



SPECIAL ISSUE:

GLOBALIZATIONS FROM 'ABOVE' AND 'BELOW'
THE FUTURE OF WORLD SOCIETY

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ABSTRACT:

In the 1960s, the left branded US imperialism the major enemy of social justice in the world. Such talk faded after the war against Vietnam and almost disappeared after communism fell in Eastern Europe. It's not that the American brand of informal empire disappeared. It continued through US influences on other states' policies, the sway of US corporations abroad on host governments, US military power, and the power of the Washington-based financial institutions. But, the discourse changed and raged around the softer term globalization. In the past few years, imperialism talk has roared back, led this time by the political right, who gave it a positive sheen. Some on the left have joined

in too, in an exciting new literature, revising Marxist and Leninist critiques of imperialism. But, much of the political left and centre are still mired in aspirations for cosmopolitanism, which inadvertently obscure struggles for popular and national sovereignty. This paper examines the limits of cosmopolitanism for democracy, critiques the nature of US power, and discusses how a reasserted US empire has sparked the revival of nationalisms by looking at the cases of nationalism in the six top oil-exporting countries to the US. The paper concludes with inquiries into people-to-people inter-nationalism and whether citizen-based democracy is possible without sovereignty.

POPULAR NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY AND THE U.S. EMPIRE*

Gordon Laxer

Foreign capital is able to determine possible governments by incarnating itself as an indigenous ruling class. — *George Grant (1965)*

INTRODUCTION

This article challenges the idea that working towards a global civil society,¹ in present circumstances, is a laudable goal. We live in the age of the US Empire, which aggressively asserts its own right to unilateral action, while demanding that the sovereignty of every other political community be breached. To the extent that proponents of global society² forecast and approve the "inevitable" weakening of popular and national sovereignties of rooted political communities, they are, regardless of their intentions, objectively aiding the unilateral power of the US Empire. Instead of global society, I argue that the goal should be support for deep democracy everywhere and inter-national solidarity from below.

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¹ For a more thorough treatment of my assessment of the problems of the concept of *global civil society*, see Laxer and Halperin (2003).

² Not all advocates of global civil society support the weakening of national or popular sovereignty. For Jocelyne Couture (1999) liberal nationalism is compatible with moral cosmopolitan doctrine, but not with legal cosmopolitanism.

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By inter-national solidarity, I do not mean only state-to-state support, but also inter-national support from citizens movements for the sovereignty of democratic political communities and regions wherever they are found. Nations are understood here in the French Revolution sense as “citizen-peoples” rather than states, but not in the French Revolution sense of a “nation one and indivisible,” in which the rights of minority nations within countries are crushed.³

George W. Bush deserves credit. Talk about imperialism almost disappeared for 20 years. Now it has returned. In the 1960s and 1970s, the left branded US imperialism as the major enemy of national and social liberation in the world. Such talk faded after the war against Vietnam, and almost vanished, even amongst the left, after communism collapsed in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. It is not that the US abandoned its largely informal empire in the intervening period. Far from it. It continued to hold sway as before, largely through US influences, both attractive and coercive, on the policies of other states. Intermittently, it resorted to outright invasion. But, the discourse changed. It swirled around globalization—often a cleansed term for imperialism.

Now empire talk has roared back. Terms like Imperial America, US imperialism, the imperial grand strategy, the New Imperial State and The New Rome are in the air. Instead of being the epithet hurled by the left that it was in the 1960s, talk about the US empire has been revived by the political right and given a positive sheen (Brzezinski 1997; Ferguson 2002).⁴ It has become fashionable to compare the American Empire with Britain’s informal “free trade” empire of the nineteenth century or with the Roman Empire. But US empire talk is not the sole preserve of the right. Some on the left have joined the debate, revising earlier approaches to understanding empire formulated by Lenin and other Marxists (Gowan 1999; Ali 2003; Brenner 2003; Harvey 2003; Mann 2003; Meiksins Wood 2003; Wallerstein 2003).⁵ I will examine two such formulations, but first I look at why many progressives refuse to confront the politics of anti-imperialism and are still mired in imagining a world of moral cosmopolitanism.

³ The concept “plurination” states recognizes the rights of minority nations. The term is used in Ecuador and several other Latin American countries (Egan 1996).

⁴ See also Richard Haass, “Imperial America,” *Foreign Affairs*, Nov. 11, 2000; Thomas Friedman, “What the World Needs Now,” *New York Times*, Mar. 28, 1999; and Michael Ignatieff, “The American Empire. The Burden,” *New York Times*, Jan. 5, 2003.

⁵ Then there are Hardt and Negri (2002), who deny that there is an American Empire.

MORAL ASPIRATIONS FOR COSMOPOLITANISM

The US Empire is flexing its muscles, but its ability to continue to dominate, is uncertain. The unilateral actions of the US are fostering antidotes—the growth of popular, anti-imperial nationalisms and regionalisms, often backed by governments which attempt to gain allies for greater sovereignty. Craig Calhoun (1997: 8) argued that in earlier forms of empire, “colonialism drove nationalism forward even while resisting it...no matter how elite the anti-colonialists and how elitist their agendas for post-colonial rule, their claims for sovereignty came by definition from ‘below’, from ‘the people.’”⁶ Nationalisms are powerful at mass mobilization because they have the unique ability to move people, Calhoun continues, as a positive source of meaning and inspiration, give a sense of place and of mutual commitment for large numbers. Nationalisms create a high degree of cohesion, without which self-governing societies are not possible. They can and have created the soil in which democracy deepened and the power of ordinary citizens was enhanced. Of course, progressive, internationalist nationalisms do not inevitably triumph. They are usually contested by reactionary versions of nationalisms, over issues such as rule by the people, openness to the rest of the world, and racial and other forms of inclusivity.

The question for us is whether, and under what circumstances current anti-colonial nationalisms are pushing governments and political communities towards deepening democracy, and social and class transformations. When combined with the potential powers which national and subnational governments, even in weaker states, still possess, but often do not use for progressive ends, I argue that anti-imperial nationalisms have great potential for social change. I examine the cases of struggles for national and popular sovereignty in major oil exporting countries and the impact this is having on the US Empire. I also explore whether these national struggles have advanced, or retarded progress toward democracy and social transformation.

Before proceeding, I briefly address two common objections to my arguments. First, there may be other ways to reach deep democratic transformation than through anti-imperial nationalisms. Second, can I substantiate my claim that certain versions of global civil society and cosmopolitanism help to justify American unilateral power and undermine claims of anti-imperial contestations for popular national sovereignty?

⁶ Arguments in the next two sentences are taken from Calhoun (1997: 126; and 2002: 878).

The first objection is easily dealt with. I do not claim that progressive, internationalist nationalisms are the only important expressions of common identity, community and solidaristic action. Religious movements which conceive of a religious community on a transnational basis, can also profoundly unify and motivate large numbers of people, in ways similar to that of nationalisms. The jury is out on whether such religious communities will in future both challenge the power of the US Empire and become genuine political communities which can also lead to democracy-from-below and class leveling. I do not rule out the possibility that this will occur, but we have seen few signs of this seriously emerging. As well, there are those who claim that contestations based on transnational mobilizing for social justice, offer the most hopeful challenges to the unilateral power of the US. I turn to a discussion of this possibility.

Some argue that transnational social movements have emerged as a crucial site for identity, community and solidarity (Kaldor et al.: 2003). To say a movement is “transnational” is more limited and more accurate than to say it is “global.” To be “transnational” does not require that a movement encompass all continents and most countries, just that it transcends many of them. The anti-war movement, the World Social Forum and the anti-corporate globalization movement are commonly seen as examples of current transnational or global social movements with the potential for both transformation and as counterweights to US power. I do not dispute the radical potential of these movements. Indeed, I have participated in all of them. But, what I find problematic is the automatic interpretations of such movements as unalloyed examples of transnationalism or expressions of global civil society. In the interests of brevity, I refer readers to publications which I and my coauthors⁷ have written on these issues (Laxer 2001; Johnston and Laxer 2003; Laxer and Halperin 2003). I summarize some of the points here.

How do we know that a movement is transnational or global? Thomas Risse-Kappen (1995) contends that transnational implies “regular interactions across national boundaries when at least one actor is a non-state agent or does not operate on behalf of a national government or an intergovernmental organization.” Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink (1998a) sharply distinguish between “transnational social movements” and “transnational advocacy networks.” A transnational social movement is usually built on concrete networks of shared locality, experiences, or kinship. Its key resource is its capacity for mass mobilizing. Tarrow (1998) argues that in transnational social movements, “challengers need

to be rooted in domestic social networks and connected to each other more than episodically; common ways of seeing the world; contentious in action as well as words.” In contrast to transnational social movements, transnational advocacy networks (I call them “international advocacy networks”) involve a small number of morally motivated activists, and do not usually engage in mass mobilizations. They are a “set of relevant organizations working internationally with shared values, a common discourse, and dense exchanges of information” (Keck and Sikkink 1998b: 46). International advocacy networks cannot be subsumed into notions of global civil society or transnational social movements. In this regard, Keck and Sikkink (1998a: 237) conclude that “however much we are seeing the increasing interpenetration of domestic and international politics, transposing sets of categories from one to the other seems unlikely to make sense of the simultaneity of both.” I concur.

Transnational social movements and international advocacy networks are not the same as nationally-focused struggles. Cosmopolitan assumptions about power drifting away from countries and nations obscure evidence that even in campaigns and organizations which are thought to have most escaped national enclosures, solidarity ties are usually denser, and the capacity to mass mobilize is greater, at national than at supranational levels. After studying the anti-apartheid movement, Greenpeace and Amnesty international, movements or organizations which are commonly thought to be exemplars of transnationalism, Christian Lahusen (1999: 190) concluded that “social movement action above the level of the nation-state is still organized and coordinated to a greater degree between national entities than across them and is therefore rather international than transnational in character.”

