

*Stephen Eric Bronner*

## **Anatomy of A Disaster: Class War, Iraq, and the Contours of American Foreign Policy**

**by  
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### *1. Lest we forget . . .*

There is a new game in town: the political establishment has decided it is time to forget the lies and blunders associated with the Iraqi War. Europe wishes to reaffirm its bonds with the United States, the United Nations needs to placate the super-power, and smaller nations are now in the position to make a deal. The angry demonstrations of time past, the loss of “the street,” are apparently no longer relevant. It is indeed time to “get on with the job” of securing the peace. But not at any cost: not at the cost of burying the recent past. That would mean forgetting how the American public was manipulated, the world was bullied, and also the fragile nature of the democratic discourse. Especially when it comes to this administration—scarred by deceit, intoxicated with military power, inspired by imperialist ambitions, and guided by the interests of the wealthy—this is not a game that progressives should play. New crises of planetary importance will present themselves in the future and it seems the same strategy of mixing deceit with belligerence will be employed. An imperialist foreign policy, fueled by militarism and a hyper-nationalism, is also cloaking a new domestic form of class war. Battling the latter calls for understanding the former. This indeed turns the need to remember into a political issue.

### *2. Winning the hearts and minds . . .*

There are countless dictators in the world and Saddam, though bad enough, was probably not the most gruesome. The United States cannot intervene everywhere. The question is why an intervention took place in Iraq. It has now been revealed that Saddam actually made various last-minute overtures to avoid war: his concessions apparently included unrestricted investigations for nuclear weapons by American inspectors and even, which admittedly

provokes suspicion, free elections. The possibility of peace, in any event, was ignored. But that's not all: reports by the State Department forecast the difficulties associated with rebuilding the Iraqi infrastructure, the looting that would follow opening the prisons, and the resentment that would greet American troops. These reports were also ignored. Another study commissioned from the current administration by David Kay, the American expert leading the search for "weapons of mass destruction," states that Saddam Hussein was not building nuclear arms or in possession of large quantities of chemical weapons. The Iraqi War, in short, was also not a logical outcome of the assault on Afghanistan in which a genuine international coalition supported an attack upon a Taliban regime complicit in the events of 9/11. Richard Haas, President of the Council on Foreign Relations, put the matter well: "Iraq was a war of choice, not a war that had to be fought."

The American public would never have supported a war against Iraq had it known then what we know now. Human rights became a fashionable justification only once the other justifications increasingly began losing their validity. The pro-war clique of "realists" in the Department of Defense made their reputation attacking "idealists" who favored human rights and Deputy Secretary of Defense, Paul Wolfowitz, actually stated in *Vanity Fair* in June 2003 that, while freedom from the tyranny of Saddam Hussein was an important aim of American policy in Iraq, this alone was "not a reason to put the lives of American kids at risk." The mixture of arrogance and cynicism that marks the current administration indeed virtually oozes from the words of Richard Perle, perhaps the most notorious of right-wing hawks, who—according to *The Guardian* (November, 20,2003)—told an audience in London that with regard to Iraq, "I think in this case international law stood in the way of doing the right thing."

Other reasons were primary: geo-political dreams of controlling vast oil resources and four rivers—the upper and lower Zab as well as the Tigris and Euphrates—in one of the most arid regions of the world; intimidating Teheran, Damascus, and the Palestinians; a belief that American interests in the Middle East could no longer be safely left in the hands of Israel; the perceived need for an alternative to the bases situated in the increasingly archaic and potentially explosive nation of Saudi Arabia. Thus, the United States felt its presence in the region was required: larger interests than those of Iraq were at stake

President Bush insisted after 9/11 that the war on terror would last a long time: years, decades, perhaps even generations. There was no single identifiable enemy: only an amorphous transnational terrorist movement and a shifting collection of rogue states harboring fanatics and preparing for nuclear war. The enemy could be anywhere, its hatred could only be irrational, and thus—with a paranoia fanned by the dreadful events of 9/11 no less than the flames of the administration's own propaganda—the Bush Administration began to think anew about the calls to reconfigure the Middle East. Leading strategists of the far right like Wolfowitz and Perle had been calling for the ouster of Saddam as early as 1991 and it made sense for administrations to consider the contingency plans formulated in September of 2000 by neo-conservative think-tanks like Project for the New American Century. These reports insisted on the strategic importance of dominating the Gulf as well as creating a “worldwide command and control system” to deal with nations like North Korea, Iran, and Syria that President Bush would later lump together and condemn as “the axis of evil.”

