

The Real Axis of Evil*

by George Katsiaficas

Long before North Korea announced in October 2002 that it possesses nuclear weapons, Bush's infamous "axis of evil" speech was a clear sign that his administration had made North Korea a target.¹ In early 2002, the US not only labeled North Korea part of an "axis of evil," it also threatened to use nuclear weapons against it.² In the first year and a half of the Bush presidency, there were not any serious talks between the US and North Korea. Moreover, under pressure from right-wing congressmen, the Bush administration reevaluated the 1994 U.S. agreement with North Korea, known as "The Agreed Framework."³ Although most Americans remain completely unaware of it, in 1994 the US came very close to bombing North Korea unilaterally. "The Agreed Framework" narrowly averted a new Korean War that in the estimation of the US military commander in Korea would have killed more than the 3 million people who lost their lives from 1950-1953.⁴

Alongside its looming war against Iraq and hostile actions against North Korea, Bush and Co. are today waging wars in Afghanistan, the Philippines, and Colombia; they arm Israel and permit it to overrun and destroy Palestinian towns and cities; they are

* This is a revised version of a speech given at an international peace conference in Seoul, June 21, 2002.

¹ On November 25, 2001, the Sunday *New York Times* featured a story entitled "After the Taliban, Who? Don't Forget North Korea."

² In March 2002, a Pentagon review of US nuclear policy recommended that the US threaten to use nuclear weapons against 7 countries—including North Korea

³ North Korea agreed to shut down and eventually dismantle its nuclear weapons program. In return, the U.S., Japan, and South Korea agreed to provide the North with two light-water nuclear reactors for generating electricity. These reactors were never built.

⁴ See "Engaging North Korea," by Jimmy Carter, *New York Times*, October 27, 2002, p. wk13.

encouraging the revival of German and Japanese militarism; they are attempting to overthrow the Chavez government in Venezuela; they have withdrawn from the International Criminal Court, scrapped the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty and the Kyoto protocols, refused to sign a new international protocol to the 1972 biological warfare treaty, and dramatically increased military spending. Most ominously, Bush adopted a new “first-strike” strategic doctrine, replacing decades of US policies of “deterrence” and “containment.”

When I say Bush and Co., I do not refer only to one man and his administration. It is the system that is the problem. No matter who sits in the White House, whether George Bush or Al Gore, militarism has long been and—until we change it—will remain at the center of US foreign policy and economic output. The US Congress has been little better than Bush: among other things, it rejected the nuclear test ban treaty signed by 164 nations. Currently, with Congressional funding, the US now has over 250,000 troops in 141 countries—and they are seeking new bases and attempting to install more troops in places Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. In Northeast Asia, 100,000 US troops are stationed indefinitely.

In a phrase, military madness defines the mentality of the top US decision-makers. We cannot therefore regard recent threats as empty. We need a huge international peace movement mobilizing millions of people across the world in order to stop US military madness before it results in renewed wars. In the following remarks, I hope to clarify the historical character of this disease and recommend a possible cure.

THE HISTORICAL PATTERN OF VIOLENCE

Before they became organized as nation-states, white European settlers in America committed genocide to steal the land of indigenous peoples. Beginning in the 16th century, peripheral areas were rapidly assimilated into a capitalist world system based in Europe. Whether in what is now Mexico, Peru or the US, the pattern was generally the same. Besides massacring tens of millions of Native Americans, European colonialists enslaved tens of millions of Africans to build up their new empires. Estimates of the number of Africans **killed** in the slave trade range from 15 to 50 million human beings, and that does not count tens of millions more who were enslaved. From its earliest days, the US practiced biological warfare. Lord Jeffrey Amherst, after whom towns in Massachusetts, New York and New Hampshire are named to this day, was celebrated because he devised a scheme to rid the land of indigenous people without risking white lives. He gave Native Americans blankets carrying smallpox virus, thereby wiping out entire villages under the guise of helping them. In the century after the American Revolution, nearly all native peoples were systematically butchered and the few survivors compelled to live on reservations. Have people in the US apologized for and renounced such violence? Unfortunately, the answer is no. Indeed, towns are still named for Amherst, and one of the fanciest restaurants near prestigious Amherst College is called the “Lord Jeff.”

