CHALLENGES FOR CULTURAL STUDIES UNDER THE RULE OF GLOBAL WAR

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Abstract
Based on a lecture delivered not long after the US launched its so-called war on terror in Iraq in the aftermath of 9/11, the paper addresses the challenges for cultural studies in the midst of "the emergence of a global network of quasi-military states in tributary relations to the US super security state" and "the emergence of a global counter public or constituency." With a note of urgency and particular attention to the Philippine context, the paper expresses the need "to interpret, articulate, and participate in the social struggles taking place in and through cultural practice" which begins with the recognition of "the continual subsumption of people's labor—physical, mental, experiential, and psychical—into systems of domination and exploitation." It asserts that "the realms of freedom" are "getting smaller" even as "small spaces of creativity and freedom are won," thus, the challenge is "to locate and extend these spaces as well as their political potential and to extricate these cultural practices … from those that contribute to the containment, expropriation, and alienation of people's labor, processes which operate everywhere, even in the most politically radical sectors." In these spaces, cultural practice becomes "not only the means of a transformation" but "part and parcel of that very transformation we hope and strive for."

About the Author
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Editor's Note
This paper based on a lecture by the author, "Challenges for Cultural Studies Under the Rule of Global War," for *Kritika Kultura Lecture Series* held at the Ateneo de Manila University on July 1, 2003.

Although it would appear that the times we live in, following the launching of the "war on terror" by the US in October 2001 with the bombing of Afghanistan, are no different from the previous 12 to 15 years under the undisputed global reign of the US (whether you date it from the fall of the Berlin wall or the first Gulf war), we are, I believe, living in a changed and changing historical situation whose import for our shared futures we have yet to fully grasp. I do not intend to speculate on the future implications of the current global situation. After all, we have yet to adequately account for the specific features comprising this current situation, in which, I would argue, the economic globalization of capital is being re-harnessed to the ends of political-military domination by

means of war. My purpose rather is to think about the present implications of this situation for cultural studies.

Many parallelisms with past, well known historical situations have been and continue to be made by both those who are critical of the global-US "war on terror" and those who openly advocate the rule of Empire: early twentieth-century US colonization of the Philippines, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Hawaii, Samoa and Guam; British conquest of Mesopotamia (present-day Iraq) and the division of the former Ottoman Empire between Britain and France; the First World War among the imperialist nations; the Second World War and the ascendance of US world hegemony and the onset of the Cold War; as well as the long, ignominious, and bloody track record of US foreign interventions in the last hundred years. These past wars are often invoked as the historical precedents of, if not the legitimate models for, the blatant political-military actions currently undertaken by the US and its network of complicit states, including the Philippines, and thus also, as guides for possible scenarios in the near future.

In the 1967 preface to *Imperialism*, Part Two of her three-volume work, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Hannah Arendt comments on the resemblance between contemporary events then—particularly the US war against Vietnam—and the events of imperialism during the period preceding the outbreak of World War I, about which she writes. As she concludes, however:

> To stress the unhappy relevance of this half-forgotten period for contemporary events does not mean, of course, either that the die is cast and we are entering a new period of imperialist policies or that imperialism under all circumstances must end in the disasters of totalitarianism. No matter how much we may be capable of learning from the past, it will not enable us to know the future. (Arendt ix-x)

The past will not enable us to know the future inasmuch as the future is the result not of an abstract logic whose tendencies might be discerned across historical times, but rather of peoples' liberatory social struggles and the efforts on the part of ruling elites to contain and defeat them.

Indeed, what ensued after 1967, when Arendt wrote this preface, was not totalitarianism but instead tremendous social unrest and revolution, much of which was cut short and undermined by the installation of reactionary regimes the world over. We have only to look

