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By Noam Chomsky

I am sure I am not the only one to have been reminded in the past months of some wise and prescient words of one of the most impressive figures of 20th century America, the radical pacifist A.J. Muste. As the US entered World War II 60 years ago, he predicted with considerable accuracy the contours of the world that would emerge after the US victory, and a little later, observed that "the problem after a war is with the victor. He thinks he has just proved that war and violence pay. Who will now teach him a lesson?"

Far too many people around the world were to learn the bitter meaning of these words. It is only in folk tales, children's stories, and the journals of intellectual opinion that power is used wisely and well to destroy evil. The real world teaches very different lessons, and it takes wilful and dedicated ignorance to fail to perceive them.

These are, unfortunately, leading themes of history. In his major study of European state formation, Charles Tilly observed, accurately enough, that over the last millennium, "war has been the dominant activity of European states," for an unfortunate reason: "The central tragic fact is simple: coercion works; those who apply substantial force to their fellows get compliance, and from that compliance draw the multiple advantages of money, goods, deference, access to pleasures denied to less powerful people." These are close to historical truisms, which most of the people of the world have learned the hard way. The deference commonly includes the awed acclaim of the educated classes. Resort to overwhelming means of violence to destroy defenseless enemies with impunity tends to win particular admiration, and also to become natural, a demonstration of one's virtue; again, close to historical-cultural universals.

One normal concomitant of easy victories over defenseless enemies is the entrenchment of the habit of preferring force over the pursuit of peaceful means. Another is the high priority of acting without authority. The incarnation of the God who comes to Earth as the

"perfect man" with the mission of eradicating evil from the world needs no higher authority. What is true of the most ancient Indian epics from millennia ago holds as well for the plagiarists of today. The preference for force, and rejection of authorization, have been notable features of the last decade of overwhelming and unchallenged power and crushing of much weaker adversaries, in accord with policy recommendations. As the first Bush administration came into office, it undertook a National Security Policy Review dealing with "third world threats." Parts were leaked to the press during the Gulf war. The Review concluded that "In cases where the U.S. confronts much weaker enemies" -- that is, the only kind one chooses to fight -- "our challenge will be not simply to defeat them, but to defeat them decisively and rapidly." Any other outcome would be "embarrassing" and might "undercut political support," understood to be thin. With the collapse of the sole deterrent a few months later, the conclusions became even more firmly established, not surprisingly. These are, I think, some of the considerations that should be at the back of our minds when we contemplate the world after Sept. 11.

Whatever one's judgment about the events of the past weeks, if we want to reach a reasonable assessment of what may lie ahead, we should attend carefully to several crucial factors. Among them are:

- (1) The premises on which policy decisions have been based
- (2) Their roots in stable institutions and doctrines in very recent history, to a large extent involving the same decision-makers
- (3) The ways these have been translated to specific actions

I'd like to say a few words about each of these topics.

The new millennium quickly produced two terrible new crimes, added to the gloomy record of persisting ones. The first was the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11; the second, the response to them, surely taking a far greater toll of innocent lives, Afghan civilians who were themselves victims of the suspected perpetrators of the crimes of Sept. 11. I'll assume these to be Osama bin Laden and his al-Qaeda network. There has been a prima facie case from the outset, though little credible evidence has been produced, and there have been few successes at home, despite what must be the most intensive investigations ever by the coordinated intelligence services of the major powers. Such "leaderless resistance" networks, as they are called, are not easy nuts to crack.

An inauspicious sign is that in both cases the crimes are considered right and just, even noble, within the doctrinal framework of the perpetrators, and in fact are justified in almost the same words. Bin Laden proclaims that violence is justified in self-defense against the infidels who invade and occupy Muslim lands and against the brutal

and corrupt governments they impose there -- words that have considerable resonance in the region even among those who despise and fear him. Bush and Blair proclaim, in almost identical words, that violence is justified to drive evil from our lands. The proclamations of the antagonists are not entirely identical. When bin Laden speaks of "our lands," he is referring to Muslim lands: Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Chechnya, Bosnia, Kashmir, and others; the radical Islamists who were mobilized and nurtured by the CIA and its associates through the 1980s despise Russia, but ceased their terrorist operations in Russia from Afghan bases after the Russians withdrew. When Bush and Blair speak of "our lands" they are, in contrast, referring to the world. The distinction reflects the power that the adversaries command. That either side can speak without shame of eradicating evil in the light of their records... -- that should leave us open-mouthed in astonishment, unless we adopt the easy course of effacing even very recent history.