In 1848, the US annexed almost half of Mexico in the name of expanding “Anglo-Saxon democracy” and “Manifest Destiny.” Even though dozens of US soldiers were executed under orders of General Zachary Taylor for refusing to fight against Mexico, US

expansionism accelerated. At the end of the 19th Century, as manufacturers looked for international markets, the US (led by men experienced in the Indian wars) conquered the Philippines. Six hundred thousand Filipinos perished from the war and disease on the island of Luzon alone. William McKinley, who went on to receive a Nobel Prize, explained that “I heartily approve of the employment of the sternest measures necessary.” The director of all Presbyterian missions hailed the slaughter of Filipinos as “a great step in the civilization of the world.”⁵ For Theodore Roosevelt, the murders in the Philippines were “for civilization over the black chaos of savagery and barbarism.” In 1900, Senator Albert Beveridge of Indiana, summarized the colonialist mentality: “We are the ruling race of the world...We will not renounce our part in the mission of our race, trustee, under God of the civilization of the world.” One cannot help but wonder precisely what the definition is of the “civilization” to which he refers.

Although Mark Twain and the Anti-Imperialist League attempted to change US policy, imperial ambitions were far too strong. Between 1898 and 1934, US Marines invaded Honduras 7 times, Cuba 4 times, Nicaragua 5, the Dominican Republic 4, Haiti and Panama twice each, Guatemala once, Mexico 3 times and Colombia 4 times. In 1915, Over 50,000 Haitians were killed when US troops put down a peasant rebellion.⁶ Marines were sent to China, Russia, and North Africa—in short, wherever the masters of US imperialism needed them.

With the Great Depression of 1929, militarism became more than an instrument of

⁵ Noam Chomsky, “The United States and Indochina: Far From an Aberration,” in Douglas Allen and Ngo Vinh Long (editors), *Coming to Terms: Indochina, the United States and the War* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991) p. 165.

⁶ See the illustrated book by Joel Andreas, *Addicted to War: Why the US Can't Kick Militarism* (Oakland: AK Press, 2002).

colonial conquest: it has emerged as the primary solution to stagnation in the world economy. Since 1948, the US has spent more than \$15 trillion on the military—more than the cumulative monetary value of all human-made wealth in the US. (More than the value of all airports, factories, highways, bridges, buildings, machinery, water and sewage systems, power plants, schools, hospitals, shopping centers, hotels, houses, automobiles, etc.!) If we add the current Pentagon budget (over \$346 billion in fiscal 2002) to foreign military aid, veterans' pensions, the military portion of NASA, the nuclear weapons budget of the Energy Department and the interest payments on debt from past military spending, the US spends \$670 billion every year on the military—more than a million dollars a minute.⁷ The US military budget is larger than the world's next 15 biggest spenders combined, accounting for 36% of global military expenditures. Here, the main problem is the US but nearly two-thirds of global military spending occurs outside the US. Recently Japanese and German militarism are being revived, and in South Korea, the military budget has been increased by 12.7% for 2003 to more than \$14 billion.

US MILITARISM AND ASIA

Unless we ignore geography, we must understand that Bush's "axis of evil" is entirely in Asia. This is no accident. Lest we forget history, it is in Asia where in the last half century the US slaughtered over 5 million people in regional wars so distant from the US (and Russian) mainlands that historians refer to this period as the "Cold" War. In a mere 3 years, between 3 and 5 million people were killed in Korea. Although thousands of

⁷ Andreas, p. 39.

civilian refugees were massacred and the US used biological weapons,⁸ it still will not admit to nor apologize for these actions. Rather it moved the killing fields to Indochina, where it used more firepower than had been used in all previous wars in history combined, killing at least 2 million people and leaving millions more wounded or made into refugees. Chemical warfare, euphemistically called Agent Orange, was systematic and deadly. Over 20 million gallons of Agent Orange were sprayed on Vietnam. For every man, woman and child in South Vietnam, the US dropped more than 1000 pounds of bombs (the equivalent of 700 Hiroshima bombs), sprayed a gallon of Agent Orange, and used 40 pounds of napalm and half a ton of CS gas on people whose only wrongdoing was to struggle for national independence.⁹ The kill ratio in these two Asian wars was about 1000 times that of wars in Central America and even higher for the more than 200 other US military interventions during the “Cold War.”