National movements are those which contend largely against national power structures, have all or most of their supporters in one country or nation, and display distinctive cultures of contention. National movement organizations may coordinate campaigns inter-nationally with other nationally-based organizations, but that does not automatically make them transnational. It is only when issues, targets, mobilization and organization are truly transnational, that a movement can be accurately considered fully transnational. In practice, movements are often hybrids of the national, the inter-national and the transnational regarding issues, targets, mobilization and organization.

I believe it is important to distinguish amongst the three levels because of the widespread cosmopolitan assumption that transnational movements have replaced national organizations, and that the simple act of coordinating beyond-the-nation is sufficient to make a campaign or movement transnational. According to these criteria, a transnational social movement requires regular, long-term interaction across nations, the presence of common frames and shared

⁷ I alone am accountable for the views expressed below, however.

norms across national boundaries. Consensus formation across national movements takes a long time and can be said to be transnational only once formulations are put in more universal language. If on the other hand, the framing of issues remains different, mass mobilizations and organizations stay separate and targets distinct, we are dealing with movements that are primarily national.

The powerful anti-war movement, which flexed its muscles on February 15, 2003 five weeks before the invasion of Iraq, was the largest coordinated series of demonstrations in world history. Kaldor et al. (2003: 3) characterized it as a “global popular mobilization.” But, it had national, international and transnational (rather than global) aspects. The transnational part involved an unknown number of the demonstrators who were motivated to march primarily or exclusively from a horror of war and invasion, but who had little or no identification with the national political community in which the demonstration took place. But, there were strong national dimensions to the protests. It was no accident, that the largest demonstrations were held in countries such as Britain, Italy, Spain, and Australia, whose governments supported the invasion, in contrast to lower turnouts in countries such as France and Germany where their governments did not.⁸ In the pro-invasion countries, many citizens clearly marched at least partly against their own governments, trying to change their positions. The inter-national aspect was expressed when nationally-focussed movements coordinated their activities with counterparts in other countries.

Rather than look at the radical potential of re-emerging nationalisms, in part sparked by the aggressive US Empire, many progressive and left intellectuals are still advocates for abstract, moral cosmopolitanism. Cosmopolitanism was never seriously on the political agenda, even in the 1990s and conditions for its realization turned decidedly more negative after the attacks of September 11, 2001 (9/11). Those changes include the faltering of the neoliberal agenda of global integration whose success depends on multilateralism, the strengthening of borders rather than progress towards a borderless world, and rising public expectations that governments can again do more for them than civil society, corporations or markets. I briefly examine objections to sovereignty, nationalisms and self-determination of some in the cosmopolitan camp, before exploring the nature of recent national struggles against the US Empire.

Much recent discourse among progressive intellectuals still revolves around cosmopolitan concepts such as global civil society, which contend that state

power is retracting as sovereignty leaks up to transnational institutions and down to the local.⁹ As Ulrich Beck writes, “[g]lobalization—however the word is understood—implies the weakening of state sovereignty and state structures.” In contrast to modernity’s first stage—where solidarity was limited to the enclosed space of the nation state—identities are reformulated beyond state boundaries, embedded in “intersecting transnational loyalties.” The cosmopolitan project “contradicts and replaces the nation-state project,” implying a shift in conflict from capital-labor towards cosmopolitan movements and counter-movements. Beck (2000: 86, 90, 92, 102) sees possibilities not in national movements, but in new political subjects, which he alludes to as “movements and parties of world citizens.” As states lose sovereignty, democratic resistance is depicted as either local, or transnational, but not national. The Internet is seen by many cosmopolitans as helping to build new, non-territorial, non-national forms of community in the time-compressed space created by globalization (Smith and Smythe 1999: 84). Richard Falk’s concept of “Globalization from below” (1997) is a radical version of global civil society. It is understood to include diverse efforts to moderate the logic of capitalism and implement substantive democracy.

David Held and others have put forward proposals to create legal institutions for the governance of cosmopolitan democracy. In this model, Held (1995: ix, x, 233) argued that the nation-state will “wither away,” in the sense that it would be but one focus of power and authority. Many advocates of cosmopolitanism share Held’s hopes for the withering away of the state, because they view state sovereignty as in conflict, in many instances, with human rights. As Allan Bock put it “all too often the concept of sovereignty in ‘international law’...provides a cover for domestic thuggery.”¹⁰ Since the end of the Cold war, such state-led atrocities gave rise to increasing calls for “humanitarian intervention” to support human rights. Mary Kaldor’s (2001) argument exemplifies this perspective. She sees “humanitarian intervention” as a major expression of an emerging global civil society. She argues that “non-intervention” was the dominant principle in international affairs during the cold war and that this was replaced in the 1990s by “the presumption that there is a right to use armed force in support of humanitarian objectives.” Although there is not “a consensus about military intervention,” it has “become widely accepted” (109–110). Kaldor is hopeful about the emergence of a global humanitarian regime which includes a growing consensus about respect for human rights, a strengthening of international law, a growing readiness of

⁸ BBC News, Feb. 17, 2003. “Millions Join Global Anti-war Protests.” <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/2765215.stm>, accessed June 29, 2005.

⁹ This paragraph is partly based on Johnston and Laxer (2003: 44–5).

¹⁰ Bock, Allan. 2001. “Eye on the Empire.” Apr. 11. <http://www.antiwar.com/bock/b04101.html>, accessed June 24, 2005.

governments to give resources (money and troops) for humanitarian purposes and above all civil society groups who focus on humanitarian intervention (140). Kaldor also asserts, astoundingly, that changing international norms “reflect a growing global consensus about the equality of human beings and the responsibility to prevent suffering wherever it takes place” (110). Would it were so.

Such views are naïve and their proponents risk becoming apologists for the US imperial project. Humanitarian intervention, often involves military intervention and the latter are led only by a country or countries in the North against a country in the South. Some have taken the next step¹¹ and enshrined the principle of civilian inviolability and have construed humanitarian intervention by coalitions of the willing (Cohen 2004: 8). As Jean L. Cohen (2004) cogently argues, “the sovereignty-based model of international law appears to be ceding not to cosmopolitan justice but to a different bid to restructure the world order: the project of empire.” Bush cloaks his “war on terror,” in rhetoric about a renewed commitment to human rights and democracy. Diminishing the “right of self-determination” of other countries fits well with the law of imperial power which “rests on the willingness of the superpower to sustain world order, but...the superpower only plays by the rules of its own making when it suits its interest...imperial power is above the rules of the order, while smaller states are subjected to them” (Risse 2003). Some trace the current principle of sovereignty back to the Treaty of Westphalia of 1648, but that is misleading because Westphalia did not recognize the sovereign equality of non-European countries or popular democracy. International recognition of sovereignty and self-determination are recent gains and have espoused very different norms. They date from the 1960s era of decolonization of the Global South and are embodied in UN General Assembly resolutions 1514 and 1541. “Inherent in this conception of sovereign equality, [is] the newly generalized principle of nonintervention,” writes Cohen (2004: 12).

However, the US doctrine of preemptive strike has thrown us back to old style colonialism. “Humanitarian interventions,” have been led by countries of the North and carried out exclusively in the South, if we include the old Yugoslavia in that category. Kaldor lists the following as sites of such interventions: Northern Iraq, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Somalia, Rwanda, Haiti, Kosovo, East Timor and Sierra Leone. If international norms are applied wherever there are human rights abuses, there would have been humanitarian and military interventions to stop

¹¹ Cohen (2004: 8) refers to authors who cite the Kosovo intervention as a “constitutive moment.”

the illegal invasion of Iraq, the abuse of prisoners in Iraq and Guantanamo Bay, the mining of harbours in Nicaragua in the 1980s, and military actions against Chechnya. Applying “international norms” by the strong versus only the weak is a double standard, widely seen as recolonization in the South. Such hypocrisy abets the principle of empire. At the present juncture, a global humanitarian republic is not on the agenda, but the US National Security Strategy (2002) which asserts the US right to get rid of any regime, anywhere, that might some day become hostile to what the United States considers its vital interests, is on the agenda.¹² Recognizing humanitarian intervention can be good if done under the auspices of the United Nations and in ways that do not undermine the principles of national self-determination. Cohen (2004) outlines constructive ways the two can be supported simultaneously.

Cosmopolitan perspectives tend to involve more normative assertions than empirical answers (Brennan 1997). Catherine Eschle (2002: 65) argues they do not invoke global civil society to make empirical claims, but to “justify a cosmopolitan ethical stance that posits the existence of a single moral community.” Because their orientation is “not to take power,” their stance may be more about complaining about the world than changing it.

Concepts such as “global civil society,” “transnational social movements,” and “globalization from below” have positive associations, but are frequently left ill-defined and underdeveloped. Part of the problem is that “civil society” is a contested concept which developed in the context of domestic states (Taylor 1997). John Locke imagined civil society as a sphere independent of the state and centrally located in the market, a view that justified private property rights (Arthur 1970: 5). Once these rights were won in the West, the concept fell into disuse, to be revived in Eastern Europe in the 1970s by those attempting to create a sphere independent of totalitarian states. When communism fell, the concept morphed again and was wielded in Eastern Europe by advocates of capitalism rather than democracy (Stubbs 1996). For liberals of both eras, the main conflicts are between state and civil society. The state must be limited because civil society embodies superior values of individual freedom. In contrast to liberal-pluralists who tend to see transnational actors as unambiguous democrats and downplay inequalities, Marxists and Gramscians view civil society as the contested space of class relations and production (Macdonald 1994: 276). If corporations are inte-

¹² North, David. 2002. “The War against Iraq and America’s Drive for World Domination.” Oct. 4, <http://www.serendipity.li/wot/north01.htm>, accessed June 24, 2005.

grally part of, and often dominate, civil society, then empowering civil society to limit the power of transnational corporations is nonsensical. Marxists tend to agree with liberals that capitalist power has been aided by neoliberalism and the ubiquitous globalization discourse. I take a Gramscian perspective on these issues.

