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ALEXANDER COCKBURN AND JEFFREY ST. CLAIR

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## Down the Mine and Up the Chimney with Dr. Gingrich

By Alexander Cockburn

When Newt Gingrich, currently touted as the Republican front-runner for the presidential nomination of his party, sees a 6-year-old playing computer games or hanging out in the playground, he gnashes his teeth and cries out that the lad should be swabbing school bathrooms and performing other functions of the janitorial art. He told a Harvard audience not so long ago that child labor laws are “truly stupid,” and schools should fire janitors and replace them with poor children.

Later he modified this to “What if they became assistant janitors and their jobs were to mop the floor and clean the bathroom?” Then he compared putting the kids to work as janitors to a program in Georgia that paid kids to read books.

Gingrich insists that his tots-into-janitors plan answers his latest national crisis: poor kids have no habit of work “unless it’s illegal.” Thus the former speaker of the House updates Ignatius of Loyola who said, “Give me the child until he is seven. Afterward anyone can have him.” Let the infant hand receive the lifelong impress of the janitor’s mop.

Gingrich, who recently admitted that his own childhood was comfortable, seems to have a problem with youth. Back in 1994, the Gingrich master plan to shrink the welfare rolls was to ship the children of the poor off to orphanages.

Mind you, there’s nothing more tonic than the occasional sight of a 7-year-old efficiently discharging business, or farming functions, normally regarded as reserved for adults. Back in the early 1960s, when I traveled from time to time to eastern Europe on the old Orient Express, as soon as we got past Vienna,

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## What’s the U.S. Up to in the Pacific?

By Conn Hallinan

*“On his recent trip to Asia Pacific, the president made it clear that the centerpiece of this strategy includes an intensified American role in this vital region,” Financial Times, Nov. 28, 2011 – Tom Donilon, President Barack Obama’s national security advisor.*

*“An Indo-Pacific without a strong U.S. military presence would mean the Finlandisation by China of countries in the South China Sea, such as Vietnam, Malaysia and Singapore,” Financial Times, Nov. 30, 2011 – Robert Kaplan, senior fellow, Center for a New American Security and author of Monsoon: The Indian Ocean and the Future of American Power.*

Donilon is a long-time Democratic Party operative and former lobbyist for Fannie Mae, and also a key figure in the Clinton administration’s attack on Yugoslavia and the expansion of NATO into Eastern Europe. Kaplan is a Harvard Business School professor and advisor on the Mujahedeen war against

the Soviets in Afghanistan, as well as current U.S. military intervention in the Horn of Africa.

Something is afoot.

Indeed, it is. The Obama administration is in the middle of a major shift in foreign policy – a “strategic pivot,” in the words of the White House – in two regions of the world: Asia and Africa. In both cases, a substantial buildup of military forces and a gloves-off use of force lie at the heart of the new approach.

The U.S.A. now has a permanent military force deployed in the Horn of Africa, a continent-wide military command – AFRICOM – and it has played a key role in overthrowing the Libyan government. It also has Special Forces active in Uganda, Somalia, and most of the countries that border the Sahara. But it is in Asia that the administration is making its major push, nor is it coy about which country is the target. “We are asserting our presence in the Pacific.

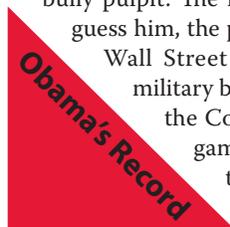
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## Obama and Labor Friends Without Benefits

By David Macaray

The president of the United States isn’t king: he doesn’t wield absolute power. Still, despite the obvious limitations of the job, he does have access to one unique and tantalizing resource. He – and he alone – has the bully pulpit. The media can second-guess him, the public can criticize,

Wall Street can threaten, the military brass can smirk, and the Congress can play its games, but no one has the power to shut him up.



Not only can no one shut him up, but when the president of the United States goes on national television, everybody tends to listen. A prime-time presidential address, particularly one presented eloquently and compellingly (and repeated often), has the power to alter the national consciousness.

Which is why, given labor’s long friendship with the Democratic Party and Obama’s acknowledged brilliance as a speaker, his first term in office has been so disappointing. The tame and reluctant President Obama (as opposed to the

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We are a Pacific power,” U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said at the National Defense University in August, “we know we face some long-term challenges about how we are going to cope with what the rise of China means.”

