1. Labour, war and world politics: contemporary dynamics in world-historical perspective
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INTRODUCTION

During the last decade of the twentieth century, there was an almost complete consensus in the social science literature that labour movements worldwide were in a general and severe (some argued terminal) crisis. By the turn of the century, however, a growing number of observers were suggesting that labour movements were on the upsurge, most visible as a mounting popular backlash – from Seattle to Genoa – against the dislocations provoked by contemporary globalization. Yet, in the immediate aftermath of September 11, 2001, with demonstrations and strikes being cancelled around the world, questions were raised about the future of movements that had appeared to be on a strong upward trajectory. Then, on 15 February 2003, with war looming in Iraq, some of the largest demonstrations in world history – with strong labour movement participation – were held in hundreds of cities throughout the world.

Students of labour movements have focused much attention on world-*economic* processes in explaining both the global crisis of labour movements in the 1980s and 1990s, and their recent and partial resurgence. This continues to be an important line of inquiry. Yet, the ups and downs around the turn of the century also remind us of the central role played by war and world politics in the dynamics of global labour and social protest. This theme is the focus of this chapter, not only in terms of the impact that war and world politics have on labour movements, but also in terms of the ways in which workers and workers' movements have shaped the dynamics of war and world politics.

The central purpose of this chapter is to derive lessons for thinking about the contemporary link between labour and war from an analysis of past dynamics. The chapter proceeds in three steps. In the first section I draw on some of my empirical research on the world-historical dynamics of labour unrest (including a database on world labour unrest, cf. Silver 2003) to describe (what I call) the 'vicious circle' of war and labour

unrest that characterized the first half of the twentieth century. The second section takes an even longer-term view by briefly comparing two periods of world-hegemonic transition – that is, the period of transition from Dutch to British world hegemony in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century and the period of transition from British to United States world hegemony in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. By lengthening the time horizon of the analysis, we can begin to see aspects of both recurrence and evolution in the relationship between war and labour/social unrest (see Arrighi and Silver 1999a, especially chapter 3). In the final section I return to the more recent period by asking whether and to what extent the nature of contemporary warfare has changed, and what such changes mean for the way in which workers and workers' movements are now embedded in world politics.

LABOUR, WAR AND WORLD POLITICS IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Figure 1.1 presents a time series of the number of annual newspaper reports about labour unrest worldwide from 1870 to 1996 (cf. Silver 2003: 126). The figure is based on the World Labour Group (WLG) database, which includes all acts of labour unrest (such as strikes and demonstrations) reported in either *The New York Times* or *The Times* (London) over this period. The database only includes the international reports from these two newspaper sources, so omitting reports on the UK in *The Times* and on the US in *The New York Times* (for a more extensive discussion of procedure and reliability, see Silver 2003, Appendix A).

The most immediately striking feature of Figure 1.1 is the interrelationship between world labour unrest and the two world wars – with labour unrest rising on the eves of both world wars, declining precipitously with the outbreak of war, and exploding in the aftermath of the wars. The two highest peaks in overall world labour unrest are the years immediately following the two world wars. The years 1919 and 1920 are the peak years of the series with a total of 2720 and 2293 reports, respectively. The next highest peak is 1946 and 1947 with a total of 1857 and 2122 reports, respectively. The early war years themselves are among the low points of the time series. There are only 196 reports in 1915 and only 248 and 279 in 1940 and 1942, respectively. Finally, the years just prior to the outbreak of the wars are years of rapidly rising labour unrest leading to local peaks in the time series. In the decade leading up to the First World War, the total number of mentions of labour unrest increases from 325 in 1905 to 604 in 1909 and 875 in 1913. Likewise, the total number of mentions of labour
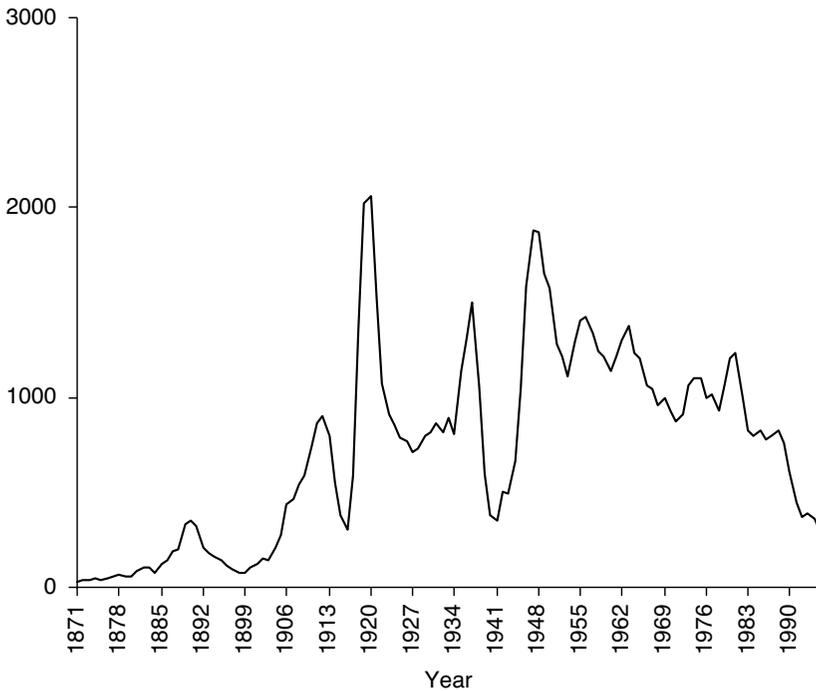
Figure 1.1   World labour unrest, 1870–1996 (mentions of labour unrest, 3-year moving average)