If many of the advocates of global civil society are neither Marxist nor liberal of either the classical or neo-liberal variety, how can we characterize their perspectives? They range from left populists, to anarchists to political liberals, who believe in human rights and democracy, may or may not be anti-corporate, but who accept classical liberal premises of a fundamental division between state and civil society. In theory at least, they modify the liberal conception by excluding corporations, the market and national level spheres from global civil society (Kaldor et al. 2003: 4). For them strengthening global civil society can deepen democracy only if the former is non-corporate as well as non-state. But in practice, it is difficult to ignore corporate influences on society. To their credit, Kaldor, Anheier, and Glasius (2003: 9) discuss the growing “‘corporatization’ of NGOs as well as the expansion of business into local and global civil society.” This brings their perspective closer in practice to a Gramscian conception.

Civil society is an ambiguous concept. Globalizing the idea creates more confusion. If civil society is mainly about creating a sphere that is independent of the state, what state or power structure is global civil society supposed to be independent from? There is no global state. How can most people be “global citizens” when there are no democratic structures above the level of countries conducive to their participation?

Whatever the motivation of their advocates, globalization and cosmopolitan talk help legitimize America’s imperial ambitions by devaluing international strictures against non-intervention. By undervaluing the right to the sovereignty of countries, many proponents of global civil society obfuscate the importance of progressive, anti-imperial nationalisms and popular national sovereignty.

Imperialists have always justified grabbing other peoples resources by invoking lofty goals such as spreading Christianity, democracy, human rights or peace. They came to deliver those in the Global South from local tyrants. Instead of realizing such goals, imperialists stayed to rule through local despots. In practice, doctrines which breach national sovereignty help justify the US contravening the sovereignty of weak countries. Meanwhile the US retains its sovereignty, and

¹³. Roth, Kenneth. 2000. “The Charade of US Ratification of International Human Rights Treaties.” *Chicago Journal of International Law*. Fall. <http://www.globalpolicy.org/empire/un/2003/0806charade.htm>, accessed June 29, 2005.

refuses to sign many international agreements such as the land mines treaty or the jurisdiction of the World Court, which would reduce US sovereignty. Those the US ratifies, it declares a reservation to negate additional rights protection.¹³ The US often ignores or continually postpones unfavorable rulings by transnational institutions, such as NAFTA or the WTO. This is the perfect formula for imperial rule. Reduce the autonomy of other countries, but make an exception for the leadership of “the world’s only indispensable nation,” as Madeleine Albright put it. To a lesser extent, other powerful countries—China and those in Western Europe—also retain a great deal of sovereignty.

Historically, cosmopolitanism has been an elite project of empires (Calhoun 2002). While promoting diversity, empires refuse to recognize democratic self-determination. As Calhoun puts it, “The tolerance of diversity in great imperial and trading cities has always reflected, among other things, precisely the absence of need or opportunity to organize political self-rule” (2002: 872). The litmus test is whether today’s proponents of cosmopolitanism celebrate diversity at the expense of self-rule and whether they reveal or hide the dominating nature of the US Empire. In a very thorough and perceptive critique, Atilio A. Boron (2005: 10, 20) shows how Hardt and Negri decenter empire away from the United States and in fact, often celebrate the US role in integrating the world. Negri went so far as to characterize the US occupation of Iraq as “nation building,” not “colonization.”

Having addressed cosmopolitan objections, I now turn to an examination of the new imperial talk and its connections with universalism, globalization and cosmopolitanism. Then, I critique the nature of the US Empire and its Achilles heel of depending on rule through other states. I conclude with a discussion of how a reasserted US empire has sparked the revival of sovereignty-seeking nationalisms, and how this is contributing to a shift from the politics of globalization-from-below, towards anti-imperialist politics which contest government policies through marches, multi-level movements and elections.

IMPERIAL TALK

Much as George W. Bush, the practitioner, deserves credit for spreading the recognition that the US is acting like an empire, he was not the pioneer. In his 1997 book, *The Grand Chessboard*, Zbigniew Brzezinski outlined the best strategy for American “hegemony of a new type” in language which harkened back to Imperial Rome: “The three grand imperatives of imperial geo-strategy are to prevent collusion and maintain dependence amongst the vassals, to keep tributaries compliant and protected, and to keep the barbarians from coming together” (Brzezinski 1997:40). Although Brzezinski had held office in Jimmy Carter’s Democratic Party government, Brzezinski’s book purportedly attained biblical

authority in George W. Bush's administration. In 1999, Henry Kissinger declared that globalization is a soft term for the US Empire. "[W]hat is called globalization is really another name for the dominant role of the United States."¹⁴

The US is ascendant, but does it express its power in a unilateral-imperial way or in a multilateral-global capitalist way? Contradictory forces pull the US in both directions. The logic of territory, the fairly autonomous role of the militarized US state, and American, big power nationalism all lead toward US unilateralism and assertions of US sovereignty. In contrast, the logic of capitalism leads in the direction of multilateral agreements with other countries, to break down borders to corporate investments. This contradiction is discussed below in relation to the writings of David Harvey.

Washington insider, Richard Haass, urges Americans to "re-conceive their role from one of a traditional nation-state to an imperial power."¹⁵ Haass draws a distinction between imperial power and imperialism, characterizing the latter as exploitive and involving territorial control. Glossing over the millions of deaths caused by British imperial policy, which was documented so well in Davis' (2001) *Late Victorian Holocausts*, Haass argues that imperial power relies largely on informal means. Force is employed as a last resort, Haass asserted.¹⁶

The US-as-empire formulations of Brzezinski, Kissinger and Haass were written before 9/11. The attacks on New York and Washington were seized upon as the "new Pearl Harbor," by proponents of the Project for a New American Century¹⁷ and their allies, who populate George W. Bush's cabinet. The Democratic Party has an equivalent group of imperialist thinkers in The Progressive Policy Institute, which produced a blueprint for maintaining US global pre-eminence before the 2000 presidential election. It advocates "the bold exercise of American power," but refrains from language that inflames opinion abroad.¹⁸ Shortly after September 11, Condoleezza Rice, then Bush's National

¹⁴ Henry Kissinger, "Globalisation and World Order," Speech delivered at Trinity College, Dublin, Oct. 12, 1999.

¹⁵ Haass, Richard. 2000. "Imperial America." *Foreign Affairs*, Nov. 11, <http://www.brook.edu/dybdocroot/views/articles/haass/2000imperial.htm> (accessed May 26, 2005). Haass has moved between the Brookings Institute, the State Department and the Council on Foreign Relations.

¹⁶ While Britain used informal power more than its stereotypical image, it used force much more than as a last resort.

¹⁷ Thomas Donnelly, "Rebuilding America's Defenses. Strategy, Forces and Resources for a New Century." Washington: Project for a New American Century, Sept. 2000, pp. 1–76.

¹⁸ John Pilger, *New Statesman*, Mar. 4, 2004.

Security Advisor, asked the National Security Council "how do you capitalize on these opportunities [i.e. the attacks]?"¹⁹ For the US government, the conditions were seen as favorable for more aggressive US unilateralism, including invasions and coup attempts. These actions were justified in the US National Security Strategy, already discussed above. This doctrine for perpetual war, was a much more forthright version of already established US practice. One of the Strategy's "non-negotiable demands," is to promote "economic freedom beyond America's shores" and assert "respect for private property." In plain language, the US reserves the right to overthrow governments, for example in Venezuela and Haiti, which fail to implement US-led, neoliberal capitalism, even if such governments receive decisive electoral majorities. In contrast, current anti-imperialist movements emphasize the opposite—the importance of sovereignty and its role in realizing the will of the people.

DENATIONALISING AMERICAN ELITES

Samuel Huntington, a US establishment thinker, argues that in the US, the "central distinction between the public and elites is not isolationism versus internationalism, but nationalism versus cosmopolitanism."²⁰ He argues that involvement in globalizing processes varies according to socio-economic status. Americans as a whole are becoming more committed to their nation. Not so America's business, professional, intellectual and academic elites, who are not likely to be overwhelmed with deep feelings of commitment to their "native land." Despite the reaction to the attacks of September 11, 2001, the denationalizing of US elites will continue, he contends.²¹

Huntington outlines three types of transnational strands amongst American elites: universalist, economic and moralist. Although he does not say so, these are "ideal-types," which draw distinctions sharply for the purposes of clarification. In practice, individuals often combine elements of two or more strands. Ironically, Huntington's first example of a transnational approach, universalism, takes American nationalism and American exceptionalism to the extreme. Sakamoto perceptively writes that US "isolationism" and "universalistic interventionism" are two sides of the same coin.²² The former takes the view, "America by

¹⁹ John Pilger, *New Statesman*, Dec. 16, 2002.

²⁰ Samuel Huntington, "Dead Souls, the Denationalization of the American Elite," *National Interest* Spring 2004, Issue 75.

²¹ Christopher Lash (1995) made a similar argument.

