Introduction

The question of war and peace evokes many conflicting responses. For the ideologues and civilian militarists in Washington, peace can be secured with the consolidation of a world empire, which in turn implies perpetual wars throughout the world. For the ideologues and political spokespeople of the multinational corporations, the operation of the free market combined with selective use of imperial force in specific "strategic" circumstances can ensure peace and prosperity. For the oppressed peoples and nations of the Third World, peace will result from self-determination and social justice - the elimination of imperial exploitation and intervention and the establishment of participatory democracies based on social equality. For many of the progressive forces in Europe and the US, a system of international institutions and laws, binding on all nations, can enforce the peaceful resolution of conflicts, regulate the behavior of the MNCs and defend the self-determination of peoples.

Each of these perspectives has serious deficiencies. The militarist doctrine of peace through empire has been demonstrated to be a formula for war over the past 3 millennia, and especially in the contemporary period as witnessed by the past and present anti-colonial revolts and peoples' wars throughout Asia, Africa and Latin America. The notion of combining market power and selective force in securing peace has deceived few, particularly the people of the Third World: popular revolts leading to the overthrow of electoral free market clients of the Euro-US imperial empire over the past two decades throughout Latin America attests to their constant vulnerability.

The anti-imperialist movements, where they have succeeded, have in many cases succeeded in displacing one form of imperialism (direct rule) only to fall victim to another based on market forces. Moreover class and ethnic warfare has emerged in postcolonial nations as nationalist and socialist revolutionaries have become the new privileged elites.

Finally the legal-institutionalist road to peace has suffered because the global inequalities in socio-political power are reproduced in the international institutions and their judicial personnel. Thus while in form they provide an international framework, in substance their rules of procedures, omissions and selections of criminal acts and actors reflect the political interest of the imperial powers. What I am suggesting is that we need to go forward beyond anti-imperialism toward combining the struggles for self-determination to embrace class emancipation. We have to argue and struggle for a new correlation of socio-political forces in order to give the international institutions and personnel which serve them a class perspective that favor the oppressed nations and exploited classes. This means supporting democratic, secular and socialist tendencies within the anti-imperialist movements: supporting international institutional frameworks but with a deep and abiding emphasis on their class and national content. Finally while it is necessary to recognize the potential divisions and conflicts between military and market imperialists for tactical purposes (and momentary alliances), it is important to keep in sight their common strategic goals (empire
building) even as their means may differ.

**Contemporary Controversies: Peace and War**

Academics, anti-war activists, politicians and journalists have pointed to narrow sets of circumstances and processes in analyzing the prospects for war and peace. In this paper we will focus on four major theses and their implications.

1. **The 'Declining Power' of the US and New Wars**

2. **Imperial defeats and New Wars**

3. **Economic interdependency and military threats**

4. **New power configurations and inter-imperialist conflicts and convergences.**

Theories arguing in favor of the thesis that US imperialism is a declining power are one-sided, misleading and can lead to serious political mistakes. While it is true that the domestic US economy (what I call the "Republic") confronts serious structural problems (growing trade and budget deficits, excess indebtedness, decline in manufacturing and the growth of a speculative economy), the Empire - the overseas operation of the US-MNCs, banks and military bases expands. They are not in decline. On the contrary, one could argue it is the external economic expansion which engenders increased military intervention. The US still leads in the percentage of MNCs among the top 500 (almost 50%) compared to Europe, Asia and the rest of the world, and in several important sectors like information technology, finance and manufacturing (aeronautics) the US is the dominant power. The US leads the world in investment in research and development (R and D) and is high in productivity growth. The bulk of the gains in R and D however apply to MNC operations in their overseas subsidiaries, while productivity gains and profits are transferred to the paper economy at home and manufacturing abroad. The problem is not an absolute decline of the US but the unequal development between the Empire and the Republic. More specifically, as the Empire grows the Republic declines. The domestic economy and society bears the cost of financing, subsidizing and providing soldiers for the empire. That is why prolonged, costly imperial wars have in recent times provoked domestic dissent and mass opposition. Unlike the past in which the empire created a labor aristocracy, today imperialism is accompanied by the impoverishment of labor, the reduction of social expenditures and the creation of a precarious labor force.

