September 11th and Its Aftermath: Where is the World Heading? Noam Chomsky

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(As he takes his position at the lectern in an overflowing auditorium, Noam Chomsky is greeted in traditional South Indian style, with a *ponnadai*, a brocade shawl, to audience applause.)

Oh, what's going to make it stay on? [Told he is free to take it off]: It's going to fall in one minute, so I might as well take it off [audience laughter]. Thank you.

A few years ago, one of the great figures of contemporary biology, Ernst Mayr of Harvard published some reflections on the search for extra-terrestrial intelligence. His conclusion was that the likelihood of success was effectively zero. His reasoning had to do with the adaptive value of what we call higher intelligence, meaning the particular human form of intellectual organisation. Mayr estimates the number of species since the origin of life at about 50 billion, only one of which, he writes, achieved the kind of intelligence needed to establish a civilisation. It did so very recently, perhaps a hundred thousand years ago in a small breeding group of which we are all survivors. And he speculates that this form of intellectual organisation may not be favoured by selection, and points out that life on earth refutes the claim that "it's better to be smart than stupid," at least judging by biological success, which is great for beetles and bacteria but not so good as you move higher up the level of cognitive organisation. And he also makes the rather sombre observation that the average life expectancy of a species is about a hundred thousand years.

We are entering a period of human life that may provide an answer to the question of whether it's better to be smart than stupid. The most hopeful prospect is that the question will not be answered. If it receives a definite answer, that answer can only be that humans were a kind of biological error, using their allotted hundred thousand years to destroy themselves and, in the process, much else. The species has certainly developed the capacity to do just that, and an extra-terrestrial observer, if one could exist, might conclude that they have demonstrated that capacity throughout their history, dramatically in the past several hundred years, with an assault on the environment that sustains life, on the diversity of more complex organisms, and with cold and calculated savagery, on each other as well

September 11th and the Aftermath are a case in point. The shocking atrocities of September 11th are widely regarded as a historic event and that, I think, is most definitely true. But we should think clearly about exactly why it's true. These crimes had perhaps the most devastating instant human toll on record, outside of war. But the word `instant' should not be overlooked. It's unfortunate but true that the crime is far from unusual in the annals of violence that falls short of war. The aftermath of September 11th is only one of innumerable illustrations of that.

Although the scale of the catastrophe that has already taken place in Afghanistan can only be guessed, and we can hardly do more than speculate about what may follow, we do know the projections on which policy decisions are based. And from these we can gain some insight into the question of where the world is heading. The answer, unfortunately, is that it's heading along paths that are well travelled, though there certainly are changes. The crimes of September 11th are indeed a historic turning point -- but not because of the scale, rather because of the choice of target.

For the United States, this is the first time since the British burnt down Washington, in 1814, that the national territory has been under attack, or for that matter even under threat. And I don't have to review what's happened in those two centuries. The number of victims is huge. Now, for the first time, the guns have been pointed in the opposite direction, and that's a dramatic change.

The same is true, even more dramatically of Europe. Europe has suffered murderous destruction, but that's Europeans slaughtering one another. Meanwhile, Europeans conquered much of the world -- not very politely. With rare and limited exceptions, they were not under attack by their foreign victims, so it is not surprising that Europe should be utterly shocked by the terrorist crimes of September 11th. And while September 11th is indeed a dramatic change in world affairs, the aftermath represents no change at all, and therefore passes with very little notice. All of this raises questions that should be considered with some care -- if we hope to avert still further tragedies. And lurking not very far in the shadows is the question I already mentioned. Is the species on the verge of demonstrating that higher intelligence is simply a grotesque biological error?

Some of these questions have to do with immediate events, some with more lasting and fundamental issues. Among the questions that come to mind are these: First of all and most critically important, what's happening right before our eyes? Secondly, a bit more general, what is the "new war on terrorism"? Thirdly, what about the tendencies that are already underway?

There are several that I'd like to mention at least. One is the rapid increase in the means of mass destruction. Second is the threat to the environment that sustains human life. And third is the shaping of international society by the world's dominant power centres, state and private, what's misleadingly called "globalisation." And throughout we should ask quite seriously, I think, to what extent ominous tendencies that are all too easy to perceive reflect choices

that are natural and, in fact, even rational within existing institutional and ideological structures. To the extent that they do, that's the greatest danger of all.

Let's begin, briefly at least, with the first and most immediate question: What's happening before our eyes and what do we learn from it about where the world is heading under the leadership of its most powerful forces? Even before September 11th, much of the population of Afghanistan was relying on international food-aid for survival. Current estimates by the United Nations and others in a position to know are not seriously challenged. The estimates are that the number at risk since September 11th, as a direct consequence of the threat of bombing and the attack itself has risen by about two-and-a-half million, by 50 per cent, to approximately seven-and-a-half million. Pleas to stop the bombing to allow delivery of desperately needed food have been rebuffed virtually without comment. These have come from high U.N. officials, from charitable agencies, and others.

The U.N. Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) had already warned, even before the bombing, that over seven million people would face starvation if military action were initiated. After the bombing began, it advised that the threat of a humanitarian catastrophe in the short term was very grave, and furthermore that the bombing has disrupted the planting of 80 per cent of the country's grain supplies, so that the effects next year will be even more severe.