²² Sakamoto, Yoshikazu. 2002. "The Politics of Terrorism and 'Civilization': How to Respond As a Human Being," <http://www.iwanami.co.jp/jpworld/text/civilization01.html>, accessed June 22, 2005.

itself is the world” and the latter, “make the world American.” The United States is seen to be the universal nation because of the triumph and world appeal of American society and culture. I call this the imperialist perspective. Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger voiced this position well at the 2004 Republican Party Convention. “If you believe this country, not the United Nations, is the best hope of democracy in the world...then you are a Republican!”²³ Huntington mentions no class or interest basis for those who hold this elite perspective, which he does for the economic and moralist strands. Let me fill in this oversight. Major American entertainment corporations, the military, strategic resource industries—oil and military-related business, are the most prominent actors underpinning the US universalism/imperialism camp. The military and related industries depend on US government actions and expenditures and may benefit from US unilateralism. When security clashes with liberalized trade, the imperialists tend to assert the primacy of security. “Security trumps trade.” White, Christian fundamentalists in the US interior and the South provide the strongest electoral base for imperialism.

The “economic” is the second transnational approach, held by CEOs of transnationals, Huntington contends. It focuses on economic globalization breaking down national boundaries and eroding the authority of national governments. I call this the globalism perspective. Globalism is an ideology which asserts the historical inevitability of global integration along Washington Consensus or neoliberal lines. Such interests depend on foreign investments, trade and US multilateralism. The “economic approach” has its counterpart amongst sociologists such as Ulrich Beck, who applaud the way, as he contends, globalizing capitalism is wiping out nationality. Beck (2000: 79) wrote approvingly about “the cosmopolitan gaze opening wide, empowered by capitalism undermining national borders.”

The “moralistic” view is Huntington’s third strand of transnationalism amongst American elites. It decries patriotism and nationalism as evil forces and argues that international law and norms are morally superior to those of individual nations. Moralists, according to Huntington are highly critical of the concept of national sovereignty, national identity and national pride and want them to give way to individual sovereignty. They share a universalism with the imperialist camp, but it is less an American-centric universalism.²⁴ Let me add that

²³. BBC News, Sept. 1, 2004,

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/3617130.stm>, accessed July 1, 2005.

²⁴. Often though, US moralists express a humanitarian concern in the language of “universalism.” When singers from several countries wrote their own songs for Live Aid,

prioritising individual sovereignty above that of popular sovereignty would do away with democracy, because democracy expresses the collective will of political communities, not the individual’s autonomy from democratic collectivities. The moralist view, Huntington claims, is found amongst “intellectuals, academics and journalists.” I call this the cosmopolitan perspective, a strand that is part of the tradition of liberal internationalism and has a lot in common with proponents of global civil society. I have already discussed these views.

Advocates of global civil society overgeneralize about the declining power of nations and the sovereignty of countries, and frequently imply an equality of state power in the international community. But do such rules apply to the most powerful state of all—the United States? If American unilateralism is the most flagrant exception to this rule, what purpose is served by frequent assertions about national identities peeling away everywhere and states losing their autonomy? Perhaps it is that advocates of global civil society cannot credibly hold on to their aspirations without forecasting the inevitable withering of all nations and states. Whatever the purpose, the effect of such distortions is to obscure the reality of US domination. Since 9/11 the US has looked less to multilateral bodies than before, and certainly does not treat them as being above US power.

There are crucial distinctions amongst the imperialist, globalist and cosmopolitan perspectives. The motivations for holding them differ. At the risk of oversimplification, let me suggest that Imperialists may be motivated primarily by ethnocentrism, fear of the “other,” and a desire for domination, Globalists by capitalist greed and Cosmopolitans by their abhorrence of racism / intolerance and recognition of the sanctity of the individual. Cosmopolitans approach the issue from the class sensibility of the frequent traveler who enjoys encountering unfamiliar places and frequent flyer lounges (Calhoun 2002: 888). They decry all forms of nationalism and want to diminish or end national sovereignty. Whatever their motivation, all three strands share in the revolt of elites against majorities in the world. In different ways, purposefully or not, each strand justifies the unilateral power of the US and its new kind of imperialism, and helps explain the broad political and electoral support that President Bush enjoyed in his first term.

Typologies are static conceptual frameworks. Their real test is how powerfully they explain the nature of the US imperial power and the current rise of anti-imperial nationalisms.

expressing genuine concern for famine victims in Ethiopia in 1985, only the US group phrased it as “we are the world,” in terms reminiscent of US baseball calling itself the “world series.”

THE NEW IMPERIALISM

Richard Haass argued that the US had to operate an informal empire, rather than a formal one “if only because American democracy could not underwrite an imperial order that required constant, costly applications of military power.”²⁵ The great appeal of the US Empire is that it does not look like an empire, but maintains indirect rule by influencing other states. This is also its Achilles heel. To gain support at home, US leaders appeal to American nationalism to gain support for imperial ventures and they demonise, in muted racist tones, the “other” as evil. This may work well at home, at least until Americans lose their fear and see the mounting American body counts and military costs. But in contrast to ancient Rome, which bestowed Roman citizenship on conquered peoples and thus prolonged its empire by several hundred years,²⁶ US nationalism does not extend beyond the United States. In fact, aggressive expressions of American nationalism tend to spark counter-nationalisms such as those in Iraq, Venezuela, Canada, Mexico, Nigeria or Saudi Arabia. Aggressive US nationalism also fosters counter-regionalisms, as in the European Union or MercoSur, a trading region of the southern cone of South America.²⁷

I briefly look at the nature of America’s contemporary imperialism by examining the writings of Leo Panitch, Sam Gindin and David Harvey. Each is a leading proponent of an exciting new critical literature on the “new imperialism” that has emerged since September 11. Each writer insists on the importance of political, state, and territorial explanations for understanding the new imperialism.

Canadian Marxists Leo Panitch and Sam Gindin (2004) reject major aspects of earlier Marxist formulations about the nature of imperialism, including those of Lenin and Kautsky, which, they rightly argue, were based on overly economic and stagist assumptions of capitalist progress and crises. Gindin makes several points.²⁸ First, while the American state represents American capital, its own interests demand that it also represent all capital. This leads to tensions when the two are in contradiction. In our terms, this occurs when imperialist interests clash with globalist interests.

Second, while states, especially those in the core, became distinct centers of accumulation, they were also “internationalized” by the American state and

²⁵. Haass, op. cit.

²⁶. Walden Bello, “The Economics of Empire,” *New Labor Forum*, Jan. 4, 2004.

²⁷. Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay established MercoSur in Mar. 1991.

²⁸. Sam Gindin “Sovereignty and Empire,” *Canadian Dimension*, July/Aug. 2003.
http://www.canadiandimension.mb.ca/v37/v37_4sg.htm

American capital, as they entered the other states economically, politically, militarily and culturally.

US capital became internal to their social formations and undermined allegiance to “national capital.” It is the internalization of American corporations abroad which has prevented the sort of inter-imperial rivalry which led to the First World War. Instead, home-grown capital has looked to the American state for protection, especially when it invests in the Global South. The mission of other states came to include responsibility for reproducing at home, the conditions for global capitalism, including treating foreign corporations as if they were domestic ones and by supporting and implementing international corporate rights agreements.

Third, institutional relationships had been densest between the core and their subordinate colonies in the days of formal empires. These weakened and now the densest institutional ties shifted to those within core capitalist countries. This change led to convergence within the capitalist core and the continuation, in general, of the qualitative gap with the Global South.

Fourth, “dominant as the US was, it was not omnipotent. The American state could only rule through other states.” I develop this point further because, as Gindin states, it means “the transformation of global capitalism will ultimately depend on the transformation of social relations nationally.”²⁹ This opens up hopeful strategies for social and political transformation because usually, solidarity ties most densely inhere at national and local scales (Imig and Tarrow 1999: 131, 124; Lahusen 1999: 190). At these scales, solidarity ties are continually formed and reformed in myriad ways. They are usually much stronger ties than those formed episodically at the transnational level around specific campaigns such as those against the WTO or for the Kyoto Accord on green house gases. Most importantly, citizens movements usually have greater leverage at the national and local levels, when a modicum of democracy exists, than at transnational levels.³⁰ Governments are more likely to respond to pressures from their own citizens, especially before elections, than to the views of foreign citizens. The latter, after all, can’t vote them out. The US goal, according to Gindin, is to turn all other countries into effective states for global capitalism and to brand those which fail to conform, rogue states. US officials see economic nationalisms as their main adversaries and try to defeat them through economic and diplomatic pressures.

²⁹. Sam Gindin, op. cit., emphasis added.

³⁰. This was evident in the successful campaigns to defeat the MAI (Multilateral Agreement on Investment) in 1998 (see Johnston/Laxer 2003:56).

When these fail, the US state tries to ruthlessly suppress them. After the Suez crisis of 1956, Panitch and Gindin contend, only the US was allowed to breach the sovereignty of other states on its own.

An additional example is the 2004 coup in Haiti, against President Jean Bertrand Aristide, who had been elected in 2000 with over 90% of the vote.³¹ Characterized as a “voluntary” abdication of power by US authorities,³² the coup was engineered by the United States and backed by France and Canada. According to Peter Hallward, Aristide reluctantly accepted “a series of severe IMF structural adjustment plans, to the dismay of the working poor, but he refused to acquiesce in the indiscriminate privatization of state resources, and he stuck to his guns over wages, education and health.”³³ The New York Times probably reflected official US thinking when they contemptuously characterized Aristide as “a left leaning nationalist.”³⁴ That label was enough to justify his ouster.