There is whiff to all this of old-fashioned Cold War hype, when the U.S.A. pumped up the Russian military as a world-swallowing force panting to pour through the Fulda Gap and overrun Western Europe: the Chinese are building a navy to challenge the U.S.; the Chinese are designing special missiles to neutralize American aircraft carriers; the Chinese are bullying nations throughout the region.

Common to Clinton’s address and to Kaplan’s and Donilon’s opinion pieces are pleas not to cut military spending in the Pacific. In fact, it appears the White House is already committed to that program. “Reduction in defense spending will not come at the expense of the Asia Pacific,” Donilon wrote, “There will be no diminution of our military presence or capabilities in the region.”

The spin the White House is putting on all this is that the U.S.A. has been bogged down in Iraq and Afghanistan, allowing China to throw its weight around in Asia. Donilon’s opinion piece was

titled “America is back in the Pacific and will uphold the rules.”

It is hard to know where to begin to address a statement like that other than with the observation that irony is dead.

Asia and the Pacific have been a major focus for the U.S. since it seized the Philippines in the 1899 Spanish-American War. The U.S.A. has fought four major wars in the region over the past century and, not counting the Chinese People’s Liberation Army, it deploys more military personnel in the Pacific than any other nation. It dominates the region through a network of bases in Japan, the Philippines, South

**“We are asserting our presence in the Pacific. We are a Pacific power,” U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said at the National Defense University in August, “we know we face some long-term challenges about how we are going to cope with what the rise of China means.”**

Korea, Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore, the Marshall Islands, and island fortresses like Guam and Wake. The White House just announced the deployment of 2,500 Marines to Australia.

The American Seventh Fleet – created in 1943 and currently based in Yokosuka, Japan – is the largest of the U.S.’s naval fleets, and the one most heavily armed with nuclear weapons.

We aren’t “back,” we never went anywhere.

But the argument fits into the fable that U.S. military force keeps the peace in Asia. Kaplan even argues, “A world without U.S. naval and air dominance will be one where powers such as China, Russia, India, Japan and others act more aggressively toward each other than they do now, because they will all be far more insecure than they are now.” In short, the kiddies will get into fights unless Uncle Sam is around to teach them manners. And, right now, China is threatening to upend “the rules” through an aggressive expansion of its navy.

China is, indeed, upgrading its navy,

in large part because of what the Seventh Fleet did during the 1995-96 Taiwan Strait Crisis. In the middle of tensions between Taipei and Beijing, the Clinton administration deployed two aircraft carrier battle groups into the Taiwan Straits. Since there was never any danger that China was going to invade Taiwan, the carriers were just a gratuitous slap in the face. China had little choice but to back down, but vowed it would never again be humiliated in its home waters. Beijing’s naval buildup dates from that crisis.

And “buildup” is a relative term. The U.S.A. has made much of China acquiring an aircraft carrier, but the “new” ship is a 1990 vintage Russian carrier, less than half the size of the standard American Nimitz flattop (of which the U.S. has 10). The “new” carrier-killer Chinese missile has yet to be tested, let alone deployed. Only in submarines can China say it is finally closing the gap with the U.S. And keep in mind that China’s military budget is about one-eighth that of the U.S.A.

If the Chinese are paranoid about their sea routes and home waters, it is not without cause. Most invasions of China have come via the Yellow Sea, and 80 per cent of China’s energy supplies come by sea. China ships much of its gas and oil through the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea. With major suppliers based on the west coast of Africa, the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf, it has little choice. Those sea lanes are controlled by the U.S.A., whose Fifth Fleet is based in Bahrain and the Seventh in Japan.

China is also building friendly ports for its tankers – the so-called string of pearls. Hence, Beijing’s suspicions about the sudden thaw in U.S.-Myanmar relations. China plans to build “a pearl” also in Myanmar.

Indeed, a major reason why China is building pipelines from Russia and Central Asia is to bypass the series of choke points through which its energy supplies pass, including the strait of Hormuz and the Malacca Strait. The Turkmenistan-Xingjian and Eastern Siberia Pacific Ocean pipelines are already up and running, but their volume is not nearly enough to feed China’s 11 billion barrels of oil a day appetite.

In spite of China’s protests, the U.S.A. recently carried out major naval operations in the Yellow Sea, and Washington has injected itself into tensions between Beijing and some of its neighbors over

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the South China Sea. In part, China has exacerbated those tensions by its own high-handed attitude toward other nations with claims on the Yellow Sea. In responding to protests over China's claims, Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi remarked, "China is a big country and other countries are small countries, and that is just a fact."