unrest is rising in the decade leading up to the Second World War (from 859 in 1930 to 1101 in 1934 and 1186 in 1938).

If differentiated for metropolitan and colonial/semi-colonial coun-tries (Silver 2003: 127, 128; for a more extensive discussion, chapter 4 of the same work), the connection is strongest in the former. Even in the colonial/semi-colonial aggregate the link is clearly visible, with labour unrest rising on the eves of both world wars; short-lived but major declines in overt unrest with the onset of war; and then major waves of unrest in the aftermath of the world wars. For these countries the pattern is visible for both world wars, but more pronounced for the Second World War.

This then provides striking *prima facie* evidence for the existence of a strong link between wars (or at least world wars) and labour unrest. Such an inter-relationship among labour movements, war and world politics should come as no surprise to us. Indeed, there is a long established tradi-

tion within the labour studies literature (and in the social science literature more generally) linking domestic and international conflict (Levy 1989: 258–88; Levy 1998: 139–65; Stohl 1980: 297–330). The 'presumed nexus of civil conflict and international conflict', political scientist Michael Stohl suggests, is 'one of the most venerable hypotheses in the social science literature' even whilst there is extensive debate on its forms and spatial-temporal peculiarities (Stohl 1980: 297).

Stohl identifies three sub-variants of the civil/international conflict hypothesis in his review of the literature:

1. involvement in war increases social cohesion at the national level and thus brings about internal peace (sometimes known as the 'rally-around-the flag' hypothesis);
2. involvement in war increases social conflict at the national level including the chances of revolution (most famously formulated in Lenin's 1916 prediction that inter-imperialist war would intensify the contradictions of capitalism and lead to revolution); and
3. social conflict at the national level encourages governments to involve themselves in wars (sometimes also referred to as the 'diversionary' or 'scapegoat' hypothesis).

Curiously, the patterning of labour unrest visible from the World Labour Group data may be interpreted as providing support for all three hypotheses. Their apparently contradictory nature disappears if we see them as having different temporal relevance. That is, hypothesis 3 (the scapegoat or diversionary hypothesis) best describes the period leading up to the world wars; hypothesis 1 (linking war and social cohesion) is most relevant for the early phases of the hostilities; while hypothesis 2 (linking war and revolution) is most relevant to the aftermath of the world wars. Their combined effects helped produce the volatile and explosive character of labour unrest during the first half of the twentieth century that is visible in our figure.

Thus, on the one side, it has been widely argued that 'diversionary' tactics in part motivated decisions about war in the late-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Rulers had learned that, at least in the short run, little victorious wars could bolster governments. The Spanish-American War (for the United States) and the South African War (for the United Kingdom) were two such examples. On the eve of the Russo-Japanese War of 1904, the Russian interior minister had openly stated that 'this country needs... a short victorious war to stem the tide of revolution' (quoted in Levy 1989: 264). Yet the revolutionary upheavals that shook the Russian Empire in the wake of its 1905 defeat by Japan

showed the potential boomerang effect of lost (or otherwise unpopular) wars. The First World War brought both tendencies into sharp relief, with the initial 'rally around the flag' response of workers being followed by a wave of revolutions and revolutionary crises in the final years of the war and its aftermath.

Yet beneath the volatility of labour unrest was an important longer-term trend – that is, the strengthening of workers' bargaining power vis-à-vis their governments. By the late-nineteenth century, workers in the main imperial powers had become critical cogs in war machines, not only at the front, but also in the factories and in allied transportation industries supplying the front. The growing industrialization of warfare (McNeill 1982: chapters 7–8) and the increasing size and centrality of industrial working classes, combined with the turn toward mass conscription armies, meant that rulers in Europe and North America were becoming more and more dependent on the active cooperation of their citizens for imperial expansion and war (Tilly 1990; Mann 1988).