at our own historical experience here in the Philippines with the social upheaval and nascent revolutionary movement during the late 1960s followed by the declaration of Martial Law by the authoritarian Marcos regime, to ascertain this fact. The liberatory struggle of the Vietnamese people was itself a material testimony to the powerful force of the Third World that challenged US world domination, and the anti-Vietnam war movement in the US, with which the broad Civil Rights movement of the 1960s and 1970s was importantly aligned, only served to strengthen this challenge and the sense of international solidarity that grew around it. Decolonizing nationalist movements worldwide, marked by the triumph of Vietnam against the US and the victory of the Nicaraguan revolution against the US-backed Somoza regime, were met with fierce and relentless counter-insurgency campaigns, funded and equipped by the US military industrial complex. These counter-insurgency campaigns were coupled with an equally fierce and relentless program of financial capitalist expansion to stave off the world economic crisis of the early 1970s, produced precisely as a consequence of the struggles of labor worldwide and the challenge of Third World nation-states to First World hegemony.[1] And neoliberalist restructuring processes during the last two decades, which have often been referred to as globalization, comprised an effort to capitalize upon this long, cultural revolution of minoritized populations in the Third and First Worlds alike.

In some ways, then, the global-US "war on terror" now being waged on diverse fronts, can be understood as a retaliatory measure on the part of a right wing faction of the global elite bent on rebuilding its hegemony in the face both of rival powers (notably the European Union and the tiger economies of the Asia-Pacific, including China) and of the gains of people's struggles against global corporate and state powers (institutionally expressed, for example, in the Kyoto Protocols, the World Conference on Racism, the International Criminal Court). The formation of the new "security" state in the US, with repressive policies such as the Patriot Act and the Domestic Security Enhancement Act (or Patriot Act II), points to the visible tendencies of fascism that are in evidence there, domestically, as well as in "coalitional" states, such as the Philippine state, which currently embrace the 'war on terror' as an alibi for continued and new forms of political repression and cronyist war profiteering. The execution of human rights activists in Mindoro several months ago, the mounting cases of harassment and "disappearances" of individuals linked to radical political organizations, and the egregious military abuses and atrocities in Southern Mindanao since the Philippine government joined forces with the US only show the ambition and retaliatory political and military opportunism driving the Philippines' part in this global crusade. In the meantime, while offspring and beneficiaries of the previous

fascist regime propose refurbished anti-subversion decrees (in the guise of anti-terrorism measures), economic opportunism goes hand in hand with rising authoritarianism. Besides the US$356 million security-related assistance granted by the US to the Philippine government, plenty of opportunities for economic gain are to be had with the proliferation of sites of state "war." The recent quarrel on the front pages of Philippine news over departmental jurisdiction in the anti-drug campaign, expressed by some journalists as a "turf war" taking over the "drug war," reveals the underlying motivation of the ostensibly moral campaign, which is precisely cronyist war profiteering. Today the close links between the military-police and the underworld of drug trafficking, illegal gambling, and the kidnapping business have all but been formalized into state rule, creating an ascendant cronyist class power ready to take charge of the national war economy.

Like the fascism of Germany and Italy in the earlier period, these trends towards fascism arise precisely out of a context of intensified imperialist competition and crisis, particularly for the US which has found itself increasingly marginalized by other national and regional economies and yet continues to be the greatest military superpower on earth. If the new period of imperialism that Arendt saw looming in 1967 did not immediately end in the disasters of totalitarianism, at least on the scale that they did in the middle of the century, perhaps now we are witnessing the beginnings of that conclusive end to US empire, that is, global fascism.

Some progressive scholars in the US are in fact calling for a new analysis and at least recognition of the emergent conditions of fascism that confront not only the people in the US but also all the peoples in the paths of the global-US "war on terror." The question of "culture" in this context is, as it was under European fascism in the mid-20th century, once again paramount for politics. It is, I believe, an important challenge for cultural studies to provide an account of the role that culture plays in this present situation which can be characterized by the ascendancy of the rule of war. The war on terror, the war on drugs, the war against crime, the war against poverty—these are all instantiations of the rule of war. War has become a bureaucratic matter, with the military turned into police (which we have seen before, under Martial Law) and constitutionality and law overturned for a government run by decree. Witness the Macapagal-Arroyo government's willingness to sign on to decrees issued by the US, such as the latter's decree of refusal to participate in the International Criminal Court which could very well try the US as a war criminal for its pre-emptive war against Iraq. Despite the fact that the Philippines was among the signatories to the 1998 Rome Statue creating the ICC, the Macapagal-Arroyo government

has signed on to what amounts to a unilateral decree of immunity from international criminal prosecution for the U.S. and Philippine states.[2] The rule of war is not only the rule of might, but also the rule of absolute and arbitrary power as the normal and legitimate state of affairs.