Gindin and Panitch do not focus on the politics of opposition to the US Empire, but they briefly sketch a counter strategy of seeking “democratic sovereignty” and “de-linking’ from the present order.”³⁵ Since the American empire can rule only through other states, its greatest danger, Gindin contends, is that “the states within its orbit will be rendered illegitimate by virtue of their articulation to the imperium.” In plain language, this means that the appearance of being a US puppet undermines the legitimacy of a government with its own citizens. There is not “anything like a sense of patriotic attachment to the American state amongst the citizenry of other states.” Aggressive US actions often undermine the legitimacy of other states when the latter support American projects, Gindin argues.

Opposition will centre on national class struggles, working with anti-corporate globalization and peace movements, Gindin writes. In this state-centered strategy, radical transformations of the state are crucial, so that the state develops

^{31.} The Organization of American States, which tends to be US dominated, characterized the election as unfair, but the International Coalition of Independent Observers concluded that “fair and peaceful elections were held.” Aristide claims he was forced out by US troops, a claim denied by US officials http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jean-Bertrand_Aristide (accessed Sept. 7, 2004).

^{32.} Wikipedia, “Jean-Bertrand Aristide,” accessed Sept. 7, 2004. <http://en.wikipedia.org>.

^{33.} Peter Hallward, “Why They had to Crush Aristide,” *The Guardian*, Mar. 2, 2004.

^{34.} James Petras, “Haitian Tragedy and Imperial Farce,” *Canadian Dimension*, May/June 2004, p.40.

^{35.} Quotes in this paragraph: Gindin, op. cit.

“our capacities for the deepest democratic participation.”³⁶ Successful national struggles depend on others taking up similar struggles in “nationally based internationalism” and inwardly directed development. Gindin and Panitch see the recent US turn to explicit empire as undermining its long-standing appeal of not appearing imperialistic.

Gindin and Panitch make a convincing case for the importance of the state in both upholding and undermining the power of the US Empire. The only major flaw in their argument, is that they usually equate states with nations, as in the overused and problematic formula, the “nation-state.” But popular nationalisms, those defined from below, do not always coincide with that of central states. The left nationalisms of Chavez in Venezuela and Aristide in Haiti were popular movements and state led. But the left nationalisms, as defined from below, of several other contemporary cases, such as that of the Zapatistas, English speaking Canada and Quebec, do not coincide with the boundaries of Mexico and Canada respectively.

I now turn to the perspective of the critical social geographer, David Harvey (2003: 26, 60, 79), before examining several current cases of anti-imperialist nationalisms and inter-nationalism from below. Harvey understands the new capitalist imperialism of the United States in terms of two dialectics: first, the extraction of surpluses through capitalist exploitation of labor versus the extraction of surpluses by dispossession (displacement, force, fraud, looting etc) or what Marx called “primitive accumulation.” The second is the dialectical tension between the territorial logic of state power and the capitalist logic of power based on accumulation. In contrast to Marx, who stated that dispossession was a necessary stage before the development of capitalism, in severing peasants connections to the land so that they had no choice but to become free wage laborers, Harvey argues that capitalists continue to capture a great deal of surplus value through dispossession and force.³⁷ This is still very important today, along with the extraction of surplus value through the exploitation of workers, which Marx described so well, but too single-mindedly.

In today’s terms, accumulation by dispossession entails suppression of citizens’ rights to the commons and the commodification of land, labor and

^{36.} Quotes in this paragraph: Panitch/Gindin (2004:23–24).

^{37.} Marx portrayed primitive accumulation as both original capital and the origin of the working class. For his theory of capitalist extraction of surplus value to work, there must be capital. The original capital must have come from non-capitalist sources, “previous accumulation,” in Adam Smith’s term. But, Marx discusses primitive accumulation as necessary to create a working class more than he does the creation of capital. His meaning is closer to dispossession than to origins of the first capital (Marx 1974: 668–671).

knowledge. Dispossession tends to rely more on open uses of force, fraud and oppression and less on consent than the daily, and hence more hidden and routine, extraction of surplus value from workers. Thus, Harvey provides a cogent theoretical reason why strategies for imperial domination continue in our time, despite defying the calculus of pure neoliberal capitalism by creating enormous costs for the state which must be paid for by higher taxes or huge government deficits and by awarding contracts to imperial-based corporations rather than lowest-cost bidders. This point follows the lead of writers such as Samir Amin (1974: 3) and Michael Perelman (2000), and may be Harvey's major contribution to current debates about contemporary capitalism and the new imperialism. But Harvey's discussion of the second dialectic, the tension between the logics of territory and capitalism, is more relevant to our discussion.

Harvey explains that the territorial dynamic is a political project based on the command of territory, and the mobilization of its human and natural resources. In contrast, in the capitalist logic of imperialism, the command and use of capital takes precedence. The two logics frequently clash, and one or other may temporarily gain pre-eminence. Bill Clinton's most powerful cabinet members were in Treasury, and worked closely with Wall Street, Harvey argued. The capitalist logic was dominant. In our terms, the globalism strand generally prevailed. In contrast, the government of Bush the second, has emphasized the territorial imperative—with its power base in the Defense Department, the armed forces, and the oil and military industries. "The American homeland is the planet," declared the 9/11 Commission Report (United States 2004: 362). This captures in a nutshell the imperial logic of territory.

Reserving the spoils of the war against Iraq for US corporations such as Halliburton and pushing aside pre-existing corporate interests in Iraq, those from France, Germany and China, reveals a US regime working for corporations based in the US and its allies in Iraq, at the expense of universal capitalist interests. Such blatant favoritism for corporations based on their national origins, undermines American attempts to disguise its territorial imperial ambitions in the rhetoric of universality and the conceptual fog of an American "century," rather than an American empire (Harvey 2003: 79). Favoritism and unilateralism undermine US leadership at multilateral fora such as the WTO. When security and borders "trumped trade" after September 11, 2001, it meant that the US imperial strand has been trumping the globalist one.

Harvey, the geographer, highlights the importance of the state. Despite occasional rhetorical flights of fancy from US officials, all states, even the US state, is territorially bounded and cannot encompass the world. Along with Panitch and Gindin, Harvey puts the political back into political economy and gets us away from disempowering and reified discussions about globalization as if they were anonymous and agencyless forces which cannot be stopped or changed.

But no sooner does Harvey conceptually give power to the people with one hand, he takes it away with the other. The United States is the real battleground where construction of a New Deal in the world and an alternative logic of territorial power will take place, Harvey contends. "The rest of the world can only watch, wait, and hope" (Harvey 2003: 212). This is where Harvey goes seriously off the rails. Harvey argues that the only people with power are Americans. The other 95% of us humans are mere observers, victims of whatever Americans decide. Harvey's argument is the opposite of the Gindin-Panitch perspective, which implies that the rest of the world is powerful precisely because the US must rule indirectly through other states.

Why does Harvey, the trenchant critic of the new imperialism, end up on the same side as his imperial adversaries despite the best of motives? When he applies the territorial logic of power to ordinary people, his assumptions lead him seriously astray. Harvey (2003: 133) understands very well that imperialism foists "institutional arrangements and conditions upon others, usually in the name of universal well-being." Nevertheless, he joins adversaries of imperialism in condemning popular movements for sovereignty from the US Empire because, it appears, he rejects all nationalisms, even those which are anti-imperialist. Consider the following passage: "Many elements in the middle classes took to the defense of territory, nation and tradition as a way to arm themselves against a predatory neo-liberal capitalism. They sought to mobilize the territorial logic of power to shield themselves from the effects of predatory capital." So far so good, but in the next sentence, Harvey joins his adversaries by essentialising all nationalisms as necessarily racist and reactionary. "The racism and nationalism that had once bound nation-state and empire together re-emerged at the petty bourgeois and working-class level as a weapon to organize against the cosmopolitanism of finance capital," he contended. It appears that Harvey's cosmopolitanism, his "moralistic" transnationalism in Huntington's terms, lands him in the same camp on the issue of sovereignty, democracy and class, as the "universalizing" tendencies of American imperialists and the globalism approach of corporate elites. The hollowness of Harvey's advice for the world to rely on the US left to stop US imperialism was revealed in the 2004 presidential election. Abandoning their spirited struggle from the early 1990s through and past the Battle in Seattle, most of the US left, according to James Petras, deserted principle and backed Kerry, a warmonger who pledged to put 40,000 more troops in Iraq.³⁸

³⁸. James Petras, "US Presidential Elections: A View from the Left," *Information Clearing House*, Oct. 28, 2004. <http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/article7165.htm>

IMPERIALISM SPARKS THE REVIVAL OF ANTI-IMPERIAL NATIONALISMS

George W. Bush has been the best motivator for reviving anti-imperialist nationalisms and promoting negative attitudes towards American foreign policy. Whenever he opens his mouth or invades more countries, he drives support towards national, regional and popular sovereignty abroad. Jorge Castañeda, Mexico's former Foreign Minister, confirmed this when he wrote that "across Latin America, anti-Americanism is on the rise" and that "government parties or leaders with a strong anti-US tilt are gaining ground all over the region."³⁹ The pro-American Castañeda laments the way "America's friends in Latin America are feeling the fire of this anti-American wrath." He places blame squarely on the Bush Administration's folly in Iraq. The more subtle proponents of the US empire are aware that it is not in their interests to spark sovereignty-seeking nationalisms, and their twin, bottom-up democracy abroad.

