



DAG HAMMARSKJÖLD FOUNDATION

What Next?

Draft thematic paper

Challenging the Empire: A New Internationalism

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In January 2004, Vice-President Dick Cheney struck an aggressive, not-quite-defensive tone at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, telling the gathered glitterati that “if we were a true empire, we would currently preside over a much greater piece of the earth’s surface than we do. That’s not the way we operate.”

From the narrowest vantage point, that was true. While asserting what the *New York Times* called an “unapologetic defense of the administration’s threat to use military force,” Cheney was right in implying that however old-fashioned the current U.S. global crusade for dominion, it necessarily reflects the changed modern realities of the early 21st century.

The powerful peace and justice movement that has exploded around the world to challenge the U.S. war in Iraq has become not only global in composition and in outlook, it has consciously become a movement against empire. It is building a new internationalist civil society, based on a rejection of U.S.-driven unilateralism and militarism, and a belief that “another world is possible.” The movement now encompasses more than popular mobilizations – it has taken into itself governments, at different times and for different reasons, and the United Nations itself. In that expansion, it has been transformed. The empire it challenges, however, bears much resemblance to empires of old. Both that movement, and the political and military forces it challenges, are the subjects of this paper.

Of course the drive towards power and empire is not itself a new phenomenon. The rise of a single global super-power is not unprecedented – the empires of Rome, the Mongols, the Byzantines, the Ottomans, the British all had their day in the sun. The claims of empire – exemption from international law, enforced loyalty of the vassal states, exclusive rights to the perquisites of power – remain constant today.

The Bush administration, with its militarized unilateralism, was from its unelected ascension to office bent on establishing a global force more powerful, with greater military reach, deeper cultural influence, bigger economic clout, and a greater political, strategic and diplomatic capacity than any empire that has ever existed in history.

THE IRAQ WAR AND THE STRUGGLE FOR EMPIRE

Certainly the war in Iraq was about oil. It was certainly about expanding the U.S. military presence throughout the region, it was about creating a "weapon of mass distraction" to sway the U.S. elections in November 2004, and it was about undermining the United Nations and international law. But most of all the war was about power. And that is why the cavalier unilateralism that shaped the run-up to the war reflected such extraordinary hubris. It was the arrogance of absolute authority, the arrogance of those who claimed that because the U.S. had the power of domination, that it somehow held the *right* to dominate. That because the U.S. military and nuclear arsenals dwarf all others in the world combined, that using those deadly instruments was somehow okay. That because it was Americans

wielding that overweening might, that somehow the power itself was inherently, congenitally right.

Certainly the September 11th terror attacks facilitated the capture of legitimacy and public acquiescence to the newly defined exigencies of empire. But Washington's drive for consolidation of a U.S. empire traces its roots not only to the expansionist dreams of the neo-conservative cabal that serves as the operational center of the Bush Junior White House, but to ancient and not-so-ancient history itself.

What is new, relative to those earlier empires, is the staggering level of globalized power that Washington has concentrated in the new imperial center. Military reach beyond the dream of any Roman legionnaire, extending indeed across the very skies. Access to economic wealth exceeding even the most predatory of King Leopold's colonial thieves. Diplomatic control more relentless than that of the entire coterie of Queen Victoria's striped-pants emissaries. And cultural influence far surpassing the imagination of the most refined Athenian philosophers.

But what is also new is that, imperial overstretch aside, the vast reach of this newest empire is still not sufficient to withstand the challenges of the 21st century. The U.S. empire was able to invade Iraq and capture Saddam Hussein, but its military occupation and ruthless privatization plan face a huge crisis of legitimacy. That crisis showed up in the popular demands for immediate elections, which Washington first opposed, only later giving in to pressure for elections orchestrated by the leading Shi'a clergyman Ali al-Sistani. The lack of legitimacy continued through the Bush administration's false claims that they were "transferring Iraqi sovereignty" to the so-called "interim government" in September 2004, when in fact 150,000 U.S. troops remained occupying the country. And still later, in January 2005, the lack of legitimacy reappeared even after the elections in Iraq, in which (despite the extraordinary bravery of millions of Iraqi men and women determined to take the risk of voting, the majority for parties committed to ending the occupation), the new "transition government" remained tainted by the occupation.

The U.S. empire was willing to go to war virtually alone even in the face of unprecedented UN opposition, but its war-shredded alliances have proved difficult to mend in Bush's second term. Despite the efforts of Bush and second-term Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice during their sequential European tours in early 2005, transatlantic relations remain frayed. The Bush-Rice diplomatic efforts to soften European opposition to Washington's Iraq policy were significantly derailed as Europe recognized the unilateralist message inherent in Bush's appointment of the aggressive right-winger, John Bolton, as his chosen ambassador to the United Nations.

The U.S. empire continues its uncritical economic, military and diplomatic support for Israel's occupation of Palestine, but neither the Palestinians themselves nor others in the region are persuaded that the "disengagement" from Gaza, (matched as it is by plans for U.S.-endorsed Israeli annexations in the West Bank as well as continuing Israeli brutality) means an end to the occupation or regional stability across the Middle East. The U.S. empire exerts significant domination over the

trajectory of corporate globalization centered in the World Trade Organization, but even massive U.S. efforts to reshape the WTO could not prevent the Brazil-led Group of 21 from yanking the Cancun 2003 summit of the WTO out from under Washington's thumb.

And most of all, the U.S. empire remains challenged by what the *New York Times* called "the second super-power" – global public opinion, the mobilized cross-border civil society that led the three-part international opposition to George Bush's war. It was just two days after the massive protests of February 15, 2003, that brought ten to thirteen million people into the streets of more than 665 cities across the globe, when "the world said no to war," that the *Times* acknowledged the new reality. There are "still two super-powers on the planet," the front-page article proclaimed. "The United States, and world public opinion."ⁱ

The fact that that second super-power challenging Washington's power includes the very citizens of the empire itself represents a key distinction between the U.S. empire and those of its predecessors. Perhaps remembering that earlier empires were brought down from outside, in fire and blood and with great violence, citizens of the U.S. have joined with their international counterparts in global civil society, a host of governments across the globe, and the United Nations itself, in a conscious effort to bring down this newest empire from within, using the tools of non-violence and democracy.

As a result, the White House's efforts to impose an age of *Pax Americana* remain so far unfulfilled.

GULF WAR I: SETTING THE STAGE FOR POST-COLD WAR HYPERPOWER

Fourteen years ago, on the eve of what would be the first U.S. war against Iraq, the great Pakistani scholar Eqbal Ahmad addressed a New York teach-in broadcast live on a nation-wide radio hookup. On that singular night, people gathered to listen in living rooms, union halls and church basements across the United States, a moment's respite from the round-the-clock campaigning to try, however fruitlessly, to prevent what was already understood to be an inevitable war.