China's initial arrogance on the issue has allowed the U.S.A. to wedge itself into the dispute and portray itself as the "protector" of small nations. Less than 40 years ago, it was trying to bomb several of those nations back into the Stone Age, and Vietnam just recorded its 100,000th casualty since 1975, from explosives left over by the American war.

Beijing has since cooled its tone on the South China Sea and is backing away from defining it as a "core" Chinese area.

In sum, why the "strategic pivot"? Undoubtedly, some of it is posturing for the run-up to the 2012 elections. Being "tough" on China trumps Republican charges that Obama is "soft" on foreign policy. But this "pivot" is more than cynical electioneering. First, China does not pose any military threat to the U.S.A. or its allies in Asia, and the last thing China wants is a war. Beijing has not forgotten its 1979 invasion of Vietnam that ended up derailing its "four modernizations" drive and deeply damaging its economy.

Part of this "China threat" nonsense has to do with the power of the U.S. armaments industry to keep the money spigots open. When it comes to "big ticket" spending items, navies and air forces top the list. An aircraft costs in excess of \$5 billion, and the single most expensive weapons program in U.S. history is the F-35 stealth fighter.

But there is more than an appetite for pork at work here. China is the number two economy in the world, and in sharp competition with the U.S.A. and its allies for raw materials and human resources. It is hard to see the aggressive U.S. posture in Asia as anything other than an application of the old Cold War formula of economic pressure, military force, and diplomatic coercion. From Washington's point of view, it worked to destabilize the Soviet Union, so, why shouldn't it work on China?

"If you are a strategic thinker in China," says Simon Tay, chair of the Singapore Institute of International Affairs, "you do not have to be a paranoid conspiracy

theorist to think that the U.S. is trying to bandwagon Asia against China."

Because U.S. foreign policy is almost always an extension of corporate interests, squeezing China in Asia and Africa helps create openings for American investments. And if such a policy also protects the multibillion-dollar military budget, including the likes of Lockheed Martin, Boeing, General Dynamics and Northrop Grumman, so much the better.

It is a dangerous game, however. First, because military tension can lead to war, and, while that is an unlikely event, mistakes happen. "If we keep this up, then we are going to leave the impression with China that we are drawing battle lines," Douglas Paal of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace told the *Financial Times*. In fact, the Obama administration has drawn up a plan called Air-Sea Battle to deny China control of the Taiwan Straits.

The consequences for those caught in the middle will be severe. China has pulled hundreds of millions of people out of poverty, but it still has a very long way to go. An arms race will delay that. At the same time, for the average American, racked by double-digit unemployment, a vanishing safety net, and the collapse of everything from education to infrastructure, it will be no less of a tragedy. **CP**

**Conn Hallinan** is a regular contributor to *CounterPunch's* website.

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bold, wildly idealistic Candidate Obama) has never used the bully pulpit to lobby for what is, undeniably, the country's heart and soul, not to mention its largest voting bloc: working people.

The man who said, "Politics didn't lead me to working folks; working folks led me to politics," has never gone on TV and declared his support for labor, and has never suggested publicly that the reason the economy is struggling is because, with barely 12 per cent of the workforce earning a union wage, there aren't enough consumers out there who can afford to buy goods and services. As far as organized labor is concerned, Obama has been a washout.

Take EFCA (Employee Free Choice Act). This legislation would have given workers the right to join a union without having to navigate the treacherous

waters of management's hate campaigns, or long, drawn-out National Labor Relations Board elections. With EFCA, they could join simply by signing cards ("card check"). If a majority said they wished to belong to a union, presto! – they were union members, which is more or less how they do it in Europe and Canada. Only in the United States joining a union is nearly as complicated as becoming a citizen.

In addition to the simple majority vote, there were two other important provisions included in EFCA. One increased the penalties for management personnel found guilty of discriminating against employees engaged in union activism, and the other stipulated that if agreement on a contract couldn't be reached within 120 days, binding arbitration would set the terms.

What most people don't realize is that even after a successful union certification drive, things don't automatically proceed smoothly. Even after a union wins the right to represent the workers, many companies refuse to take "yes" for an answer. Seeking to sabotage the collective bargaining process, management does everything it can to avoid reaching agreement on a contract.

Some inaugural bargains have been known to limp along for as long as a year or more, with no resolution. It's management's hope that these stalling tactics will spook or frustrate the members to the point where they reconsider their union vote and request to decertify. Odd as that sounds, it does happen. A newly formed union membership can be very skittish. The 120-day deadline would prevent that.

