

Friends,

This analysis piece, written for the Washington Peace Letter, does not reflect my deeper analysis of events, but it does reflect my ideas about what must be our response to them, and their broader context. If now now, when? If not us, who? This is, I think, democracy's last and best chance. Time to change or enter the nightmare forever. We are not alone, either. People all over the country are responding to these events with questions and calls for a reasoned response.

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## **A New War or a New World?**

by John Judge

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Following the events of September 11, there has been a paradigm shift here and around the globe. Our matrix of assumptions has been thrown into confusion, and the current government leadership, seeking to maintain and extend political power and control, are working hard to give us a new one. It is a time for reflection and calm, not for reaction from the pain and fear we understandably feel. Now, more than ever, the voices of reason, social justice and democratic values must take on the task of correctly defining the situation.

The media is calling this "America's New War", making comparisons to Pearl Harbor and World War II, calling on sacrifice and what they are calling patriotic duty from a new generation. Officials are projecting a prolonged war, extending into "Bush's second administration". The international community is joining in a massive alliance, including all the NATO nations, and our former "enemies" Russia and China. The "free market" nations, and others, are being lined up against any other faction or government who would oppose their agenda or demands. Corporate globalization, and its neo-liberal agenda, has created a global security apparatus, with a militarized response.

Our choice now seems to be between a "new war" and a new world. As always, the forces of reaction and wealth are telling us we have no choice but war, and no right or power to decide. They are calling for a secret investigation, a secret conviction, a secret method of execution, and a totally secret war abroad. The American people as a whole are the only ones in the world who have the right to decide on a national response to this tragedy, and it must be one that takes into account the rights of all the other peoples and nations of the world.

## **Is This War?**

The Bush administration quickly called the attack an "act of war," and the Congress has formally declared a war against those responsible for the action. Officials are calling for a much wider war, one with an enemy that is constantly being defined and named, until all the "evil" is eradicated. NATO has for the first time in history invoked Article V of its charter, creating the basis for a joint military response of all its members on behalf of the United States. Officials have also implied that not only the perpetrators but also their supporters and any country that harbors or sanctions them are open to retaliatory attack. In effect, we have declared war on the rest of the world that is not already aligned with our global presence and agenda.

But, is this war? Certainly the scale of this action goes beyond anything labeled "terrorism" to date, and resembles the sort of attack that a hostile nation might lead against an enemy. The attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941 was clearly an act of war by Japan, but in this instance, the US has yet to identify the actual perpetrators convincingly, much less their ultimate sponsor. We are even told that if we do identify Osama bin Laden and his organization as the author, their eradication will not suffice to resolve the matter. Moreover, it is a war without an enemy, or at least a clear one.

A former Nuremberg prosecutor, Benjamin Ferencz, has spoken out this week stating that this is not a war, but a criminal act of mass murder, a crime against humanity, proscribed by all international law. He calls for the United States, which initiated the rule of law over the rule of force at Nuremberg, to put aside military retaliation against those responsible for such crimes, and to protect the rights of the many innocent victims that would result from such actions. He calls on the UN for an *ad hoc* international tribunal to try these murderers as criminals, under the auspices of existing international law. The United Nations can call on all the member nations to arrest detain and turn over the suspects once identified.

He argues against killing our principles in response to the killing of our people. We are a nation of laws. The horrific crimes and genocide of the Nazi leaders led many to speak out for their immediate execution upon capture. But at Nuremberg, Supreme Court Justice Robert Jackson refused to stoop to the same barbarity with which the Nazis dealt with their victims, and insisted on full trials before a tribunal of law.

This is not just a question of semantics, because whenever Congress declares war, it also creates many changes in the function of government and our democratic process, and has a profound effect on our international relations.

## **Is this Terrorism?**

Terrorism is an ill-defined concept. One man's terrorism is another man's heroism. From one perspective, the perpetrator of these covert acts of violence is a fanatic or terrorist, from another they may be seen as a rebel, revolutionary or freedom fighter. To the British, the American revolutionaries were "terrorists". The actions some of us envision in retaliation for the killing of our innocent civilian population are often reflected in the actions others take

with similar justifications for their own victims of social injustice. None of this makes violence right, in any sense. It can only beget more violence in the end, either immediate escalation or delayed revenge.