While now, perhaps more than ever, the exercise of naked power seems to reign over and above all ideological window-dressing (in contrast to the Marcos era, when the state invested heavily in cultural propaganda), 'culture' as a realm of social action is no less crucial to power. But I think it is a challenge for cultural studies to figure out the *ways* that "culture" is crucial, that is, *how* cultural practices serve to maintain this power based on the rule of war and, furthermore, how cultural practices are reproducing and changing contemporary social relations of production or, more specifically, the social conditions of the exploited and the marginalized. In other words, it is a challenge for cultural studies today to interpret, articulate, and participate in the social struggles taking place in and through cultural practice.

This injunction is, of course, not new. In the Philippines we have heard it before in the words of Recto, Constantino, and Sison. And we have seen this injunction heeded in the vast amount of partisan cultural work carried out by writers, artists, and filmmakers since the political ferment of the 1960s. Feminists have been particularly attentive to the crucial importance of culture to social struggle. For feminists such as Sr. Mary John Mananzan and Lilia Quindoza Santiago, culture refers to concrete, everyday habits historically embedded in women's relations to others as well as to themselves, relations that are fundamental to present and past orders of social oppression. This Philippine tradition of anti-imperialist, nationalist, and feminist cultural critique has long emphasized the role of culture in securing and enabling prevailing forms of domination. What is new or changed today are the specific conditions under which cultural practice is converted into socio-economic infrastructure supporting the rule of war: for example, the ways in which narco-culture supports the mutually dependent "war on drugs" and narco-trafficking; the ways in which global media culture supports the forced export of Western-style bourgeois democracy via pre-emptive war, with the war on Iraq setting the precedent; and the ways in which the entrepreneurial ethic governs virtually all major efforts to revitalize or strengthen Philippine "culture" at the expense of sustainable relations of community and solidarity. Beyond merely securing the consent for the rule of war, these cultural practices comprise the "software" for social relations on which the rule of war, in both its political and economic aspects, depends.

Those of us engaged in cultural studies are thus confronted with a pressing question. What cultural practices enable the transformation in global social relations wrought, on the one hand, by the emergence of a global network of quasi-militarist states in tributary

relations to the US super security state and, on the other hand, by the emergence of a global counter public or constituency which found representation in the unprecedented worldwide protests against the US-UK-led war on Iraq? I am suggesting that these recent political developments—the rise of both global, imperial fascism and popular, transnational opposition to it—depend on cultural shifts that have occurred as the combined result of the long, world cultural revolution since the late 1960s and of the political and economic counterrevolution staged by state, corporate, and financial powers, which sought to coopt and capitalize upon the gains of the former (culminating in "globalization"). On this view, cultural histories of the last three and a half decades or more would be a vital component of any politicized account of the conditions that have led to, as well as that might lead beyond, the current world crisis.

While the global network of complicit states attempts to refurbish an older territorial world-system and its geopolitical categories by reconfiguring old territorial boundaries and drawing new ones (e.g., the new boundaries along the so-called axis of evil, from North Korea to Iraq, or from East to West Asia, and along the line from Central Asia to Eastern Europe), the global counter constituency or, if you will, 'transnational-popular,' depends on transformed and largely deterritorialized conditions of social and political identification.[3] Witness one message on activist t-shirts: We are all Palestinians now. It is, of course, true that these deterritorialized conditions of social and political identification run both ways, politically speaking, so that a transnational imagined community like a global civil society can very well also support the neoliberalist wing of the new security state. By this I mean to imply that, as simultaneously the conditions of free trade promoted by neoliberalism and the conditions underlying emergent transnational imaginaries such as that of a global civil society, "globalization" is not necessarily incompatible with imperial fascism.[4] Or, we might say, imperial fascism is an attempt to overcome the real crisis of world social struggles that "globalization" was itself a complex attempt to resolve. Insofar as it addresses and depends upon the prevailing inter-state system and, in relation to the latter, it plays the role of social conscience in what is at base a free world market economy, such a global civil society only succeeds in bolstering the logic of turning to authoritarianism and repressive militarist state power to control any threat to this world capitalist hegemony. Immanuel Wallerstein notes how, in the process of exerting pressure on states, human rights organizations that have mobilized around the notion of civil society "have come to be more like the adjuncts of states than their opponents and, on the whole, scarcely seem very antisystemic" (29-40).[5] The important point here, however, is that the political direction and meaning of emergent social conditions and the activisms