What the effects will be, we will never know. Starvation is not something that kills people instantly. People eat roots and leaves and they drag on for a while. And the effects of starvation may be the death of children born from malnourished mothers a year or two from now, and all sorts of consequences. Furthermore, nobody's going to look because the West is not interested in such things and others don't have the resources. There are plenty of examples of that. So in August 1998, Clinton bombed the Sudan, destroyed half of its pharmaceutical supplies and the factory that produced them. The consequences there are unknown. The few attempts to estimate the toll, the death toll, are in the neighbourhood of tens of thousands of people -- by the German Embassy in Sudan, by a few independent investigators, who have looked. Actually nobody really looked carefully because nobody cares! It's not important, it's normal, it's ordinary for a couple of bombs to have the effect of leaving tens of thousands of corpses in a poor African country.

Something comparable, though probably on a considerably greater scale, is unfolding right in front of us at this moment. What the consequences will be we do not know and probably never will know in any detail. But what we know is that these are the expectations on which Western civilisation is relying as it lays its plans. And only those who are entirely ignorant of modern history will be surprised by the course of events, or by the justifications that are provided by the educated classes. These are important topics that I'll reluctantly put aside for lack of time. I might say that the combination of sadistic cruelty and starry-eyed self-adulation is captured... well, to give one example, captured accurately enough by the American press just about a hundred years ago during the noble campaign to ``uplift and christianise" the Philippines, as the President described it. And they succeeded in uplifting about half-a-million Filipinos within the next few years by slaughtering them, along with horrifying war crimes carried out by old Indian fighters who were killing the `Niggers', as they put it. That finally aroused some disquiet at home and the press explained that it takes patience to overcome evil, that it will be a long war, and that we will have to go on "slaughtering the natives in English fashion [until] the misguided creatures" who resist us will at least come to "respect our arms" and later will come to understand that we wish them nothing but "liberty [and] happiness." As in Afghanistan today, and all too many other places for hundreds of years.

Well, it's much too brief, but let me put that terrifying issue aside and turn to the second question. What is the "new war on terrorism"? The goal of the civilised world has been announced very clearly in high places. We must "eradicate the evil scourge of terrorism," a plague spread by "depraved opponents of civilisation itself" in a "return to barbarism in the modern age," and so on. Surely a noble enterprise!

To place the enterprise in proper perspective, we should recognise that the Crusade is not new, contrary to what's being said. In fact, the phrases just quoted are from President Ronald Reagan and his Secretary of State, George Schultz, twenty years ago. They came to office at that time – Reagan, and shortly after, Schultz -- proclaiming that the struggle against international terrorism would be the core of U.S. foreign policy. And they responded to the plague by organising campaigns of international terrorism of unprecedented scale and violence, even leading to a condemnation by the World Court of the United States for what the Court called "the unlawful use of force," meaning international terrorism. This was followed by a U.N. Security Council Resolution calling on all states to observe international law, which the United States vetoed. It also voted alone, with one or two client states, against successive similar U.N. General Assembly Resolutions.

So the "New War on Terrorism" is, in fact, led by the only state in the world that has been condemned by the International Court of Justice for international terrorism and has vetoed a resolution calling on states to observe international law, which is perhaps appropriate.

The World Court order to terminate the crime of international terrorism and to pay substantial reparations was dismissed with contempt across the spectrum. *The New York Times* informed the public that the Court was a "hostile forum" and therefore we need pay no attention to it. Washington reacted at once to the Court's orders by escalating the economic and the terrorist wars. It also issued official orders to the mercenary army attacking from Honduras to attack "soft targets" -- those are the official orders: Attack "soft targets," undefended civilian targets like health clinics, agricultural cooperatives and so on -- and to avoid combat, as the army could do, thanks to total U. S. control

of the skies and the sophisticated communications equipment that was provided to the terrorist forces attacking from foreign bases.

These orders aroused a little discussion. Not much, and they were considered legitimate, but only with qualifications. Only if pragmatic criteria were satisfied. So one prominent commentator, Michael Kinsley, who's regarded as the spokesperson of the Left in mainstream discussion (he happened to be writing for *The Wall Street Journal* this time), argued that we should not simply dismiss State Department justifications for terrorist attacks on "soft targets." He wrote that a "sensible policy" must "meet the test of cost-benefit analysis." That is, an analysis of "the amount of blood and misery that will be poured in, and the likelihood that democracy will emerge at the other end."

"Democracy" means what Western elites decide is democracy. And that interpretation was illustrated quite clearly in the region at that time. It's taken for granted that Western elites have the right to conduct the analysis and pursue the project if it passes their tests.

And pass their tests, it did. When Nicaragua, the target, finally succumbed to superpower assault, commentators across the spectrum of respectable opinion lauded the success of the methods adopted to "wreck the economy and prosecute a long and deadly proxy war until the exhausted natives overthrow the unwanted government themselves," with a cost to us that is "minimal," leaving the victims with "wrecked bridges, sabotaged power stations, and ruined farms'' -- and tens of thousands of corpses, which are not mentioned -- and thus providing the U. S. candidate with "a winning issue": ending "the impoverishment of the people of Nicaragua.'' That happens to be *Time* magazine, but it was pretty characteristic. We are "United in Joy" at this outcome," *The New York Times* proclaimed, proud of the 'Victory for U.S. Fair Play," as a *Times* headline read.