### *3. Fighting the good fight . . .*

THE “WAR ON TERROR,” IF THAT PHRASE ANY LONGER HAS ANY meaning, is not going away. Right-wing politicians in Washington continue to joke: “sissies stay in Baghdad, real men want Teheran and Damascus.” Every now and then a trial balloon goes up expressing new fears about posed by Iran or Syria. Both are lambasted for aiding the attacks on American troops, harboring or selling nuclear weapons, and imperiling Israel and the stability of the Middle East. But public skepticism for yet another military adventure has grown. The economic, military, and economic miscalculations made in Iraq have thrown the Bush administration on the defensive. Its foreign policy is in shambles.

Relations between Europe and the United States will undoubtedly improve: it makes no sense for them to engage in an ongoing confrontation with the other. Both are too politically important, too economically powerful; and—also—too alike. The rifts remaining within the European Union require mending, which is only possible through a rapprochement with the United States, while the need for reliable allies has become obvious on the part of the hegemon. The United Nations for its part has now passed a resolution supporting American policy in Iraq. That, too, only makes sense. The United

Nations cannot remain at loggerheads with its most powerful member: such a course would spell financial disaster and instability for the organization. Some degree of international cooperation over the future of Iraq, moreover, was probably inevitable. But tensions still remain: symbolic is different than military support and, while it is becoming ever more apparent that the United States cannot bear the costs of peace by itself, the billions in aid sought by the Bush administration are still not forthcoming. The European Union has offered \$230 million and the administration will be lucky to raise an extra few billion dollars from its other allies.

But it is not simply a matter of money. This administration has also lost the moral high ground accorded the United States following the tragedy of 9/11. America is now seen by the publics of most nations as the primary threat to world peace and as a hypocrite willing to make war on weak states and then leave the mess to be cleaned by others. The world senses that this administration no longer takes the constructive criticism of democratic allies seriously while, among Muslims, its own panel of experts has advised the Bush Administration that “hostility toward America has reached shocking levels” and that the “image” of the United States must change. The source of a new public relations campaign, however, will surely not be Afghanistan.

That nation is now witnessing a revival of the Taliban amid the armed conflicts between tribal chieftains, which recall the battles between American gangsters during Prohibition, and there is precious little sense of a deep commitment to reconstruction. The stable, secular, and democratic regime promised by the Bush administration has not come into existence. Admittedly, in Afghanistan, some financial and humanitarian aid has been given by the allies of the United States in what was an internationally supported military response to a regime harboring the criminals of 9/11. But further aid is assuredly imperiled by demands for support in Iraq. This is not a good sign. Any potential ally must think that American foreign policy is at cross-purposes in that part of the world. It is.

And the situation is not that different elsewhere. The original refusal of the Bush administration to consider providing material incentives for North Korea to liquidate its nuclear arsenal, the rejection of the policy followed by President Clinton, and the attack on those who would succumb to “blackmail” or appeasement, has given way to negotiations with Pyongyang punctuated by bellicose blustering. The “road-map” to peace between Israelis and Palestinians, which was originally predicated on overestimating the

pliancy of Ariel Sharon and underestimating the popular support of Yassir Arafat, has also led nowhere.

President Bush clearly did not “ride herd” on both parties to the conflict and, for all the talk about statehood, Palestinian independence was not guaranteed as a prerequisite for curtailing the violence. Annexation of land is awaiting the completion of the “fence” separating Israel from Palestine; settlements are still being built, terrorism inside Israel is increasing, and the prospect of peace is further removed than it was before the Iraqi War. Clearly the connection between security and settlements trumpeted by the bosses of Israel is an illusion and, with the support given to the pre-emptive strike of Israel against supposed “terror bases” in Syria, the possibility of a general war in the region has increased. The belief that the fall of Saddam has created more stability in the Middle East is simply absurd and, the way things are going, even the prospect of securing American military bases on Iraqi territory is in jeopardy.

There is nothing worse than a fearful bully: feint and retreat have supplanted any sustained foreign policy. Suspended between bellicose rhetoric, and uncertain aims, the foreign policy of the Bush administration is adrift. Some half-cracked officials and advisors of this administration think that the cure, the best way to soften the impact of a failed policy in Iraq, is to gamble on a spectacular victory elsewhere. A bombing of North Korea or an invasion of say, Iran, will probably not take place while the United States is stuck in an Iraqi quagmire that is solely of its own making. But you never know. The influence of the lunatic right should not be underestimated and—as Machiavelli and Sun Tzu understood—it is always better to prepare for the worst.