Recently, East Asia’s importance as a market for military goods has been increasing dramatically. After the end of the Cold War, when demand for such products leveled off in North America, Western Europe, and the former Soviet Union, arms suppliers looked to other markets. US arms exports rose from \$8 billion in 1989 to \$40 billion in 1991. British arms exports rose nearly 1000% from 1975 to 1995 (when they reached \$4.7 billion). In 2001, global military spending (conservatively estimated) rose 2% to \$839 billion, 2.6% of world GNP or about \$137 for every man, woman and child on the planet. According to the International Institute for Strategic Studies: “Between 1990 and 1997,

⁸ International Scientific Commission on Biological Warfare in Korea and China, *Report*, 1952. available from Koreatruthcommission@yahoo.com.

⁹ *Vietnam Documents*, edited by George Katsiaficas (New York: ME Sharpe, 1992) p. 146.

East Asia's share of global defence imports by value almost tripled, from 11.4% to 31.7%. In 1988, only 10% of US arms exports went to the region. By 1997, this had increased to 25%.”¹⁰ Within East Asia, South Korea's share of military spending in 1997 (\$14.8 billion) was nearly as large as the combined total spending of Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand.¹¹ In the wake of the Asian financial crisis, military buildups were delayed, but Malaysia's recent purchase of three French submarines for \$972 million, South Korea's decision to acquire 40 F-15's for \$4.23 billion and its rapidly increasing military budget are indications of military spending growing in the region. According to Kim Kook Hun, a major general and director of the South Korean Defense Ministry's arms control bureau, 7 of 17 countries in the world with nuclear weapons or weapons programs were in the Asia/Pacific region, as were 16 of 28 with missile programs, 10 of 16 with chemical weapons and 8 of 13 with biological weapons.¹²

Even more alarming is the revival of Japanese militarism. Its annual defense spending is now second only to the US, amounting to some 5 trillion yen (about \$40 billion), and international deployment movement of its military, banned since 1945, has resumed. Five warships have currently been dispatched to the Arabian Sea. In April 2002, Ichiro Ozawa, leader of Japan's second largest opposition party, stated that Japan could easily make nuclear weapons and become stronger than China. More recently, Shinzo Abe, deputy chief cabinet secretary, publicly explained that Japan could legally possess “small” nuclear weapons. Barely a week later, Yasuo Fukuda, chief secretary of the Japanese

¹⁰ Tim Huxley and Susan Willett, *Arming East Asia* (International Institute for Strategic Studies/Oxford University Press, 1999) p. 23.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

¹² Michael Richardson, “Fears spread that other Asia nations will seek nuclear arms,” *International Herald Tribune*, June

cabinet, said that Tokyo could review its ban on nuclear weapons. Rather than reaping a peace dividend with the end of the Cold War, East Asia is poised for what could become a regional nuclear arms race and massive buildup of conventional forces.

The need for global peace movements is strongly indicated by the above dynamics. Without massive and militant peace movements, political elites will be unconstrained to use military spending to prevent global stagnation, aggrandize national power and enrich large defense contractors. One countertrend can be found in the Filipino example of expelling the US from its huge base at Subic Bay, an important trendsetter for anti-militarism movements. But as we watch US troops conducting military operations in the Philippines today, we must reflect upon the urgent need to cure the disease of military madness, beyond temporarily fixing the symptoms. Strategic popular movements need to inject long-term vision into moments of crisis. Necessary for the health of the existing world system, militarism is a scourge that squanders humanity's vast resources and threatens to destroy our hard-won accomplishments. The impetus for militarism resides in the capitalist world economic system, and it is there that peace movements must focus if a cure for the disease is to be found.