Eqbal spoke of the history of war, describing how for four hundred years before this century Europe and the United States had fought wars in and for and over their colonies, and how they had devastated Africa and the Arab world, Latin America, and China and the rest of Asia. Whole populations were slaughtered, whole civilizations were destroyed. Yet no one in the colonial countries spoke of those wars.

Only in the 20th century, Eqbal reminded us, those colonial powers fought against one another, and then they called it a world war and gave it a number; they called it World War I. And then some years later they fought each other again, and they called it World War II. Yet still they did not talk about the earlier colonial wars

that had wiped out populations around the world. And Eqbal looked at those sitting in the audience in New York and spoke to all of those listening around the country, and said "the history of our time is studded with unrecorded holocausts."

When Washington launched its war against Iraq a few days later, when U.S. bombers lit the sky of Baghdad's night, it was clear that this war would not go unrecorded. CNN was there as the war began, broadcasting the bombing around the world. In fact the Security Council itself, and the Secretary General of the United Nations, had to learn from CNN that night that the war had actually started. The Council was in session that night - not on the crisis in Iraq, but on the question of Palestine. A reporter came downstairs to the Security Council chamber where a group of journalists waited. He came running, shouting: "there's something happening in the sky over Baghdad; we don't know what it is, but there is something. It's on CNN." And the Council ambassadors, and the secretary-general, all had to learn from CNN and a UN security guard who overheard the tumult, that Washington had taken the world to war.

INTERVENTIONS AND "HUMANITARIAN" WARS

The U.S. war and the years of brutal economic sanctions that followed would do nothing to eliminate the repression that had characterized Iraq for twenty years, repression that had been not only tolerated but succored, armed, financed and supported by the United States. But the war would lead to the destruction of much of Iraq's—and civilization's—ancient past, undermine its modern present, and threaten its future generations.

Throughout the 1990s, the use of U.S. military power increased, often couched in the human rights-friendly language of "humanitarian intervention" or multilateralism." The deployment of U.S. troops in Haiti, in Somalia, in Bosnia, in Kosovo, as well as the ruthless decisions to ignore growing crises deemed less than strategically important, such as the Rwandan genocide, only served to increase the militarization of U.S. foreign policy and undermine the potential for non-military solutions.

Those years, with Bill Clinton's claims of "assertive multilateralism" masking the reality of a growing unilateralist trajectory, set the stage for the abandonment of international law, rejection of multilateral institutions and instruments, and the emergence of a consciously asserted law of empire.

When the Bush Junior administration first took power in 2001, an escalating phase of unilateral militarism began. It included the political legitimation of unilateralism, with specific calls for "unsigning" treaties (the International Criminal Court), abandoning others already in process (the Anti-Ballistic Missile treaty, the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty), and rejecting those in the works (the Kyoto protocol). But in that early phase of the Bush Junior presidency, the world was not prepared to sit back and allow the U.S. to stand as a colossus over the peoples and nations of the world. A global fight-back began. The United Nations emerged as a key venue for the ascendant international challenge to the U.S.: Washington

lost its seat on the UN Human Rights Commission (May 2001), failed to keep its position on the UN drug enforcement agency, and proved unable to orchestrate a global walkout to the anti-racism conference in Durban, South Africa in August 2001.

THE DRIVE TOWARDS EMPIRE: 9/11 AND BEFORE

But just a few days later came September 11, 2001. And in the aftermath of the horrific terrorist attacks the White House found a new capacity to implement the long-standing goals of the empire builders at the center of the Bush administration. Centered particularly in the offices of the civilian leadership of the Pentagon and that of Vice-President Dick Cheney, the neo-conservative ideologues and old-reconstructed Cold Warriors had for years asserted the legitimacy of a unilateral, military thrust to advance U.S. power around the world. Throughout the 1990s, while still out of office, many of these individuals had drafted a set of working papers outlining a call for increasing the military power of the U.S. In September 2000 as a group calling itself the Project for the New American Century, they issued the "Rebuilding America's Defenses" plan, codifying their call for a massive increase in defense spending, ratcheting up military capacity to fight several major theatre wars simultaneously, sidelining the United Nations, and relying on military rather than diplomatic relations with other countries.

The paper did not reflect new ideas, particularly. But until September 11, 2001, its premises were deemed too fanatical to win acceptance among the American people. The Bush administration's response to the destruction of the World Trade Center would change that reality, making the implementation of the extremist plan possible for the first time.

It was as if the Bush White House had taken up the Athenian cause reflected in the Melian dialogues of ancient Greece. Athens, afraid that its fragile new democracy might be imperiled, sent emissaries to the island of Melos announcing its intention to seize the island to increase Athens' strategic reach. The Melians protested, saying "Athenians, you are known for your justice; what about justice?" They were told simply, "Justice? There is only justice among equals." For Athens, international law would apply; for Melos, it would be the law of empire.

An updated version of the Dialogues can be seen today, in the words of Viet Nam-era war leader Robert McNamara. Admitting the failures of the policies and the war over which he presided, McNamara went on to acknowledge that "the United States is today the strongest power in the world, politically, economically and militarily, and I think it will continue to be so for decades ahead, if not for the whole century. But I do not believe, with one qualification, that it should ever, ever use that power unilaterally – the one qualification being the unlikely event we had to use it to defend the continental U.S., Alaska or Hawaii."ⁱⁱⁱ The bottom line, for McNamara, was a personal *preference* for abjuring unilateral military power – he made no mention of U.S. accountability to the requirements of international law and the UN Charter that prohibit such assertion.

From the first U.S. Gulf War, the United States was strategically and militarily unchallenged anywhere in the world, by any combination of forces. The U.S. imposed a kind of unilateral power – visible in both the U.S. control of the war and in the blatant diplomatic, economic and political pressures brought to bear on Security Council members to assure their votes authorizing the war – that the world had not seen for a long time. The unilateralism continued in the 13 years of economic sanctions against Iraq, imposed and maintained in the name of the United Nations, but created and supported and kept in place by one government – that of the United States. That tendency of Bush Senior and Clinton, to impose unilateral U.S. force in the name of the United Nations, became a decade-long habit broken only by the aggressive assertion of a defiant unilateralism characteristic of Bush Junior's ideologues.

But the UN itself would continue to pay a high price.

THE UNITED NATIONS AND BUSH'S WAR ON IRAQ

On August 19, 2003, a huge truck bomb exploded outside the United Nations headquarters at the Canal Hotel in U.S.-occupied Baghdad. The killing of 22 UN staff members demonstrated in a visceral and powerful way the price the global organization would pay when U.S. pressure forced it to submit to a role subservient to Washington's strategic control and military aggression. The UN compound was not targeted because Iraqis hate the United Nations. Despite anger at the UN's role in implementing U.S.-imposed economic sanctions for more than a decade, most Iraqis were clear that it was the U.S. and Britain, not the international institution as a whole, that were responsible for their suffering. Rather, the 2003 attack was a direct response to the UN's role within, and supportive of, the U.S. occupation of Iraq. The international and Iraqi humanitarian workers, and the UN as a whole, made an easier, more accessible target than the Pentagon's tanks and humvees patrolling Baghdad's streets. The United Nations and its staff became the ultimate victim of U.S. policy.