The growing bargaining power of labour, in turn, contributed to a second important long-run trend beneath the volatility of the period – that is, the expansion of democratic and workers' rights (including welfare rights) or what might be called the increasing 'socialization of the state'. This extension of democratic and workers' rights came in fits and starts, with wartime itself often providing an especially propitious environment for advances. To be sure, increased government repression of labour militancy was characteristic of war periods, and is an important element explaining the decline in wartime labour unrest. Yet with the growing size and bargaining power of industrial working classes, simple repression was becoming an inadequate solution and had to be supplemented by active government efforts to secure the consent and cooperation of the masses. At the shop floor level, tripartite agreements between trade unions, employers and governments secured no-strike pledges from union leaders in exchange for government and employer recognition of trade unions and the establishment of collective bargaining and grievance procedures. For the union movement in many core countries (notably, the United States), the First World War marked the first time that employers relaxed their implacable hostility to trade unions (Hibbs 1978; Feldman 1966; Brody 1980; Dubofsky 1983; Giddens 1987).

Similarly, wartime proved propitious for the successful expansion of suffrage rights for both propertyless men and women (the latter were drawn into wartime factories in large numbers). The case of Belgium is illuminating: there had been mass strikes in 1886, 1888, 1891, 1893, 1902 and 1913 for which universal suffrage was a central demand; yet Belgium entered the First World War with a voting system in which older men

owning property had three votes. By the war's end, however, Belgium had equal male suffrage (Markoff 1996: 73–4, 85).

This same period saw major advances in social insurance schemes such as old-age pensions and health and unemployment insurance (Abbott and DeViney 1992). These measures were, in no small part, responses to increasingly effective labour militancy. However, they were also part of a more general development of cross-class alliances in favour of a strong and activist state. The intense competition that characterized the late-nineteenth century Great Depression prompted clamours for protection from all segments of the class spectrum and economy. By the 1878 Congress of Berlin, national bourgeoisies in continental Europe had joined agrarian elites in demanding that government action be oriented toward obtaining exclusive spheres of influence, protected markets and privileged sources of supply. Likewise in the United States, the depression of 1893, which hit both agriculture and industry, and moreover, produced widespread social unrest, prompted US business and government leaders to finally accept 'overseas expansion as the strategic solution to the nation's economic and social problems' (Williams 1969: 41; cf. Polanyi 1957: 216–7).

E.H. Carr has suggested that by the eve of the First World War the incorporation of European working classes into cross-class national projects was already quite real. In the nineteenth century, Carr wrote, when 'the nation belonged to the middle class and the worker had no fatherland,' socialism had been 'international'. Yet, the 'crisis of 1914 showed in a flash' that things had changed dramatically. The 'mass of workers knew instinctively on which side their bread was buttered' – that is, on the side of their own state's power. During the first years of the war draft evasion was virtually non-existent, and labour and socialist agitation declined precipitously in the belligerent countries (Carr 1945: 204).

Whatever the extent to which workers were effectively incorporated into cross-class national hegemonic projects by the eve of the First World War, a central characteristic of the first half of the twentieth century was the extremely unstable nature of these projects. In part, the sheer brutality of industrialized warfare disabused many of the idea that successful formulas for protecting workers and citizens had been found. More generally, as would become increasingly clear, such national hegemonic projects – without a facilitating structure of global governance – tended to malfunction; and moreover, only further stoke the flames of inter-imperialist rivalry and war.

The world economic crisis of the 1930s prompted a large number of countries to pursue rapid industrial expansion as part of an effort to overcome the social and political crises caused by the failure of the

market system (Polanyi 1957: chapter 2). But rapid industrial expansion relieved unemployment only by exacerbating other sources of domestic and international tensions. First and foremost, it increased pressures to seek out new markets and new sources of raw materials. These pressures, in turn, brought about a renewed escalation of inter-imperialist rivalries as the major powers sought out exclusive and protected overseas domains. As inter-imperialist rivalries re-ignited, the pressure to industrialize further intensified given the now intimate links between industrial and military capabilities. The vicious circle of international and domestic conflict thus resurfaced on a far greater scale and with wider geographical scope than that surrounding the First World War.