We are now "united in joy" once again, just a few days ago on Nov. 6, as the U. S. candidate won the Nicaraguan election after very stern warnings by Washington of the consequences if the Nicaraguan people did not understand their responsibilities. *The Washington Post*, the other national newspaper, explained the victory cheerfully The U. S. candidate "focused much of his campaign on reminding people of the economic and military difficulties of the Sandinista era," referring to the U. S. terrorist war and economic strangulation that destroyed the country. Meanwhile, a leering George Bush peers at us from television, instructing us that the "one universal law" is that all variants of terror and murder are "evil." Unless, of course, we're the agents, in which case terror and murder lead us to a "noble phase' of our foreign policy with a "saintly glow," so the *The New York Times*, the newspaper of record, informs us.

There's nothing particularly new about this. This goes back hundreds of years and you can find examples among the hegemonic powers consistently.

Prevailing Western attitudes are revealed with great clarity by the reaction to the appointment of the new U.N. Ambassador to lead today's "New War against Terrorism," John Negroponte. Negroponte's record includes his service as Pro-Consul in Honduras in the 1980s, where he was the local supervisor of the international terrorist war for which his government was condemned by the World Court and the Security Council -- irrelevantly of course in a world that's governed by the rule of force. There was no detectable reaction to that either in the United States or in Europe. Another of Negroponte's condemned colleagues, Donald Rumsfeld, was just here. He was here for a few hours, which gave him enough time to declare that "'We' Crush Terror." That was the headline for an enthusiastic front-page article in the national press here a few days ago. I think even Jonathan Swift would be speechless at all of this [audience laughter].

I mentioned the case of Nicaragua not because it's the most extreme example of international terrorism, unfortunately far from it, but because it's uncontroversial, given the judgments of the highest international authorities. Uncontroversial that is, among people who have a minimal commitment to human rights and international law. One can estimate the size of that category by determining how often these elementary matters have been mentioned in the period since September 11th and from that (don't bother carrying out an extensive enquiry, you'll find approximately zero) and from that exercise alone, you can draw some grim conclusions about what lies ahead.

During the first war on terrorism, the Reagan years, U. S.-sponsored state terrorism in Central America left hundreds of thousands of tortured and mutilated corpses, millions of maimed and orphaned, four countries in ruins. Also in the same years, the Reagan years, Western-backed South African depredations killed about a million-and-a-half people and caused sixty billion dollars of damage in neighboring countries—massive international terrorism backed by the United States and Britain and others. I don't have to speak of West and South-East Asia, South America, or much else.

It's a serious analytical error proceeding to describe terrorism as a weapon of the weak, as is often done. It's simply not the case, radically not the case.

There's a great deal more to say about terrorism – the terrorism of the weak against the powerful and the unmentionable but far more extreme terrorism of the powerful against the weak. That both pose severe threats is hardly in doubt. The threats are enhanced by the fact that the policies are considered rational within the frameworks in which they are pursued. And there's reason for that. A major historian, Charles Tilly, who studied the history of these issues in Europe particularly, observed quite accurately that over the last millennium "war has been the dominant activity of European states." And for good 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." It's a truism understood all too well by most of the people of the world, even if its significance has not penetrated the heights of intellectual enlightenment.

Well, let me turn to the third category of questions, long-term tendencies that are underway and that will persist without the essential change, though there's a change there too. They're being escalated as state and private power exploit the window of opportunity that is provided by the fear and anguish of the population after Sept. 11 and naturally use that opportunity to ram through harsh and regressive measures that would otherwise arouse resistance. As usual, one participant in class war pursues its path with unrelenting intensity. It's their victims who are enjoined to be subdued and acquiescent in the interest of patriotism. The range of measures being implemented in this fashion is far ranging. I'll mention only a few.

The most important of them is the instant escalation of the policies that pose the greatest immediate threat to survival, namely, expanding the means of mass destruction. For the powerful, nuclear weapons are the weapon of choice. The U. S. Strategic Command, the highest military authority, describes nuclear weapons as the core of the arsenal, because "unlike chemical or biological weapons, the extreme destruction from a nuclear explosion is immediate, with few if any palliatives to reduce its effect." Furthermore, "nuclear weapons always cast a shadow over any crisis or conflict." This study advises further that planners should not "portray ourselves as too fully rational and cool-headed." "That the United States may become irrational and vindictive if its vital interests are attacked should be part of the national *persona* that we project." It's "beneficial" for our strategic posture if "some elements appear to be potentially 'out of control'."

The United States is unusual, I think unique, in the access that it allows to high-level planning documents and I'd be rather surprised if those of other countries were fundamentally different. The important study that I've just been quoting from is called ``Essentials of Post-Cold War Deterrence," a Clinton era document. It's been available for years but it's unknown, it's known only to readers of dissident literature that's scrupulously marginalised, although I presume intelligence services of other countries read it and draw the appropriate conclusions.

For the future, we also have to face the fact that small nuclear weapons can be smuggled into any country with relative ease and remember they are small – a 15-pound plutonium bomb can be carried across a border in a suitcase. There's a recent technical study that concludes that "a well-planned operation to smuggle weapons of mass destruction into the United States would have at least a 90 per cent probability of success, much higher than ICBM (Inter-Continental Ballistic Missile) delivery even in the absence of [National Missile Defence]."