Of course, the Republican Party, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, and the National Association of Manufacturers went berserk at the prospect of EFCA becoming the law of the land. Allowing working people more access to labor unions was by itself scary enough, but giving an outside agency – a federal arbitrator, no less – the authority to set the actual terms of the contract? That was terrifying.

In fact, the prospect was so frightening, corporate America closed ranks, went on a rampage, and spent tens of millions of dollars lobbying against it, just as labor spent millions lobbying in favor of it. And with the money collected, the positions defined, the lines drawn,

and both sides fully mobilized, the “Battle for the EFCA” officially began.

When Demosthenes’ rival Aeschines finished speaking, people would nod appreciatively and say, “How well he spoke.” But when Demosthenes finished speaking, the Athenians would shout, “Let us march!” (Thus wrote, admiringly, the legendary adman, David Ogilvy.) Such is the power of the spoken word. So, given Obama’s extraordinary skills as an orator, what did he say to inspire the public? What was the theme of his rousing speech? Alas, there was no speech. He barely spoke.

While he did acknowledge support of EFCA, he did it flatly, mechanically, sounding more like an actuary than a champion of a cause. Instead of going on national television and presenting the EFCA inspirationally, introducing it as a monument to worker empowerment, Obama laid an egg. He handed the baton to Chief of Staff Rahm Emanuel, and told him to run with it.

And from the moment Emanuel got involved, it became politics as usual. Not only did Emanuel spin his wheels, but,

by immediately offering concessions to the corporations, he revealed the White House’s lack of commitment. Predictably, with Obama conspicuously silent and no one to lead the charge, the legislation, even in its watered-down form, died. By the time Senator Feinstein (D-CA) got around to announcing that she had changed her mind and wouldn’t be voting for it, the bill was already six feet under.

Organized labor was furious. The EFCA was viewed by many as the most important labor initiative since the Taft-Hartley Act. If Obama had only done what he promised – had he set the national agenda and made EFCA part of the public debate – the legislation could have grown legs; it could very well have passed. Instead, Obama’s actions made

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it clear that EFCA mattered little to him, that he was merely going through the motions, largely to placate labor. (Sorry, boys ... at least, we tried...)

The same indifference was evident in the president’s shocking nonresponse to the attacks on America’s public school teachers being made by anti-union forces and free-market fundamentalists. Although virtually every study ever conducted by reputable educational professionals has shown that the defects plaguing our school system are not the fault of the teachers, Obama chose to leave the teachers twisting slowly in the wind.

To his shame, Obama has never once contradicted these trumped-up accusations, which he could have refuted simply by citing the relevant statistics. Instead, Obama sought to curry favor with Republicans and free-market independents by appointing the anti-union, platitude-spouting bureaucrat Arne Duncan (a former Chicago crony) as the secretary of education.

The only “studies” that blame teachers are the phony ones, sponsored by Republican business groups whose goal is to replace public schools with private

charters. Because there’s money to be made, these entrepreneurs want to privatize everything. They want to commodify the world – with private police forces, private armies, private schools, beaches, toll roads, national parks, pay-as-you-go libraries, you name it.

Accordingly, their first order of business was to demonize organized labor. They did this by claiming that our schools were failing because so many “bad teachers” were being protected by the teachers’ union. And without anyone in authority to step up and publicly refute those accusations – with the president of the United States unwilling to set the record straight – these lies morphed into sound bites, and the sound bites became part of the conventional wisdom.

Yet, if anyone had taken two minutes to examine the statistics, they would have found that nonunion teachers across the country get fired at about the same rate as union teachers. It’s a fact. Also, they would have found that many of the states with a preponderance of union teachers (Oregon, Wisconsin, South Dakota, Connecticut, Vermont, Washington, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Maine, et al) happen to have excellent public schools, some of the finest in the country.

Oregon and Washington’s public school teachers are 100 per cent unionized. Wisconsin and Connecticut’s are 98 per cent unionized. In other words, the knock against public school teachers and the unions that represent them was all part of a well-planned, well-choreographed smear campaign. But by chickening out, Obama allowed those smears to work. By refusing to defend public schools against these subversive accusations, he contributed to what we see today as an assault not only on teachers but also on all our public sector unions. If President Obama had been even half the friend to labor that Candidate Obama was, America’s unions wouldn’t be in the defensive position they are today.