THE REAL AXIS OF EVIL

The key recognition here is that the real axis of evil is composed of the World Trade Organization, World Bank, and International Monetary Fund. Like their predecessors in the colonial world, these international institutions masquerade as bringing people more freedom. "Free" trade, IMF "bailouts" and World Bank "assistance," however, too often

6, 2002, p. 5.

mean more poverty for people at the periphery of the world system—not more freedom. Historically there is an inverse relationship between the expansion of prosperity and democracy in the core of the world system and poverty and dictatorship in the Third World, a dialectic of enslavement meaning that greater “progress” in Europe and the US spells increasing misery in the periphery.

Conventional wisdom holds that increasing core democracy should mean more enlightened policies towards the Third World and improvement in the conditions of life for all human beings. One exponent of such conventional wisdom is Francis Fukuyama, whose argues we have reached the “end of history”—that contemporary European/American political institutions are at the desired endpoint of human development. Fukuyama believes that the battle of Jena in 1806 (when Napoleon defeated the Prussian monarchy) marks the consolidation of the liberal democratic state, and that “the principles and privileges of citizenship in a democratic state only have to be extended.” For Fukuyama, “there is nothing left to be invented” in terms of humanity’s social progress.¹³

For Fukuyama, the spatial extension of the principles of the French Revolution means that the rest of the world will likewise experience progress. Evidence abounds, however, that the extension of those principles has resulted in increasing dependency and poverty for the Third World. The American and French revolutions helped propel the nascent world system centered in Europe into international domination, concentrating military power in nation-states and accumulating the world’s wealth in the hands of giant corporations and banks. The worldwide penetration of the economic and political system

¹³ See his article “The End of History,” *Foreign Affairs* 1988, p. 5.

produced by the American and French revolutions has, to be sure, resulted in rapid economic development and some of the most important forms of political liberty that our species has enjoyed. For a majority of its people, the US is arguably the freest society in the world. The dialectical irony of history means that it is simultaneously a white European settler colony founded on genocide and slavery as well as on freedom and democracy. But what are the costs of living in such a society? Slavery in the Third World? Ecological devastation? Military madness?

The dynamic of increasing political democracy in the North giving rise to intensified exploitation in the South has a long history. French colonialists in Vietnam provided a particularly graphic example when they placed a copy of the same statue of liberty that France gave to the United States (the one now in New York harbor) atop the pagoda of Le Loi in Hanoi. Le Loi was the national leader who in 1418 had helped defeat the Mongols when they invaded Vietnam. Today he is still regarded as a national hero, a man whose mythology includes Hoan Kiem (Returned Sword) Lake, where the golden turtle that gave him the magical sword he used to drive the Mongols out subsequently reappeared to reclaim the sword—a story not unlike that of King Arthur in British history. The placing of a statue of liberty on Le Loi's pagoda certainly was an affront to the Vietnamese, one which symbolizes how the spatial extension of the principles of the French Revolution can be an affront to the Third World.

French colonialism was brutal and deadly. Indochinese recall that dead human beings fertilize each tree in the country's vast rubber plantations. During the great war against fascism, French exploitation of Vietnam was intensified. In a famine from 1944 to

1945, at least a million and a half, possibly two million, Vietnamese starved to death in the North (where the population was under 14 million), at the same time rice exports to France were fueling its liquor industry, a blatant disregard for human life in the midst of the war against “fascism.” In American popular culture, President John Kennedy is often associated with the word “Camelot” and remembered for his beautiful wife. Tragically, it was he—one of the most “liberal” US presidents in history—that ordered massive use of Agent Orange in Vietnam. Similarly, the strongest French imperial expansionists were staunch anti-clerical “progressives” who regarded themselves as the ideological heirs of the French Revolution. They were “enlightened” liberals, much like John Kennedy and members of his administration were “enlightened” liberals who believed they were carrying forth in the tradition of the US revolutionary heritage. As Minister of Education, Jules Ferry defied the Catholic Church in France by making education universal, secular, and obligatory. He was later the first French prime minister to make colonialism and its intensification his principle platform. He felt that it was France’s duty to civilize inferior people, and on May 15, 1883, a full-scale expedition was launched to impose a protectorate on Vietnam.¹⁴ Conservatives in France objected to this colonial expansion. As Vietnam disappeared, subsumed under the names of Tonkin, Annam, and Cochin China, even the identity of Vietnamese people was attacked as the French referred them to as Annamites. Here we see the spatial expansion of the liberal values of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution—values which became the basis for France’s “civilizing mission” (“*Mission civilisatrice*”), just as the American revolution was later turned into “Manifest Destiny.” It