The labour unrest and revolutionary upheavals that followed the Second World War also engulfed the colonial and semi-colonial countries (Silver 2003: 128). Already on the eve of the Second World War, colonies and semi-colonies had become tightly interwoven into the supply structures of the imperial powers (as suppliers of both men and material). Workers in colonial export enclaves and allied transportation industries came to occupy strategic positions within the resource-needs structure of the imperial powers. At the same time, the long arm of the European state reached into colonies and extracted colonial subjects to fight as soldiers in imperial armies on faraway battlefields. Resentments against such mobilizations fuelled worker radicalism and anti-colonialism. Key nationalist leaders, most of whom made little effort to connect with the masses prior to the First World War, by the 1920s and later came to recognize the growing strategic importance of the masses, and consciously made efforts to mobilize workers and peasants in the struggle for independence.

To be sure, war did not everywhere lead to the strengthening of the working class. In Shanghai, which had been the centre of the textile industry, the war initially dissolved the working class as factories closed and workers returned to the countryside so as to be able to survive. But in the colonial and semi-colonial areas that were being incorporated into resource provisioning, rather than being plundered, the war strengthened the strategic bargaining power of workers.

Colonial powers, in an effort to keep labour unrest under control for the duration of the war, promised to expand workers' rights. One indicator of this tendency was Britain's decision during the Second World War to introduce trade unions and conciliation and arbitration mechanisms throughout its empire (Cooper 1996). During the First World War, tripartite agreements among trade unions, employers and states only emerged in metropolitan countries and were rapidly eliminated after the war. The tripartite agreements concluded during the Second World War were both rel-

atively longer-lasting and broader in geographical scope (see Lichtenstein 2002, especially chapter 3, on the less than whole-hearted embrace of the labour–capital accord by US business).

Labour militancy and revolutionary upheavals peaked worldwide in the aftermath of the Second World War. With the Communist victory in China in 1949, the problem of repressing or accommodating the social revolutionary challenge from the non-Western world moved to centre stage in the global strategies of the new world hegemonic power (the United States). Until 1949, attention had been focused on Europe where, as a US undersecretary of commerce reported to President Truman in 1947, 'most. . . countries were standing on the very brink [of revolution] and may be pushed over at any time; others are gravely threatened' (quoted in Loth 1988: 137). By 1949, the social revolutionary threat was unmistakable. 'Instead of a single, weak and isolated USSR, something like a dozen states emerged, or were emerging, from the second great wave of global revolution. . . Nor was the impetus of global revolution exhausted, for the decolonization of the old imperialist overseas possessions was still in full progress' (Hobsbawm 1994: 82).

Nevertheless, by the 1950s the rising and explosive pattern of labour unrest in the first half of the twentieth century gave way to a far less volatile dynamic in the second half of the twentieth century, especially in metropolitan or core countries. This shift was in part related to the unprecedented concentration of military and economic power in the hands of the United States at the close of the Second World War, which brought an end to the great power rivalries that had fed the vicious circle of war and labour unrest. Of equal importance were deep institutional reforms at the firm, national, and especially the global levels, which sought to accommodate some of the demands that had been thrown up by the labour, nationalist and other movements of the first half of the twentieth century, and through which the US sought to respond to the global challenge posed by the Soviet alternative. The various elements of these reforms have been referred to as 'liberal corporatism', 'embedded liberalism', the 'globalization of the New Deal', the 'welfare–warfare state', and for the third world, 'decolonization' and 'development' (cf. Silver 2003: 149–61). Embedded in the reformed global institutions was the implicit recognition that labour is a fictitious commodity that needs to be protected from the harshest verdicts of an unregulated world market economy. It was only in the context of this reformed *international* institutional environment that cross-class national hegemonic compacts could find a *relatively* stable ground on which to stand.

WORLD HEGEMONIC TRANSITIONS COMPARED

From a world-systems perspective, the current period in world history not only has strong analogies with the first half of the twentieth century; it is also comparable to the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. All three periods are times of deep 'systemic chaos' associated with the crisis and decline of world hegemonies: (1) the transition from Dutch to British hegemony in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries; (2) the transition from British to United States hegemony in the first half of the twentieth century; and (3) the current period of crisis and decline of US hegemony. Limitations of space and time prevent me from defending the proposition that we are now in a period of crisis and breakdown of US world hegemony; an extensive defence of this proposition as well as of other arguments put forward in this section can be found in Arrighi and Silver 1999a.