These dangers, not just to the United States, are enhanced by the most immediate threat that was identified by a high-level U.S. Department of Energy task force, namely, "forty thousand nuclear weapons in the former Soviet Union, poorly controlled and poorly stored." One of the first acts of the incoming Bush Administration was to cut back a small programme to assist Russia in safeguarding and dismantling these weapons and providing alternative employment for nuclear scientists. That decision increased the risks of accidental launch and leakage of what are called ``loose nukes,'' followed by nuclear scientists who have no other way to employ their skills.

Current plans for ballistic missile defence are expected to enhance the threats further. U. S. intelligence predicts that

any deployment will impel China to develop and deploy new nuclear-armed missiles. They predict it will expand its nuclear arsenal by a factor of ten, probably with multiple warheads, MIRV (Multiple Independently Targetable Reentry Vehicles), which will "prompt India and Pakistan to respond with their own build-ups," with a likely ripple effect throughout the Middle East. These same analyses, intelligence analyses and others, also conclude that Russia's "only rational response would be to maintain, and strengthen, the existing Russian nuclear force." The Bush administration announced on September 1st of this year that "it has no objections to [China's] plans to build up its small fleet of nuclear missiles" – that's a sharp shift in official policy -- in the hope of gaining Chinese acquiescence to the planned dismantling of the core arms control agreements. Chinese resumption of nuclear tests is also being quietly endorsed. On the same day that this was announced, the national press also reported that the Bush Administration will impose sanctions on China for allowing the transfer to Pakistan of "missile parts and technology that are essentially for weapons that can carry nuclear warheads." All quoting from *The New York Times*. You can figure out what all that means without further comment.

Extension of the arms race to space has been a core programme for quite a few years. 'Arms race' is a misleading term for it. The United States, for now at least, is competing alone in this race, although there are others who appear to be eager to join the race to mutual destruction. Rightly or wrongly, that's how India's stand is being interpreted in the United States. That received great applause from the more hawkish and jingoist U. S. strategic analysts. Writing after the Foreign Minister's visit to the United States a few months ago, Lawrence Kaplan wrote in the liberal *New Republic* that when President Bush unveiled his plans to expand these programmes, "the rest of the world carped that the plan would provoke a new arms race, but India took a mere six hours to declare its support," while Foreign Minister [Jaswant] Singh boasted that Delhi and Washington are "endeavouring to work out together a totally new security regime, which is for the entire globe." Whether that's the right interpretation or not, you can determine, but that's the interpretation.

Kaplan went on to quote Administration hawks who recognised that Pakistan is "not an ally anymore," but rather a "rogue state," unlike India, which will now be admitted into the club that includes the United States, Britain, Taiwan and Israel. It's true this was three months ago. And since then all of us have observed a small lesson in Axiom One of international affairs: States are not moral agents. Their solemn pledges mean exactly zero. They serve domestic

power interests. And they do as they please, unless they are constrained externally or by their own citizens, the choice that lies in their hands at least in the more free and democratic societies.

All of these programmes increase the danger of destruction for the United States as for others. But that's nothing new. It's very common to pursue programmes with the conscious knowledge that they increase the danger of destruction for the participants, the advocates. The history of the arms race during the Cold War provides many examples and there's ample precedent going back far in history. Furthermore, all these choices make sense within the prevailing value system.

Both of these topics bear quite directly on the assessment of the biological success of higher intelligence. Let's look at a couple of cases. Fifty years ago, there was only one major threat to U. S. security, at that time only potential: ICBMs, which did not yet then exist but were being developed. It was quite likely that the Soviet Union would have accepted a Treaty banning development of these weapons, knowing it was far behind. There is a standard history of the arms race by McGeorge Bundy, the National Security Adviser for the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations. He had access to internal documents. He reported that he could find no record of any interest in pursuing the possibility of eliminating the sole potential threat to U.S. security.

Russian archives, quite a lot of them, have been released recently and these bear on this question. They strongly reinforce the assessments by high-level U.S. analysts that after Stalin's death, Khrushchev, when he took over, called for mutual reduction of offensive military forces and, when these initiatives were ignored by the Eisenhower Administration, he implemented them unilaterally over the objection of his own military command. Kennedy's planners, when they came in forty years ago, doubtless shared Eisenhower's understanding that, in his words, "a major war would destroy the Northern hemisphere." They also knew, we now know, of Khrushchev's unilateral steps to reduce Soviet offensive forces radically and they also knew that the United States was far ahead by any meaningful measure. Nevertheless, they chose to reject Khrushchev's plea for reciprocity, preferring to carry out a massive conventional and nuclear force build-up, thus driving the last nail into the coffin of "Khrushchev's agenda of restraining the Soviet military." I'm quoting historian Matthew Evangelista, in a monograph reviewing the U.S. and Soviet archival records, published by the main history project on this topic.

Without continuing, there's not much novelty in the Clinton-Bush preferences.