¹⁴ See *Greater France, A History of French Overseas Expansion* by Robert Aldrich (New York: St. Martin’s, 1996) p. 98.

was the same French troops, bringing with them “civilization,” who in 1885 burned the imperial library at Hue, which contained ancient scrolls and manuscripts and was a repository for thousands of years of oriental wisdom.

In 1831 Alexis de Tocqueville, a disciple of the French Revolution and author of the famous book, *Democracy in America*, watched in Memphis, Tennessee the “triumphant march of civilization across the desert,” as he put it. As he observed 3,000 or 4,000 soldiers drive before them “the wandering races of the aborigines” that is, those Native Americans who were lucky enough to survive “Jacksonian democracy” (named after a man who ordered his men to exterminate “bloodthirsty barbarians and cannibals”), Tocqueville was impressed that Americans could deprive Indians of their liberty and exterminate them, as he put it, “with singular felicity, tranquility, legally, philanthropically, without shedding blood,” and most importantly “without violating a single great principle of morality in the eyes of the world,” the European world, one should say. “It was impossible,” Tocqueville said, “to kill people with more respect for the laws of humanity.”¹⁵ Fukuyama’s spatial extension of the liberal principles of the French and American revolutions could not be more eloquently enunciated.

In the name of civilization and liberal democracy, the British destroyed the communal ownership of village land in India, structures which had sustained local culture for centuries, a communal tradition surviving invasions by Persians, Greeks, Scythians, Afghans, Tartars, and Mongols, but which could not, as Fukuyama would insist, resist the perfection of the liberal principles of the British state. Under British enlightenment, large

¹⁵ See Chomsky, *op. cit.*

estates developed and peasants were turned into sharecroppers. In 1867 the first fruits of British liberalism appeared: In the Orissa district of India alone, more than one million people died in a famine. This was a famine that, I might add, was not indigenous to India, with its “backward” traditions (according to European values), but famine brought by the “enlightened” liberalism of European democracy, by the spatial extension of the principles of “democratic” capitalism.

Under direct influence of its great revolution, France proclaimed a crusade against Algerian slavery and anarchy and, in the name of instituting orderly and civilized conditions, was able to break up Arab communal fields of villages, lands untouched by the “barbarous” and “unenlightened” Ottoman rulers. As long as Moslem Islamic culture had prevailed, hereditary clan and family lands were inalienable, making it impossible for the land to be sold. But after fifty years of enlightened French rule, the large estates had again appeared and famine made its appearance in Algeria.

CIVILIZATION OR BARBARISM?

I have indicated how European capitalist “civilization”—especially its most “enlightened” forms—has systematically slaughtered native peoples and created a centralized world system that demands militarism as a key organizing principle. If this were simply past history, we could all breathe a sigh of relief. Unfortunately, these very tendencies are today stronger than ever. According to the United Nations, in the 1990s more than 100 million children under the age of five died of unnecessary causes: diarrhea, whooping cough, tetanus, pneumonia, and measles—diseases easily preventable through

cheap vaccines or simply clean water. UNICEF estimates that some twenty to thirty thousand children under the age of five die of easily preventable diseases *every day* in the Third World.¹⁶ Kofi Anna recently declared that as many as 24,000 people starve to death every day.¹⁷ Altogether one billion people today are chronically malnourished, while austerity measures imposed by the International Monetary Fund have resulted in a drop in real wages in the Third World and declining gross national products in many countries. While 70 percent of the world's wealth is in the hands of 20 percent of its population, one in ten human beings suffers starvation and malnutrition.