Let's start by noting that there are strong links between interstate conflict and domestic conflict in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, analogous to those that we found for the first half of the twentieth century. We cannot draw on a database of global labour/social unrest similar to that used in the previous section. Nevertheless, a clear pattern emerges from the secondary historical literature. As argued in detail elsewhere (Arrighi and Silver 1999a: 159–76), the Seven Years' War marked the first step toward a late-eighteenth century 'vicious circle' of war and social unrest. The dislocations of the boom–bust cycle caused by the Seven Years' War in North America were important in detonating the American Revolution. The immense costs of France's intervention in the American Revolutionary War, in turn, were crucial in bringing about the final collapse of the French monarchy and the French Revolution. The French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars simultaneously increased social strains and produced the intra-elite rift that opened the space for a full-scale slave insurrection in France's most profitable colony (Saint Domingue/Haiti), which, in turn, inspired further slave conspiracies and maroon rebellions throughout the Americas, as well as a second wave of abolitionist and reform mobilizations in Europe. The late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, like the first half of the twentieth century, was thus an age of 'global' war and revolution.

Yet differences are as important as similarities. My use of the word 'global' (and the fact that it is in quotation marks) points to a similarity, but also a first difference between the two periods of hegemonic transition. In the late-eighteenth century, 'globalization' processes had advanced to the point where words and deeds in the Americas often had a rapid and resounding impact on Europe (and vice versa). Thus, it would be accurate to characterize the revolutionary ferment of the period as unfolding within

the Atlantic world as a whole. Yet, if revolutionary contradictions largely diffused within the Atlantic world during the first transition, in the second transition such 'contagiousness' had become a truly global affair, interconnecting Africa, Asia, Europe and the Americas.

A second difference is the fact that interstate and intrastate conflicts were far more deeply intertwined in the second transition. In both transitions, wars produced social unrest. However, in contrast to the transition from British to US hegemony, there is no evidence that the reverse relationship also obtained – that is, neither the Seven Years' War nor the French intervention in the American Revolutionary War seem to have been motivated by efforts to quell social unrest on the home front. By contrast, not only was class and nationalist agitation escalating on the eve of the First World War; even the colonialist adventures in the late 1890s followed (and attempted to divert) increasing class antagonisms.

This is related to a third difference between the two world hegemonic transitions: over time, war produced mass social unrest far more quickly in the twentieth century. Put differently, we can detect a 'speeding up of social history'.

At the root of this 'speeding up of social history' is a fundamental transition in the organization of warfare. For as long as old-style armies of paid professional mercenaries and 'gentlemen' predominated, wars could drag on for years without provoking mass social unrest. However, as states came more and more to depend on mass conscription and the patriotic mobilization of their citizens in wartime struggles, great power rivalries and social conflict became far more intertwined, and the 'vicious circle' of war and social unrest was unleashed far more quickly. In this respect, the mobilization of citizen armies during the Napoleonic Wars was a first premonition of things to come – a premonition that led Europe's rulers to end experiments and restore old-style armies of 'paid professionals, mercenaries and gentlemen' after the war. As William McNeill has pointed out, the experience of warfare in the age of revolution convinced Europe's rulers that 'the fierce energy of the French conscripts in 1893–95, and the nationalist fervour of some German citizen soldiers in 1813–14, could challenge constituted authority as readily as it could confirm and strengthen it'. By restoring old-style armies, Europe's rulers 'refrained from tapping the depths of national energies that the revolutionary years unveiled'. But they also kept 'the spectre of revolutionary disorder at bay' (McNeill 1982: 221). Nevertheless, by the end of the nineteenth century, states once again were developing nationalism and patriotism as the new civil religion and as a basis for mobilizing soldiers as citizens.

Indeed, by the time of the First World War, military strategists were well aware of the close relationship between war and mass social conflict.

New military strategies, such as naval blockades aimed at cutting off food supplies and raising the threat of mass starvation among non-combatants, were designed to create domestic instability on the enemies' home front. Such strategies recognized the importance of retaining popular loyalty (and the danger of losing mass support) for success in war.

In sum, if prior to the nineteenth century rulers seemed to fight wars with little concern for 'public opinion', by the end of the century domestic politics and international politics were intimately intertwined.

INTO THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

What are the implications of the preceding discussion for understanding the early twenty-first century? We have described a process in which war and labour/social unrest played out on an ever larger and more interconnected global stage; a process in which all three of Stohl's hypotheses linking domestic and international conflict became increasingly relevant as war and labour/social unrest became more and more intertwined; and a process of 'speeding up' of social history, with wars producing mass labour/social unrest more quickly. Another important question that arises is what role wage workers will play in the social unrest of the transition. If we interpret the evolution from the first to the second transition as a trend (increasing importance of wage workers, declining centrality of peasants and especially slaves), then we would expect wage workers to be even more central protagonists in the current transition. This is not totally far-fetched, but is an important argument to be developed later.