In the face of external expansion and domestic decay, at least two major imperial policy emerge: one advocates creating new crises, escalated militarism to distract domestic opposition with chauvinist calls and the inculcation of fear of external threats in order to create cohesion behind the empire. The second school argues that new wars will exacerbate domestic opposition, that pro-war fear and chauvinist propaganda has lost its effectiveness in the face of material
losses felt by the masses, and that it is time to engage in diplomacy (to engage imperial competitors), decrease the colonial army and increase the role of local sepoys. According to this school, this will reduce budget deficits and concentrate State resources on promoting international free markets, trade and investment agreements.

Imperial Defeats and New Wars

Imperial powers which suffer political, diplomatic and military defeats in their quest for empire respond in contradictory ways depending on the depth and scope of the defeat and the political consequences which result.

Essentially imperialist powers respond to military defeats in two ways:

1. by seeking new easier (at least in the eyes of policymakers) ways to win wars to distract the public from its defeat, to bolster morale within the military and to reassure allies and clients of their continued capacity to project power;

2. by withdrawing from the field of combat, reducing their military profile in order to neutralize internal opposition to empire building, to lessen international political isolation and to reallocate political, economic and military resources to defending the system as a whole.

The Bush administration has adopted the strategy of new wars - threatening invasions, military attacks, economic sanctions and coup d’états (“regime change”) against Syria, Iran and Venezuela, even as they face defeat in their war in Iraq and increasing insurgency in Afghanistan. Even as the civilian militarists war in Iraq is opposed by a majority of their citizens and abandoned by an increasing number of their coalition partners, the civilian militarists launch new mass media propaganda campaigns, demonizing the targeted countries and creating international tension in hopes of reviving internal cohesion and new coalition partners beyond the Anglo-Saxon world.

In the face of major military defeats, US imperial policy makers frequently resort to "successful" invasions of small, weak countries to overcome civilian anti-militarism. For example, subsequent to the defeat in Vietnam, the US invaded the small Caribbean island of Grenada, and then Panama. Building from these imperial conquests, Washington turned successfully to air wars against Yugoslavia and Iraq (the First Gulf War) creating the domestic mystique of the "invincible and righteous" army ready and willing to invade Iraq. In the course of three years of unending severe resistance and over 15,000 dead and wounded soldiers and at a cost of $300 billion dollars, the mystique has evaporated replaced by disenchantment and opposition.

The second imperial response to a military defeat is to cut losses, reduce domestic divisions and to channel empire building temporarily into other channels: namely surrogate wars, covert operations by specialized operations units and intensified economic competition for market.
shares. This shift from large-scale warfare to low intensity warfare and market-led empire building has proven to be a temporary pause between imperial wars.

Subsequent to the Vietnam War, the US shifted toward covert operations in overthrowing the democratic socialist government of Chile, financing surrogate and mercenary forces in Angola, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Afghanistan and successfully imposing neo-liberal regimes to open new markets and investment opportunities throughout the Third World and the former USSR.

In summary, imperial defeats by national liberation movements temporarily change policies in some cases, but do not affect the underlying institutions and socio-economic forces, which lead to imperial wars.

The doctrine of multiple wars in the face of defeats is yet untested but the likelihood is that under present military and economic conditions, the US will likely exacerbate internal opposition and widen and deepen armed and mass resistance particularly in the Muslim world, the Middle East and Latin America - if Venezuela’s elected government is targeted.