The UN paying a price for U.S. domination was nothing new in the organization's history, though the August 2003 attack was certainly the most horrific example. But just a little less than a year earlier, the situation had, for a time, begun to look a little bit different. In September 2002, the second President George Bush had, like his father, gone to the UN to demand that the international community endorse his war against Iraq. But unlike Bush Senior, whose bribes and threats won him Security Council acquiescence to war, Junior failed to win UN support. Instead, for an extraordinary 8 ½ months, the UN stood defiant of Washington's war cries, and took its place alongside world-wide protesters and a shifting assortment of governments at the center of an unprecedented global mobilization for peace.

Despite enormous U.S. pressures, the Security Council itself stood firm, rejecting the U.S.-UK call for war. The powerful governments of France, Russia and Germany stood resolute against the looming U.S. war. Their reasons reflected a combination of domestic political pressure and their own mostly narrow national interests, as well as fear of a rising U.S. drive towards empire that would undermine

their own global power. Partly as a result of their support, partly because the UN itself had become a center of opposition to the U.S.-UK war drive, the six uncommitted countries on the Council -- smaller, weaker, poorer -- were able to say yes to the demands of their deeply anti-war citizens, and defy Washington, saying no to Washington's war.

The pressure expanded from Council members alone to most member states of the United Nations as a whole. In a maneuver which appears to have been used against many other countries, the U.S. ambassador to South Africa sent a letter to the deputy foreign minister explicitly demanding that South Africa reject any effort to even discuss Iraq in the General Assembly. Washington's language was harshly threatening: "Given the current highly charged atmosphere, the United States would regard a General Assembly session on Iraq as unhelpful and as directed against the United States. Please know that this question as well as your position on it is important to the U.S." But still the "uncommitted Six" refused to budge.

On February 14, 2003, at the height of the Security Council crisis, the Council met to hear the reports of the two UN arms inspectors in Iraq. While Washington and London anticipated descriptions from the UNSCOM and IAEA officials that would provide clear justification for their war, they didn't get it. What the Council heard provided no evidence of imminent threat, no excuse for war. French Foreign Minister Dominique de Villepin, responding to the relentless U.S.-UK pressure for UN endorsement of war, said that the "United Nations must be an instrument of peace, and not a tool for war." His words were answered by an unprecedented thunderous ovation across the Council chamber.

The U.S. was playing hardball, but the Council continued its defiance. And that time, at least, they got away with it. The U.S. had threatened dire consequences but the sky did not fall in. The UN acted as both venue and player in the global resistance. It was a breathtaking moment.

The next day, people around the world, in 665 cities from South Africa to Brazil, from Iceland to Chile, marched in protest. The world said No to war. In New York, half a million rallied in the freezing cold outside UN headquarters. At a meeting with UN Secretary General Kofi Annan just before the rally began, South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu told his fellow Nobel Peace Laureate that the small delegation was there representing those demonstrating for peace all over the world. And, he added, "those of U.S. marching against the war today in cities around the world claim the United Nations as our own, we claim it as part of our global mobilization for peace." Two days later, the *New York Times* would describe the emergence of the second super-power resisting the U.S. war drive. The UN had challenged the U.S., and emerged on the side of the "other" super-power. Throughout eight and one-half months of defiance, rejecting Washington's war resolution, the second super-power included the UN, global civil society, and those governments willing (reluctantly or not) to listen to their publics -- and rose as a counterweight to Washington's efforts at preventive and perpetual war.

It would not last, ultimately, but it showed the world a potential alternative. It was the beginning of a new kind of internationalism, linking cross-border social movements with willing governments (who strengthened their own democracies by following their peoples' lead), and the United Nations itself in a global challenge to the emerging U.S. empire. When U.S. pressure triumphed and the period of defiance collapsed, in May 2003, with the passage of a new UN resolution that provided a kind of multilateral gloss on Washington's and London's still-unilateral military invasion and occupation of Iraq, only the most important component of that internationalist triad remained: a mobilized global civil society. The governments and the UN itself collapsed under the pressure. But now the world had seen the possibility of a moment when some governments, whose domestic anti-war constituencies were strong, and the United Nations itself, when the world's peoples and governments together demanded it, could stand with protesters in the streets to launch a strengthened challenge to U.S. war and empire.

As the Bush administration strengthened its military victory and tried –vainly—to consolidate its occupation of Iraq, it continued its trajectory towards international expansion of power and global reach. Despite the visible failure of its policies in Iraq, despite the continuing bloodshed and chaos across the country, Washington continued to claim victory. The arrogance of its triumphalism, ignoring civilian carnage and dismissing the destruction of the ancient cities because, in the words of Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld's, "free people have the right to do bad things and commit crimes," reflected the hubris of ancient empires. Hamlet's "insolence of office" could well describe the contempt with which the Pentagon warriors looked down on Iraqis and on those peoples and governments across the world who dared to defy the U.S. call to war.

The refusal of the Bush administration's architects of war to recognize the catastrophic impact of the war on ordinary Iraqi civilians was and remains breathtaking. "We don't do body counts" was the answer to persistent requests for Pentagon studies (even estimates) of the numbers of civilian casualties. This reality was brought to center stage again in the spring of 2005, when U.S. soldiers shot dead Nicola Calipari, a high-ranking Italian intelligence operative who had arranged the release of journalist Giuliana Sgrena, who had been kidnapped and held captive for weeks. Calipari was escorting Sgrena to the Baghdad airport when their car came under fire on the airport road. In its final report, the Pentagon refused to take any responsibility for the shooting, claiming the soldiers firing was within the U.S. "rules of engagement," and the two Italian officials who participated in the investigation refused to sign off on it. The international attention on the U.S. military's role, and political consequences for Bush's Italian ally, Premier Silvio Berlusconi, were sky-high – and yet the U.S. still refused to take responsibility. The Pentagon's failure to do so spotlighted the broader danger to the numerous, often unidentified, Iraqi civilians shot at checkpoints, for whom few if any investigations are even launched, and for whom the Geneva Convention's protections, required of any occupying power, are viewed as quite spurious.

WASHINGTON'S NEW EMPIRE – OR NOT?