For a long time, US planners have strategized against the economic nationalism of other countries, because it threatens to strike against the most vulnerable aspect of the American, informal empire, the need to rule through other states. If those states significantly disengage from American-led, corporate capitalism, the US empire is threatened. At a Western hemispheric conference in 1945, US officials decried nationalisms in other countries. In that year, as Chomsky (1999: 21-23) notes, the US was deeply concerned with the philosophy, which was then called "the new nationalism," which was overspreading the Global South. US officials condemned the new nationalism because it operated on the heretical principle that the first beneficiaries of a country's resources are the people of that country rather than US and other foreign investors, and locally-allied elites. The new nationalism also aimed to "bring about a wider distribution of wealth and raise the living standards of the masses." Despite efforts to counter its spread, anti-imperial nationalists led the movements which successfully decolonized most of the Global South from 1947 to the mid 1960s. Most of the decolonization was aimed at freedom from control by European powers. But, anti-imperialist nationalists did not stop there. They mobilized the state and people against the "new colonialism" of America's informal empire and that of other Northern powers. The result was 336 takeovers, or deglobalizations, of transnational corporations around the world in the first half of the 1970s (Stopford et al. 1991: 121).

³⁹. Jorge Castañeda, "George W. Bush and America's Neglected Hemisphere," *Project Syndicate*, June 2004.

The rising tide of economic nationalisms scared elites in the US and elsewhere in the Global North. In response, some founded a number of neoliberal organizations which soon became very influential in the Thatcher-Reagan era. One of the most prominent of these was the Trilateral Commission, set up in 1973 by David Rockefeller, Zbigniew Brzezinski, and others from transnational corporations, banks, government, academia, the media, and conservative labor, to create ruling-class partnerships in North America, Western Europe, and Japan (Sklar 1980: 2). The Trilateral Commission identified an "excess of democracy" and "nationalisms" as the two main roadblocks to realizing ruling class aims. The perspective was very similar two decades later, in 1996, at the height of the US neoliberal globalism agenda. Lawrence Summers, Clinton's Deputy Secretary of the Treasury saw that the biggest danger to what he called "Washington's Bretton Woods globalist consensus," coming from "separatists," his term for nationalists.⁴⁰ Five years before September 11, 2001, Summers argued that promoting integration around the world under US leadership was America's deepest security interest. Those who did not follow the US lead were deemed "separatists," a term which presaged its later cousin, "rogue states."

It is easy to see why economic nationalisms outside the US have been seen by US corporate and government leaders as so dangerous to their interests. They threaten both the imperial and globalist strands of US power. Foreign nationalisms can halt US access to strategic resources such as oil. They can also menace American corporations guaranteed access to cheap foreign resources and low waged labour. Non-American nationalisms also tend to undermine the legitimacy of appeals to the universal rights of investors over and above those based in the national political community. When economic nationalism combines with popular democracy as in Chile under Allende and Venezuela under Chavez, citizens' demands may clash with those of foreign and domestic corporate investors.

Richard Haass asserts that immature democracies "are all too prone to being captured by nationalist forces."⁴¹ This is why Haass argues that promoting democracy, while laudable, should not be a fundamental goal of US foreign policy, "given that other vital interests often must take precedence." Democracies have been established only in Western Europe, North America and Oceania for some time, he notes. Haass' allusion to immature democracies then, can only mean those in the Global South and Eastern Europe, areas in which corporate

⁴⁰. Lawrence Summers, "America's Role in Global Economic Integration," *Treasury News*, 1996, pp.1-8.

⁴¹. Haass, op. cit.

capitalism is, in many places, not very widely supported, and where the US often has little compunction about violating national sovereignty. How unfortunate then, that David Harvey (2003: 211–212) should conclude his otherwise brilliant book with the admonition that “Across-the-board anti-Americanism from the rest of the world will not and cannot help.”

CASES OF LEFT NATIONALIST RESISTANCE

On the contrary, what has been called “anti-Americanism” is an important component, but only one part, of the much broader phenomena of a system of containment of the US Empire and of struggles for sovereignty and democracy. These are happening at both the level of states and at the level of citizens’ movements. The American failure to get UN Security Council approval to invade Iraq resulted not just from the undocumented case for Iraq’s possession of weapons of mass destruction, but also because France, Germany and other states were determined to reassert a balance of power for what Walden Bello called “the defense of national and global security against the American threat.”⁴² As well, the anti-corporate globalization movement, the peace movement, various movements for national and popular sovereignty, as well as the Islamist political project⁴³ threaten American hegemony in two ways. First, proponents from these movements have either taken power in several states or will likely take power and boost opposition to US world domination at the level of states. Secondly, both progressive and reactionary movements, in their different ways, delegitimize the US bid for hegemony.

Our focus is on the role of popular movements for national and regional sovereignty, which, in some places, are also associated with peace movements.⁴⁴ Recent movements for sovereignty do not yet appear to be heading for revolutionary class transformation, although several are advancing the cause of social democracy and deepening democracy. But such movements have helped weaken

⁴⁰ Lawrence Summers, “America’s Role in Global Economic Integration,” *Treasury News*, 1996, pp.1–8.

⁴¹ Haass, op. cit.

⁴² Walden Bello, “The Reemergence of Balance of Power Politics,” *Focus Web*, Oct. 2, 2003. <http://www.focuesweb.org/publications/2003/reemergence-of-power-politics.htm>

⁴³ The old term was “pan-Islamic.” The Islamist political project is to unite all Muslims into a single state. It is conceptually anti-nationalist, but ironically has attracted mainly Arab nationalists (Dyer 2004: 84).

⁴⁴ Yonip. <http://www.yonip.com/main/phpBB2/viewtopic.php?t=416>

recent US imperial ambitions on several fronts. First, the US threat to pre-emptively invade and occupy a handful of “rogue states” had been part of US officials bravado before invading Iraq. The possibility and scope of such invasions became less likely afterwards, though by no means impossible. The US and its allies have far too few troops to effectively control the situation in Iraq. They would get even more bogged down if they widened their “pre-emptive strike” agenda.

Second, rather than increase the supply of oil to keep world prices low and undermine OPEC’s revival, the invasion of Iraq led to major disruptions of supply from that country, due to the persistent destruction of pipelines by insurgents. Lower supplies from Iraq contributed to the jump in world oil prices in 2003–2004.

Third, the invasion of Iraq led to a major fracturing of America’s military alliances with NATO partners Germany, France and Canada, as well as with Mexico and Chile, key Latin American allies on NAFTA and the FTAA (Free Trade Area of the Americas). The latter countries sat on the UN Security Council in 2003 and each rejected the US–British plan to invade Iraq. A survey in the summer of 2004 amongst 35 countries, found that only 19 per cent agreed that President Bush’s foreign policy made them feel better about the US, while 53% agreed it made them feel worse. Respondents feeling most strongly this way were in Germany (83%), France (81%), Mexico (78%), China (72%) and Canada (71%). Venezuelans (34% worse–33% better) and Nigerians (34% worse–36% better) were divided. Iraqis and Chileans were not surveyed.⁴⁵ The survey did not ask about the effects of the aggressive shift in US foreign policy on respondents’ views on global integration under US leadership or desire for greater sovereignty for their own country, but election results in several countries demonstrated such a relationship. Opposition to the build up of a US-led invasion of Iraq, helped swing national elections in 2002 in Germany and South Korea to Presidential candidates who opposed aggressive US policies. Two year later, Spaniards threw out a government which had put troops into occupied Iraq.

Fourth, American unilateralism also undermined support for the US neo-liberal agenda at the World Trade Organization and other international fora. The emergence of the Group of 20 countries, led by Brazil, India, South Africa and China, at the Cancun meetings of the WTO in 2003, was the first time in over 20 years that there had been a strong and united, independent voice from the Global South. It was reminiscent of the relative independence in international affairs of the “non-aligned” movement from the Global South during the

⁴⁵ GlobeScan, “Poll of 35 Countries Finds 30 Prefer Kerry, 3 Bush” <http://www.GlobeScan.com>; accessed Sept. 8, 2004.

days of Cold War rivalry between the Soviet Union and the United States. It is not a coincidence that the group of 20 emerged as a bloc when there was a serious split between the United States and key allies in Western Europe.⁴⁶ Having one very powerful and bullying hegemon does not invite dissent amongst weaker countries, but a serious disagreement amongst great powers does. While their demands do not fundamentally challenge the tenets of neoliberalism, the Group of 20 Southern countries halted the US agenda for the “Washington Consensus” at the WTO, and that of America’s sometime ally, the European Union, on terms which would have benefited the North over those of the South. The US cannot pursue unilateral interests in military strikes and for US trade protection, and at the same time, receive widespread multilateral support on these issues. The palpable increase in anti-Americanism since the US shifted to a more aggressive strategy after September 11, 2001 and positive support for sovereignty at national and regional levels helped move several US allies away from support for US Empire causes.

If the American Empire’s greatest vulnerability rests on opposition in other states, it is worth briefly examining competing currents within the chief exporters of oil to the US. The invasion of Iraq was not only about oil. Certainly, the US was determined to use shock and awe after 9/11 to show the world the consequences of opposing Washington. As well, long-standing, economic nationalist policies in Western Asia had shut out foreign corporations from profitable investments in the region. Iraq could act as a demonstration project for privatization and for foreign, particularly American, capital. In addition, an aggressive, pro-Israel faction within Bush’s cabinet wanted to remove Saddam Hussein, the most outspoken supporter of the Palestinian struggle among Arab regimes. When arguments about weapons of mass destruction and Saddam’s support for Al Qaeda, proved false, the American—British justification for invasion shifted to promoting democracy, an unlikely primary goal, given the history of US actions to install dictators in Iran, Iraq and prop up autocratic Saudi Arabia.

However, oil was undoubtedly a big factor in the invasion. As Linda McQuaig shows, Iraq has huge potential for low cost, and therefore exceedingly profitable, oil in the range of \$15 billion to \$50 billion per year (McQuaig 2004: chap. 2). Iraq’s oil has been explored very little and has great strategic importance. While Saudi Arabia is the world’s largest exporter, its regime is brittle and vulnerable to overthrow. Fifteen of the 19 airplane hijackers on September 11, 2001 were Saudis.