Unfortunately under present circumstances, international political and legal institutions have failed to implement established legal conventions and legal codes. Under Kofi Annam, the United Nations has aided and abetted US aggression against Afghanistan, provided a legal cover for US colonial occupation of Iraq by recognizing the puppet regime, and refused to condemn Washington’s systematic use of torture and illegal and indefinite detention of suspects. The UN commission’s investigation of the assassination of the Lebanese billionaire politician, Hariri, made accusations against the Syrian government based on dubious witnesses, and circumstantial evidence which any independent court of justice would throw out. The UN-supported International Tribunal on Yugoslavia has refused to consider US, British and Kosovar war crimes - including saturation bombing of cities, ethnic cleansing of Serbs and the occupation and fragmentation of Serbian territory. In a word, international law is in search of an international institutional order independent of Euro-US manipulation and control in order to be effective.

Economic Interdependence and Military Encirclement

Avoidance of war and the pursuit of war require that we foresee emerging conflicts and potential military confrontations. One of the most ominous signs of military conflict is the growing US threats to emerging economic powers, namely the Peoples Republic of China.

Over the past several years but more intensely throughout 2005, Washington has engaged in a rabid propaganda campaign demonizing China - largely on the basis of gross falsehoods and distortions. The relative decline of the US in the face of China’s rapid growth has provoked two responses from the US. On the one hand US MNCs have relocated many of their manufacturing facilities to China, increased their investments and trade, and sought to take over potentially lucrative firms. On the other hand, a coalition of backward sectors of the economy, backed by numerous congresspeople and civilian neo-conservative militarists have orchestrated an aggressive policy of protectionism at home and encirclement of China abroad. Despite the
increasing "interdependence" of the US and China - China finances the US trade deficit by buying billions of dollars of US Treasury bonds and China accumulates a substantial trade surplus with the US - the militarist faction signed a military pact with Japan and India, aimed against China, builds military bases in Southwest Asia, cultivates military exercises with its client, Mongolia, and sells billions of dollars in military arms to Taiwan aimed at Chinese cities. The US challenges Chinese expenditures of $30 billion USD, claiming they are triple in size, while conveniently forgetting that US military expenditures exceed $430 billion USD, between five and fifteen times larger (depending on whose estimate one accepts). In response to US encirclement China has entered into a defensive pact with Russia and several other former USSR states.

Clearly there is a conflict between militarist sectors and economic sectors of the US elite as to the best manner to extend the empire. Both sectors are active in pursuit of their imperial goals, one through military encirclement, the other via market penetration, with the former blocking the sales of technology, oil companies and other so-called strategic goods.

Rather than accept reduced hegemonic power in Asia in which the US competes economically with China, the dominant militarists sectors attempt to compensate for relative economic decline by increasing military aggression.

In other words, "economic interdependence" is not a sufficient condition for containing the propensity for military aggression by the US against emerging economic powers. The attempts by the US to block China's emergence as a regional power follows a strategic plan designed by Paul Wolfowitz in 1992, which calls for a range of military, diplomatic and economic policies to establish a unipolar world. Short of a re-appraisal of US economic capabilities and limitations, the projected growth of China is likely to evoke new calls for offensive military confrontation, either by encouraging provincial separatism (Taiwan, Tibet and the Muslim provinces in the west), or by provoking a territorial conflict on the high seas or in airspace, by engaging in human right interventionism, or by promoting a new trade war over energy and raw materials.

War and the New Power Bloc: Civilian Militarists and Zionism versus the Traditional Ruling Class

With the election of President Bush, a new power bloc has taken over the principle decision-making centers of the imperial state; civilian militarists have downgraded the traditional military and intelligence agencies, in favor of their own intelligence bodies and special military formations. The State Department has been eclipsed by Zionist neo-conservatives in the National Security Council, the Pentagon, the influential rightwing "think tanks", and within the vice-presidential office - among other centers of power.