The U.S. war in Iraq was certainly not the first time the U.S. has unilaterally, illegally, and without justification attacked another country. But in the past -- whether Grenada, Panama, the first Gulf War, even Kosovo -- Washington generally attempted to validate its wars through some kind of claim (however spurious) of international legality. In giving life to Bush's doctrine of pre-emptive war, the 2003 assault on Iraq represents the first time a U.S. president has claimed -- even boasted -- that he had the right to launch such a unilateral attack against a country that had not attacked the U.S. and did not pose any imminent threat, and that international authority was unnecessary, even undesired.

Claiming the right of pre-emptive war would not, by itself, be proof of empire. Even launching a war more accurately defined as an aggressive preventive war (since a preemptive attack implies an imminent threat -- which never existed in Iraq) does not by itself represent such proof. But the eagerness of Washington's powerful to launch this war without United Nations authorization and with reckless disregard for the consequences, with the expressed aim of toppling the government (however repressive) of an independent country that had never attacked the U.S., may represent just such proof.

Historian Paul Schroeder, writing some weeks before Washington's invasion of Iraq, concluded that the U.S. "is not an empire--not yet." He described the U.S. as "at this moment a wannabe empire, poised on the brink. The Bush Doctrine proclaims unquestionably imperialist ambitions and goals, and its armed forces are poised for war for empire--formal empire in Iraq through conquest, occupation, and indefinite political control, and informal empire over the whole Middle East through exclusive paramountcy."ⁱⁱⁱ

The rapid overthrow of the Iraqi regime, with its long hours stretching into days and months of horror for tens of thousands of Iraqi civilians, pushed Bush administration officials over that brink. Their smug "other Middle Eastern governments better learn their lesson" attitude reflected an even fortified sense of self-righteousness and the justice of their cause. If Washington has not yet consolidated its global empire, the drive towards it is now undeniable.

The two U.S. attacks on the restive city of Fallujah, in April and November 2004, make that reality clear. The spring assault was designed to make an example out of Fallujah, to demonstrate to recalcitrant Iraqis the futility of resisting the U.S. occupation. The entire population of the city, somewhere over 300,000 people, were expelled from their homes, tens of thousands of them forced to camp in the rough in makeshift refugee centers outside the city. Others found space with already over-crowded and under-fed relatives in Baghdad or elsewhere. Their city was destroyed. U.S. jet bombers, helicopter gunships, tanks, and other weapons all were directed against Fallujah, all in the ostensible interest of "liberating" the Fallujans from the resistance forces among them.

The second attack, in November 2004, was supposedly designed to insure that the city was available for voting in the January 2005 elections. While the vast majority

of Fallujah's population remained outside the city, unable to return home even briefly to assess the damage, the city's already battered infrastructure was attacked even further. Fallujah became the Guernica of the Iraq war. And while the world never learned the name of the Vietnamese village made famous in the well-known U.S. soldier's statement that "we had to destroy the village in order to save it," the whole world knows the name of Fallujah.

Ultimately though, what is important is less the debate over whether the U.S. today is already an imperial center ready for global domination or still an empire-wannabe, than understanding the political significance and consequence of this historical moment. U.S. tanks still control the Euphrates valley and U.S. troops still occupy the sites of the earliest recorded history of humanity. But U.S. policymakers willing to look out beyond their own euphoria will see not only a devastated and dishonored Iraq facing at best an uncertain future. The largest components of the Iraqi population, whom Washington's ideologues believed would welcome their troops with rice and flowers in the streets voted in massive numbers for parties pledged (however opportunistically) to call for an end to the U.S. occupation. And a humiliated and enraged Arab world, a shattered system of U.S.-European and other alliances; and a constellation of growing international opposition that includes Washington's closest allies and an emerging global people's movement saying no to Washington's war and no to Washington's empire, round out the world of 2005.

THE EMPIRE GOES GLOBAL

If war in Iraq were the only clear imperial thrust of the Bush administration, it would be tempting to reduce it to the resource-grabbing of an oil-obsessed administration, the actions of an irresponsible hegemon soon to be taken to task by the rest of the global community. Opposition to the war could indeed be reduced to the demand of "no blood for oil." But when taken in the context of even longer-standing, and more visionary efforts to reshape regional and global power relations, the Iraq war emerges far more as an exemplar of a broad and entrenched pattern of international domination and control, than it does as an isolated case of U.S. intent.

That is particularly significant in light of the combination of military, political, and economic factors whose collective expansion undergirds the relentless drive for power and empire. Militarily, the network of 14 permanent U.S. military bases under construction in Iraq has become the hub of a system of bases throughout the Middle East and Central Asia. The Pentagon's techno-lethal "revolution in military affairs," the scaffolding of Israel's rise as an unchallengeable regional military and nuclear power, and most especially the public commitment to a new generation of nuclear weapons designed not for deterrence but for actual battlefield use, have all contributed to a military capacity so enormous that no combination of other countries could even hope to approach, let alone match or surpass it.

Elsewhere in the world, U.S. military involvement is on the rise in Latin America, particularly in Colombia, despite some emerging gains for popular forces elsewhere on the continent. In Africa, U.S. military aid to oil-producing countries (such as

Nigeria) is on the rise. In Asia, the U.S. is rebuilding its military connections with the Philippines, and discussions are continuing with Japan regarding expansion of Tokyo's military capacity and especially eliminating the now-challenged Article IX of Japan's constitution that once prohibited the use of military force other than in self-defense. Washington is goading North Korea into consistently higher levels of nuclear brinkmanship, almost daring China to rise to the bait. All over the world, the U.S. is reclaiming access to bases lost earlier to the vagaries of post-Cold War and post-neo-colonial politics, and sending "trainers" to bolster local surrogate forces -- in places such as Yemen, Somalia, Ethiopia, the Philippines. And in once inaccessible arenas, long off-limits to U.S. military forces because of the Cold War or claims of Russian influence, U.S. bases are sprouting like mushrooms. In the oil- and gas-rich regions of the Caspian and Central Asia, U.S. bases in Uzbekistan, Krygyzstan, Azerbaijan, Khazakhstan and elsewhere now ring war-torn Afghanistan.

The Bush administration's official September 2002 national security plan, based on the earlier documents of the Project for the New American Century, calls explicitly for maintaining the enormous chasm between the military capacity of the U.S. and that of the rest of the world. It calls for using military force to insure that no nation or group of nations ever imagines even matching, let alone surpassing, U.S. prowess. The cavalier dismissal of concerns regarding the increase of regional instability as a likely result of war in Iraq, reflects a rash acceptance of the view that every political challenge can best be answered with a military response. As in the earliest days of the Bush administration's first term when it abandoned the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and essentially consigned the Non-Proliferation Treaty to the dustbin of history, military unilateralism has become a Bush administration point of principle.