The EFCA farce and dissing school teachers are merely two disappointments. There have been others.

Candidate Obama acknowledged the problem of striker replacements. Heeding Supreme Court Justice Brandeis’ observation, “Labor cannot, on any terms, surrender the right to strike”, he agreed that being permanently replaced while on strike was tantamount to not having the right to strike. Although

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striker replacement legislation would likely not have passed, it would have been a worthwhile salvo to fire across the bow, because it would have captured the public's attention and redirected the debate. President Obama said nothing.

Another salvo across the bow should have been a spirited defense of the auto industry bailout. While Obama did eventually endorse the \$18 billion loan package, he did so reluctantly, grimly, like a man with a gun to his head. Moreover, he allowed Senator Richard Shelby (R-Ala) to go on national TV and sanctimoniously rail against the United Auto Workers (UAW), blaming the union for the industry's problems. Instead of coming to the defense of the UAW and revealing Shelby as the self-serving hypocrite he was, Obama backed away. In truth, Shelby and every other Southern politician wanted

Detroit to fail – they needed Detroit to fail – so that the auto industry would continue to shift its operations to non-union Dixie. They were (and are) salivating at the prospect of the South becoming the New Detroit.

Another bully pulpit speech that should have been given was an exposé of what passes for so-called fair trade. It goes without saying that the president has an obligation to protect American workers – not only because they're the country's largest constituency, but because fair play should count for something. Obama needed to go on national TV and clarify some economic realities.

In my CounterPunch interview with Robert Reich (President Clinton's Secretary of Labor), he said, referring to the EFCA, "Once again, the leaders of organized labor got hoodwinked. It hap-

pened in the Clinton administration. It happened under Carter. Labor leaders support a Democratic candidate for president, and then they are disappointed and surprised when he doesn't come through."

Because Obama believes America's labor unions have no place to reside except the Democratic Party, he condescends to them. He condescends to labor the same way and for the same reasons the Kennedy White House condescended to the civil rights movement. The message is clear: if you think the Democrats aren't doing enough for you, just see how you do with the Republicans. **CP**

**David Macaray**, a Los Angeles playwright and author (*It's Never Been Easy: Essays on Modern Labor*), was a former union rep.

## ***Involuntary Selective Service for All*** **Corporate Nihilism and the Roots of War**

By **T.P. Wilkinson**

*Düsseldorf*

**W**ould conscription make the problems of today's U.S./NATO wars more visible and repulsive to populations, who seem to have no grasp of the destruction their military wreaks on the world?

There are many who have argued that conscription would promote war by providing a steady flow of cheap human flesh to spoil in battle. Yet, there is no denying that universal conscription has often fanned protest and opposition to wars throughout history – even modern wars fought with sophisticated psychological weapons.

Not only has the U.S.A. had an "all volunteer" military for some 40 years, other NATO members, like France and Germany, recently ended universal conscription in favor of professional volunteer armies. Has this made military intervention for France and Germany (within NATO) easier? Has it immunized the population against the most basic form of anti-war feeling – the anger at a lost or disabled life from military action?

There are some problematic aspects of military indoctrination which should not be underestimated. Arguments that compulsory military service – and hence its abolition – are directly related to a

society's militarism ignore the extent to which, for example, the U.S.A. is subjected to saturation militarism in nearly every aspect of consumer life (which substitutes for political life today). So, while the number of standard issue cannon fodder produced by factories like Fort Jackson has been reduced by the end of the draft, the militarization of the society as a whole has been severely enhanced – especially through the mass media. The proliferation of U.S. war products – video and computer games and films – throughout Europe has certainly done nothing to promote anti-war sentiment here.

I think we can also recall that Selective Service only became an issue when it meant too many white folks without special exemptions were also getting sent to death, disability or drug addiction in Southeast Asia. If I am not mistaken, the "all volunteer army" became an employer of last resort for many Americans who are the first to be denied work in the civilian sector. This may not be the case in Europe, but a stagnant employment market certainly leads many young people to consider the relative security of a job under arms.

But does the new warfare even need

the large battalions of expendable troops? Just as financial "engineering" has replaced industrial production as a means of wealth extraction, remote-control weapons deployment and mercenary subcontracting have largely replaced the mass armies that characterized U.S. and U.K. warfare in Korea and Vietnam. In this sense, warfare has become even more "corporate." The fiction that wars of invasion and conquest are the result of state action is obsolete. The entire "national security" process has been fully depoliticized; in other words, the state is more clearly than ever a mere conduit for policies and practices whose origin and essential characteristics are those of boardroom strategic planning and marketing. The difference between global business and global warfare has, in fact, dissolved.