Another fact with grim portent is that in both cases, the perpetrators insist on underscoring the criminality of their acts. In the case of bin Laden, no discussion is needed. The US pointedly rejected the framework of legitimacy that resides in the UN Charter. There has been much debate over whether the ambiguous Security Council declarations provided authorization for the resort to force. It is, in my opinion, beside the point. To resolve the debate would have been simple enough, had there been any wish to do so. There is scarcely any doubt that Washington could have obtained entirely unambiguous Security Council authorization, not for attractive reasons. Russia is eager to gain US support for its own massive crimes. China hopes to be admitted to the coalition of the just for the same reasons, and in fact, states throughout the world recognized at once that they could now enlist the support of the global superpower for their own violence and repression, a lesson not lost on the global managers either. British support is reflexive; France would raise no objections. There would, in brief, have been no veto.

But Washington preferred to reject Security Council authorization and to insist on its unique right to act unilaterally in violation of international law and solemn treaty obligations, a right forcefully proclaimed by the Clinton administration and its predecessors in clear and explicit words -- warnings that we and others may choose to ignore, but at our peril. Similarly, Washington contemptuously dismissed the tentative offers to consider extradition of bin Laden and his associates; how real such possibilities were we cannot know, because of the righteous refusal even to consider them. This stand adheres to a leading principle of statecraft, called "establishing credibility" in the rhetoric of statecraft and scholarship. And it is understandable. If a Mafia Don plans to collect protection money, he does not first ask for a Court order, even if he could obtain it. Much the same is true of international affairs. Subjects must understand their place, and must recognize that the powerful need no higher

authority.

Thucydides remarked that "large nations do what they wish, while small nations accept what they must." The world has changed a great deal over several thousand years, but some things stay much the same.

The atrocities of Sept. 11 are regarded as a historic event, which is true, though not because of their scale. In its civilian toll, the crime is far from unusual in the annals of violence short of war. To mention only one example, so minor in context as to be a mere footnote, a Panamanian journalist, condemning the crimes of Sept. 11, observed that for Panamanians the "sinister times" are not unfamiliar, recalling the US bombing of the barrio Chorrillo during "Operation Just Cause" with perhaps thousands killed; our crimes, so there is no serious accounting. The atrocities of Sept. 11 are indeed a historic event, but because of their target. For the US, it is the first time since the British burned down Washington in 1814 that the national territory has been under serious attack, even threatened. There is no need to review what has been done to others in the two centuries since. For Europe, the reversal is even more dramatic. While conquering much of the world, leaving a trail of terror and devastation, Europeans were safe from attack by their victims, with rare and limited exceptions. It is not surprising, then, that Europe and its offshoots should be shocked by the crimes of Sept. 11, a dramatic breach of the norms of acceptable behavior for hundreds of years.

It is also not surprising that they should remain complacent, perhaps mildly regretful, about the even more terrible suffering that followed. The victims, after all, are miserable Afghans -- "uncivilized tribes," as Winston Churchill described them with contempt when he ordered the use of poison gas to "spread a lively terror" among them 80 years ago, denouncing the "squeamishness" of the soft-hearted ninnies who failed to understand that chemical weapons were just "the application of modern science to modern warfare" and must be used "to procure a speedy termination of the disorder which prevails on the frontier."

Similar thoughts are heard today. The editors of the *New Republic*, who not long ago were calling for more military aid for "Latin-style fascists...regardless of how many are murdered" because "there are higher American priorities than Salvadoran human rights," now explain -- correctly -- that "Operation Enduring Freedom is not a humanitarian intervention," so that "If we leave behind a country in chaos that can no longer serve as a base of operations against us, then we will have accomplished a necessary objective," and should "lose the obsession with nation-building" to try to repair what we have done to Afghanistan for 20 years.