Economically, both internationally and domestically, it is clear that consolidation of economic power in fewer and fewer hands remains a key strategic approach of the U.S. drive towards empire. The Bush team's continuing enthusiasm for domestic tax breaks for the rich and lack of concern with the dire domestic economic consequences of their \$100-200 billion war in Iraq. The post-war contract-grab and war profiteering for administration-linked companies in Iraq reflects the broader privatization focus of Bush foreign policy. Abroad, the United States continues its agenda of advancing corporate trade and investment rights, as it attempts to craft a new round of global trade talks in the World Trade Organization. Washington continued its blatant use of economic aid and trade agreements as carrots and sticks to bribe, threaten, and purchase coalition partners for the war in Iraq. (Although it was in this area that Washington's failure was most visible. The fact that the Security Council's "Uncommitted Six" got away with their refusal to sign on to Bush's "coalition of the willing" in Iraq was a clear part of the emergence of the Brazil-led Group of 21 that stood up the U.S. and Europe at the WTO meeting in Cancun.) And the continuing moves to tighten U.S. military control over strategic oil and gas reserves in the Middle East and Central Asia are aimed at providing more economic clout to Washington vis-à-vis its economic competitors and allies. (The drive towards controlling oil reserves, price policies and oil access for U.S.

allies took a more urgent turn, with greater consequences in domestic politics, with the spike in oil prices in late 2004 and into 2005.)

Politically and diplomatically, Washington's effort to undermine the United Nations and render it "irrelevant" in the run-up to the Iraq war, clearly demonstrated the view of key White House ideologues that UN authorization was not only unnecessary but actually damaging to their holy grail of legitimizing the unilateral assertion of U.S. power. Coming on the heels of earlier rejections of treaty obligations and/or negotiations (Kyoto, ABM, the International Criminal Court, etc.) the Bush administration's grudging and dismissive use of the UN went far beyond the Clinton administration's cynically instrumentalist view of the UN.

Clearly, the U.S. history of dominating and using the United Nations for its own purposes is hardly a new phenomenon. Nor is it limited to the right-wing extremists powerful in the Bush administration, or even limited to the Republican Party. It was President Bill Clinton's then-UN Ambassador Madeleine Albright, after all, who famously called the UN "a tool of American foreign policy."^{iv} And the near-decade of Clinton's so-called "humanitarian" interventions mostly relied on forced UN endorsement to provide a fig leaf of international credibility.

George W. Bush, however, went much further. The Bush White House dismissed all notions of any accountability to international law or the UN Charter, operating instead on a litany of assertions that UN resolutions meant only what President Bush said they mean, and that anyway we don't need any UN resolutions, we have the god-given right to go to war when and where and against whom and for as long as we like.

But the United Nations was not rendered irrelevant. To the contrary, for the crucial months in the run-up to the Iraq war and for some months after war began, the UN stood at the center of the global demand for peace. As George Monbiot wrote, "the US, in other words, seems to be ripping up the global rulebook. As it does so, those of U.S. who have campaigned against the grotesque injustices of the existing world order will quickly discover that a world with no institutions is even nastier than a world run by the wrong ones. Multilateralism, however inequitable it may be, requires certain concessions to other nations. Unilateralism means piracy: the armed robbery of the poor by the rich. The difference between today's world order and the one for which the U.S. may be preparing is the difference between mediated and unmediated force."^v

MOVING AGAINST EMPIRE

There is no country or group of countries capable of launching a serious (as opposed to merely disruptive) military challenge to Washington's power drive. But for perhaps the first time since the end of the Cold War, there is a serious competitor challenging the U.S. empire for influence and authority -- global public opinion, including a mobilized international civil society joined by key governments as well as the United Nations itself. Not only the Non-Aligned stalwarts such as South Africa, Cuba, Brazil, although they are vital to this

challenge. Not only the key U.S. allies such as France, Germany, or Russia eager to remain on good terms with Washington but recognize the dangers to their own national interests of an unrestrained rogue empire. Not only the often beleaguered UN secretary general and the secretariat that he leads, facing extraordinary pressure to cave in to Washington's will yet aware that the global organization's real survival depends on its willingness and ability to stand defiant of that pressure in defense of the UN Charter.

But together all of those forces together make up the astonishing movement towards a new internationalism that today forms the global challenge to the empire. And the United Nations, while not the only sector, is at its center. The combination of events in mid-February 2003 – the unprecedented Security Council response to Villepin's call to defend the UN as an instrument of peace and not a tool for war; the resulting refusal of the Council and its members to accede to U.S. demands to endorse the war, and the outpouring of millions across the globe on February 15 when "The World Said No to War," – provided early evidence of the arrival at this critical historical juncture. The *New York Times* recognition of the "two superpowers" acknowledged this as such a moment.

And although that global movement against war in Iraq failed to stop the U.S. onslaught, it did insure that when the war was launched, there could be no denying that it was an illegal, unauthorized, unilateral war. This would not be the "international" Gulf War of Bush Senior, whose bribes, threats and punishments assured sufficient Security Council votes to authorize "the world's" war against Iraq. This time Bush Junior's effort failed, and the U.S. backed only by the British government (despite massive public opposition across the UK) and a few countries eager to remain in Washington's pocket, went to war alone.

And the global movement quickly moved into the process of transformation into a movement against the emerging U.S. empire. Many of the speakers at many of the simultaneous February 15, 2003 rallies around the world hit the same point -- this war, and this anti-war movement, were no longer just about Iraq. This was about mobilizing the world against the U.S. policies and the rising empire they represented. To the shock of ideologically-driven American analysts, European and other governments recognized that the need to constrain the U.S. was as urgent – perhaps even more so – as the need to restrain Baghdad -- and that effort was reflected in the UN debate. Writing in the *New York Times* magazine, James Traub quoted an unnamed UN official saying that the Security Council "members ended up feeling that they had to stand up to American unilateralism."^{vi}

It was in this context that the conscious struggle –and again with the UN as the primary venue – emerged among Europeans. "Old Europe" recognized the danger of ignoring the rise of U.S. power, and sought to go almost public with the usually-hidden goal of building Europe as an explicit counterweight to the U.S. Public opinion in France, Germany and elsewhere made it possible -- indeed virtually mandatory -- for those governments to stand defiant of the U.S. in the Security Council, transforming what began as tactical disagreements with Washington into immutable principle. Even the "new" European governments, the weaker and

poorer states aspiring to EU and NATO membership, and still caught up in the illusion of taking advantage of the EU's generous cash benefits while keeping their strategic eggs solidly in Washington's basket, faced 65-80% public opposition to their support for Bush's war. Differences over the nature of an expanded Europe, then, emerged as a crucial sub-text within United Nations debates. By the time the 2004 European expansion took place, bringing to 25 the member states of the European Union, the political advantage of joining Washington's war train was fading. Even super-loyal Poland announced its intention of early withdrawal of at least 40% of its 2500 soldiers by December 2005.^{vii}

THE PEOPLE'S VOICE

The events of February 15 transformed widespread anti-war sentiment into a powerful global movement, one that was mobilized around the world on the same slogan – The World Says No to War. It wasn't simply a matter of simultaneous demonstrations – there was the qualitatively greater power that comes from a shared framework (even if spontaneous and rudimentary rather than conscious and comprehensive). It was that connection and coordination that set in motion Washington's and other international ruling class recognition of the importance of the global movement, at a moment when once-powerful elite voices opposition had been largely squelched within U.S. domestic politics.