To comprehend the logic of these programmes and why mutual destruction seems an entirely rational policy to pursue, it's necessary to recall a doctrinal truism. It's conventional for attack to be called "defence." And this case is no exception. Ballistic missile defence is only a small component of much more far-reaching programmes for militarisation of space. The goal is to achieve what is called Full Spectrum Dominance, that is, a monopoly of the use of space for offensive military purposes. These plans have been available in public documents of the U.S. Space Command and other government agencies for some years and the projects outlined have been under development. They were expanded in the first months of the Bush Administration and again sharply expanded after September 11th in a crude exploitation of the fear and horror that was engendered by these crimes. These plans are disguised as ballistic missile defence. But that's only a small component of what's under development and even that small component is an offensive weapon.

That's understood by such potential adversaries as Russia and China and also by close allies. China's top arms control official simply reflected common understanding when he observed that "Once the United States believes it has both a strong spear and a strong shield, it could lead them to conclude that nobody can harm the United States and they can harm anyone they like anywhere in the world." China's position is shared by high-level strategic analysts in virtually the same words. The Rand Corporation is the major, mostly military research agency. Rand studied the topic, and concluded that ballistic missile defence "is not simply a shield but rather an enabler of U.S. action" - virtually the same words as China. Canada's military planners advised their Government that the goal of ballistic missile defence is "arguably more in order to preserve U.S.-NATO freedom of action than because the U.S. really fears North Korean or Iranian threats." Quoting another leading strategic analyst, Andrew [J.] Bacevich: "Ballistic missile defence "will facilitate the more effective application of U.S. military power abroad." He happens to be writing in the conservative journal, National Interest. He says: "By insulating the homeland from reprisal albeit in a limited way -- missile defence will underwrite the capacity and willingness of the United States to 'shape' the environment elsewhere." He cites approvingly the conclusions of Lawrence Kaplan, who happens to be writing at the other end of the spectrum. He says "missile defence isn't really meant to protect America. It's a tool for global dominance," for "hegemony." For this reason, both of them enthusiastically proclaim, "missile defence" is a wonderful contribution to justice and freedom.

It's understood that missile defence, even if it's technically feasible, has to rely on satellite communication, and destroying satellites is far easier than shooting down missiles. That's one reason why the United States must seek Full Spectrum Dominance, such overwhelming control of space that even the poor man's weapons will not be available to an adversary. And that requires offensive space-based capacities. That includes immensively destructive weapons, nuclear-powered, in space that can be launched with instant computer-controlled reaction. That greatly increases the danger of vast slaughter and devastation if only because of what are called in the trade ``normal accidents,'' that is, the unpredictable accidents to which all complex systems are subject.

The logic of militarisation of space is much broader however. And it's explained. The U.S. Space Command, the major agency in charge, has been quite explicit about this. It put out an important brochure, in the Clinton years, in 1997, called 'Vision for 2020.' In it, it announced the primary goal quite prominently on the front cover, in big

letters: ``Dominating the Space Dimension of Military Operations to Protect U.S. Interests and Investment.'` This is presented as the next phase of the historic task of military forces. They say that armies were needed during the westward expansion of the continental United States, of course in `self-defence' against the indigenous population that was being exterminated and expelled. Nations also built navies, the Space Command continues "to protect and enhance their commercial interests." The next logical step is space forces to protect "U.S. National Interests [military and commercial] and Investments."

However, they say the United States' Space Forces will be unlike Navies protecting sea commerce in earlier years because this time there will be a sole hegemon. The British Navy could be countered by Germany, with consequences that we need not discuss. But the U.S. somehow will remain immune except to the narrowly circumscribed category of terrorism that is permitted to enter the canon, the terrorism that "they" carry out against "us," whoever "we" happen to be.

The need for total dominance, they argue, is going to increase as a result of the "globalisation of the economy." The reason is that globalisation is expected to bring about "a widening between 'haves' and 'have-nots'," an assessment shared by U.S. intelligence and academic analysts. I'll come back to that. Planners are concerned that the widening divide may lead to unrest among the have-nots and the U.S. must be ready to control that by "using space systems and planning for precision strike from space [as a counter] to the worldwide proliferation of weapons of mass destruction" -- a predictable consequence of the recommended programmes, as I just mentioned, just as the widening divide is an anticipated consequence of the preferred form of globalisation. That happens to be in conflict with the economic theories that are professed, but it's in accord with reality.

Well, again there's more to say about that, but I have my eye on the clock. Throughout history it has been recognised that such steps are dangerous. I gave a few examples, but there are many more. By now the danger has reached the level of a threat to human survival. But there's a good reason to pursue it nevertheless. It's deeply rooted in existing institutions. The basic principle is that hegemony is more important than survival. That's not new, plenty of examples through history. The principle is amply illustrated in the last half century. What's new is the scale of the consequences of pursuing this principle.

Let's turn to another apparently inexorable tendency -- the destruction of the environment that sustains human life. The Bush Administration has been widely criticised for undermining the Kyoto Treaty. The grounds that they presented are that to conform to the Treaty would harm the U.S. economy. Those criticisms are rather surprising because the decisions are entirely rational within the framework of existing ideology. We're instructed daily to be firm believers in neo-classical markets in which isolated individuals are rational wealth maximisers. The market responds perfectly to their votes, which are expressed in currency inputs. The value of a person's interests is measured the same way. In particular, the interests of those with no votes, no dollars, those interests are valued at zero. Future generations, for example, who don't have dollar inputs in the market.