The Zioncons and the major Zionist organizations in civil society were the principal architects and
propagandists of the Iraq war and continue today as the leading proponents of war with Syrian and Iran. Paul Wolfowitz and Douglas Feith, formerly number two and three in the Pentagon, Irving Libby, principal advisor to Vice-President Cheney, Richard Perle, major consultant for Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld, Elliot Abrams, member of the National Security Council for Middle Eastern affairs, have organic ties with the governing regime in Israel and have been fanatical Zionists for several decades.

The war plan for Iraq that they proposed and implemented with the backing of the civilian militarists (Rumsfeld, Cheney, Bush and others) was to destroy any adversary of Israel in the Middle East and promote a US-Israel “co-prosperity” sphere in the Middle East. All the major Zionist organizations are politically influential in and out of government, and with rare exception are simply automatic transmission belts for Israel policy. Israel calls for regime change in Syria and the major Zionist organizations immediately leverage all their Congressional and Executive branch clients to echo their master’s voice. Israel calls for war against Iraq because it supports the Palestinians and actively opposes Israeli occupation of the West Bank and the Zionist intellectuals and government functionaries in collaboration with their counterparts in the mass media churn out hundreds of opinion articles advocating a US military mission to "democratize" the Middle East.

Imperialist policy makers are not homogeneous, and do not share the same ideological outlooks and priorities at all times. The traditional ruling elite did not balk at using force, or demonizing victims or intervening to produce "regime change". What is different about the contemporary configuration of power is their (1) highly militarist posture, positing permanent offensive "preventive" wars everywhere in the world; (2) embrace of Israeli state interests over US economic interests in shaping US imperial strategy; (3) hostility to the traditional sectors of the State and their attempts to create parallel power centers; (4) measures to replace the constitutional order with an executive centered [new order] with plenipotentiary powers to arrest, incarcerate and prohibit political opposition to its war plans, the Israeli State and the division of powers.

As a result Zioncons and civilian militarists face a two front conflict: between civil society and [their state]; and an intra-institutional struggle between professional military and the CIA and the FBI on the one hand and the Zioncons, the civilian militarists who head the executive branch, and their appointees to these institutions.

The pressures, conflicts, both in and out of the State apparatus and in civil society can have one of two consequences depending on who gains the upper hand and how the Zioncon power bloc reacts to threats to its stranglehold in government.

The defeat of the civilian militarists via mass opposition combined with successful federal prosecution of key members of the executive can undermine the militarist policy and result into a timed withdrawal. On the other hand, a defeat might lead the civilian militarists to take desperate measures, a contrived [9/11] to impose martial law and [unify the country] behind an anti-terrorism/militarist war policy.
Conclusion

Despite the relative decline of US power, in both economic and military terms, largely as a result of popular resistance in Iraq and Venezuela and the rising power of China, the threat of new wars has not diminished. In large part because we have an extremist regime in Washington dominated by voluntarist civilian militarists, who believe in political will over objective realities and limitations. This creates a great deal of uncertainty and danger. This threat of new wars unfortunately is being abetted by several European leaders, like Blair, Chirac and Merkel, who have joined the Zioncon chorus in destabilizing Syria and threatening Iran. Clearly there is a great need to deepen our critique of the fabrications of evidence of nuclear threats and the demonization of states. There is a need to go beyond massive social forums, which discuss and exchange ideas, to forming a new participatory international dedicated to opposing imperialist wars, colonial states and the economic structure which sustain them. Without fundamental structural changes universal human rights enshrined in international law and the United Nations Charter will remain dead letters. We must shed the heresies that there are no alternatives to imperial wars, that we live in a unipolar world, that realism dictates accommodation to Washington’s militarist cabal. Instead, we must affirm these truths: (1) that out of the ashes of the colonial occupations, the people of the Middle East are forging their own destiny; (2) that we live in a multipolar world, situated in the centers of mass popular resistance; (3) that the survival of our planet depends on a new realism based on freedom, self-determination and, as President Chavez so eloquently states, twenty-first century socialism.

November 2005