While few are willing to sink to that level, it remains true that atrocities committed against Afghans carry little moral stigma, for one

reason, because such practices have been so familiar throughout history, even when there has been no pretext other than greed and domination. And retribution knows no bounds. For that there is ample historical precedent, not to speak of authority in the holiest texts we are taught to revere.

Another aspect of the complacent acceptance of atrocities was described with wonder by Alexis de Tocqueville in his report of one of the great crimes of ethnic cleansing of the continent, the expulsion of the Cherokees through the trail of tears "in the middle of winter," with snow "frozen hard on the ground," a "solemn spectacle" of murder and degradation, "the triumphal march of civilization across the desert." He was particularly struck that the conquerors could deprive people of their rights and exterminate them "with singular felicity, tranquilly, legally, philanthropically, without shedding blood, and without violating a single great principle of morality in the eyes of the world." It was impossible to destroy people with "more respect for the laws of humanity," he wrote.

That is a fair enough description of what has been unfolding before our eyes. For example, in the refugee camp of Maslakh, where hundreds of thousands of people are starving, dozens dying every night from cold and starvation. They were living on the edge of survival even before the bombing, which deprived them of desperately-needed aid. It remains a "forgotten camp" as we meet, three months after Sept. 11. Veteran correspondent Christina Lamb reports scenes more "harrowing" than anything in her memory, after having "seen death and misery in refugee camps in many parts of Asia and Africa." The destruction of lives is silent and mostly invisible, by choice; and can easily remain forgotten, also by choice. The easy tolerance of the "vivid awfulness" that Lamb recounts merely reflects the fact that this is how the powerful deal with the weak and defenseless, hence in no way remarkable.

We have no right to harbor any illusions about the premises of current planning. Planning for the war in Afghanistan was based on the unchallenged assumption that the threat of bombing, and its realization, would considerably increase the number of Afghans at risk of death from starvation, disease, and exposure. The press blandly reported that the numbers were expected to increase by 50%, to about 7.5 million: an additional 2.5 million people. Pleas to stop the bombing to allow delivery of food and other aid were rebuffed without comment, mostly without even report. These came from high UN officials, major relief and aid agencies, and others in a good position to know. By late September, the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) had warned that more than 7 million people would face starvation if the threatened military action were undertaken, and after the bombing began, advised that the threat of "humanitarian catastrophe" was "grave," and that the bombing had disrupted the planting of 80% of the grain supplies, so that the effects next year

could be even more severe.

What will happen we cannot know. But we know well enough the assumptions on which plans are based and executed, and commentary produced. As a simple matter of logic, it is these assumptions that inform us about the shape of the world that lies ahead, whatever the outcomes might be. The basic facts have been casually reported, including the fact that as we meet, little is being done to bring food and other aid to many of those dying in refugee camps and the countryside, even though supplies are available and the primary factor hampering delivery is lack of interest and will.

Furthermore, the longer-term effects will remain unknown, if history is any guide. Reporting is scanty today, and the consequences will not be investigated tomorrow. It is acceptable to report the crime of "collateral damage" by bombing error, the inevitable cost of war, but not the conscious and deliberate destruction of fleeing Afghans who will die in silence, invisibly, not by design, but because it doesn't matter, a much deeper level of moral depravity; if we step on an ant while walking, we have not purposely killed it.

People do not die of starvation instantly; they can survive on roots and grass, and if malnourished children die of disease, who will seek to determine the immediate cause? In the future, the topic is off the agenda by virtue of a crucial principle: We must devote enormous energy to meticulous accounting of crimes of official enemies, quite properly including not only those literally killed, but also those who die as a consequence of their policies; and we must take equally scrupulous care to avoid this practice in the case of our own crimes, adopting the stance that so impressed de Tocqueville. There are hundreds of pages of detailed documentation of the application of these principles; again, I suppose, close to a historical universal. It will be a welcome surprise if the current case turns out differently.

And we should remember that we are not observing all of this from Mars, or describing the crimes of Attila the Hun. There is a great deal that we can do right now, if we choose.

To explore what is likely to lie ahead from a different perspective, let's ask whether there were alternatives to the resort to devastating force at a distance, a device that comes naturally to those with overwhelming might at their command, no external deterrent, and confidence in the obedience of articulate opinion.

