since that would mean not only exempting environmentally inefficient US industry from the costs of adjustment, but hobbling other economies with even greater costs than if the US participated in an equitable adjustment process, thus giving the US economy a strong edge in global competition. Raw economic realpolitik, not fundamentalist blindness, lies at the root of the Washington's decision not to sign the Kyoto Protocol on Climate Change.

THE ECONOMICS AND POLITICS OF OVEREXTENSION

Being harnessed very closely to strategic ends, any discussion of the likely outcomes of the Bush administration's economic policies must take into account both the state of the US economy and the global economy and the broader strategic picture. A key base for successful imperial management are expanding national and global economies—something precluded by the extended period of deflation and stagnation ahead, which is more likely to spur inter-capitalist rivalries.

Moreover, resources include not only economic and political resources but political and ideological ones as well. For without legitimacy—without what Gramsci called “the consensus” of the dominated that a system of rule is just—imperial management cannot be stable.

Faced with a similar problem of securing the long-term stability of its rule, the ancient Romans came up with the solution that created what was till then the most far-reaching case of collective mass loyalty ever achieved till then and prolonged the empire for 700 years. The Roman solution was not just or even principally military in character. The Romans realized that an important component of successful imperial domination was consensus among the dominated of the "rightness" of the Roman order. As sociologist Michael Mann notes in his classic *Sources of Social Power*, the "decisive edge" was not so much military as political. "The Romans," he writes, "gradually stumbled on the invention of extensive territorial citizenship." The extension of Roman citizenship to ruling groups and non-slave peoples throughout the empire was the political breakthrough that produced "was probably the widest extent of collective commitment yet mobilized." Political citizenship combined with the vision of the empire providing peace and prosperity for all to create that intangible but essential moral element called legitimacy.

Needless to say, extension of citizenship plays no role in the US imperial order. In fact, US citizenship is jealously reserved for a very tiny minority of the world's population, entry into whose territory is tightly controlled. Subordinate populations are not to be integrated but kept in check either by force or the threat of the use of force or by a system of global or regional rules and institutions--the World Trade Organization, the Bretton Woods system, NATO--that are increasingly blatantly manipulated to serve the interests of the imperial center.

Though extension of universal citizenship was never a tool in the American imperial arsenal, during its struggle with communism in the post-World War II period Washington did come up with a political formula to legitimize its global reach. The two elements of this formula were multilateralism as a system of global governance and liberal democracy.

In the immediate aftermath of the Cold War, there were, in fact, widespread expectations of a modern-day version of Pax Romana. There was hope in liberal circles that the US would use its sole superpower status to buttress a multilateral order that would institutionalize its hegemony but assure an Augustan peace globally. That was the path of economic globalization and multilateral governance. That was the path eliminated by George W. Bush's unilateralism.

As Frances Fitzgerald observed in *Fire in the Lake*, the promise of extending liberal democracy was a very powerful ideal that accompanied American arms during the Cold War. Today, however, Washington or Westminster-type liberal democracy is in trouble throughout the developing world, where it has been reduced to providing a façade for oligarchic rule, as in the Philippines, pre-Musharraf Pakistan, and throughout Latin America. In fact, liberal democracy in America has become both less democratic and less liberal. Certainly, few in the developing world see a system fueled and corrupted by corporate money as a model.

Recovery of the moral vision needed to create consensus for US hegemony will be extremely difficult. Indeed, the thinking in Washington these days is that the most effective consensus builder is the threat of the use of force. Moreover, despite their talk about imposing democracy in the Arab world, the main aim of influential neoconservative writers like Robert Kagan and Charles Krauthammer is transparent: the manipulation of liberal democratic mechanisms to create pluralistic competition that would destroy Arab unity. Bringing democracy to the Arabs is not so much an afterthought as a slogan that is uttered tongue in cheek.

The Bush people are not interested in creating a new Pax Romana. What they want is a Pax Americana where most of the subordinate populations like the Arabs are kept in check by a healthy respect for lethal American power, while the loyalty of other groups such as the Philippine government is purchased with the promise of cash. With no moral vision to bind the global majority to the imperial center, this mode of imperial management can only inspire one thing: resistance.

The great problem for unilateralism is overextension, or a mismatch between the goals of the United States and the resources needed to accomplish these goals. Overextension is relative. That is, it is to a great degree a function of resistance. An overextended power may, in fact, be in a worse condition even with a significant increase in its military power if resistance to its power increases by an even greater degree. Among the key indicators of US overextension are the following:

- Washington's continuing inability to create a new political order in Iraq that would serve as a secure foundation for colonial rule
- its failure to consolidate a pro-US regime in Afghanistan outside of Kabul
- the inability of a key ally, Israel, to quell, even with Washington's unrestricted support, the Palestinian people's uprising
- the inflaming of Arab and Muslim sentiment in the Middle East, South Asia, and Southeast Asia, resulting in massive ideological gains for Islamic fundamentalists—which was what Osama bin Laden had been hoping for in the first place
- the collapse of the Cold War Atlantic Alliance and the emergence of a new countervailing alliance, with Germany and France at the center of it
- the forging of a powerful global civil society movement against US unilateralism, militarism, and economic hegemony, the most recent significant expression is the global anti-war movement;
- the coming to power of anti-neoliberal, anti-US movements in Washington's own backyard—Brazil, Venezuela, and Ecuador—as the Bush administration is preoccupied with the Middle East

- an increasingly negative impact of militarism on the US economy, as military spending becomes dependent on deficit spending, and deficit spending become more and more dependent on financing from foreign sources, creating more stresses and strains within an economy that is already in the throes of stagnation.