This presents a serious cognitive problem for anyone trying to find the root of this poisonous plant in order to tear it from the ground that nurtures it. The military sustained by the draft was mimetic of the steel mill in Gary, Indiana, or the cotton plantation in the south. Today's military operates like the headquarters of Microsoft or USX – the actual physical violence has been outsourced.

However, another point to consider, when recommending reinstatement of the draft, is a historical fact. No mass movement has ever produced revolutionary change without a mutiny in the armed forces. The corporations that rule the U.S.A. know this very well. That was an essential reason for disbanding conscription – a process now completed in Germany and France.

At the same time as NATO contingent units are now drawn from volunteer (career and mercenary) forces, covert action has focused on turning the military of target countries against their state in favor of corporate invaders. Foreign military assistance has never had any other goal than to create a segment of the host military willing to betray its own country in favor of the U.S. and NATO. However, this is not always enough, especially in countries where the military has a strong popular component (e.g., through conscription).

In the 1960s, the U.S.A. developed and propagated the overarching “national security doctrine,” based on corporate-industrial ideology as an antidote to the nationalism of emerging countries and those who had developed their nationalism in the course of 19th century struggles (e.g., Latin America). A whole generation of military cadre were trained to see the U.S. corporation as the model for national interest and not the population. The 1964 Brazilian coup was paradigmatic.

There is considerable confusion among many about how this approach – the corporate security model – can be reconciled with the events in North Africa and the Middle East. I think the key to understanding this lies in two particular aspects: the corporation’s religious character and, therefore, its compatibility with reactionary religious movements (despite all the noise made about secularism), and the consolidation of the financial/drug/trade sector to provide the “central committee” of the entire global economy.

While the U.S. government and NATO all complain that the Great War On Terror (GWOT) is a campaign against movements like “Islamic fundamentalism,” the reverse has been true (going back to Carter). The GWOT is a battle against all forms of populism, and populism from Casablanca to Kabul has always had some Islamic components to the extent that U.S.-backed re-

gimes effectively eliminated secular political movements (the actual aim of the Brzezinski-organized insurgency against the Kabul government in the late 1970s). Qaddafi’s murder marked the end of the war against African secular populism that began with Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana. The problem for corporations struggling to expand and maintain power is not Islam per se but the control of the state and popular institutions. Backing reactionary religious leaders and groups is one of the oldest tactics of Euro-American colonialism. Corporate management and religious reactionaries are structurally and ideologically very similar.

When the U.S.A., with the help of France, succeeded in replacing the 1979 secular Iranian revolution with Khomeini’s reactionary faction, it seemed

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like the sovereignty question could be suppressed in Iran in favor of a preoccupation with religious repression. The “Khomeini” solution was for his reactionary Islamic organization to crush the Iranian nationalists because of their “secularism.” U.S. corporations clearly underestimated the depth of Iranian nationalism. Ahmadinejad is a thorn in the side of U.S. empire, because he represents Iranian nationalism even as he appears to sustain the extreme form of Islam, upon which the U.S.A. had relied since 1980 to subdue the Iranian population. The fake “green revolution” was an attempt to introduce someone who appeared entirely secularized and Western on the assumption that Iranian youth are more easily seduced by mobile telephony than patriotism. To date, this strategy has failed to produce either an entirely compliant pseudo-secular regime, or an entirely “autistic” reactionary religious regime

(like that of Khomeini). Apparently, the Kermit Roosevelt strategy does not work either – there has been little success in penetrating the Iranian military so as to induce a coup. In Syria, it appears that the ability of Russia and China to satisfy the vanities of Syrian military leaders has been sufficient to immunize them against U.S. subversion. Hence the need for more outright terror visited on Syria – from Turkey and Israel.