that depend on and foster them are not determined from the outset. Social relations on a global scale are in the thick of transformation and only struggle will determine the political outcome. Moreover, the cultural dimensions of what might appear to be principally the political and economic restructuring of the contemporary world order are of no secondary importance to this struggle. Indeed, if we do not have an understanding of the complex, creative role that cultural practice plays in this struggle, we will be reduced to, at worst, making the most fundamentalist assumptions about the politics of culture (as in the current violent realization of "the clash of civilizations") and, at best, surrendering its transformative political potential to both the neoliberals and the neoconservatives.

When we take on the category of culture, as we do in cultural studies, we need to interrogate its easily assumed equivalence with territory (e.g., of the nation-state, such that Philippine or Filipino culture would refer only to the peoples originally defined by the boundaries of the Philippine nation-state). This questioning of the territoriality of the nation does not mean an eschewing of nationalism or a dismissal of the continuing importance of the nation-state as a unit of political regulation and surplus-value extraction on a global scale (we know very well that the denial of this fact has often been crucial to the neoliberalist promotion of a free global market). To interrogate culture's assumed equivalence with territory means rather to take into account the plasticity of cultures.[6] It means to a certain extent taking care not to understand culture predominantly as a noun, as in "*a* culture," however historically specific we might want to be when we do so. As social ways of *doing*, cultural practices do not have hard and fast lines of demarcation, even if principles of social organization such as gender, class, and nation may appear to confine particular ways of doing to given social groups (e.g., women, workers, Filipinos). It is important, especially at this conjuncture, to be attendant to the minute shifts in social formations that have been enabled through sea changes in cultural practice. I am thinking, for example, of how the nationalism and mass-orientation of cultural practice that were cultivated in the radical movements of the late 1960s and early 1970s also came to be articulated in a hegemonic key. Today, state and corporate culture industries as well as local community development programs tout reified versions of "Filipino culture," or the values and ways of "the Filipino people" that are greatly appealing to the middle classes as well as to the vast Filipino diaspora. I am also thinking of how youth cultures across diverse contexts have come to be increasingly closer to one another (in codes of behavior, communication, and affect) than to their own immediate and 'traditional-cultural' communities. Sea changes in cultural practice are supporting and shaping changes in conventional rural-urban social relations, both nationally and transnationally, such that a

rural milieu from Malaybalay, Bukidnon can be found alive and well in New York.

It is equally important to be cognizant of the diversity or differences of cultural practice within given social groups as well as of the sharing, migration, and influence of cultural practices between and among constituted social groups. Overseas Filipino Workers (OFW) communities shape and change—and in turn are shaped and changed by—their 'host' cultures. At the same time, those OFW communities are far from homogeneous in their cultural ways. This is where strict class or regional categorizations need to be inflected and intersected with other operative principles of social organization such as gender and race. On the West coast of the US, many second- and third-generation Filipino American youth share and participate in cultures of hip hop and the inner city, often identified as Black and/or Latino, while in other parts of the world, immigrant Filipina workers find themselves in fragmented cultural enclaves isolated from both dominant and other marginalized communities.

We cannot presume to know in advance the social groups for whom particular practices comprise certain 'cultures,' which subsequently serve to define such groups (in the current fashion of cultural racism). I would go so far as to suggest that there are levels of social constitution that operate below the threshold of current codings of social identity—which I would call forms of *infra-sociality*. This is the level of emergent social constitution, whereby imagined communities both beneath and beyond hegemonic categories of nationhood, regionality, ethnicity, gender, and so on, are in the process of being created. Or, put differently, the micro-political, subjective level at which dominant social relations of production is undergoing transformation. Indeed, it is an important part of cultural struggles to set the defining limits and identifying marks of emergent social formations produced out of new configurations of cultural practice (e.g., whether one identifies forms of sociality as Ilocanos, Filipino Americans, OFWs, or peasants and their respective practices as Ilocano, Filipino American OFW, or peasant 'culture'). That is to say, cultural struggles are also importantly struggles over the construction of effective political subjects. We can see such efforts in the conservative instantiations of "the Filipino character" that abound, even or especially today, in the midst of global phenomena such as the neoliberal global market, terrorism, and epidemics like HIV/AIDS. These conservative instantiations seek not only to territorialize the realm of culture so that it becomes simply another area of state management, but also to separate it from the realm of political economy in the idealist, transcendent form of "values" that are to fall under the jurisdiction of dominant, social institutions such as the educational system.