Alternatives were prominently suggested. By the Vatican, for example, which called for reliance on the measures appropriate to crimes, whatever their scale: if someone robs my house and I think I know who did it, I am not entitled to go after him with an assault rifle, meanwhile killing people randomly in his neighborhood. Or by the eminent military historian Michael Howard, who delivered a "scathing

attack" on the bombardment of Afghanistan on October 30, not on grounds of success or failure, but its design: what is needed is "patient operations of police and intelligence forces," "a police operation conducted under the auspices of the UN on behalf of the international community as a whole, against a criminal conspiracy, whose members should be hunted down and brought before an international court." There certainly are precedents, including acts of international terrorism even more extreme than those of Sept. 11: the US terrorist war against Nicaragua, to take an uncontroversial example -- uncontroversial, because of the judgment of the highest international authorities, the International Court of Justice and the Security Council. Nicaragua's efforts to pursue lawful means failed, in a world ruled by force; but no one would impede the US if it chose to follow a similar course.

Could the legitimate goals of apprehending and punishing the perpetrators have been attained without violence? Perhaps. We have no way of knowing whether the Taliban offers to discuss extradition were serious, since they were dismissed for the reasons already mentioned. The same is true of the much later afterthought, overthrowing the Taliban regime, a high priority for many Afghans, much as for innumerable others throughout the world who suffer under brutal regimes and miserable oppression.

I mentioned a few of those who suggested alternatives, and one of many examples of appropriate precedents. What about the most important place to inquire: what are the attitudes and opinions of the people of Afghanistan? To determine their views is a difficult task, no doubt, but not entirely impossible. There are some reasonable ways to proceed.

We might begin with the gathering of 1000 Afghan leaders in Peshawar at the end of October, some of them exiles, some who trekked across the border from within Afghanistan, all committed to overthrowing the Taliban regime. It was "a rare display of unity among tribal elders, Islamic scholars, fractious politicians, and former guerrilla commanders," the NY Times reported. They unanimously "urged the US to stop the air raids," appealed to the international media to call for an end to the "bombing of innocent people," and "demanded an end to the US bombing of Afghanistan." They urged that other means be adopted to overthrow the hated Taliban regime, a goal they believed could be achieved without mass slaughter and destruction.

A similar message was conveyed by Afghan opposition leader Abdul Haq, who was highly regarded in Washington. Just before he entered Afghanistan, apparently without US support, and was then captured and killed, he condemned the bombing and criticized the US for refusing to support the efforts of his and of others "to create a revolt within the Taliban." The bombing was "a big setback for these

efforts," he said. He reported contacts with second-level Taliban commanders and ex-Mujahiddin tribal elders, and discussed how such efforts could proceed, calling on the US to assist them with funding and other support instead of undermining them with bombs.

The US, Abdul Haq said, "is trying to show its muscle, score a victory and scare everyone in the world. They don't care about the suffering of the Afghans or how many people we will lose. And we don't like that. Because Afghans are now being made to suffer for these Arab fanatics, but we all know who brought these Arabs to Afghanistan in the 1980s, armed them and gave them a base. It was the Americans and the CIA. And the Americans who did this all got medals and good careers, while all these years Afghans suffered from these Arabs and their allies. Now, when America is attacked, instead of punishing the Americans who did this, it punishes the Afghans."

For what it's worth, I think there is considerable merit in his remarks.

We can also look elsewhere for enlightenment about Afghan opinions. There has, at last, been some belated concern about the fate of women in Afghanistan. It even reached the First Lady. Maybe it will be followed some day by concern for the plight of women elsewhere in Central and South Asia, which, unfortunately, is not all that different in many places from life under the Taliban, including the most vibrant democracies. There are plenty of highly reliable and expert sources on these matters, if we choose to look. And such a radical departure from past practice would lend at least some credibility to the professed outrage over Taliban practices just at the moment when it served US propaganda purposes. Of course, no sane person advocates foreign military intervention by the US or other states to rectify these and other terrible crimes in countries that are US allies and clients. The problems are severe, but should be dealt with from within, with assistance from outsiders if it is constructive and honest, not merely hypocritical and self-serving.