Despite—or more accurately, because of—the spatial extension of liberal values in the period after World War II, there were four times as many deaths from wars in the forty years after World War II than in the forty years prior to World War II. While the world spends something like a trillion dollars a year on its militaries, one adult in three cannot read and write, one person in four is hungry, the AIDS epidemic accelerates and we are destroying the planet's ecological capacity to sustain life. The absurdity and tragedy of such a world is made even more tragic and absurd by the ignorance and lack of concern of the wealthiest planetary citizens for the continuing plight of human beings in the periphery.

In such a world, of course, there can be no lasting peace. As long as the wretched of the earth, those at the margins of the world system, are dehumanized, branded as terrorists, and kept out of decision-making, they have no alternative but to wage war in order to find justice. In order to remedy this irrational system, we need to redefine what civilization means. We know what it is not for the billion or more “wretched of the earth” for whom

¹⁶ “UN Says Millions of Children Die Needlessly” by Elizabeth Olson, *New York Times*, March 14, 2002, p. 13.

¹⁷ “‘Time to Act’ on Hunger, Annan says,” *International Herald-Tribune*, June 11, 2002.

increasing planetary centralization and dependence upon transnational corporations, militarized nation-states and the international axis of evil mean living hell. With the passing of time, it becomes more obvious that this same “civilization” squanders humanity’s wealth, destroys traditional cultures wholesale, and plunders the planet’s natural resources.

The structural violence of an economic system based upon short-term profitability is a crisis that all peace and justice movements need to address. Even if some of the above irrationalities of the present system are reduced, the structural unreasonability of the system will be displaced to other arenas. As long as the vast social wealth remains dominated by the “enlightened” and “rational” principles of efficiency and profitability, there will be militarism, brutal degradation of human lives along with unbridled destruction of the natural ecosystem; there will be mammoth socially wasteful projects, for example tunnels in the Alps and Pyrenees, bridges connecting Denmark and Sweden or Prince Edward Island and the Canadian mainland, redundant World Cup stadiums—rather than constructive use of humanity’s vast social wealth. A few hundred multinational corporations today control this vast social wealth through the most undemocratic of means and for ends benefiting only a few. According to the logic of “enlightened” neoliberal economics, these corporations must either grow or die. I say, let them die! Only a fundamental restructuring of the world system can lead us toward an ecologically viable life-world, one in which we decentralize and bring under self-management OUR vast social wealth.

If we ourselves a brief moment of utopian speculation (today more difficult than ever in the aftermath of the carnage of September 11) few people would disagree with the

desirability of the complete abolition of weapons mass destruction—not just nuclear, chemical and biological weapons but also so-called conventional ones like fighter jets, bombers, landmines and artillery. Acting strategically, global peace movements should be directed toward the abolition of militaries, not their reform. In a world where even peaceful means of transportation are turned into weapons of mass destruction, nearly everyone would consider such a proposition foolish, but with major weapons systems in the hands of governments, how else can the powerless fight back? Only through the universalization of non-military conflict resolution will humanity's future fate improve beyond our abysmal reality. Of course, the destruction of the world's militaries would undoubtedly send the global economic system into a disastrous depression—all the more reason for us to discuss it as part of the need for a completely different world system (or anti-system).

Popular strength resides in forging a new international civil society that can ultimately delegitimize militarized nation-states and socialize predatory transnational corporations. The transformation of Eurocentric capitalist civilization requires an international movement. Lessons we can learn from past liberation movements are central here. A few years ago, Vo Nguyen Giap, military commander of Vietnamese forces against the French and Americans, summarized the reasons why the Vietnamese were able to defeat the US. Among these, the anti-war movement inside the US was prominent. For years, Vietnam cultivated this movement until it grew into a force with which they coordinated their battlefield tactics.¹⁸

¹⁸ We all owe Vietnam a debt for helping preserve the principles of liberty and democracy. It was their sacrifice and resistance that preserved the idea of national independence, and it was the resistance to the war inside the US that both helped preserve principles of individual liberty and prevent direct US military intervention in Central America in the 1980s. If the truth about US massacres during the Korean War had