The recent Asian Social Institute commencement speech given by Presidential Adviser on Culture, Leticia Ramos-Shahani provides an example of the refurbishment of values-oriented inquiries of the 1960s and 1970s in the context of revanchist fascism. In this speech on "Politics and Spiritual Values," Shahani emphasizes the particular urgency of the issues of values today in the face of "threats like terrorism, regional armed conflicts, SARS, HIV/AIDS" and in the context of a world of growing inequality and injustice. She asks, "Is not the widening gap between the rich and the poor also an indication of the felt absence of a moral order which should guide the lives of individuals and nations in the modern world?" Diagnosing the "diseases of poverty, passivity, graft and corruption, exploitative patronage, factionalism" and other pathologies afflicting our "sick nation," Shahani proposes to revitalize the Moral Recovery Program that she had advocated in the Senate in 1987. Besides interpreting the 1986 EDSA uprising as essentially a moral event, the Moral Recovery Program commissioned leading Filipino social scientists to conduct an analysis of "the strengths and weakness of the Filipino character," which would serve as the basis of rebuilding the nation. To continue this program, Shahani recently prepared a handbook to disseminate the methodology of moral and spiritual education through "self-analysis, self-purification and self-awareness" as well as "regular spiritual discipline," that, it is hoped, would result in people demanding high standards of moral values from electoral candidates. This program of cultural transformation does not only seek to institute yet another "revolution from the center," in which the dictates of discipline and moral development are decreed by a small authoritative group. As its vision of change in our political culture makes clear, it also seeks to recalibrate, but essentially preserve, the prevailing state in a manner that better coordinates it with a semi-liberal capitalist socio-economic order: "We should elect men and women who understand that public office exists to serve the people, to enable the private sector to function dynamically and to cooperate with civil society in common concerns." How different, in the end, is the Christian vision of "a new world order of spiritual values, and economic prosperity" based on the quest for divine redemption and righteousness and worldly compensation, which Shahani puts forth, from the civilizationist discourse that undergirds Bush's mandate to wage the "war on terror"?

I hope it is by now evident that when I speak of cultural practices I do not mean peculiar habits of thought or action detached from economic conditions and political events. After all, social thought, action, and experience do not occur in a vacuum, detached from the historical situations that the dominant organization of production and power plays a fundamental part in generating and shaping. To take account of the material

force or world-making effects of cultural practice, one must first recognize the continual subsumption of people's labor—physical, mental, experiential, and psychical—into systems of domination and exploitation. Subsumption here can be likened to taxation, in the sense of exacting payment or tribute from those who perform the whole range of labor that maintains the overall economic order. I would suggest in fact that this tributary or enforced taxation system is one that has not been outmoded in peripheral nations such as the Philippines but in fact today generalized, even if largely informalized. We can, on this view, understand the rule of war to be also the rule of taxation, best represented by the 'tong' capitalism of the military-police-criminal syndicate. The exaction of monetary "cuts" and/or fees at all levels of the current drug war, from the drug test fee to get one's driver's license to protection fees for the drug lords (or their "profit-sharing" schemes with government), is supplemented and matched by the expropriation of people's cultural practices of accommodation and resistance. I mean, for one, the way the consumption of drugs itself often serves as a cultural form of accommodation to prevailing social conditions of profound alienation, debasement and/or exploitation. I also mean, for another, the way the anti-drug campaign of the state and its facilitation of "tong" capitalism enjoins the civic participation of precisely those who would oppose this criminal-state alliance. This expropriation of socio-cultural technologies of resistance against the ruling system can be seen in Alex Magno's call for a "people's war" against "the drug menace." Invoking the Maoist phrase of radical democratic struggle, Magno argues for the necessity of "an information infrastructure that allows for broad involvement" of "the people." This information structure, which would not entail any additional budgetary allocation and, moreover, would provide the means for "a fully developed social movement," will "network the power of the mass media and private communications (such as web groups and mobile phones) to provide enforcements information dominance against the enemy." Clearly, what is proposed here is no less than an appropriation of the notion and motivation of progressive social movements, as well as socially developed means of communication and community (web groups and mobile phones), for the purposes of a state intelligence that is completely embroiled in the cronyist war economy.[7] Given the close links between the anti-drug and anti-terrorist campaigns under the current rule of global war, it may come as no surprise to find the Pentagon thinking along similar, though much more ambitious, lines. The latest US Defense Department's anti-terrorist plan is to create an online futures trading market in which speculators could bet on forecasts of terrorist attacks, assassinations, and coups, thereby providing a way of predicting and preventing future attacks.[8] Although heavy criticism has apparently laid this latest plan