At first sight, the anti-war movement that emerged in 2003 in response to the threat of war on Iraq would seem to confirm these predictions, with mass protest *preceding* the start of the war. Nevertheless, there are important differences between the nature of warfare today and the nature of warfare in the first half of the twentieth century, and these differences have important implications for contemporary dynamics. With the establishment of US world hegemony and the Cold War world order, the scope for conventional inter-imperialist (North–North) wars was greatly reduced. The end of overt wars among the most powerful states, in combination with the relatively 'labour-friendly' institutional reforms at the national and international level that accompanied the 'global New Deal', accounts in large part for the less volatile pattern of labour unrest in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s.

While the tendency towards North–North war was contained, North–South wars were not. In the US–Vietnam War we can see both a continu-

ation of the trends discussed above as well as a significant turning point. The radicalizing effects of costly and unpopular wars were demonstrated once again with the emergence of a strong anti-war movement, the growing refusal of US soldiers to continue fighting (Appy 1993), and the 'contagion' between the anti-war movement and other social movements. Likewise, the propensity of states to respond to unrest through a further 'socialization of the state' (an expansion of workers' and citizens' rights) was once again in evidence. Here I have in mind the expansion of the Great Society programmes that went hand-in-hand with the escalation of the Vietnam War. Yet the intertwined fiscal, military, political and social crises produced by the Vietnam War also showed the limits of the combined guns *and* butter strategy.

The deep crisis of the 1970s led the United States government in the 1980s under Reagan to implement a series of major changes in its global economic and military strategy. The new economic strategy amounted to an abandonment of the domestic and global New Deals. In the military sphere, the new strategy involved the end of universal conscription and an increase in the weight of capital-intensive (as opposed to labour-intensive) warfare. The long-term tendency of the United States to rely on high-tech military methods increased still further with the application of 'information age' technologies to warfare. Tremendous energies were devoted to the automation of war (that is, the development of military hardware such as pilotless drones and cruise missiles that allow for the complete removal of the First World human from both the risk of being killed and *direct* contact with the process of mass killing).

Wars in the 1990s like the Falklands/Malvinas War, the First Gulf War and the Kosovo War were a very different type of war than that which radicalized workers and other citizens, and created the explosive pattern of world labour unrest in the first half of the twentieth century. Internal opposition to these late-twentieth century wars within First World countries remained low because First World governments (the United States in particular) went to extreme lengths to keep casualties *among their own citizen-soldiers* to a minimum (tending toward zero). These wars inflicted tremendous damage on the generally poor countries on whom the high-tech explosives landed – destroying economic infrastructures and hence stable working classes and civil societies (indeed, it has been reported that not a single factory was operating in either Kosovo or Baghdad; Vargas Llosa 2003; author's own communication). But they have not (to paraphrase Durkheim) 'violently moved the masses' in the First World. If warfare continues to insulate First World workers (and citizens more generally) from its more horrifying aspects while destroying stable working classes and civil societies elsewhere, it is not likely to produce the kind of

powerful and explosive labour and social unrest that characterized the first half of the twentieth century.

This type of warfare is also reversing the long-term trend in the relationship between states and the mass of their citizens discussed in the previous sections. For the more the United States and other First World countries move toward the automation of war, the more they emancipate themselves from dependence on their worker-citizens for success in war. As such, the growing bargaining power of workers and citizens vis-à-vis their states – an inadvertent by-product of the inter-imperialist and Cold War rivalries of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries – is being reversed, along with many of the economic and social benefits achieved. It is an open question as to whether the major declines in workers' and citizens' rights in the 1980s and 1990s are causally related to the transformations in the military sphere, or are merely coincidental. There is, however, no doubt that the decline in social welfare benefits and the disappearance of union jobs with good wages and benefits along with rising tuition costs and declining scholarship funds, has made it much easier for the US government to recruit its 'all volunteer' army from the ranks of the poor and working class (Halbfinger and Holmes 2003).

I have argued that in the 1980s and 1990s, the global political–military context contrasted sharply with the global political–military context that produced radicalized and explosive labour and social unrest in the late nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries. However, the response of the Bush Administration to the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon raised the question as to whether we were seeing another fundamental turning point in the nature of war and in the interrelationship between war and workers' movements. Indeed, the 2003 occupation of Iraq (and the developing military quagmire) was a fundamentally different operation than the routine bombing of Iraq that had been going on since the end of the First Gulf War.