So it's therefore entirely rational to destroy the possibility for decent survival for our grandchildren, if by doing so we can maximise the particular form of self-interest that's hailed as the highest value, reinforced by vast industries that are devoted to implanting and reinforcing them. The threats to survival are currently being enhanced by dedicated efforts to weaken the institutional structures that have been developed to mitigate the harsh consequences of market fundamentalism and, even more important, to undermine the culture of sympathy and solidarity that sustains these institutions. Well, that's another prescription for disaster, perhaps in the not very distant future -- but again it's rational within a lunatic system of doctrines and institutions.

Let me finally turn to the last of the questions that I mentioned -- the process that's called "globalisation." But first let's be clear about the notion. If we use the term neutrally, globalisation just means international integration, welcome or not depending on the human consequences. In Western doctrinal systems, which prevail everywhere as a result of Western power, the term has a somewhat different and narrower meaning. It refers to a specific form of international integration that has been pursued with particular intensity in the last quarter century. It's designed primarily in the interest of private concentrations of power, and the interests of everyone else are incidental. With that terminology in place, the great mass of people around the world who object to these programmes can be labelled "anti-globalisation," as they always are. The force of ideology and power is such that they even accept that ridiculous designation. They can then be derided as "primitivists" who want to return to the "Stone Age," to harm the poor, and other terms of abuse with which we are familiar.

It's the way you'd expect a dedicated propaganda system to work, but it's a little surprising as it's so powerful that even its victims accept it. They shouldn't. No sane person is opposed to globalisation. The question is what form it takes

The specific form of international integration that's being pursued is called ``neo-liberal,'' but that too is highly misleading. The policies are not ``new'' and they are by no means ``liberal.'' That should be particularly obvious here. The history of England and India for two centuries illustrates very graphically how liberalism can be shaped into an instrument of power and destruction. And the current version keeps that tradition, maintains the traditional double-edged doctrine of free trade and liberalism -- fine for you so that I can demolish you, but I'm going to insist on the protection of the powerful Nanny State and other devices to ensure that I'm not subject to market discipline, except when the playing field is what is called ``level,'' that means tilted so sharply in my favour that I'm confident that I can win. That's a good part of the history of India for a couple of hundred of years.

The fact that the new versions simply adapt the traditional ones to current circumstances shouldn't actually come as a surprise. It's exactly what we would expect simply by a look at the designers – the richest and most powerful states, the international financial institutions that follow their directives, and their array of megacorporations tending towards oligopoly in most sectors of the economy and heavily reliant on the state sector to socialise risk and cost and to maintain the dynamism of the economy, often under a military cover.

These power concentrations often modestly call themselves the ``international community'' but perhaps a more appropriate term is one that's used by the business press. Last January, at the annual Davos Conference, they were described by the London *Financial Times* as `'The Masters of the Universe.'' Since the Masters profess to be admirers of Adam Smith, we might expect them to abide by his description of their behaviour, although be only called them the ``Masters of Mankind.''After all, this was before the Space Age. Smith was referring specifically to what he called "the principal architects of policy" of his day -- the "merchants and manufacturers" of England who made sure that their own interests are "most peculiarly attended to," however "grievous" the impact on others, including the people of England. I'm sure you know he condemned with particular vehemence the crimes of England in India in his day. ``The principal architects,'` he wrote, adopt the "vile maxim of the masters of mankind: All for ourselves, and nothing for anyone else.'` And that persists.

Over time, in developments that surely would have appalled the founders of classical liberalism, corporate management has been granted the rights of immortal persons by radical judicial activism and it's been granted rights that go far beyond those of mere persons in recent international economic agreements. So for example, General Motors can demand "national treatment" in Mexico, but a Mexican of flesh and blood will not fare too well if he were to demand such treatment after crossing the border to Texas, assuming that he made made it alive (many don't).

The rights of these private tyrannies, which is what they are, are being extended in current trade agreements, which allow private power concentrations to attack government regulations concerning health, environmental protection, workers' rights and so on -- on the grounds that these are "tantamount to expropriation" because they threaten future profits. In a further assault on classical liberal principles, these enormous systems of unaccountable private power assume the role of administering markets. That includes intra-firm transfers (transfers across borders within a particular corporate entity), outsourcing, strategic alliances, and a whole range of other devices to evade market discipline and that, in fact, constitute the majority of what is mislabelled ``trade.'' When you hear that trade is going up, the fact of the matter is that in classical terms it's probably going down!

These policies and their human consequences have been matters of great concern outside the ranks of the Masters of the Universe. There have been large-scale popular protests in the South against the new international economic regime for many years. They're harder to ignore when the rich countries join in, as they have in the past few years. In the United States, despite near-unanimous articulate support for free trade agreements, or as *The Wall Street Journal* calls them more honestly, ''free investment agreements,'' the population has remained stubbornly opposed. That's why NAFTA, the North American Free Trade Agreement, had to be imposed effectively in secret ten years ago. And to this day, the official position of the labour movement has not been permitted expression in the free press, or even the very similar critique and alternative proposals by Congress' own research bureau, the Office of Technology Assessment. It's extremely important to keep the public from knowing that its opposition to these Treaties is well grounded in very respectable analysis.