#### *4. The price of victory . . .*

The cost of the Iraqi war has been far higher than anyone expected, and it will not be paid for a long time. More is involved than dollars and cents. American democracy has incurred dramatic wounds. The left laughs at those who would substitute the term “liberty fries” for “french fries.” But it is no laughing matter. A wave of nationalism and xenophobia has been unleashed in a country that clearly retains what the great American historian, Richard

Hofstadter, called a “paranoid streak.” Coupled with the introduction of legislation like The Patriot Act, it has called for expanding federal death penalty statutes and issuing subpoenas without the approval of judges or grand juries, insisting on maximum penalties while limiting plea bargaining, and constricting the right to counsel, bail, *habeas corpus*, and freedom from surveillance. A “watch list” of more than 100,000 suspects associated with terrorism is currently being designed. Justification for such measures is supplied by a seemingly endless number of “national security alerts” for which neither criteria nor evidence is ever supplied.

Billions of dollars—\$4-5 billion dollars per month—have already been spent on the Iraqi conflict and another \$87 billion is on the way. Even before adding on the \$166 billion in war costs, the huge surplus inherited from the Clinton administration has turned into the largest deficit in the history of the United States. Tax cuts benefit the rich exacerbate the situation, profits are not reinvested, and low-paying jobs without benefits are being substituted for high-paying jobs with benefits. While the richest 1% of Americans acquired more after tax money than the bottom 40% combined, the state teeters on the edge of bankruptcy thereby, of course (!), rendering new social programs unfeasible. Where wars have traditionally been associated with an expansion of domestic programs—consider the G.I. Bill in the aftermath of World War II or the complex of social programs associated with the “great society” during the conflict in Vietnam—that has not been the case this time.

Soldiers will have a much tougher time when they come back. Work requirements have been increased for welfare recipients, overtime has been eliminated for more than two million workers, child-care subsidies have been reduced throughout the country, and there is barely a single welfare program that has not felt the knife: a particularly mean-spirited example is in the virtual elimination of a tiny program costing \$150 million to tutor the children of convicts. Union rights of workers engaged in the many agencies connected with the Office of Homeland Security have also been rolled back. Then there are the lives wasted and, especially for the Iraqis, the “collateral damage.” The price of this conflict was purposely underestimated, later miscalculated, and now understated by the current administration. If ever there was a president who deserved to be impeached then it is George W. Bush.

Congress, admittedly, set up two “bi-partisan” committees to “investigate” the administration. In concert with a cowed and simpering media, however,

they have tended to sweep under the carpet the sheer incompetence and blatant misuse of power by the Bush administration. Every now and then a little gem is dropped: the public will then learn about new developments like the formation of a company known as “New Bridge Strategies,” composed of businessmen close to the family and administration of President Bush, which is consulting other companies seeking slices of taxpayer financed reconstruction projects. Most probably the mainstream media lost its bearings amid the outburst of euphoric nationalism that accompanied the outbreak of hostilities. But whether its ongoing laxity is due to intellectual laziness, a “club” mentality, or misplaced pragmatism is irrelevant. Independently minded people now look to other sources of information like the Internet. There they can find writings by a host of critics who insisted from the beginning that Iraq had no serious links to Al Qaeda and that it constituted no threat, and certainly no nuclear threat, to the security of the United States. There they can find commentators who anticipated that the people of Iraq would not embrace the United States as a liberator and that any number of serious—if not intractable—problems would plague the post-war reconstruction.

Grass-roots organizations like United for Peace and Justice no less than Internet groups like “Move-On” and “Truth Out” have been doing a valiant job of speaking truth to power and demanding that the president and his cronies be held responsible for the debacle. The president’s popularity has sunk dramatically from what it was in the aftermath of 9/11, due to the depressed state of the economy and growing cynicism about the failed policy in Iraq. But the forces arrayed against the opposition are mighty indeed: there is the timidity of the media, the cowardice of so many in the “mainstream” of the Democratic Party, and—of course—the \$250 million that President Bush now wishes to raise for a re-election campaign whose advertisements is already condemning candidates who are “attacking the president for attacking terrorists.”