The early signs of demoralization and open protest among US troops in Iraq and their families – resistance that burst into the open at a far earlier stage than it did in the Vietnam War – together with the global mass anti-war movement, suggests that the 'speeding up of social history' thesis continues to have some validity (cf. Harris and Franklin 2003). It is possible that unrest in the military ranks had already been building up in response to the high disability rates associated with service in the First Gulf War, combined with cuts in veterans' benefits implemented by the US government. Chalmers Johnson (unpublished) has suggested that the US casualties in the 1991 Gulf War are far higher than the wartime battle figures would suggest, given the 'potential toxic side effects of the [depleted uranium in the] ammunition now being widely used by [the US's]

armed forces'. He estimates a death and disability rate of 29.3 per cent for the First Gulf War once one includes the deaths and disabilities linked to 'service-connected exposures' during the war.

Moreover, it is important to point out that the policy of simultaneously cutting the welfare state while expanding the warfare state constitutes a sharp reversal of the twentieth-century trend in which the two grew hand in hand. Indeed, this sharp reversal may in large part explain the passage of a (relatively timid but unprecedented) anti-war resolution by the AFL–CIO (American Federation of Labour–Congress of Industrial Organizations) in 2003 – a step that broke with the US labour federation's long-held practice of actively supporting US foreign policy (Letwin 2003; to be sure, many within and outside the labour movement, while acknowledging its unprecedented nature, have nonetheless emphasized the timidity of the US labour movement's anti-war mobilization).

Rather than respond to these signs of labour and popular unrest with a social policy that expands workers' and citizens' rights, the current US government strategy seems to be to further reduce its reliance on the mass of the population for fighting wars. Efforts to further automate war continue apace (Brzezinski 2003). At the same time, two 'new' strategies were already taking shape by the time of the 2003 war on Iraq. One was the growing reliance of the US military on private military contractors. The supply contracts awarded to Halliburton have been mainly commented on in relation to the odour of crony capitalism. Yet, they are also a way of privatizing military supply activities and thereby limiting the number of troops officially in the war arena. Employees of the Halliburton subsidiary, Kellogg Brown & Root (KBR), not only fed and housed troops and constructed, supplied and serviced military bases; they also maintained high-tech weapons and trained soldiers in how to use them. Other private military contractors (such as the Vinnell Corporation) were even more directly involved in combat activities.

The trend towards using private military contractors began in the 1990s, and has become central to the current Defence Department's strategy for limiting the number of active duty troops, even in the face of expanding military commitments. This strategy has the effect of further reducing the benefits that the working class and poor can derive from the existence of the military–industrial complex. As pointed out in an article in *Business Week*, aptly titled 'Outsourcing war', the supply and support jobs previously done by full-time soldiers receiving salaries and fringe benefits are now being done by 'flexible employees' working on a contract basis, including lower-cost 'host country nationals' and immigrant workers brought to Iraq from other low-wage countries (Bianco and Anderson Forest 2003). Training of foreign armies is another area outsourced to

private companies. Thus Vinnell, on the basis of its previous contracts, including ones for training the Saudi national guard, was awarded a $48 million contract to train the nucleus of a new Iraqi army (ibid.).

Such privatization of warfare harks back to the period before the age of nationalism when states depended on paid mercenaries rather than their own citizens to conduct warfare. It also harks back to an even earlier age – to the age of discoveries – when the lines between business enterprises and war-making enterprises were far from clear (here I have in mind the chartering of the early British and Dutch East India Companies both to conduct trade and make war in the extra-European world, see Ortiz 2010: 19–24).

A second 'new strategy' – the concerted efforts to cajole, bully and/ or bribe other countries (especially third world countries) into sending troops to Iraq – harks back to the age of colonialism. This strategy is in many ways reminiscent of the reliance of the imperial powers on colonial troops in the first half of the twentieth century. As discussed above, in the twentieth century this reliance on colonial troops had rather contradictory effects. On the one hand, the mobilization of the Indian Army meant that Britain could conquer and then run an Empire that simply could not be run by British citizens alone. On the other hand, such mobilizations had an empowering and dislocating effect that increased the bargaining power of colonial subjects including workers, while simultaneously fuelling labour radicalism and nationalism. In the post-colonial era, it is still unclear whether the Indian army (or the armies of other post-colonial states) can be cajoled, bullied and/or bribed into playing the role of the 'iron fist in the velvet glove' of the new Anglo-American empire. The enormous popular opposition to suggestions that their citizens should play such a role is visible in places as diverse as South Korea, Turkey and India. Such opposition – *prior* to troop deployment – once again suggests that the thesis of a 'speeding up of social history' retains some contemporary relevance.