One might ask why public opposition to globalisation, what's called globalisation, has been so high for many years. That seems strange in an era when globalisation has led to unprecedented prosperity, so we're constantly told. And that's supposedly particularly true in the United States with its "fairy-tale economy." Throughout the 1990s, the United States enjoyed 'the greatest economic boom in America's history -- and the world's.'' Quoting Anthony Lewis in *The New York Times* last March, repeating the standard refrain from the left end, the critical end of the admissible spectrum. It is of course conceded that everything isn't perfect, there are a few flaws, some have been left behind in the economic miracle, and since we're good-hearted people, we have to do something about that. These `flaws'' reflect a profound and troubling dilemma. The rapid growth and great prosperity brought by globalisation has a concomitant: growing inequality, because there are some who lack the skills to enjoy these wondrous gifts and opportunities.

That picture is so conventional that it may be hard to realise that apart from the growing inequality, it is totally false. There is just no truth to it and it's known to be false. Per capita economic growth in the so-called roaring 1990s in the United States was about the same as Europe, much lower than in the first twenty-five post-War years -- before what's called globalisation. So we can ask how the conventional picture can be so radically different from uncontroversial facts, and they are uncontroversial. Well, the answer is very simple. For a small sector of the society, the Nineties really were a grand economic boom. And that sector happened to include the people who tell everyone else the wonderful news. It's only the world that's different. There's a counterpart in India, which I don't have to talk about, it's familiar.

Suppose we take a quick look at the record over a longer stretch. International economic integration, what's called globalisation in a technical sense, increased steadily up until the First World War, levelled or reduced between the wars, picked up again after the Second World War. It's now reaching roughly the levels of a century ago by gross measures. The fine structure is quite different. By some measures, the period before World War I had a higher degree of international integration. That had to do particularly with movement of people, what Adam Smith called

"the free circulation of labour," which was the foundation of free trade. That reached its peak before World War I, it's much lower now. By other measures, globalisation is greater now, most dramatically the flow of short-time speculative capital, which is far beyond any precedent. These differences reflect the central features of the contemporary version of globalisation. To an extent even beyond the norm, capital has priority – people are incidental.

There is a more technical measure of globalisation. That's convergence to a global market, which means a single price and wage everywhere. That certainly hasn't happened, in fact the opposite has happened. With regard to incomes, inequality is soaring through the globalisation period -- within countries and across countries. And that's expected to continue.

The U.S. intelligence community, with participation of specialists from academic professions and the private sector, recently released an important report on their expectations for the next fifteen years. They have several scenarios. The most optimistic is that "globalisation" will proceed on course: "its evolution will be rocky, marked by chronic financial volatility and a widening economic divide." That means less convergence, less globalisation in the technical sense but more globalisation in the doctrinally preferred sense. And financial volatility of course means slower growth and more crisis.

Well, that gives a good sense of where the world is heading at least if the Masters of the Universe can proceed without too much disruption by the rabble. I've already noted that military planners are adopting the same projections and they explain forthrightly that the overwhelming resources of violence, which are to be space-based in the new era, will be required to keep the growing numbers of have-nots under control.

It's too late to give details but if you look at the post-War period, the period since the Second World War, it has actually undergone two phases. There was a period up to the early 1970s when the Bretton Woods arrangements were in place with capital controls and regulated currencies. That was a period of very substantial and equitable economic growth. It's commonly called "the golden age" of capitalism. That changed in the last twenty-five years, with the breakdown of the Bretton Woods system. Financial markets were liberalized, constraints on capital flow were eliminated, and currencies were deregulated. That has been associated with a marked deterioration in standard measures of the economy -- the rate of growth of the economy, of productivity, of investment, in fact even growth of trade. Even with all the misleading definitions of trade, its growth has declined during the globalisation period, these last twenty-five years. There have been much higher interest rates, which harm the economy, increasing financial volatility, and other harmful consequences.

So let's return to that profound and troubling dilemma that we're supposed to be worried about. The rapid growth and great prosperity brought by so-called globalisation has also brought global inequality because some lack the skills to use the opportunities. There is no dilemma: the rapid growth and prosperity are simply a myth, except for a very small sector.

One can debate the economic consequences of liberalisation of capital, but one consequence is very clear: it undermines democracy. That was understood very well by the framers of the Bretton Woods agreement after World War II - the U.S. and Britain. One reason, explicit reason, why those arrangements were founded on regulation of capital was in order to allow governments to carry out social democratic programmes, which had enormous popular support, in the United States as well. Free capital movement yields what's called a "Virtual Parliament," which has "veto power" over government decisions, sharply restricting democratic options. I'm quoting from technical papers on the financial system now: With free movement of capital, governments face a "dual constituency" – voters and speculators. Speculators "conduct moment-by-moment referendums on government policies," and if they don't like them, they "veto" them by attacking the country's currency or removing its capital. Even in rich countries, the private constituency prevails. That's understood to be a very striking difference, maybe the most significant difference, between the current phase of globalisation and the period before World War I, which it partly resembles. That point is, as I say, understood. I'll simply quote from a standard history of the contemporary international monetary system, by Barry Eichengreen. Before World War I, he points out, government policy had not yet been "politicised by universal male suffrage and the rise of trade unionism and parliamentary labour parties." Therefore, the severe costs of financial rectitude that were imposed by the "Virtual Parliament" could be transferred to the general population. It's what's called structural adjustment these days for the poor countries. But that luxury was no longer available in the more democratic Bretton Woods era. Therefore, "limits on capital mobility substituted for limits of democracy as a source of insulation from market pressures."