##### *5. False hopes . . .*

Propaganda in America won’t change the “facts on the ground” in Iraq. Capturing Saddam Hussein won’t either: it might even make things worse since, arguably, the only reason even more of the populace is not engaged in open resistance is the fear that the dictator will return to power. The original

assumptions underpinning the policy of the Bush administration, in any event, were optimistic and naïve. There will be no quick transition to democracy, Iraqis are not welcoming their liberators, terror is rampant, and the obstacles to reconstruction are clearly enormous. We now have the prospect of a protracted war and a long occupation. How long? Some in the administration believe America should cut its losses while others like Director of the National Security Council, Condoleezza Rice, believe Americans might have to remain in Iraq for a “generation.” In order to justify his policy, the president has claimed that Iraq is now the “central front” in the international war against terror: why that is the case given what is occurring in Indonesia, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and elsewhere remains an open question. Ironically, in Iraq, it hardly makes sense to speak of “terror” any longer: better to think of a traditional guerilla war against an imperialist military occupation, naturally remains unclear.

Knee-jerk responses won't help matters: the situation is complex. Though most Baghdadis look forward to the creation of a democratic order, and probably believe that life will improve for them in five years, different groups within Iraqi society have very different notions of what “democracy” means and what institutions should govern the new polity. Profound disagreements exist over whether this new regime should take the form of a western parliamentary democracy or an Islamic republic. Rifts also run deep not only between Sunni and Shiite Muslims, between moderates and fundamentalists within the Shiite community itself, but also between various minorities on the borders of Iraq. There is little doubt that not merely the degree of nationalism in Iraq, but the depth of competing ethno-religious identification, has become more intense than anticipated. Neither a civil war that might destabilize the region even more nor a partition, which would generate a permanent irredentism among Iraqis, is a far-fetched possibility.

Simply pulling out American troops—without transferring responsibility to a NATO or UN force under multi-lateral command—might hasten these developments. It will surely plunge Iraq into deeper chaos and ultimately empower a new set of anti-democratic forces. This would occur as security is handed over to Iraqi militia and police. Creating an Iraqi military and police is a possibility: but leaders of the 50,000 Iraqis already recruited are coming from the old regime. 650,000 tons of ammunition at numerous unsecured sites must serve as a temptation for tribal chieftains, gangsters, and the new leaders of paramilitary organizations. In contrast to the initial claims of the Bush administration that opposition to its policy is strong only among “dead-

enders” like foreign religious fanatics and criminal gangs, according to most assessments, everyday Iraqis are becoming increasingly disgusted with the military occupation by the United States. Introducing substitute forces from the United Nations or Europe might provide a solution: but that will not happen so long as command remains a prerogative of the United States. There is no need for Iraq to turn into another Vietnam: there is a way out but it is *politically* unacceptable to the Bush administration.

No quid pro quo has been put on the table by the president. The ideological reason is most likely the general strategic decision to reject the multi-lateral foreign policy of the past—with its reliance on NATO, the UN, and various regional associations of states—in favor a unilateral approach. But there are also practical reasons: domestic politics cannot simply be divorced from foreign policy. The domestic base of political support for the Bush Administration has never had any use for the United Nations and it always understood NATO as an arm for implementing American foreign policy goals. As for the beliefs and interests of Bush supporters: conservative elites are adamant that American corporations closely tied to the administration retain their lucrative contacts for reconstructing Iraq and its oil industry while the Christian coalition and other groups imbued with nationalistic ideology would be furious should an “apology” for the invasion be made or the “victory,” no less than the symbols of American military power, be compromised.

When the Iraqi War broke out, without any sense of the different power constellations, references were constantly made to the dangers incurred by appeasing Hitler in the 1930s. Next the postwar era was invoked: Iran and Syria and other Middle Eastern states have been challenged by the United States to embrace democratic “regime change” just as Europe did following the defeat of Nazism. That is a laudable goal. But it becomes little more than posturing for domestic consumption, or veiled threats the recalcitrant abroad, since no plans exist regarding how to introduce democracy or just what democratic forces in these nations should be supported. The Middle East lacks the indigenous traditions of liberalism and social democracy that marked European history. The context is radically different and the analogy is false. An analogy of a different sort, however, might prove useful in making sense of post-war Iraq and the intensification of anti-Americanism.