The above discussion suggests that there is a growing decoupling of the warfare and welfare states. This in turn has potentially important implications for labour internationalism. To paraphrase E.H. Carr, if workers in the twenty-first century are now finding themselves once again without a 'fatherland', will labour politics turn 'instinctively' internationalist once again? (Carr 1945: 20–21). To be sure, the persistence of the enormous North–South wealth divide is a significant (and perhaps insurmountable) barrier to any such development (Silver and Arrighi 2001; Silver 2003, chapters 1, 3 and 5). Nevertheless, the above discussion suggests that a sea change in the relationship between labour, war and world politics may be in progress.

In conclusion, what does the above narrative suggest about what is to be (and can be) done? How effective can social movements in general,

and labour movements in particular, be in influencing the contemporary dynamics of war and peace? If we return to our comparison of world hegemonic transitions, we come to a rather pessimistic conclusion. For in the first half of the twentieth century, labour and other protest movements were *not* able to stop the slide into a long period of war and 'systemic chaos' (Arrighi and Silver 1999a; 1999b: 310). What they were able to do was to affect the nature of the new world order that emerged afterwards. To be sure, movements from below were far more effective in influencing the content of the newly emergent world order in 1945 than in 1815. At the outset of British world hegemony in 1815, Britain no longer faced a serious popular revolutionary challenge. France (the main great-power embodiment of the revolutionary challenge of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries) had suffered a decisive military defeat, as did the British labour movement domestically. Haiti won its independence, but was ostracized from the international community. The initial thrust of British domestic and international policy in the immediate aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars was repression at home and the restoration of the *anciens régimes* on the continent. Reform policies only emerged later. In contrast, at the outset of US hegemony, the Soviet Union (the main great-power embodiment of the revolutionary challenge of the first half of the twentieth century) emerged from the Second World War battered, but much stronger politically and militarily, and was shortly joined by a revolutionary China. Moreover, both labour and nationalist movements emerged from the twentieth-century world wars strengthened and radicalized. The *counter*revolutionary challenge of the Axis powers was defeated in the war, while the power and prestige of the revolutionary challenge was enhanced (Arrighi and Silver 1999a: chapter 3).

US hegemony from the start had to incorporate reformist policies designed to respond to the popular demands thrown up from below, including policies that recognized that labour is a 'fictitious commodity' that cannot simply be left at the mercy of an unregulated world market economy (ibid.: 202–3). Thus, in past hegemonic transitions both the strength and content of popular protest mattered in shaping the long-term outcomes.

However, as we stand on the eve of a new slide into systemic chaos, considerations about the eventual impact of labour and other movements on a future world order may not be particularly comforting. They may not even be relevant, for given the tremendous destructive powers that humans have at their disposal, there is no particular guarantee that most or any of the world's population would survive another long period of generalized war. Thus, the problem of avoiding the slide into systemic chaos takes on great urgency.

The analysis carried out here has tended to emphasize that labour is being weakened vis-à-vis states by the ongoing transformations. Moreover, 'the biggest demonstrations in world history' in February 2003 did not succeed in stopping the war. Nevertheless, the weakness thesis can be overstated. In the first half of the twentieth century, strikes by workers in the armaments, energy and transportation industries had a major impact on the military–industrial complexes of the belligerent powers. Today, transportation workers are still strategic actors, not only for the smooth operation of the world-economy, but also for the smooth operation of the world military–industrial complex. In this context, the announcement in early 2003 by railroad and dockworkers in countries around the world that they would refuse to move materials for war on Iraq is important, even if they were not able to materially affect the course of events (Letwin 2003). Second, the growth in the use of private military contractors not-withstanding, the refusal of worker-soldiers at the front to go on fighting has been key in affecting the course of events from the First World War to Vietnam and Iraq.

Moreover, it is important to point out that there is nothing inevitable about the slide into systemic chaos. The 'international system', writes David Calleo, 'breaks down not only because unbalanced and aggressive new powers seek to dominate their neighbours, but also because declining powers, rather than adjusting and accommodating, try to cement their slipping pre-eminence into an exploitative hegemony' (Calleo 1987: 142). The neoconservative Project for a New American Century was in large measure an attempt by the United States to convert its declining hegemony into an exploitative empire through the use of military force (a point anticipated in Arrighi and Silver 1999a, especially the concluding chapter; cf. Arrighi 2007, chapters 7–9). The mass anti-war protests in 2003 appear as an almost intuitive recognition by people around the world (including many in the United States) that what amounted to a new US imperial project risked precipitating major worldwide chaos. Indeed, since 2003, the likelihood that we have already entered a long and deep period of global systemic chaos has grown. It remains an open question as to whether the forces identified in this chapter (and others not discussed here) will be sufficiently strong to put a break on the slide into mounting systemic chaos and to facilitate a transition to a more peaceful, just and equitable world order.