The arguments shaping and defining that movement took some time to cohere. They start with condemning the civilian lives lost and massive destruction in Iraq, demanding an end to the U.S. occupation and the return home of U.S. troops, denouncing the links between the illegal U.S. occupation of Iraq and the U.S.-backed Israeli occupation of Palestine, warning of regional instability throughout the Middle East and the possibility of increased terrorism world-wide as a result of the war, exposing the increased economic costs of the war and their impact on the poorest strata in the U.S. and elsewhere, including the virtual abandonment of already-insufficient economic aid to Africa. Even before the war began the movement was developing clarity on issues of U.S. lies regarding Iraq's alleged weapons of mass destruction, hypocrisy regarding Washington's own role in Iraq's early WMD programs, double standards regarding UN resolutions, and the massive Iraq resource-grab inherent in the hand-out of multi-billion dollar contracts to Bush administration corporate minions and cronies.

As the movement's parameters expand, the broader articulation frames the global trajectory of early 21st century U.S. empire, and explains the connections within it. Those include the links between Iraq and Israel-Palestine; between oil, Central Asia, and the unfinished Afghanistan war; between preemptive war doctrine and aggressive preventive wars; between North Korean nukes and Israel's nuclear arsenal; Syria, Iran and weapons of mass destruction; corporate domination and military spending; U.S. power projection and local budgets; building a new internationalist movement and the role of the United Nations.

CAN THE UN JOIN IN CHALLENGING EMPIRE?

The issue of the UN role in the Iraq crisis remains ambivalent for many people. The question of whether the UN, dominated by the U.S., is primarily a villain or a victim in situations like that surrounding the Iraq war, remains unresolved among many parts of the activist movement. Should the global organization be defended from U.S. attack, or condemned as "imperialism with a global face"? Recognition of the UN's potential as a center of opposition to U.S. hegemonic moves, while understanding the constraints imposed on the organization and the need for civil society to defend it from the ravages of U.S. power, is not wide-spread. The non-governmental organizations created to defend the UN have served largely as cheerleaders, afraid or unable to challenge the current anti-UN crusade and its political context. And many within the broader peace movement see the UN's silences in the face of the U.S. war build-up as evidence of collaboration with the war. Kofi Annan's October 2004 statement that the U.S. invasion of Iraq was "illegal" was a crucial step towards reclaiming the legitimate role for the United Nations. Speaking of the war "from the [UN] Charter point of view," Annan said, "it was illegal."^{viii} Like any statement of the secretary general, it has little legal significance. But the clear condemnation of the war's illegality (however late in coming) provided an important tool to activists and some parliamentarians around the world fighting for the renewed influence and legitimacy of international law and the centrality of the United Nations.

Earlier, during the September 2002-May 2003 period, the refusal of the six Non-Aligned Security Council members to cave in to Washington's extraordinary pressure to endorse the U.S. war, as well as the sequence of anti-war resolutions passed by the General Assembly, and the steadfastness of the secretariat, was unprecedented. Even after that actual resistance collapsed under intense U.S. pressure, it provided an extraordinary model of the role the UN could play at the center of an internationalist challenge to empire. But it remained insufficiently recognized and appreciated in many quarters.

In examining the composition of the emerging movement against empire, it is notable that in key countries whose governments stood defiant of the U.S. war – including France, Germany, Brazil, the Philippines and many other countries – the peace movements are made up of largely the same forces as the anti-corporate globalization or global justice movements. Their demands for a more equitable, just and sustainable global order, even while pressing the need for peace, provide a key framework for global mobilization. And the nuanced political framework required to build alliances recognizing the important role Paris or Berlin play as part of the global front against U.S. empire, while rigorously challenging their corporate-driven economic trajectory as well as other domestic and foreign policies, is beginning to take shape.

The global movement for peace and justice that cohered in the run-up to the U.S. war in Iraq was born in a new kind of world, different than the conditions shaping earlier global anti-war mobilizations, and requires a newly defined global strategy. It will take some time for a unifying agenda for the "global peace and justice movement" to emerge. One feature will have to include universal disarmament, focusing on the extraordinary dangers posed by the largest nuclear/military powers,

including the U.S., and challenging the common assumption that “non-proliferation” among small, impoverished, often unstable countries will resolve the global threat of war. Another aspect will need to be the focus on economic justice as a linchpin of social mobilization. Other issues must include the primacy of internationalism and the centrality of the United Nations in all our work. That means claiming the UN as our own, as Bishop Tutu told Kofi Annan, as part of the global mobilization for peace, and it means working to empower the UN as the legitimate center of global power and governance to challenge the United States empire we seek to undermine.

There can be little doubt that at present, at all levels the U.S. dominates, and when it chooses to exercise its power, the U.S. largely controls the actions and inactions, determines the successes and the failures of the United Nations. But the U.S. doesn't control it all the time – and despite Washington's overarching dominion, at the end of the day internationalism requires a bold defense of the UN. No other global institution holds even the possibility of representing the broad diversity of the world's nations, and no other global institution maintains even a pretense of democratic governance. And crucially, if there is ever to be a *successful* multilateral and international challenge to the U.S. drive for empire – a challenge that to succeed must also involve both governments and especially international civil society and social movements -- it can only be organized and mobilized within such a global institution.

Like all inter-governmental organizations, the UN was created to reflect, not to challenge, the power realities of its founding moment. And certainly the UN bears all of the limitations inherent in an organization crafted to reflect the post-World War II balance of power, and later seized and held hostage by Washington's unchallenged global reach. But imagine how much weaker, how much less able to stand up to U.S. pressure, would be a new "United Nations-Lite" -- inevitably constructed to reflect the 21st century reality of vastly expanded, untrammled U.S. power?

REAL UN REFORM

“Defending the UN” must itself be redefined – broadened to include defending the organization *against* the domination of its most powerful member, the commanding force within it. Defending the UN has to mean organizing opposition to the role the UN is too often forced to play, especially its role as fig-leaf legitimator of the U.S. expansion of empire. It has to mean mobilizing within civil society and finding at least a few member states to rebuild the conditions that made possible the UN's remarkable 8 1/2 months of doing what its Charter mandates: standing defiant against the U.S. to "prevent the scourge of war."