In the aftermath to World War I, a defeated Germany was forced to admit sole responsibility for the conflict, compensate the victorious allies, and

surrender part of its territory, while its new democratic leaders were castigated as “November criminals” and “traitors” for supposedly collaborating with the enemy and signing the Treaty of Versailles. Nationalist fervor arose among the masses and also among soldiers who, unemployed following the peace, formed any number of right-wing paramilitary organizations. Chaos followed the war, left-wing revolutions were attempted, the economy collapsed, unemployment raged, and liberal politicians were assassinated at a rapid rate. The new republic never gained the legitimacy its framers expected and dreams of revenge festered.

Iraq in 2003 is obviously not Germany in 1918. But, while there are no left-wing revolutionary uprisings taking place in postwar Iraq, unemployment is now about 70% and other similarities are striking. A defeated nation—billions in debt to a variety of countries—must take responsibility for a war, which this time was obviously the work of its enemy, while this same enemy has instituted economic policies privatizing 200 Iraqi firms, allowing 100% ownership of Iraqi industries and banks by foreign investors, and making it legal for all profits to be sent abroad. The new leaders of Iraq, Ahmad Chalabi and his friends on the provisional council nominally ruling Iraq fear for their lives. They inspire little enthusiasm and less trust: most of them are viewed as corrupt stooges of the United States and, it seems clear, that any new western styled regime will suffer from a deficit of legitimacy. The country has been humiliated, territory might be lost, and the fabric of the nation has been frayed. More ominously: neither a civil war that might destabilize the region even more nor a partition, which would generate a permanent irredentism among Iraqis, is a far-fetched possibility.

Historical no less than political miscalculations have produced terrible consequences. It was believed by officials of the Bush administration that the United States would be welcomed as liberators and that democracy would be brought to Iraq: a full-scale guerrilla war is instead underway and only baby steps have been taken on the road to democracy. Though most Baghdadis look forward to the creation of a democratic order, and probably believe that life will improve for them in five years, different groups within Iraqi society have very different notions of what “democracy” means and what institutions should govern the new polity. Rifts also run deep not only between Sunni and Shiite Muslims, between moderates and fundamentalists within the Shiite community itself, but also between various minorities on the borders of Iraq. Profound disagreements exist over whether this new regime

should take the form of a western parliamentary democracy or an Islamic republic.

No less than in Germany, following World War I, intense nationalism provides the only locus of unity: this translates into hatred of the invader. Resistance to the United States is rapidly becoming a symbol for the anti-western and anti-democratic fundamentalists in the region: linkage between Iraqi insurgents and “terrorist” forces, precisely what the Bush administration most feared, might actually come to pass. Responding to this situation has taken the form of employing police and military officers of the old regime while making deals with tribal chieftains and religious leaders. These are not reliable allies, neither by tradition nor by inclination are they disposed to democracy, and it is becoming ever to imagine the emergence of a new authoritarian state lacking in gratitude to its creators and politically incapable of guaranteeing the United States a presence in the region. Perhaps things will turn out differently. But the future does not look bright for the forces of liberty.

#### *6. A Class War. . .*

When the twentieth century began, among the left in the socialist labor movement, it was generally believed that imperialism, militarism, and nationalism were the natural fruits of an inevitably more exploitative capitalism. That perspective is no longer fashionable. Imperialism is a word rarely used any longer in polite company; talking about a “system” is considered old-fashioned; while history is interpreted by many on the left as an agglomeration of ruptures and contingencies. To be sure: speaking about inevitability is misleading and there is little left of orthodox Marxism. But still—today—imperialism, militarism, and heightened nationalism are functioning together amid an intense economic assault on working people and the poor. Not to see the interconnection between these phenomena undermines the ability to make sense of world affairs and respond to what more than one Nobel Prize winner has called the most reactionary administration in American history.

Imperialism need neither benefit the nation as a whole nor prove purely economic in character. It can serve only certain small powerful interests and it can project primarily geo-political aims. Naomi Klein was correct when she

noted in *The Nation* that, whether troops were withdrawn or power was ceded to international organizations, Iraq would still remain “occupied.” There is nothing strange in suggesting that the reconstruction contracts awarded certain American firms and the economic arrangements introduced into Iraq, coupled with new geo-political control of regional resources, are part of a new imperialist strategy undertaken by the United States, the *hegemon*, in a period marked by globalization. It cannot simply be a coincidence, after all, that rogue states almost always seem to be traditional in orientation, outside the orbit of global society, and with a citizenry that is brown or black. The United States is now already harshly criticizing Iran and Syria for failing to close borders, for building nuclear arms, and for posing a threat to planetary security. The propaganda machine is employing the same tactics that it used in Iraq: whether they will lead to the same result, of course, is another matter. Nevertheless, it makes sense that the Bush administration should believe the United States must back up the world-wide revulsion against its words with world-wide fear of its might.