⁴⁶. Walden Bello, “How Iraq has Worsened Washington’s Strategic Dilemma,” *Interpress Service*, Apr. 2004.

If a regime hostile to the US took control over Saudi oil, it would be very useful for the US to have Iraq as a reserve source, controlled largely by US corporations. The US has long asserted its right to access Middle East oil. In 1980, President Jimmy Carter issued a declaration on the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, later called the “Carter Doctrine.” Going far beyond Afghanistan, Carter declared that “an attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of America, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force.”⁴⁷ While the US military was killing many civilians during the invasion of Iraq, and were destined to kill many more afterwards, Donald Rumsfeld, the US Secretary of Defense, invented a novel interpretation of war crimes. Rather than point to civilian casualties from the illegal invasion, Rumsfeld warned Iraqis that setting oil fields on fire would be punished as a “war crime” (McQuaig 2004: 6).

In the summer of 2004, the top six suppliers of oil to the US were, in descending order, Canada, Saudi Arabia, Mexico, Venezuela, Nigeria and Iraq. We briefly examine the role of nationalism in popular and governmental opposition to US imperial influence and domination in these oil-exporting countries.

Oil and nationalism make a potent, emotive mix because oil is often seen as not just another part of the economy, but essential to the “patrimony” of the country or region. This is especially true in areas which have been subject to colonial domination and resource exploitation, with foreign-owned corporations receiving sweet-heart deals and draining the areas’ riches. Oil has often been seen as a salvation which can lead to an independent, prosperous future.

When President Lázaro Cárdenas nationalized the foreign-owned oil companies which dominated the Mexican resource in 1938, it was immensely popular. Mexico was the first developing country to takeover an entire industry controlled by corporations from the developed world. Timing helped the bold Mexican move. The impending war with Germany favored non-intervention by the US and Britain.

Mexico’s example inspired economic nationalism in many places. Riding on a wave of popular nationalism and anti-colonialism, Muhammad Musaddiq, nationalized Iran’s oil industry in 1951. Coming at the height of the Cold War, international conditions were unfavorable and Musaddiq’s government was overthrown by a US and British supported coup (Cottam 1988). But the mix of oil and economic nationalism continued to bubble forth. Although Egypt had little oil, Nasser’s nationalization of the Suez Canal in 1956 and of Mobil and Shell’s oil

⁴⁷. State of the Union Address. Jan. 23, 1980.

interests in Egypt the following year, gave him nationalist credentials throughout the Arab world. The formation of OPEC in 1960 (Terzian 1985: 1–35), the massive nationalizations of the oil industry in Western Asia, Venezuela, and even in Canada in the 1970s and early 1980s, were all in some way influenced by Mexico's example.

Most oil nationalisms of the 1970s were effective, popular mobilizations to elicit sacrifice for the common good. But in all the cases referred to above, oil nationalisms were top-down, state-led affairs, even if they were backed by popular support. Activist states were part of mainstream thinking in that "Keynesian," post-colonial era. The issue now is whether, after 25 years of neoliberal dominance, current nationalisms around oil, or more broadly, nationalisms in oil exporting countries, are state-led, elitist projects, or whether they are initiated by popular democratic mobilization. There is no reason to assume that these are top-down nationalist projects. Nationalisms have a wonderful, chameleon ability to change colors because competing versions tend to serve distinct interests and adopt different nuances according to the class that poses it and the moments in which it is posed.⁴⁸ In the past quarter century, elites in most countries have publicly embraced neoliberalism and globalization, explicitly rejecting nationalism. Thus today's nationalisms tend to come from below.

Current cases of nationalism in oil-exporting countries represent a spectrum on the continuum from core to periphery. They cross several cultural divides, represent varying levels of popular political influence and display varying levels of state autonomy and capacity. Iraq resembles, at least temporarily, the old imperialism of direct occupation. Venezuela is an example of the new imperialism, in which, rather than invade, the US backed an unsuccessful coup in April 2002, orchestrated by Venezuela's elites. Mexico is a tough case for guaranteed American access to oil. Mexican control, embodied in Pemex, the publicly-owned company, is a cherished part of Mexican nationalism. Attempts to privatize it or parts of it, have met with popular mobilizations and failed so far.

Iraq presents the strongest immediate challenge to the US Empire, where all of the latter's stated objectives except one, have failed. The one US success is the overthrow and jailing of Saddam. But, as Immanuel Wallerstein argues, the US has been defeated on all other objectives.⁴⁹ These include the following. The US goal of controlling the world's oil has been set back by continual insurgent attacks which rupture the pipelines. Rather than limit the ability of "Islamic terrorists"

⁴⁸. Pierre Vilar, "On Nations and Nationalism," *Marxist Perspectives* 2(1): 25.

⁴⁹. Immanuel Wallerstein, "What has the U.S. Achieved in Iraq?," *Commentary* 145, Sept. 15, 2004. <http://fbc.binghamton.edu/145en.htm>

to attack the US, the invasion allows them to use Iraq as a base and polls show, has increased popular sympathies with the Islamist political project in Muslim countries.⁵⁰ Saddam had refused to allow Al Qaeda and other Islamic terrorists to operate out of Iraq. The US has failed to create a stable, pro-American government in Iraq, and provide a shining example of democracy to help it spread regionally. Rather than making friends, the occupation has badly cut support for US policies in Western Asia. Finally, rather than boost the credibility of US power to act as a deterrent elsewhere, "it is hard to be awesome when the great US armed forces are held in check by a popular resistance in Iraq," as Wallerstein puts it.

The occupation of Iraq, did something, at least temporarily, which hundreds of years of co-habitation had not. It united Shiites and Sunnis in a common quest to expel the invader, in a war of national liberation, as John Pilger put it.⁵¹ That is a very apt term, which almost disappeared from use during the recent period when globalization myths reigned supreme. W. Andrew Terrill, professor at the (US) Army War College, echoed this view when he stated that "most Iraqis consider us occupiers, not liberators."⁵² Iraq's liberation movement appears to be led by Islamic traditionalists, who are anything but democratic. It is not led by a Gandhi or Mandela, a major reason it is dismissed by Western progressives. But that does not mean that the international community should oppose self-rule by Iraqis.

For decades, Saudi Arabia has been the key supplier of oil in Western Asia and the regime's current instability greatly worries US authorities. Saudi politics are largely invisible to outside observers. Official policies are set by internal politics within the royal House of Saud and in their interaction with insurgent opponents. Its supply of very cheap oil has been so immense, that it can readily increase or decrease exports and help stabilize the world price. Saudi Arabia has long been the United States strongest Arab ally. The understanding between the two parties, has been plentiful exports of low-priced, Saudi oil and an undermining of OPEC, in return for US non-interference in Saudi Arabia's brutal dictatorship. This understanding started to unravel after the attacks on the twin towers

⁵⁰. Pew Research Center, 2004. "A Year After Iraq War. Mistrust of America in Europe Ever Higher, Muslim Anger Persists," <http://www.people-press.org>, accessed June 22, 2005.

⁵¹. John Pilger, "Iraq is a War of National Liberation," *The New Statesman*, Apr. 15, 2004.

⁵². Sidney Blumenthal, "Far Graver than Vietnam," *The Guardian*, Sept. 16, 2004.

in New York, carried out mainly by Saudi insurgents. These insurgents appear to be motivated by the twin forces of the Islamists and Saudi nationalism.

Venezuela has spearheaded oil independence in the Global South. In 1960, Venezuela initiated the formation of OPEC (The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries), and President Hugo Chavez campaigned effectively to revive OPEC in 2000. The US failure in Iraq contributed to the US failure at “regime change” in Venezuela. High world oil prices, in part caused by reduced exports of oil from Iraq after the invasion, helped Hugo Chavez, the fiery left-nationalist President, win a presidential referendum in Venezuela in August 2004. Revenues from high prices allowed Chavez to balance internal class forces by maintaining payments to foreign creditors, subsidies and low-interest loans to local capitalists, while redistributing much of the huge oil rents to the poor.⁵³ Many other internal factors were involved in Chavez’ victory, including his successful campaign in 2002–3 to wrest control of the state-owned oil company from the elites, who had insulated its revenues from state coffers. Chavez’s popularity combines an appeal to workers, the working poor and the dark skinned, with appeals to national sovereignty and South American autonomy from US domination, and a moral, middle-class style crusade against corruption.⁵⁴ Venezuela displays a potent combination of state-led, left nationalism with massive mobilization from below in support.

Canada is the only developed country amongst the US’ major suppliers of oil and is currently America’s greatest foreign source for both oil and natural gas. Controlling oil in a developed country calls for more subtle means than coup attempts. US domination over Canadian oil was threatened in the 1970s and early 1980s, when Canada boldly asserted oil independence. Exports of Western Canadian crude were reduced to the United States and diverted to Eastern Canada, which had previously relied on imports. The Canadian price was below the world price, but exports to the US were priced at world levels. Canada set up PetroCanada, a government-owned entity partly modeled after Pemex, which bought several large, foreign-owned corporations. The Canadianization of the foreign owned oil industry, coincided with oil nationalism in many OPEC countries and was immensely popular at first, backed by an astonishing 84% of Canadians in 1981 (Doern and Toner 1985: 107). The Canadian independence

⁵³ Gregory Wilpert, “A Historic Date for Venezuela, Latin America and the Left,” *ZNet*, Sept. 15, 2004.