In conclusion, the globalist project is in crisis. Whether it can make a comeback via a Democratic or Liberal Republican presidency should not be ruled out, especially since there are influential globalist voices in the US business community—among them George Soros-- that are expressing opposition to the unilateralist thrust of the Bush administration. In our view, however, this is unlikely, and unilateralism will reign for sometime to come.

We have, in short, entered a historical maelstrom marked by prolonged economic crisis, the spread of global resistance, the reappearance of the balance of power among center states, and the reemergence of acute inter-imperialist contradictions. We must have a healthy respect for US power, but neither must we overestimate it. The signs are there that the US is seriously overextended and what appear to be manifestations of strength might in fact signal weakness strategically.

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Closely Related: Excerpts from a speech by Walden delivered at the University of the Philippines P Foundation Day Assembly on June 19, 2003:

For a people under occupation, armed struggle is not one option. It is the only option. This became very clear to me when I was in the US a few weeks ago, speaking at a sparsely attended anti-war meeting. Moral suasion on the questions of Iraq will not work with most Americans at this point. America is Bush country at this juncture, and the polls show that, so far, the majority of Americans approve of the invasion of Iraq even if the Administration manufactured that false story about Saddam possessing weapons of mass destruction to justify the aggression. There one comes up against the moral and political tyranny of a politically conservative majority that Louis Hartz pointed to as the underside of the liberal ideology of America.

However, people who are willing to allow the rights of others to be trampled end up losing their rights. We have seen in the last two years a massive assault on constitutional rights that has been tolerated by most Americans on grounds of "national security." There are at least 5,000 Muslim men<permanent residents, citizens, non-citizens<who are locked up indefinitely without charges, their identities publicly concealed, and the great majority of Americans do not see it fit to protest.

Appealing to the decency and values of these people to throw off the yoke of occupation will not work since the majority of Americans are currently political zombies, the living dead, who will leave their state of transmogrified bliss only with great effort on the part of that minority of courageous Americans who court the anger of the very majority that they are trying to awake. We salute those anti-imperialist Americans, but patriotic Iraqis

know it would be foolhardy to base their liberation on the eventual success of these fine people.

Empire of the American variety rests on democratic consent, and with George W. Bush, we are entering a new phase of US imperial democracy. Globalization to promote the collective interest of the global capitalist class is out, the nationalist pursuit of supremacy of US corporate interests is in. Multilateralism as a system of global governance is out, unilateralism is in. Managing the empire by relying on a mixture of political and ideological hegemony and force is out, force as the first resort in dealing with threats to the global order is in. Hardt and Negri's Empire as an explanation of the global conjuncture is out, Lenin's Imperialism: the Highest Stage of Capitalism is back.

Why has America shifted to the unilateralist mode under George W. Bush? One answer one frequently encounters in liberal circles is that a tiny group of neoconservatives has hijacked the White House and imposed a militarist policy aimed at assuring permanent global hegemony for the United States that is opposed even by key factions of the US elite. I am dubious about this, and the reason I am is that the Democratic Party (the elite opposition)--is having a hell of a time trying to articulate a different foreign policy vision than Bush's. If Bush is successful, it is partly because the US elite has largely closed ranks behind him--and, unfortunately, the majority of the American people behind them.

I think far more plausible is the explanation that Bush's unilateralism is a response to a severe crisis of US hegemony. Look at the 1990s and notice the contrast between the beginning of the decade and the end of the decade. The beginning of the decade was the collapse of the socialist regimes in Eastern Europe, capitalism triumphant, free market ideology or neoliberalism unchallenged. Now look at the end of the nineties and the first years of the 21st century, and you see Seattle, the failure of corporate-driven globalization, massive disenchantment with neoliberalism, the corporation losing legitimacy, the massive Wall Street collapse that inaugurates an era of global economic stagnation and deflation.

Globalization has failed. Liberal internationalism Clinton-style has failed as a formula for the maintenance of hegemony. Multilateralism and diplomacy are too cumbersome. Unilateralism is the answer. The employment of force is the only reliable way to maintain a global order dominated by the US. This, in brief, is the neoconservative paradigm that reigns at the White House.

There is only one problem with this, and it is that force without legitimacy creates resistance. And the spread of resistance pretty soon leads to overextension--a condition where there is a mismatch between goals and means, with means referring not only to military resources but to political and ideological ones as well.....[next section repeats much of what is in the article above]....

So it turns out that the invasion of Iraq was merely the first phase of a protracted war. We have, in short, the makings of another Vietnam--rising internal resistance, a powerful occupation force that is overextended and pinned down, and a global movement against

intervention and war. The main difference is that the global peace movement today is much stronger than it was during the Vietnam War.

We will not have peace in our time. The rogue superpower that the United States has turned into will not give the world peace. Here in the Philippines, we must expect to be drawn in more and more into direct confrontation with a US military that desires the country as a staging area for projecting power against China and against Islamic movements in the Southern Philippines, Malaysia, and Indonesia. Sooner or later, just as in Iraq and just as in the Philippines at the turn of the last century, our choices will narrow. Mindanao is seen by Washington as one of what Samuel Huntington calls the bloody borders between Islam and the West, between Asian revolution and American imperium, and they are determined to protect their interests even if permanent war and destabilization is the fate of our peoples. As the American troops occupy more and more of our national space--both physically and psychologically-- we will have to choose between submission or resistance to Empire.....