These are not mass military strategies of the type applied in WWII, Korea or Vietnam. They are global marketing strategies as designed in the boardrooms and staff offices of the major U.S. and European corporations – just as Apple contrives to launch products in such a way that customers have to stand for hours to compete for an item, or Wal-Mart announces potential shortages before major “shopping days,” thus inducing masses of fanatical consumers willing to trample each other. Thus the wars the U.S. corporations have been waging against the world all follow marketing stages, which can be found in the voluminous literature from the academic exhaust pipes of inter alia Harvard Business School: boycotts/sanctions or financial manipulation to create shortages or distortions in supply, followed by psychological operations to create tension in the population and international media campaigns to market the “problem product.” If this does not work or if the profit targets change, then the state itself is attacked covertly. When this kind of marketing does not work, then the slow escalation of military and political intervention begins until something breaks. The rash of wars we have seen in the past 12 years are simply the extreme expressions of endless war by U.S. and European corporations, called euphemistically “trade.” Trade for profit is all that remains of politics – and to paraphrase the ever-useful Clausewitz – war is trade by other means.

This has been the universal strategy of what corporations call “globalization” but, in fact, is just the euphemism for conquest. Paradigmatic was certainly the U.S./U.K. success in Indonesia (too many people focus on the failures of Vietnam but, thereby, miss the bigger picture). None of the “success” stories required U.S. intervention with ground troops. But, as can be seen, the U.S. corporate landscape is populated with a wide vari-

ety of vermin and not everyone functions like a rat, hence there have always been competing or even contradictory strategies. The importance of the 2008 coup by the banking/drug/weapons cartel is that it has led to coherence in strategy and a consensus among the financial elite as to the means and ends of corporate domination. The archaic industrialists have been marginalized. People, whether as cannon fodder or as consumers, have always been critical for industrialists. Bankers have never been seriously interested in people, but only in cash flows. It is also a mistake to see the current world war as directed toward a “new order,” or a final strategic position. That is the main fallacy of the “U.S. will overextend itself” argument. This is not a war for stability in any sense of the word. It is a war for war’s sake – trade for trade’s sake, profit for profit’s sake – in that sense a fanatically nihilistic approach to human existence.

With this strategy and this concentration of power in the hands of the misanthropists and nihilists, the last thing any of them want is popular institutions and organizations – not even mass armies. That is why liberals are utterly useless today as are most of the fake left. They abandoned mass organization after 1989 in favor of enhanced individualism (really political egotism). They abandoned mass education in favor of allegedly “tailored” learning (really autistic dependence on electronic devices). If any one doubts this, one only has to listen to all those who insist that freedom depends on access to Google or the ability to own and use personal digital devices, if only to listen to one’s preferred music.

At the same time, very few of these “digital liberators” seem to ask the question, “What human freedom means if it is reduced to the consumer prerogatives of digital life?” Those who have been induced with the years to rave over the Internet and all its appurtenances seem to have utterly forgotten that man (and conscripted armies) cannot live by data alone. CP

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the corridors would fill up with children selling snacks, efficiently coping with six or seven different currencies, performing prodigies of mental arithmetic that would have defeated Einstein.

And liberal sermons about the glories of a humane education often ring false. For poor kids, the function of schools – particularly under the protocols of “Reform” and “National Purpose” so eagerly embraced by Bush/Obama – is to remind them that, in terms of career potential and intellectual horizons, they’ve already reached the end of the line. Gingrich’s Janitor Scholarships would merely drive the message home.

The rationales of those attacking child labor laws haven’t changed much down the decades. A glance at the histories of the town and country laborers in Britain, written by J.L. and Barbara Hammond early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, provide vivid samples from the early phases of the industrial era.

As the “new civilization” of the industrial age took hold, reformers fought futilely against appalling cruelties, particularly in the coal mines and coal fire chimneys. The first report of the Commission on the Employment of Children and Young Persons in 1832 reported on children working as “trappers,” opening and shutting the doors guiding drafts of air through the mine; as “fillers” loading the skips when the men had hewn out the coal; and as “pushers” or “hurriers” shoving or pulling the carts along.

“The trappers generally sat in a little hole, made at the side of the door, holding a string in their hand, for twelve hours, usually in the dark. “ In the West Riding of Yorkshire, hurrying or pushing the carts was done by girls – in the words of the report, “Chained, belted, harnessed like dogs in a go-kart, black, saturated with wet, and more than half naked – crawling on their hands and feet, and dragging their heavy loads behind them – they present an appearance indescribably disgusting and unnatural.” In many mines, the main gates were from 24 inches to 30 inches high and some parts of the tunnels were only 18 inches in height. Boys began as trappers at the age of 6 and were paid five pence a day, hours running from 2 a.m. to 8 or 10 p.m. every day, except Saturday. Some of them had the privilege of being in the employ

of the prime minister, Lord Melbourne, an implacable opponent of the miners’ unions.