In a world where technology, wealth, power and military might is concentrated in the hands of a few nations or groups inside nations, factions of the disenfranchised and disempowered adopt violent, covert tactics. These tactics have no support, sanction or sanctuary unless there is a long history of injustice and abuse of the whole society or a significant segment of it. Violence is not a tactic adopted quickly, even by those facing severe social oppression. When social conditions change, or a sense of hope is re-established, these tactics lose the support and become isolated.

Thus, clearly the only final solution to violence and war is to establish and practice global social justice and peace. Violence is not the only route to justice, even for the oppressed. Mahatma Gandhi developed principles of non-violent direct action that challenged and exposed the injustice of British colonial rule and undermined its authority. These principles were adopted and developed in other efforts for social change, including the civil rights movement lead by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Council.

### **The Hidden Trap**

The purpose of covert acts of violence against a superior force is to harm or retaliate, and to goad them into reactionary responses, which will eventually undermine its own moral authority. There are many examples in modern history of either protracted and fruitless escalations of such violence (Israel and Palestine), or the downfall of the governments in power (Batista and Castro in Cuba). Violence and revenge harm not only the target but also the perpetrator. Many veterans of military service know this secret, carrying the dead with them and lacking the moral and emotional closure that their "victory" was supposed to bring. Already, the families of some of the victims of this recent mass murder have spoken out on behalf of those killed to stay the hand of revenge and retaliation.

The initial sense of rage, outrage and helplessness such events bring to any population leads to calls for revenge. The president has called for "justice" by saying he was reminded of Old West posters that read "Wanted: Dead or Alive". These posters were signals to bounty hunters and lynching posses, and had nothing to do with legal justice. In the same vein, the administration is calling for an investigation and an execution without a trial. It has indicated that either it does not have the ability to collect enough evidence to try Osama bin Laden in court, or else that the evidence must be kept secret because it would compromise intelligence sources and methods. Finally, the administration has called for military tribunals, if it happens to capture anyone alive. All of this avoids rules of law, simple justice and American and international courts.

If the United States wishes to effectively prevent such tragedies in the future, it must choose the moral high ground and refuse to retaliate with more violence. By standing for real justice, legal as well as social, this country can rise above the practice and experience of the

hundreds of other nations trapped into this same nightmare of hate, fear and terror. That decision, more than any other can disarm Osama bin Laden and his counterparts in other countries. If America offers justice and hope to the disenfranchised of the world, it can easily command more loyalty than the purveyors of violence. Instead, the current leadership is forcing America and many other countries into a position of protracted violence against innocent and guilty people alike. This will not only destabilize the current balance of power, but it will increase the ranks of the violent factions.

## **The Agenda**

The new global alignment positions all the "free market" nations and rulers against the remaining disenfranchised and poor who do not fit into the neo-liberal agenda of corporate globalization and control. It asserts that peace and security arise from protracted and extended war. Aeschylus, the Greek philosopher, said, "The first casualty of war is the truth". How much of the truth of this event or its authors do we really know? Will what we are being asked to do and sacrifice in a protracted war increase or decrease our security? Is a "Pax Americana" ruled over by an open empire what we want? The *Washington Post* reported that this was the goal sought by elements in the Bush administration, against the wishes of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Has the White House now won the argument?

The "demon" nations we are proposing to attack, such as Afghanistan, are severely technologically and financially underdeveloped. Many of the Arabic and Islamic nations are impoverished except for reserves of oil, which often creates an imbalance of wealth. Thus, our unnecessary dependence on oil as an energy source, and the monopoly of oil distribution and price worldwide help to create and sustain the situation that has contributed to recent events.

As an example, at Texas A&M University, General Norman Schwarzkopf, Jr., recently celebrated the tenth anniversary of the "victory" of the Gulf War to "protect our national interests" in Kuwait (meaning oil). He revealed there for the first time the amount of oil used to carry out the war, a total of 3.5 billion gallons of oil. That is more oil than is known to exist in Kuwait. Is the goal of such wars to protect our access to oil so that we have the oil necessary to fight the wars? Not only is the percentage of global oil used by the United States disproportionate (60% used by 6% of the world's people), but so is the percentage of American military usage of that oil (estimated at 60% in 1985).