With its new strategy of the “pre-emptive strike” buttressed by its defense budget of \$400 billion, bigger than that of the rest of the world put together, the Bush administration has explicitly linked its imperialist vision with a new militarism. Little wonder then that the United States should also once again lead the world in international arms sales: its profits of about \$13 billion, with \$8.6 billion going to developing nations, are substantially more than the \$5 billion accrued by Russia and the \$1 billion by France. Israel has already claimed for itself the right to engage in pre-emptive strikes, which it did in Syria, and the increasing sales of arms world-wide will make it likely that violence will increase world-wide as well. Such developments can *only* benefit the most dominant military power, the United States, since new interventions will most likely be required for purposes of “security” and new subservient regimes for the purposes of securing stability.

A belief in the need for unilateral action is the logical consequence of such policies rather than simply an irrational form of *machismo*. It also only follows that the political mindset of those envisioning new imperial adventures and intensely preparing for war will tend to privilege the mixture of deceit and brutality in foreign affairs. But that is not something the American people can accept without undermining its sense of democratic identity. The rational justifications for imperialism and militarism therefore lose their importance. Americans become more sensitive to criticism. Old allies like France and Germany therefore are therefore not simply evidencing disagreement, but

expressing their latent resentment, jealousy, and ingratitude toward the United States. Everything becomes reduced to a conflict between “us and them.”

Nationalism will thus take the form of identifying American interests with those of the planet. If others disagree they are then—by definition—either fools unaware of their real interests or enemies not just of the United States, but humanity. Internal critics of a misguided foreign policy, by the same token, suffer the same fate as old allies with different views. Their good will is denied from the start. They become “traitors,” nothing more, and the need for vigilance against them and their kind must prove as unending as the war on terror itself: the Patriot Act and other attempts to curtail civil liberties in the name of national security and a national enterprise thus, once again, become logical extensions of a general imperial strategy rather than simply irrational expressions of paranoia. That all this actually serves the Bush Administration by identifying it with the national interest, and the national interest of the United States with that of the world, is still not emphasized enough. The similarity between the current form of thinking and that of our old communist enemies—who believed that what is good for the “party” is good for the nation and what is good for the Soviet Union is good for the world proletariat—is indeed striking.

Again: it is not a matter of this or that policy but of a new reactionary agenda and the assumptions behind it. The Democratic Party is not challenging that agenda and those assumptions. The magnitude of the current crisis is still being tempered: what was called the “military-industrial complex” is working to the detriment of the nation and the welfare state is being stripped to the bone. Three million jobs have been lost since the new millennium began that would require the creation of about 150,000 jobs per month not to recover the jobs already lost but simply to keep pace with the current decline. Little is being said about what it would take to counteract these trends in a meaningful way or, to put it differently, how to reclaim the heritage of the anti-trust spirit, the New Deal, and the Poor Peoples’ Movement.

Intoxicated by “the end of ideology,” content as usual to offer a perspective just a little less loathsome than their opponents, the opportunistic mainstream of the Democratic Party is unwilling to engage American gun-running, the economic exploitation of Iraq, and the reality of this new class war. More radical elements stand in the wings and, arguably, even many within the mainstream are being forced to re-evaluate. But the pressure must

come from outside the ranks of the party. Sources for such pressure exist: huge demonstrations now forgotten bear witness to the depth of dissatisfaction with this current regime and there exists a colorful mosaic of community organizations, interests groups, and progressive social movements.

Coordination and a common perspective on fighting this new class war are the problems not simply “apathy.” Now, more than ever, it is necessary to begin furthering a *class ideal*—a set of values and programs—that speaks to the general interests of working people within each of the existing organizations even as it privileges none. Propagating common values of resistance and articulating new programs of empowerment can only occur by working with the reformist organizations that we have: it cannot come from the top down, through sectarian action, or through vague calls for abolishing the system. No longer is it a matter of choosing between reform and revolution. The choice is instead between radical reform and resignation. But that choice is no less dramatic: the quality of our future depends upon making the right decision.