Children often began their careers as chimney sweeps at 4 or 5, thus fulfilling Gingrich’s hopes that they would have the work ethic instilled in them at the earliest feasible moment. “Is not eight pounds a large price?” a master chimney sweep, who had been offered a boy for that sum, was asked in 1818. “Oh yes, very large.” – “Why was so large a price asked for that boy?” – “Because this is a free country.” – “Was he a small boy?” – “Yes, very small of his age.”

The Hammonds write, “They started with a period of extreme misery, mental and physical, until they became inured to their trade. Their terror of the pitch-dark and often suffocating passage had to be overcome by a greater terror below. In order to induce them to climb up, the more humane masters would threaten to beat them, or perhaps only promise them plum-pudding at the top; the less humane would set straw on fire below or thrust pins into their feet ... When the ‘repugnance’ of ascending the chimney ... had been overcome, there followed many months of acute physical suffering from the sores on elbows and knees ... A witness in 1788 stated that he had known many boys serve four or five years without once being washed. They slept almost invariably, with the soot, in a cellar.”

If the chimneys were too small, the boys would be called down and told to strip and sent up naked. In 1818, chimneys in the houses of the rich were being built seven inches square. “It was, in fact, in big mansions and public offices that the difficult chimneys were found, and it was precisely in these chimneys with their horizontal reaches that there was danger of suffocation for the human brush. The child would make his way up to the top of the chimney, and then descend slowly, sweeping the soot down as he went. When he reached the bend where the flue turned at right angles, he would find great masses of soot into which he might slide as into a death trap. If he lost his head and got jammed, his fate was sealed unless his cries could bring help in time.”

Regulations were passed by the British Parliament from time to time, but were flouted before the ink was dry. The House would pass laws, but the Lords, whose chimneys were being swept,

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crushed the bills. In 1819, the parliamentary transcript, *Hansard*, recorded Lord Lauderdale, a particularly implacable opponent of reform, as saying something that could as easily have been spouted by Gingrich: "If the legislature attempted to lay down a moral code for the people, there was always a danger that every feeling of benevolence would be extirpated." By 1840, an Act was passed by which nobody under 21 was allowed to climb chimneys, and no child under 16 was to be apprenticed to a sweep. This Act was amended in 1864, when a chimney sweep was forbidden to employ any child under 10, except on his own premises.

"It takes an effort," the Hammonds conclude their chapter, "as we think of the children in the mill, punished with the punishment of Sisyphus for the pleasures of life they had never tasted, and of the children in the mines, keeping their blind vigil before the sun had risen, and keeping their blind vigil after the sun had set, to remember that this was an age in which childhood and all the promise and mystery of childhood were taking a new place in the affections of the cultivated

classes ... Even in England [Rousseau's] Emile had given a great stimulus to the study of the play and development of children ... The greatest portrait painter of the age was describing the charm and grace and laughter of happy and careless childhood. But so deep and distant was the underworld, where children were stolen from the sunshine as soon as they could creep beneath an engine or watch a trap door in a mine, that the sleep of those rulers who admired Sir Joshua's [Reynolds] portrait of innocence, and took pride in their sensibility and tenderness, was never broken..."

It's a sure thing that a couple of decades earlier Gingrich would have been pushing for sterilization as a long-term solution to the problem of the poor. Gingrich's home state of Georgia was hot for sterilization after the Buck decision of 1927, when the United States Supreme Court upheld a Virginia statute that provided for the eugenic sterilization for people considered genetically unfit. (The Court's decision was delivered by Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr., who blotted his name forever with the notorious

sentence, "Three generations of imbeciles are enough.")

Those who may think that it was the old Confederacy that rushed to sterilize the poor, particularly the black poor, should think again. Eugenics was the bogus science of progressives, eagerly embraced by Woodrow Wilson's New Jersey and other sanctuaries of the forward vision in the Northeast, particularly Harvard, where Gingrich vouchsafed his views on the children of the poor. Georgia's first sterilization bill was vetoed in 1935 by Gov. Eugene Talmadge. In neighboring South Carolina resistance was even fiercer, with a known total sterilized under 400, though not in North Carolina, whose Governor Bev Perdue is currently wrestling with the state's obligation – i.e., financial restitution – to the estimated 7,600 victims of its eugenics program. This ran from 1933 to 1977, with the state ranking third in total sterilizations after Virginia and California. **CP**

**Alexander Cockburn** is co-editor of CounterPunch and wishes subscribers a Happy Christmas and New Year.