But since the harsh treatment of women in Afghanistan has at last gained some well-deserved attention, however cynical the motives, it would seem that attitudes of Afghan women towards policy options should be a primary concern. These no doubt vary considerably, and are not easy to investigate, but it should not be completely impossible to determine whether there are mothers in Maslakh who praise the bombing, or who might, rather, agree with those who fled from their homes to miserable refugee camps under the threat of bombing and expressed the bitter hope that "even the cruel Americans must feel some pity for our ruined country" and refrain from the threatened bombing that was already bringing death and disaster. And Afghan women are by no means voiceless everywhere. There is an organization of courageous women who have been in the forefront of the struggle to defend women's rights for 25 years, RAWA (Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan), doing

remarkable work. Their leader was assassinated by Afghan collaborators with the Russians in 1987, but they continued their work within Afghanistan at risk of death, and in exile nearby. They have been quite outspoken. A week after the bombing began, for example, they issued a public statement that would have been front-page news wherever concern for Afghan women was real, not a matter of mere expediency.

The RAWA statement of October 11 was entitled: "Taliban should be overthrown by the uprising of Afghan nation," and continued as follows: "Again, due to the treason of fundamentalist hangmen, our people have been caught in the claws of the monster of a vast war and destruction. America, by forming an international coalition against Osama and his Taliban-collaborators and in retaliation for the 11th September terrorist attacks, has launched a vast aggression on our country. Despite the claim of the US that only military and terrorist bases of the Taliban and Al Qieda will be struck and that its actions would be accurately targeted and proportionate, we have witnessed for the past seven days leaves no doubt that this invasion will shed the blood of numerous women, men, children, young and old of our country."

The statement went on to call for "the eradication of the plague of Taliban and Al Qieda" by "an overall uprising" of the Afghan people themselves, which alone "can prevent the repetition and recurrence of the catastrophe that has befallen our country...."

In another declaration on November 25, at a demonstration of women's organizations in Islamabad on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, RAWA condemned the US/Russian-backed Northern Alliance for a "record of human rights violations as bad as that of the Taliban's," and called on the UN to "help Afghanistan, not the Northern Alliance."

Perhaps Afghans who have been struggling for freedom and women's rights for many years don't understand much about their country, and should cede responsibility for its future to foreigners who couldn't have placed the country on a map a few months ago, along with others who had helped destroy it in the past, led by commanders who were condemned for international terrorism by the highest international authorities and are supported by a coalition of other leading terrorist states. Maybe, but it is not obvious.

The situation is reminiscent of the Iraq war, when the Iraq opposition was barred from media and journals of opinion, apart from dissident journals at the margins. They forcefully opposed the US bombing campaign against Iraq and accused the US of preferring a military dictatorship to overthrow of Saddam by internal revolt -- as was conceded publicly, when Bush (#1) returned to collaboration with his former friend and ally Saddam in carrying out major atrocities, this

time quite directly, as Saddam brutally crushed a southern Shi'ite revolt that might well have overthrown the murderous dictator, under the watchful eyes of the US military that had total control over the region, while Washington refused even to allow rebelling Iraqi generals access to captured Iraqi arms. The Bush Administration confirmed that it would have no dealings with Iraqi opposition leaders: "We felt that political meetings with them would not be appropriate for our policy at this time," State Department spokesman Richard Boucher announced on March 14, 1991, while Saddam was massacring southern rebels with US acquiescence. That had been long-standing government policy. The same is true of preference for force over pursuit of possibly feasible diplomatic options, policies that continued in the decade that followed, until today, and are quite natural, for basically the reasons that Abdul Haq enunciated.

Another sensible way to assess the prospects for the future would be to review the actions of today's commanders when they launched the first war on terrorism 20 years ago: there is ample evidence of what they achieved in Central America, Southern Africa, the Middle East and Southeast Asia, all accompanied by much the same lofty rhetoric and passion that we hear today. There should be no need to review that shameful record. Evidently, it carries important lessons about the likely future, as does the fact that the topic is scrupulously ignored in the laudatory chorus for the current and future projects, although -- or perhaps because -- that record is so obviously relevant.