The protracted war envisioned by some in the White House, under the rubric of ending terrorism and "eradicating evil" will destabilize not only the oil-rich Arabic world, but potentially the various states of the former Soviet Union. These counties are similarly rich with the sort of resources and well-educated labor that the globalization agenda demands. It will also change economic relations here in the United States, throwing us back into the permanent war economy of the Cold War years, and a severe economic slump.

This agenda always stresses military expenditures at the cost of industrial infrastructure useful to the civilian world, and cuts into the social services, education and medical research and care that could instead be the benefit of our vast reserves of wealth. With a federal

budget so bloated Congress could afford to cut future taxes, send us the rebate in advance, and still fund the Pentagon and CIA, the increases in education and social welfare were far outstripped by the tax cuts. However, in the face of the "new war", the Congress suddenly found \$40 billion not available for these other programs. Voices abound in the corridors of power calling for increased military spending, new weaponry of destruction, exotic defenses, increased and intrusive security measures, and an "unleashing" of the CIA for covert spying and operations, including assassinations.

A state of declared war brings with it many changes in the function of government, the democratic process, the suspension of civil rights and liberties, and the powers of the executive branch and federal agencies. These can range from mere inconvenience to repression of dissent, assembly and free speech, detention and internment without trial, renewal of military conscription, curtailment of means of transportation and communication, and new tests of loyalty, to a loss of democratic control over decisions that affect us all, as well as the rest of the world.

Immigration laws, wiretap restrictions, travel opportunities, and alternative media, free communications, privacy and dissent are only the first targets of the new social repression that follows from the logic of war. FBI harassment of "suspects" and "knowledgeable subjects" has already begun. Without sufficient evidence, a suspect has been named, and all Arabic and Islamic people are in danger from the hatred and xenophobic reactions that have followed. The clear message is, if the government does not need to follow a rule of law, then why should the populace not bring suspects in "dead or alive"?

### **The Task Ahead**

Will we join in the "new war" the US government is planning in secret, or will we envision a new world of peace and justice instead? Have the trillions of dollars spent on this National Security State and Defense Department since the end of WWII really protected us and given us security? Or have they engendered the conditions that put us in more danger?

Such massive changes open the door to both danger and opportunity. No method is without cost, but there are different sorts of victories that breaking the cycle of violence make possible. Through non-violent movements British rule ended, America changed. Gandhi was once asked what he thought of Western civilization, and replied, "I think it would be a good idea." Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. saw that America as "the greatest purveyor of violence in the world". He said that the choice facing America was not between non-violence and war, but between non-violence and non-existence.

By rejecting further violence and retaliation, the American people can send a moral signal to the rest of the nations of the world. We are not your enemy; we are not at war with you. We believe in justice. And by calling for global social justice, and acting on that in our relations with other nations, we can set the stage for an end to factional violence and the creation of a new world.

No country lacks the arable land to feed their people; they lack the social equity to use the

land to plant food before cash crops sold to the international markets instead. The technology we have developed in the last century has the potential to feed, clothe and house everyone on earth, to reduce the time spent on work, and to educate and encourage every person to realize their own best potentials. A world that puts people before profits, that puts justice before privilege and advantage, that puts peace above revenge and hatred is not only possible but easily reached if we have the vision and will. Humanity has risen above merely working for subsistence and survival, and actually exists in an economy of surplus. But it is a surplus that is concentrated, as wealth for a few, not shared as a commonwealth for all.

It is up to us to come up with another vision. A vision of what democracy, freedom, and social justice might look like. Just as the founders of this country had to envision something more than British colonialism to escape it. It is the responsibility of each generation to see beyond the limitations of history and privilege to a better world. Now, we must make that vision global in its perspective and local in its realization. The human rights and human dreams of all the people of the world must be taken into account. And this vision must include the structure and tools that empower and enfranchise all of us, not just a few.