Defending UN democracy means defending whatever voices within the organization can speak for the disenfranchised global South, defending the use of UN resources to protect the interests of the weakest of nations and the poorest of peoples. It means fighting to make the dollar-controlled multilateral institutions – the IMF, the World Bank, the WTO – accountable, at last, to the UN's Economic

and Social Council. It means working to get crucial issues out of the U.S.-dominated stranglehold of the Security Council and into the veto-less General Assembly. And it means working to reverse the U.S. affirmation that “when the United States leads, the United Nations will follow. When it suits our interest to do so, we will do so. When it does not suit our interests we will not.”^{ix} Democratizing the UN, if serious, must result in overturning that arrogant reality and defending the internationalist integrity of the global organization.

What would *real* reform of the United Nations look like?

★★ The UN would create an independent outside monitoring agency, composed of the world’s most trusted international lawyers and vested with the enforcement power of international law, to oversee the Security Council itself, to insure that Council decisions (such as imposing economic sanctions or authorizing war) do not themselves violate the UN Charter.

★★ The UN would create a new Department of Preventive Diplomacy which would be sufficiently staffed with globally representative international civil servants and provided with enough resources to monitor events around the world, to prepare real-time proposals for the Security Council and General Assembly to respond to changing events before they become crises, with a particular concern for insuring that economic and/or social crises (drought, crop failures, rising poverty, malnutrition, lack of clean water or health care, erosion of social fabric caused by foreign occupation, arms build-ups, resurgent military forces, etc.) do not escalate into war or other threats to regional or international peace and security.

★★ The UN would create a standing, independent UN-controlled rapid-response civilian/police/peacekeeping force, made up of police, civil affairs, and military forces recruited and trained by, and permanently on the staff of, the secretariat of the United Nations; the goal would be to create police/military capacity outside of existing national militaries to insure a different, internationalist culture within the institution.

★★ The UN Security Council and General Assembly jointly with all UN member states would retool the system of international financial institutions to reflect the intentions of the UN founders: bringing the IMF, the World Bank, the WTO would all be moved into positions of accountability to the UN's Economic and Social Council.

★★ The UN would re-empower the General Assembly by using the Uniting for Peace precedent and other UN regulations to shift important issues out of the U.S.-dominated stranglehold of the Security Council, and into the veto-less General Assembly where, if the Council is paralyzed by use or threat of the veto, Assembly decisions would take on the force of international law.

★★ The process of Security Council expansion would focus on reducing the power of veto-wielding permanent members, moving ultimately towards getting

rid of the veto altogether, while broadening regional representation in the Council rather than simply adding more rich and powerful countries as permanent members.

When the UN celebrated its fiftieth year in 1995, it was in the middle of the decade of “humanitarian interventions,” in many of which the UN was sent in to clean up the aftermath of disastrous policies and invasions orchestrated by the U.S. and its allies. The anniversary led to a process of public rethinking and reassessment of the organization's goals, functions, successes, and failures in many places across the globe. In the U.S., much of the public rethinking in the media and the various academic and policy-oriented journals was limited to various levels of criticism and blame for what were called the “UN's failures” around the world. Some focused on financial mismanagement or inefficiency in relief activities, on charges of corruption or the ever-popular “bloated bureaucracy” argument. Other than the last, of course, most of those problems were in fact real, and deserving of serious consideration. The problem was, they were not the fundamental challenges facing the UN, and solving them would not, ultimately, protect the UN's integrity, legitimacy and influence in the uni-polar post-Cold War world of unchallenged U.S. power.

The key UN problem, so consistently missing from those pages of print and flashes of sound-bite analysis, was the question of power. Virtually no one was prepared to state directly that the UN did what it did or failed to do so, that it succeeded in vaccinating children or failed to bring peace to Somalia, because the U.S. and its allies, the wealthy and powerful of the UN, kept it that way.

A similar kind of media attention and analytical weakness emerged in the run-up to Bush Junior's war in Iraq in 2003, as many in the U.S. examined what role the UN should or could play in the post-September 11 world of rising U.S. empire. But this time around the debate was different. Bush himself deemed the UN “irrelevant” for its refusal to endorse his war. U.S. conservatives and others excoriated the UN for its “failure” to back Washington's war in Iraq; mainstream U.S. critics of the war mostly urged support for continued UN arms inspections but paid little attention to the role of the UN as a whole. It was left to the activist community and international analysts to examine seriously the new potential of the global organization, the new relevance that became visible as the UN stood defiant against U.S. demands to go to war.

A contradiction, however, was built into Washington's own goals. To maximize the value of the UN as a legitimating agent for its own unilateral actions, Washington had to maintain at least the appearance of the UN's credibility as a global institution. The U.S., already the only superpower and unassailably the most powerful member state of the organization, couldn't “use” the UN with open impunity and still expect it to maintain its legitimacy as a multilateral organization.

UN DEMOCRACY AND U.S. POWER

In fact, if the starting vantage point is that of strengthening U.S. interests as the key UN goal, or even as the key reason for Americans to support the UN, the battle for UN democracy is already lost. If the UN is to be taken seriously as an organization dedicated to the protection of all peoples, rich and poor, living in all countries, large and small, it cannot be judged a success or failure, relevant or irrelevant, by the standard of how it strengthens U.S. foreign policy. Rather, the United Nations must be strengthened precisely to provide some level of international balance in the extraordinarily unbalanced and asymmetrical world that we are living in.

So far, that has not often been the case. In the years that began with the coerced Security Council endorsement of the first U.S. war in the Gulf, the reality has been very different. That reality shows that the U.S., when it chooses to invest the requisite political and/or financial capital, can and does call the shots in United Nations decision-making. Washington brings to bear an overwhelming, though not absolute, level of control of the United Nations. It can't control all decisions, all the time, because the political costs and financial investment aren't always practical in the trenches of U.S. domestic political considerations. And sometimes, despite extensive investment of political capital, and the worldwide distribution of deep-pocket bribes, threats and punishments, the U.S. still doesn't get its way. That was the case in the extraordinary period before the second Bush administration's war in Iraq – when the Security Council itself, despite fierce pressure, stood defiant of the U.S.-UK demand for an endorsement of war. At that time it was the rising counter-pressure of the second super-power – the mobilized and global civil society – that forced Council states to resist the blandishments of Washington's rising empire.

But if the U.S. can pick and choose when, how often, and how intensely to manipulate the UN's role in the world, the rest of the world has few such choices. There is little question that the large majority of countries and certainly the majority of the world's people would like the UN --a reconfigured and democratized UN—to play a larger part in the collective global opposition to Washington's effort towards empire – an empire complete with military control and imposed versions of its own corporate-driven economic and political system. But few diplomats will say so out loud.

The bottom line, once again, is that of power. The U.S. has a virtually unlimited arsenal of weapons to enforce its will on other countries outside the UN framework -- no other country's reach comes even close. And the UN exists squarely within, not outside of that power disparity between its member states.