Building the International Peace Movement

While the need for constraining the US military never been more necessary, much of the world peace movement supports the war against “terrorism.” The Germans Greens, whose founding principle is pacifism, served a key role in legitimating the US war in Afghanistan (to say nothing of the first foreign deployment of German combat troops since Hitler—a real boost to German imperial ambitions). Historical parallels can be found in the German Social Democrats support of the Kaiser in World War I and in the French Communist Party’s support for the war in Algeria. In the US, many progressives mirror the Bush administration’s comparison of bin Laden and Hitler, a mistaken analysis that makes any offensive action seem proper. Incredibly, the main US opposition to Bush’s plans to make war on Iraq come from the Joint Chiefs of Staff—the top men in the Pentagon, who have waged “a determined behind-the-scenes campaign” to question “Iraq hysteria” among senior Bush administration officials.¹⁹

The Bush administration has a unique window of opportunity to have its way with the world. Not one government outside Iraq (as far as I know) opposed the war in Afghanistan. While more are against escalation of the war to Iraq, I suspect they would fall in line if the US acted unilaterally. For 11 years, the US and Britain have steadily bombed Iraq, and if their coming escalation brings a quick and easy victory, Bush and Co. would be so headstrong that taking on North Korea might not be inconceivable. Russia and China might acquiesce, particularly since they would probably be left untouched while Japan and

been known, how many Vietnamese lives would have been saved?

¹⁹ Thomas E. Ricks, “Military trying to head off Iraq strike,” *International Herald Tribune*, May 25-26, 2002, p.1.

South Korea (China's main regional competitors) would be largely destroyed—and have to be rebuilt. Since 1929, war has been the primary solution to stagnation in the world economy. With the high tech sector appearing to have run its course for now, Japan and Germany stagnant, the stock market suffering its largest losses in decades and industry contracting, what avenue besides war is there for renewed growth?

The US could have responded to September 11 in a manner quite different than it has. Why not withdraw troops from Saudi Arabia and compel justice for Palestinians? Neither of these measures would create any great hardship for the US. Could it be that the US economy, dependent more than ever on war for its health, demands military action? Or is it a form of military madness? I am reminded of the Sean Connery movie, *The Rock*. Taking over Alcatraz Island, a group of army officers aims weapons of mass destruction at San Francisco, demanding \$100 million for the destitute families of servicemen who sacrificed their lives in secret wars. Although millions of people might be killed, the authorities never even discuss paying the \$100 million (a paltry sum). In the current crisis, it similarly appears the US government has not considered its “enemies” grievances—despite the very real dangers a new war poses for people all over the world.

It is no accident today that the peace movement of 2002 is strongest in Korea and Asia. From recent experiences, Korean people understand the vital need for peace and are in a position to play a vital role. A non-Islamic country with a citizenry that is deeply concerned about war, Korea can have a voice that speaks to governments and activists all over the world. When people here act in significant ways, governments take note and activists in the US and Europe are affected—even inspired to act. Asian activists would be

even more impacted. The short-term goal should be to mount a peace offensive that will spread internationally and compel Bush and Co. to behave responsibly.

Rather than relying on “liberal” governments to constrain US militarism, we can use extraparliamentary tactics to isolate the US—just as the international movement turned the apartheid regime in South Africa into an international pariah. Wherever in the world Bush or senior US officials travel, protests should be as militant and massive as possible. Recent grassroots rebellions in Argentina, Mexico and Nigeria are indications of the high consciousness people have developed and are ready to act upon.²⁰ In this context, militant protests can help unleash a global peace offensive that will compel governments to stop war by raising their costs and disrupting domestic tranquility.

In the United States, where regime change is most urgently needed to prevent use of weapons of mass destruction and secure world peace, forces of extraparliamentary opposition were galvanized by the Seattle anti-WTO protests, but the forces of reaction now command overwhelming majority allegiance. Important countertrends exist, evidenced by the 200,000 or more people who marched in Washington at the end of October and the popularity of Michael Moore and Noam Chomsky. Gradually breaking the hegemony of reaction will proceed from small steps to leaps. In this process, young people and students may be in the best position to act boldly.