to rest, there is no better example of the way the US security state is seeking to re-harness the "new economy" (of speculative finance capital) to the military-political apparatus and its resource- and rent-based economy; of the way it seeks to create the conditions for its own reproduction and growth (by inducing, through the profit incentives of speculation, the very future events it purportedly is trying to prevent); and of the way social desires, as expressed by and played out on the Internet, are to be appropriated for the purposes of this security state and its new economy.

Beyond the continual subsumption of cultural practice, one must however also recognize the equally continual inventiveness on the part of people in their efforts to survive and thrive, and even to partake of the spoils of exploitation (that is, to participate in the system of expropriation). Here we have to distinguish between life-making, liberating, and democratizing practices of resistance and forms of "resistance" that displace the deleterious effects of systems of domination, which they help to preserve.[9] In the present situation, the realms of freedom being carved out of the ever-expanding realms of necessity, dictated by the rule of war (and the capitalist system which underwrites it), are getting smaller and smaller, and more difficult to recognize in particular spatial or social zones, even as realms of more formal progressive political action are getting broader (e.g., the World Social Forum). At the same time, small spaces of creativity and freedom are won in what appear to be thoroughly commodified sites (e.g., popular music), even as progressive initiatives are at an ever quickening pace subjected to both commodification and cooptation by dominant political agendas. In this light, the challenge for cultural studies is to locate and extend these spaces of creativity and freedom, and to extricate the cultural practices that have made such spaces as well as their political potential from those cultural practices that contribute to the containment, expropriation, and alienation of people's labor, processes which operate *everywhere*, even in the most politically radical sectors.

To begin with, we might examine the notions of culture that are used and invoked in the contemporary context as well as the political significance these notions bear. We might take a critical look at proposals for the incorporation of indigenist or traditional cultural practices in dominant institutions, such as in F. Landa Jocano's *Towards Developing a Filipino Corporate Culture (Uses of Filipino Traditional Structures and Values in Modern Management)*, or the growing body of analyses of "Filipino political culture" and its implications for "democracy," which would include work sponsored by both state and non-government agencies (e.g., Shahani's Moral Recovery Program and the Philippine Democracy Agenda

series put out by the Third World Studies Center). It would be important to place these works in the context of the shifts in political, economic, and social orders, such as I have described, to see the role "culture" plays or is expected to play in such projects of nation-building.

In view of the instrumentality with which culture is both understood and deployed in many of these largely hegemonic projects, it would also be useful to examine its invocation and use in more critical or counter-hegemonic projects, such as recent efforts to assess the historical legacy of US colonialism (e.g., *Sangandaan* conference[10]) and, in general, the varied streams of contemporary Philippine cultural criticism (e.g., the works of Alice and Gelacio Guillermo, Edel Garcellano, E. San Juan, Jr., Bienvenido Lumbera, Nick Tiongson, as well as those of younger critics, Caroline Hau, Roland Tolentino, Flaudette May Datuin and others). A closer examination and reassessment of these critical projects and their political implications for cultural intervention in the current situation will, I believe, help us come up with conceptual frameworks for viewing culture and history that can, at the same time, serve as crucial components of struggle against the looming threat and actual reality of global fascism and its pernicious rule of war.