At the end of the terrible decade of the 1980s, the external deterrent to the use of force disappeared. For its victims, the collapse of Soviet tyranny was a remarkable triumph and liberation, though the victory was soon tainted by new horrors. For others, the consequences were more complex. The basic character of the post-Cold War era was revealed very quickly: more of the same, with revised pretexts and tactics. A few weeks after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the US invaded Panama, killing hundreds or thousands of people, vetoing two Security Council resolutions, and kidnapping a thug who was jailed in the US for crimes that he had mostly committed while on the CIA payroll before committing the only one that mattered: disobedience. The pattern of events was familiar enough, but there were some differences. One was pointed out by Elliott Abrams, who pleaded guilty to crimes committed when he was a State Department official during the Reagan years, and has now been appointed Human Rights specialist at the National Security Council. At the time of the invasion, he commented, astutely, that for the first time in many years the US could resort to force with no concern about Russian reactions. There were also new pretexts: the intervention was in defense against Hispanic narcotraffickers, not the Russians who were mobilizing in Managua, two days march from Harlingen, Texas.

A few months later, the Bush Administration presented its new Pentagon budget, an event of particular significance because this was

the first submission that could not rely on the plea that the Russians are coming. The Administration requested a huge military budget, as before, and in part for the same reasons. Thus it would be necessary to bolster "the defense industrial base" (aka high-tech industry), and to maintain the intervention forces that are aimed primarily at the Middle East because of "the free world's reliance on energy supplies from this pivotal region." But there was a change: in that pivotal region the "threats to our interests" that have required direct military engagement "could not be laid at the Kremlin's door," contrary to decades of propaganda, now recognized to be useless. Nor could the threats be laid at Saddam's door: the Butcher of Baghdad was still a valued friend and ally, not yet having committed his crime of disobedience. Rather, the threat was indigenous nationalism, as it had always been. The clouds lifted on the larger threat as well. It is not the Russians, but rather the "growing technological sophistication" of third world powers that requires that we maintain complete military dominance worldwide, even without "the backdrop of superpower competition." The Cold War confrontation was always in the background no doubt, but served more as a pretext than a reason, just as the Russians appealed to the US threat to justify their crimes within their own domains. The real enemy is independent (called "radical") nationalism in the South, as now tacitly acknowledged, the traditional pretexts having lost their utility. The documentary and historical record provide ample evidence to support that conclusion.

Another consequence of the collapse of the junior partner in world control was the elimination of any space for non-alignment, and the limited measure of independence it allowed. One indication is the immediate sharp reduction in foreign aid, most radically in the US, where the category virtually disappeared, even if we count the largest component, which goes to a rich country for strategic reasons, and to Egypt because of its collaboration in the same enterprise. The decline of options was fully recognized. President Mahathir of Malaysia spoke for many when he said that: "Paradoxically, the greatest catastrophe for us, who had always been anti-communist, is the defeat of communism. The end of the Cold War has deprived us of the only leverage we had - the option to defect. Now we can turn to no one." Not really a paradox, but the natural course of real-world history.

Similar fears were widely expressed. The Gulf war was bitterly condemned throughout the South as a needless show of force, evading diplomatic options; there was considerable evidence for such an interpretation at the time, more since. Many perceived what Abdul Haq describes today: the US "is trying to show its muscle, score a victory and scare everyone in the world," establishing "credibility." The resort to overwhelming military force is designed to demonstrate that "What We Say Goes," in George Bush's proud words as bombs and missiles rained on Iraq. Those who did not grasp the message then should have had no problem in doing so when he instantly returned to support for Saddam's murderous violence in order to

ensure "stability," a code word for subordination to US power interests. The general mood in the South was captured by Cardinal Paulo Evarista Arns of Sao Paulo: In the Arab countries, he said, "the rich sided with the US government while the \_millions\_ of poor condemned this military aggression." Throughout the Third World, he continued, "there is hatred and fear: When will they decide to invade us," and on what pretext?