We are challenged now to make or influence a national response. But the real issues are local and decentralized in their solutions. Justice here also leads to peace; it is all that ever can. Democracy lets all those affected by decisions make them, and excludes those not affected save by advantage or greed. Privilege is the real violence in any society, local or global. Any market that disrupts ecologies, economies, resources, quality of life, human and civil rights, and equitable distribution of the created wealth, is not free.

There is now no other people or country in the world able to decide for a new world in favor of a world war. None can stand against the primacy of the United States now without severe consequences. Russia has joined the new alliance, just as China has just joined the World Trade Organization. Henry Kissinger warned British audiences over the BBC that they would have to decide whether or not to ally themselves with the US now, or suffer the consequences. (Kissinger himself was facing consequences for his past involvement in war crimes last Monday when a suit indicting him was filed in a US court on behalf of his victims, but I doubt the US government would acknowledge their right to attack anyone harboring him.)

The Pentagon planners, who want always to operate in secret and dictate the terms to the rest of us, know who the real enemy is. It is not terrorists or religious fanatics. It is not foreign countries with their limited stockpiles of weapons, most of which the US sold or gave them. As Walt Kelly's cartoon character Pogo once noted, "the enemy . . . is us".

Why? Not because we are violent, but because we hold the ultimate power of the society, the democratic power, and the final moral authority. We can provide either sanction or dissent to the violent factions that claim to protect and revenge us as well. We did during the Vietnam war, and even during the Gulf War, with civilian protest and GI resistance. It was widespread both times.

The final responsibility lies with all of us. Whatever is being done to respond is being done in our name. Our name will be readable, as it is on the still undetonated mines and bombs of the previous wars around the world. Our voices of opposition will be heard more loudly

abroad than they are here. Will we take responsibility finally for the world we have helped to create, for the injustices we have perpetrated and funded, for the privileges we have obtained by force and deception, and for the hope that a turn to justice can create, and the victory that non-violence can bring to all?

It's up to us. Thomas Jefferson said it best long ago, "I know of no safe depository for the ultimate powers of society but the people themselves. And if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them, but to inform their discretion." He also noted that, "If you believe that people cannot be trusted to govern themselves, then can they be trusted to govern others?"

This is a time to reach out to those we do not know, to find a way to let those we have not yet worked with take ownership of the movement that can make the change all of us want to see. This paradigm shift will bring new alliances, and a different sort of activism to bear. The voices of reason and peace are just now rising in opposition to what we are being forced into. We must combine this call for justice and law instead of war into a broader call for a new world that everyone can join in and live in.

There are many models for successful community and conflict resolution, for grievance, mediation and restitution, for economies of scale, for alternate means of exchange, for cooperative ventures and community credit, for democratic referendum and direct participation, for decentralization of power and decision making, for open communication, for inclusion and education. We do not lack the tools or the models, only the hope and the will. Those, like all else, belong to the people themselves.

If we want to change now, we can unite. Not under the banners of one ideology or another, but under the human connection that binds us all. We can work together, and hold out the invitation to all those we have not yet met. The horrible costs of not doing this now will force it to happen later, with fewer resources available and more grief to recall. An earlier generation stopped a war. It took ten years, but it planted the idea that there is such a thing as a "bad war". And even though a horrible violence was done to Americans on our own soil, this is not December 8, 1941. The enemy is not so identifiable; the patriotic impulse is not so blind. And more importantly, the voices of reason and hope for a different solution abound. Let us join with them and with each other and live out the democracy this war purports to defend, and the human values this sort of violence always offends. No more victims, no more war, no more veterans. A new world, a world of justice and peace built by all of us.

The Washington Peace Center is here to make space for that discussion and the movements that will follow. We are here to facilitate communication and act as a clearinghouse. We are here to help to unite the many diverse communities that make up our city and our world. We are here to provide educational forums about the past and the future. We want to spend the next ten years building for peace not struggling to stop a war. We want to open a different paradigm and vision of the world. People from all over the world are our neighbors, including some the president seems bent now on bombing. We need to talk with and work with others, to calm the rage, and to build an alternative to war and a solution that leads to real peace. There is a different way. Join us, and join each other.