⁵⁴ James Petras, “President Chavez and the Referendum: Myths and Realities,” *Rebelión*. Aug. 26, 2004 <http://www.rebelion.org/noticia.php?id=4135>.

initiative was reversed in the Canada-US Free Trade Agreement (FTA) of 1989, which mandated that while the agreement was in place, Canada must export its current proportion of oil to the US even in the event of shortages in Canada. The so-called free trade agreement, the pioneer neoliberal corporate rights agreement upon which NAFTA and the WTO were modelled, removed barriers to foreign ownership and control over energy and removed price differentials between oil for Canadian and US markets. Mexico refused such an oil sharing agreement when it signed NAFTA in 1994.

While oil nationalism in Canada is currently quiescent because of popular assumptions about NAFTA inevitably continuing, Canadian nationalism directed at independence vis-à-vis the United States, has continually bubbled up from below. The main issues have been around defense of public, not-for-profit, services such as universal health care and around non-participation in US military adventures abroad. Opponents of for-profit health care use the terms “privatization” and “Americanization of health care” interchangeably. An example occurred during protests in May 2000 at the Alberta Legislature against a bill which allowed private, for-profit hospitals. Several thousand people gathered nightly to make noise, so that legislators could hear the protests. The crowds periodically broke into singing “O Canada.” When the national anthem is sung as a protest song against elite schemes, it is clear that this is nationalism from below.

Popular opinion and street demonstrations in Canada also manifested themselves around not joining the US “coalition of the willing” in invading Iraq. The US could not persuade either of its NAFTA partners to back its plans for Iraq. Popular opposition in Canada and Mexico helped nudge their respective governments into distancing themselves from the US imperial agenda. Subsequently, the decisions of their respective governments to stay out of Iraq were very popular and part of national pride in their respective countries. Such opposition could be characterized as nationalist or as internationalist. In fact, it seems to have been a combination of both.

NATIONALISMS, INTER-NATIONALISM AND DEMOCRACY

Nationalism has such a variety of meanings and a history of association with most kinds of politics that it is facile to be categorically for or against “it.” There is no it. There are only them. Despite its nominal form, “nationalism” is not an “ism” like socialism or liberalism. It has no set of theoretically coherent propositions, nor a universal vision, a major reason intellectuals treat it so condescendingly (Anderson 1991: 14). Nationalisms associated with the political right are often profoundly racist, exclusionary, authoritarian and expansionist, while many

left, inter-nationalist nationalisms seek the deep democratic transformation of global corporate capitalism through close ties to anti-imperial, socialist, feminist, ecological, anti-racist and union movements. Rather than generating their own content, all nationalisms get most of their ideology from the friends they keep (Lloyd 1995).

Exclusivist nationalisms, I argue, are best counteracted, not through disengaged cosmopolitanism and abstractions called global civil society or world society, but through positive, inter-nationalist nationalisms. By positive nationalisms, I do not mean the civic nationalisms of the French and American revolutions. Positive, inter-nationalist nationalisms come closest to inclusiveness, embracing deep diversity including solid recognition of the rights of minority nations within the country, being substantively democratic, refraining from expansionism and supporting inter-nationalism from below, in the people-to-people sense of the socialist internationalist tradition (for a fuller discussion see Laxer 2001: 15). The main struggles in each nation and country involve turning corporate-oriented, pro-empire states into citizen-oriented, anti-imperial states and to support the popular sovereignty of theirs and all other nations. As Sam Gindin argues, “those of us outside the US state cannot influence the American state directly. We can only act to delegitimize our own states when they support the American state. Our opposition to the sovereignty of the American state is therefore expressed by directly challenging the integration of our own state with the American empire.”⁵⁵

If capital is increasingly mobile across borders, labor is not. International migration has never come close to equaling, in relative terms, the “great migration” from Europe from the 1880s to 1914 (World Bank 2002: 10–11). Labor mobility is a basic characteristic of capitalism and much of it has been forced: indentured workers, slaves, prison labor, and political and economic refugees. People more readily emigrate to reunite with family already abroad, but most wage earners, peasants and those involved in unpaid work do not want to permanently leave their nation or country of origin, if, (and this is a big “if”), home is safe, democratic and provides decent work. Home and community have a definite place, cherished in non-market attachments.

Democracies are rooted in such territorial communities, cultures of particularity and commonwealths of immobile wage-earners, peasants and women doing unpaid, socially reproductive work. Bottom-up democracy is contingent on vibrant communities where solidarity links were formed and common memo-

⁵⁵. Gindin, op. cit.

ries were forged through citizens’ struggles and gains against specific imperial, national and local power structures. Developing social solidarity ties through real life struggles that are independent of states and the power of transnational corporations are essential to the democratic practices of citizens over rulers. So are anti-racism and international ties of social movements. But democracies need a high degree of cohesion and sense of mutual commitment. As Benjamin Barber (1995: 278) argues: “democracies are built slowly, culture by culture, each with its own strengths and needs, over centuries.” They have succeeded only in vibrant communities where there are common memories of citizens’ struggles and gains against local power structures.

NO DEMOCRACY WITHOUT SOVEREIGNTY

The issues of nationalism and democracy bring us back to the scepticism expressed at the beginning of the paper about the goal of creating a “global civil society” or “world society” in the age of the US Empire. I have made the case for alternatives, those of progressive inter-nationalist nationalisms, as current means to mobilize citizens against the US Empire and to deepen popular sovereignty. I have tried to show that such inter-nationalist nationalisms are re-emerging, within many countries, especially those which are most exposed to US domination.

In Europe and imperial countries, the discourse about nationalisms tends to be very negative for understandable reasons. The EU acts as a shield, blocking direct US domination of member states and diminishing the need to struggle for sovereignty against an outside empire. Then there is the Nazi past and the current threats from racist right movements and parties, which are designated as nationalist. Current nationalisms in imperial powers, such as those in the US and Britain, are rightly associated with domination, reaction and prejudice. It is within these contexts, that all nationalisms and even national sovereignty, are opposed in principle. Anti-EU movements such as those in Norway and Sweden, which work for greater national sovereignty, are often led predominantly by left, internationalist forces. But they avoid the nationalist label.

What is the effect of transposing such negative and overgeneralized understandings to nationalist movements in other parts of the world? It means opposing the ability of often the most effective, and rooted political communities to democratically determine their collective lives. It means undercutting the most effective opposition to unilateral rule by the US Empire. In their drive to overcome racism and prejudice, cosmopolitans overlook or undervalue the democratic implications of gutting popular sovereignty. Such sovereignty movements must link up, promote mutual understanding, radically redistribute the world’s

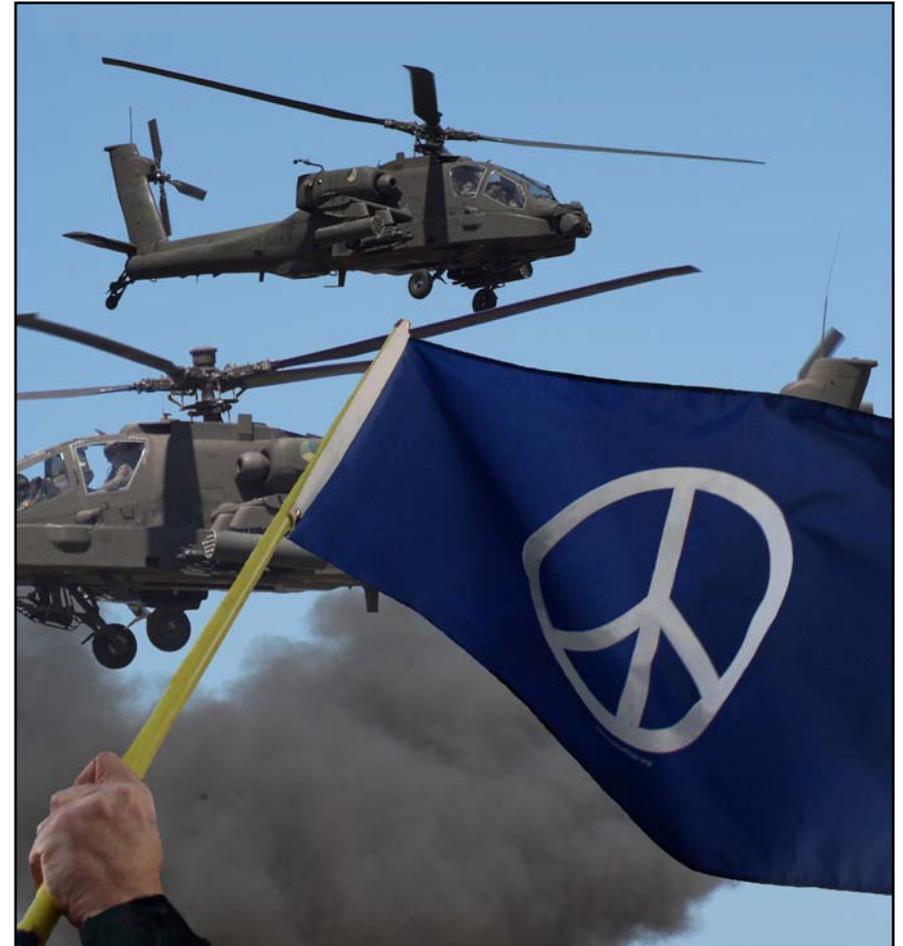
wealth, address global environmental challenges like climate change, and end racism in all its forms. But, it is naive to think that a united global civil-society of six billion people can act in concert to control the power of corporations or contain imperial America.

Talk about “globalization from below” is misleading. Ordinary people cannot be organized and coordinated globally the way elites who meet at Davos and Bilderberg can. Nor would it be desirable. The future world many of us want is one of great, cultural and national diversities, in which distinct peoples, on a scale much smaller than all humanity, have the sovereignty to decide their own futures. Deep, inclusive democracies and equality are the goals, national and popular sovereignties are necessary means.

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