I have tried to briefly describe and demonstrate above some aspects of such a framework. My own engagement with feminist and women's work has led me to view cultural practice through the notion of invisible labor and its vital role in producing and shaping the broader social order and its system of economic wealth. Hidden in the banality of naturalized subjective capacities, such invisible yet vital labor can help us understand the historical materiality and political potential of cultural practice. Moreover, insofar as it deals with precisely banal and mundane experiences of daily living which are given form in cultural objects, cultural studies can find the words, images, and affects to recognize and articulate invisible practices of cultural labor, the political potential of which we might better deploy.

Two specific questions for a cultural studies that take up the challenges posed by the current crisis might be formulated. First, what are the cultural resources and practical philosophies of everyday struggle of which the current global war on terror is an extensive effort to re-contain and defeat? As I have already suggested, we need to view both neo-liberalist "globalization" and the emergent security state system as complex efforts to co-opt, capitalize upon, and undo the gains of the long, cultural revolution of the last three and a half decades. Moreover, we need to locate those practices of cultural transformation that have not been subsumed by these counterrevolutionary efforts.

Second, how can we provide a specific vocabulary and syntax for those cultural resources and practical philosophies that at once differentiate Filipino social formations from and put them in relation with other peoples in struggle (e.g., Afghanis, Iraqis, Palestinians—a geopolitical context that the Philippines has been ideologically and politically separated from, even if economically connected to for the last few decades)? This is not only a matter of highlighting common structural features (e.g., the similarity between US suppression of Iraqi "insurgents" today and US suppression of Philippine "insurgents" a century ago) but, more importantly, of foregrounding and bolstering real living relations and their historical precedents. Françoise Verges has written about the historical world of Afro-Asian exchanges and political solidarity that took place via routes across the Indian Ocean, in particular the South-South connections of Third World decolonization (241-57). While noting current tendencies to reconstruct African-Asian connections either under the sign of the market or in the hierarchical mode of civilizationist pursuit, creating new layers of inequalities, Verges remains attentive to the ways that both formal policies and informal practices of Afro-Asian exchange create unforeseen consequences. As she writes:

> The decentering of Europe and the reconstruction of African-Asian links open new possibilities for the revision of former politics of solidarity, the circulation of narratives of resistance, alternative forms of hybridization, and creation of new politics of solidarity among the urban poor, peasants, artists, and scholars. The connections between the urban poor, peasants, artists, and scholars. The connections between the urban poor in Bombay and Cape Town, between trade unions in Madagascar and Malaysia, between musicians in Mauritius and South Africa bespeak these emergent formations. (253)

We would, I believe, do well to similarly explore the real, living connections and cultural exchanges between Filipino communities and other communities across the vast Asian continent, including Islamic and non-Islamic communities of Southeast, Central, and West Asia. This would mean an attention not only to relations of cooperation among communities but to relations of contradiction as well.

This last point leads us to consider what kind of social and cultural geography of resistance and struggle we want to help make through scholarly as well as activist writing. In exploring connections that defy the geopolitical map drawn by the current global imperialist project, we contribute to the creation of alternative political imaginations.

It goes without saying that the creation of alternative, political imaginations can only be a collective accomplishment. It remains to be said, however, that the transformative potential of cultural work lies not simply in organizing people according to preconceived notions of political action and strategy where "culture" serves as the mere means of this mobilization and organization. It lies rather in bringing cultural practice to bear on our actionable understanding of the logics underwriting and undermining the prevailing social order, that is, of bringing culture to bear on politics (instead of only analyzing the politics of culture, as in more conventional forms of ideological critique). Although the instrumental use of culture remains important, just as the practice of 'demystification' in unveiling the lies of the Bush, Blair, and Macapagal-Arroyo regimes remains politically useful, we have to view culture as also the very realm of transformation that we might otherwise see as the priority of economic and political action. We must view cultural practice not only as the means of a transformation we would finally seek elsewhere, but, as part and parcel of that very transformation we hope and strive for, that transformation which would indeed comprise "another world" here and now.