The general reaction to the bombing of Serbia was similar, and again, there is considerable evidence that peaceful options might have been pursued, avoiding much misery. In this case, it was officially and repeatedly proclaimed that the motives were to establish "credibility" and ensure "stability." It is difficult to take seriously the claim that a subsidiary goal was to prevent the ethnic cleansing and atrocities that followed the withdrawal of monitors (over unreported Serbian objections) and the bombing immediately afterwards -- a "predictable" consequence, as the commanding General informed the press as the bombing began, later reiterating that he knew of no such war aims. The rich documentary record from the State Department, OSCE, the British government, and other Western sources substantially reinforces these conclusions. Perhaps that is why the illuminating record is so consistently ignored in the extensive literature on the topic. Even in the most loyal client states the bombing was condemned as a reversion to traditional gunboat diplomacy "cloaked in moralistic righteousness" in the traditional fashion (the respected Israeli military analyst Amos Gilboa, by no means an isolated voice).

Americans are carefully protected from world opinion and critical discussion of such matters, but we do ourselves no favors by keeping to these restrictions.

We also do ourselves no favors by ignoring public documents that lucidly explain the thinking of planners. They understand very well that the world may be tripolar in economic terms -- with roughly comparable economic power in North America, Europe, and Asia -- but that it is radically unipolar in the capacity to resort to violence and to destroy. And it should be no surprise to discover that these facts of life enter crucially into planning.

Even before Sept. 11, the US outspent the next 15 countries for "defense" -- which, as usual, means "offense." And it is far ahead in sophisticated military technology. The military budget was increased sharply after Sept. 11, as the Administration exploited the fear and anguish of the population to ram through a wide array of measures that they knew would arouse popular opposition without the appeal to "patriotism" -- which the powerful of course ignore; it is the rest who must be passive and submissive. These included a variety of means to strengthen the authority of the very powerful state to which "conservatives" are deeply committed, among them, sharp increases

in military spending designed to enhance the enormous disparity between the US and the rest of the world. Included are the plans to extend the "arms race" into space -- a "race" with one competitor only -- undermining the Outer Space Treaty of 1967 and other international obligations. Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD) is only a small component, and even that is understood to be an offensive weapon: "not simply a \_shield\_ but an \_enabler\_ of action," the RAND corporation explained, echoing not only the thoughts but even the words of Chinese authorities. Strategic analysts realistically describe the program as a means to establish US global "hegemony," which is what the world needs, they explain, echoing many distinguished predecessors.

The far broader programs of militarization of space are explained in high level public documents as the natural next step in expanding state power. Armies and navies were created to protect commercial interests and investment, Clinton's Space Command observed, and the logical next frontier is space, in pursuit of the same goals. But this time there will be a difference. The British Navy could be countered by Germany, with consequences we need not discuss. But the US will be so awesomely powerful that there will be no counterforce, so it is claimed.

Overwhelming dominance is necessary for well-known technical reasons. Even BMD requires nullification of the anti-satellite weapons of a potential adversary. The US must therefore achieve "full spectrum dominance," ensuring that even this much simpler technology will not be available. An iron fist is needed for other reasons. US military planners share the assessment of the intelligence community and outside experts that what is misleadingly called "globalization" will lead to a widening divide between the "haves" and the "have-nots" -- contrary to doctrine, but in accord with reality. And it will be necessary to control unruly elements: by inspiring fear, or perhaps by actual use of highly-destructive killing machines launched from space, probably nuclear-powered and on hair-trigger alert with automated control systems, thus increasing the likelihood of what in the trade are called "normal accidents": the unpredictable errors to which all complex systems are subject.

It is recognized that these programs significantly increase the danger of uncontrollable catastrophe, but that too is entirely rational within the framework of prevailing institutions and ideology, which ranks hegemony well above survival. Again, there are ample precedents throughout the history of the Cold War, and long before. The difference today is that the stakes are much higher. It is no exaggeration to say that the survival of the species is at risk.

These seem to me some of the realistic prospects if current tendencies persist. But there is no reason for that to happen. The good news is that the reigning systems of authority are fragile, and

they know it. There is a major effort to exploit the current window of opportunity to institute harsh and regressive programs and to neutralize the mass popular movements that have been forming throughout the world in unprecedented and highly encouraging ways. There is no reason to succumb to such efforts, and every reason not to. Plenty of choices and options are available. What is needed, as always, is the will and dedication to pursue them.