The call from civil society to the global organization should challenge the UN to heed the voices of the second super-power above those of the first. Civil society must take that stand, for the stark reason that there is nothing else to provide a multilateral voice for the majority of the world's countries – and sometimes, albeit rarely, of the world's peoples. For progressives and democrats and civil society – most especially U.S. civil society whose government remains the key world power – the commitment must be to a new kind of internationalism, linking the UN with willing governments and an empowered global civil society. However flawed the

UN of the 21st century may still be, it remains at the center of any potentially successful effort to mount a serious challenge to U.S. empire. The question for global civil society and international social movements must be how to reclaim the UN as part of the global mobilization against empire, and how to return it to the defiant role it played during the run-up to Washington's war in Iraq. That will make the global organization the partner of international civil society, where independent non-governmental organizations and movements work to transform the world. Joined by a few occasionally supportive states and governments, and united with a reformed and democratized United Nations serving as both venue and player in the search for peace and justice, that global civil society movement anchors the key position in the triad of forces challenging the U.S. drive towards empire.

Support for the UN cannot be reduced either to cheerleading or dismissing the possibility of any reform because it won't be enough. It is true that none of the reforms that seem conceivable today would alone lead to real, fundamental democratization of the UN -- the organization remains a reflection of a U.S.-dominated world moving towards consolidation of a mighty U.S. empire. But some changes are possible, and the most significant among them would make a real difference in the UN's capacity to protect the impoverished, occupied and marginalized countries and peoples of the global South.

The U.S., as the UN's most powerful member, should be pressured to increase its support for the UN's work in humanitarian and development areas, while withdrawing from its usual insistence on control. And UN peacekeeping should be seen in that same context of humanitarian work: as part of a pro-active process aimed at identifying potential crises early enough to not only identify but begin to rectify the instabilities so often rooted in inequity, economic dislocation and political disempowerment, before they require military force.

This should not be translated, however, to mean increasing UN endorsement of unilateral military interventions by its major powers as a replacement for direct UN involvement. If, in violation of international law and the UN Charter, the U.S. storms across the Iraqi desert, or France re-occupies part of Rwanda, or the U.S. invades Haiti -- whether or not the actions are carried out in the name of "restoring democracy" or "providing hope" -- it should be made clear to the world that they did so without UN approval and authority. And if the U.S. goes to war explicitly without UN approval in search of non-existent weapons of mass destruction or to "liberate" the Iraqi people through military occupation, the UN should not serve as an enabler of countries wishing to collaborate in occupation, nor should it serve as a blue-helmeted clean-up squad sent in to mop up Washington's messy aftermath. Illegal wars should remain illegal and be opposed as such -- and the UN should maintain its Charter obligations to prevent the scourge of war and to hold the perpetrators of wars accountable for their violations of the international crime of aggression.

Sometimes, just sometimes, such a role for the UN might be possible. There are no magic solutions. But the result of these changes would mean at least the beginning

of UN democratization. We need the UN to at least try to provide some level of that internationalism, some level of protection for impoverished countries and peoples of the South, some level of what the founders claimed they were interested in. Their commitment was to end the scourge of war -- not to increase the might of the world's sole hyper-power.

There is no question that the UN should have claimed, and the U.S. should have accepted UN leadership and decision-making years ago, in Iraq, in Palestine, in Somalia, in Yugoslavia and elsewhere. There is no question that despite its flaws the UN represents a far more democratic expression of "the international community" than does Washington alone, or NATO's North Atlantic Council or George Bush's so-called "coalitions of the willing." There is no question that the U.S. should have paid its UN dues in full and on time all along. The U.S. and the other powerful nations should have supported UN-controlled efforts (along with those of the OSCE, the African Union, the Arab League and other regional organizations) to respond pro-actively and collaboratively to emerging humanitarian crises. The U.S. should be providing the resources for massive UN financial and political and logistical support to the African Union's troops in Darfur, so the UN could support African leadership and command of those troops, not try to replace them. The U.S. and its allies should long ago have supported the creation of a UN Department of Preventive Diplomacy and a standing, independent UN-controlled rapid-response civilian/police/peacekeeping force. There is no question that the United Nations, not the U.S. alone or a US-UK partnership or even a so-called "Quartet" under Washington's control, should be orchestrating international protection and diplomacy to end Israel's occupation of Palestine. There is no question that the UN should be helping the Iraqi population rebuild its destroyed state structures and reclaim its real sovereignty, rather than the Pentagon continuing its illegal occupation and holding occupation-controlled "elections." There is no question that the General Assembly should claim the right to address a far greater share of UN decision-making too often left to the veto-distorted, undemocratic Security Council.

There is no question that those things would make the UN -- a stronger, more democratic and more empowered UN bolstered by international social movements and far-flung citizens' organizations throughout the world -- the centerpiece of a new internationalism that would stand as a strategic challenger to Washington's empire. And there is no question that strengthening the United Nations is definitely not on the agenda of Washington's rising empire. Precisely for that reason defense of the UN must remain a priority for internationalists across the globe.

In violation of the UN Charter the United States has interfered and intervened too much. It has been granted impunity too often. Devastated and occupied Iraq, occupied Palestine, war-racked Liberia, ravaged Darfur, civil war-decimated Colombia, impoverished Haiti and many more countries do not need United States imposed versions of "liberation." They need truly international help centered largely in the United Nations -- a new and democratized UN empowered, financed, staffed and resourced to respond to those and other crises, a UN

accountable not only to governments but to a mobilized global civil society. The world doesn't need the United Nations called in as the scapegoat to provide cover for Washington's failures. Being the richest nation in the world, being more powerful than any empire in history, does not give the U.S. the right to trample international law, to run endgames around the UN Charter, to use or discard the global organization at the whim of superpower arrogance or the caprice of domestic politics.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the world has had enough of empires writing their own rules. What's next will be the empowerment of a new internationalism, linking the citizens of empire, global civil society, with like-minded governments and the United Nations in a collaborative challenge to the depredations of the latest empire.

ⁱ Patrick E. Tyler, "A New Power in the Streets," *New York Times*, 17 February 2003.

ⁱⁱ Doug Sanders, "It's Just Wrong What We're Doing," *Globe and Mail*, 24 January 2004.

ⁱⁱⁱ Paul Schroeder, The History News Network, Center for History and the New Media, George Mason University, February 3, 2003.

^{iv} Catherine Toups, *Washington Times*, December 13, 1995.

^v George Monbiot, *The Guardian*, 25 February 2003.

^{vi} James Traub, "The Next Resolution," *New York Times* magazine, 13 April 2003.

^{vii} "Poland to cut Iraq force by 2006," CNN, October 4, 2004.

^{viii} "Iraq war illegal, says Annan," BBC, Sept 16, 2004.

^{ix} John Bolton, former Under Secretary of State for International Organizations, speech at Global Structures Convocation, Washington D.C., February 1994.