Now, he [Eichengreen] doesn't carry the argument further but it's entirely natural that the dismantling of the post-War economic order should be accompanied by a sharp attack on substantive democracy, as it has been, primarily in the United States and Britain, the greatest enthusiasts; and of course in the ``Third World,'' which has no choices or at least believes it has no choices. That's not so obvious.

The attack on democracy is perhaps the most significant feature of the globalisation period, often called the `Leaden Age' in comparison with the `Golden Age' that preceded it just by straight economic measures. Other components of the neo-liberal programme lead to the same ends. Socio-economic decisions are increasingly shifted to unaccountable concentrations of power, an essential feature of the neo-liberal reforms.

There is a substantial extension of this attack on democracy. It's now being negotiated without public discussion in Geneva on the General Agreement for Trade and Services, the GATS negotiations, and it's coming up in Doha right now. The term ``services'' refers to just about anything that might fall within the arena of democratic choice. So

health, education, welfare, social security, communications, water, other resources -- anything involving that is ``services.'' Now there's no meaningful sense in which transferring services to private hands is ``trade.'' But then the term trade has been so deprived of meaning that I suppose it might as well be extended to this travesty as well. It's a covert term for handing it over to private power.

This term, "trade in services," is, in fact, a euphemism for programmes that are designed to undermine popular sovereignty and reduce the arena of democratic choice by transferring decisions over the most important aspects of life from the public arena to unaccountable private tyrannies. The huge public protests in Quebec last April at the Summit of the Americas were in part directed at the attempt to impose these GATS principles in secret as part of the newly-planned Free Trade Area of the Americas. And they remained secret: the secret was guarded by the self-censorship of the free press. These protests brought together a very broad constituency, unprecedented in fact, including the powerful labour unions and social democratic parties of South America, their counterparts in the North, and a great many others -- all strongly opposed to what's planned by trade ministers and corporate executives behind doors that are kept tight shut, and for good reasons.

There's no time now to run though the details, but they are highly instructive. In the United States, there has indeed been a transition from a Golden Age to a Leaden Age. For a large part of the population, incomes have stagnated or declined – that's probably 70 per cent of the population -- during these twenty years of "a fairy-tale economy." The picture gets a lot worse if you move away from the standard measures and look at the actual costs, but again there's no time for that.

Furthermore, the rules of the game as they're formulated in the World Trade Organisation are likely to extend these effects. Anyone familiar with economic history can see exactly what's going on. The rules of the World Trade Organisation specifically bar the measures that were used by every rich country – England, the United States, Japan and the rest — to reach the current state of development. They also provide unprecedented levels of protectionism for the rich, including a patent regime that bars innovation and growth in novel ways and allows corporations to amass huge profits by monopolistic pricing of products that are often developed with substantial public contribution. If the United States, let's say two hundred years ago, had been forced to accept this regime, New England, where I live, would now be pursuing its comparative advantage in exporting fish. It certainly wouldn't be producing textiles, which survived only by exorbitant tariffs to keep out superior British products, the same with steel and other industries, and that goes up to the present, including the extremely protectionist Reagan years. The relation of England to India is pretty much the same until India had finally been de-industrialised effectively by the combination of forced liberalism for the defeated and high levels of protection and a powerful state for the winners. And that runs across the world.

Just take a look at the societies that have developed -- Europe, England and its offshoots, the United States, Japan, a couple of countries in the Japanese periphery. They're the developed countries and they happen to be almost exactly the countries that were able to resist European colonialisation and forced liberalism. The correlation is very striking and well known to economic historians, I should say.

I don't want to suggest that the prospects are uniformly bleak. We don't have to prove that the species is a biological error. There have been very promising developments in the past several decades. One of them is the evolution of a human rights culture among the general population, a tendency that has accelerated very quickly from the 1960s when all the ferment of those years had a substantial civilising effect in many domains. One significant feature has been greatly heightened concern for civil and human rights, including rights of minorities, rights of women, and rights of future generations. That's the driving force of the environmental movement that's become a significant force in the past several decades. The human development movement that was initiated by Amartya Sen and Mahbub ul-Haq particularly, and to which the Lakdawala lectures I gave are dedicated, is one manifestation of that. Over the course of modern history, there have been very important gains in human rights and democratic control at least some sectors of life. These have very rarely been the gift of enlightened leaders. They have typically been imposed on states and other power centres by popular struggle. An optimist might hold, perhaps realistically, that history reveals deepening of appreciation for human rights and a broadening of their range, not without sharp reversals, but the tendency is nevertheless real. And these issues are very much alive today. The harmful effects of the corporate globalisation project have led to mass popular protest and activism in the South for several decades now, joined by major sectors of the rich industrial societies in the past few years, with alliances that have been taking shape at the grassroots level. These are impressive developments. They have a lot of opportunity and promise and they have had effects in the rhetoric, and sometimes policy changes, in the international financial institutions, the corporate world, and commentary generally. There has been at least a restraining influence on state violence though nothing like the human rights revolution in state practice that's proudly proclaimed by intellectual opinion in the West. These developments could prove very important if the momentum can be sustained in ways that deepen the bonds of sympathy and solidarity and interaction that have been developing. And I think it's fair to say that the future of our endangered species may be determined in no small measure by how these popular forces evolve [prolonged audience applause].

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