Since 1968, the international character of popular movements has been recognized as a primary factor in their emergence and impact. Two more recent examples of the spread of movements across borders, of their mutual amplification and synergy, of the movement’s

²⁰ See Amory Starr and Jason Adams, “Anti-globalization: The Global Fight for Local Autonomy,” *New Political Science* 25:1 (March 2003).

overwhelming popularity causing regime change (when most successful) and regime adjustments (in less extraordinary times) can be found in the disarmament movement of the early 1980s in the US and Europe and in the wave of democracy movements in Asia in the mid and late 1980s.²¹

From a handful of nuclear disarmament protesters in the 1970s, a powerful peace movement changed world history in the 1980s, helping end the Cold War and alter the world balance of power. The movement grew from years of grassroots initiatives in a variety of arenas,²² but once it became visible, it grew incredibly rapidly, bringing hundreds of thousands of people into the streets of New York, Paris, London, Rome, Brussels and Bonn. The situation in Northeast Asia today is very similar to Europe in the early 1980s, when the US and USSR stationed intermediate range Pershing and SS-20 nuclear missiles there. The new missile deployment meant that the US and USSR could have fought a “limited” nuclear war in Europe without Russia or the US being directly attacked. The emergence of the Green Party in Germany and the presence of so many demonstrators helped Gorbachev convince Russian generals that Western Europe would not attack them—giving the USSR the space to change peacefully, let go of its East European buffer states and end the arms race.

Today in Northeast Asia, a regional war could be waged without directly affecting the US. In the worst-case scenario, US policymakers may choose to have a “limited” war in which Koreans fight Koreans. Minimal US casualties would make such a war more

²¹ These are examples of what I call the “eros effect.” See www.eroseffect.com.

²² For a full analysis, see my book *The Subversion of Politics: European Social Movements and the Decolonization of Everyday Life*, published in 1997.

palatable to the American public.²³ So long as the US exercises operational command over the South Korean armed forces, the outbreak of war is more likely given Bush's "first-strike" policy. I know of no other country that permits its military to be governed by a foreign power. Demanding Korean control of its military is not only reasonable; it could also unite nearly all Koreans—including military leaders. Such a demand would encourage North Korean leaders to reengage the South in dialogue as well as sending a signal to the US that war in Korea is unacceptable.

Whatever short-term demands peace activists make, the movement in Korea has an important international role to fulfill. Koreans have long inspired other countries in Asia. In building the Korean movement for democracy in the 1980s, leaders sought to find ways to unite people in the struggle—and the answer was to call for direct presidential elections. In June 1987, after hundreds of thousands of people took to the streets for 19 consecutive days, that demand was realized. Movements for democracy soon blossomed in many Asian countries: Burma 1988, China 1989, Tibet, Taiwan, Nepal 1990, and Thailand 1992. These revolts were related to each other and today are all treated as forms of "people power," a term coined in the Filipino revolution of 1986, itself inspired by the Kwangju Uprising of 1980. To inspire such internationally prominent actions for peace should be our goal. If there is something we can learn from prior waves of social movements, it is that actions mutually amplify each other in different parts of the world.

Projecting strategic goals means to continually insist upon a ban on weapons of

²³ Here is one pragmatic reason why keeping US troops in Korea may actually serve as a deterrent to war. The US would be less likely to use weapons of mass destruction in Korea if it were to mean many American soldiers would also die in the ensuing conflict. Paik Nak-chung first brought this insight to my attention.

mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons, and a pledge of no first strike by the US. As the movement grows, the role of conscious elements within it should be to keep long-term goals should be in the forefront: a nuclear-free world, a world free of weapons of mass destruction, a world where peace and justice can freely exist; demilitarization of the economy; the use of the vast social wealth for human needs, not the profit needs of giant transnational corporations; development of autonomous regions where people can freely choose how to use their resources. Together we can accomplish these goals if we persevere and build sturdy bridges of international solidarity and cooperation.