NOTES

1	See Giovanni Arrighi, "Tracking Global Turbulence," *New Left Review* 20 (Mar/Apri 2003): 5-72 and Jose Enrique Africa, "Paper Tiger: US Imperialism's Struggle Against Economic Crisis" in *Unmasking the War on Terror: US Imperialist Hegemony and Crisis* (Philippines: Center for Anti-Imperialist Studies, 2002): 101-180.

2	"Guingona wants gov't to bare immunity pact with US" [http://www.inq7.net/brk/2003/jun/17/text/brkpol_15-1-p.htm] As Guingona is correct to point out, this "executive agreement" demonstrates the Philippines' subjection to US domestic law, specifically, the US Homeland Security Act, which greatly expands, by limiting prior legal restrictions on, the powers of the federal government and its agencies. The rule of war means the ruling out of the political participation, or at least its semblance, of the nation-state's public constituency.

3	By "transnational-popular," I allude to Gramsci's notion of "national-popular," which is a construction of the people or the general constituency of the nation against the ruling state(s) (in this case, the ruling transnational inter-state system).

4	As Nick Beams shows, the aggressive, militarist behavior of the new security state under Bush Jr. was already clearly a part of the Clinton administration's foreign policy. In 1993, as "globalization" was underway, Clinton's national security adviser Anthony Lake announced: "[W]e have arrived at neither the end of history nor a clash of civilizations, but a moment of immense democratic and entrepreneurial opportunity. We must not waste it … The successor to a doctrine of containment must be a strategy of enlargement—enlargement of the world's free community of market democracies … [O]nly one overriding factor can determine whether the US should act multilaterally or unilaterally, and that is America's interests. We should act multilaterally where doing so advances our interests—and we should act unilaterally when that will serve our purpose." Quoted in Nick Beams, "The Political Economy of American Militarism: Part 1" [http://www.wsws.org/articles/2003/jul2003/nb1-j10_prn.shtml]

5	For critiques of the normative predications of current invocations of "civil society," see John Beverley, "Civil Society, Hybridity, and the '"Political" Aspect of Cultural Studies' (on Canclini)" in his *Subalternity and Representation: Arguments in Cultural Theory* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1999): 115-132 and Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), which describes the racial exclusion fundamental to the operation of civil society in postcolonial African nations. In light of the current authority of the concept of civil society deriving in part from its use to account for anti-Soviet movements in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union in the 1980s, Beverley points out that Gramsci's own criticism of the state and civil society distinction takes up the parent

form of neoliberalism, i.e., "*laissez-faire* liberalism." "The core idea of laissze-faire liberalism is, Gramsci writes, that 'economic activity belongs to civil society and that the State must not intervene to regulate it.' But the distinction of state and market here is "merely methodological" rather than "organic"; "in actual reality civil society and the State are one and the same," since "*laissez-faire* too is a form of State 'regulation,' introduced and maintained by legislation and coercive means." Beverley, *Subalternity and Representation*, 118.

6   Here I invoke Samir Amin's notion of the plasticity of religions with regards to particular modes of production and implied notions of progress. Writing against the absolute judgements made about Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, and animism, Amin asserts, "In fact, the plasticity of religions and the possibility of adapting them in ways that allow them to justify differing relationships among people invite us to ponder the fact that ideologies formed at one moment in history can subsequently acquire vocations very different from those of their origins." Samir Amin, *Eurocentrism*, trans. Russell Moore (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1989), 84.

7   For a discussion of the historical genealogy and complex political valence of the use of cell phones, particularly in People Power 2, see Vicente L. Rafael, "The Cell Phone and the Crowd: Messianic Politics in Recent Philippine History" [http://communication.ucsd.edu/people/f_rafael.cellphone.html].

8   "New Pentagon Plan Bets on Future Terror," *San Jose Mercury News* (July 29, 2003). I thank Jonathan Beller for calling my attention to this newsreport and its implications.

9   I have argued elsewhere about informal practices of economic survival, including low-level practices of "graft and corruption," in these terms. See "Petty Adventures in (the) Capital" in my book, *Things Fall Away: Philippine Historical Experience and Subaltern Makings of Globalization* (forthcoming from Duke University Press).

10   Editors' Note: Sangandaan 2003. An International Conference on Arts and Media in Philippine-American Relations, 1899-2002. Philippine Social Science Center, Quezon City, Philippines. 7-11 July 2003.

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