

Rethinking Huntington's Third Wave **By George Katsiaficas¹**

With the demise of the Soviet Union, American triumphalists proclaimed victory in the Cold War and prepared for another century of US world hegemony. According to the misguided view of Francis Fukuyama, we had arrived at the “end of history.” Although he subsequently recanted, many people believed that the entire world would welcome US-style representative democracy as the best possible form of government. When Paul Wolfowitz and Dick Cheney sent American troops into Iraq, they fully expected to be greeted with flowers in the streets of Baghdad. With mounting US casualties in continuing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the economic crisis that began in 2008, and the rising fortune of China, the illusion of US global hegemony has vanished as quickly as a desert mirage. In 2009, President Obama's bow to the emperor of Japan and his quiescence in Beijing are only surface indications of a much deeper American decline yet to come. Nonetheless, an ideological interpretation of the late twentieth century that maintains the US is at the center remains operative in Samuel Huntington's concept of the third wave.

A Cold Warrior his entire career, Huntington championed the military—even in repressive, Third World dictatorships—as a “motor of development” and advocated the application of overwhelming force to “democratize” areas outside US influence. During the Vietnam War, he invented “forced draft urbanization.” According to his theory, since democracy has existed in urban societies and Vietnam was predominantly rural, the population needed to be urbanized in order for the preconditions for democracy to be created. His idea was to empty the countryside, a policy recommendation that was implemented through force: the largest chemical warfare program in history (euphemistically dubbed “Agent Orange”), massive bombing of “free-fire zones” in which US troops were permitted to kill anything that moved, and huge refugee camps (“strategic hamlets”) where millions of people were compelled to live behind barbed wire fences. As Carl Boggs recounted, “By the end of this warfare the U.S. had destroyed 9,000 out of 15,000 hamlets, 25 million acres of farmland, 12 million acres of forest, and 1.5 million farm animals. Towns and villages were bombed, torched, and bulldozed, their inhabitants often rounded up and slaughtered. Nearly one million orphans were left along with 181,000 disabled persons and one million widows. More than 19 million gallons of toxic herbicides were dumped in the South alone, by far the greatest use of chemical weaponry ever.”²

Despite all the destruction, the sacrifice of more than 58,000 American lives, and slaughter of at least two million Indochinese civilians, the new nation built by the “best and the brightest” could not be maintained. Huntington's attempt to “democratize” southern Vietnam had been shattered by the heroic resistance of Vietnamese freedom fighters and a global peace movement. Shaken by the US defeat, Huntington wrote a report to the Trilateral Commission in which he named “democratic distemper” as a cause of 1960s

¹ Prepared for the Program in Modern Greek Studies, Brown University, March 24, 2010.

² Carl Boggs, *The Crimes of Empire* (London: Pluto Press, 2010).

protests and advocated less democracy in the US.³ At the time, many people worried about the health of liberty, of its capacity to survive assaults by jaundiced paragons of virtue from Harvard, such as Henry Kissinger and Samuel Huntington.

In 1984, Huntington surmised that, “The likelihood of democratic development in Eastern Europe is virtually nil...with a few exceptions, the limits of democratic development in the world may well have been reached.”⁴ He was not alone in his assessment. In a multivolume study of democratization published in 1989, Juan Linz, Seymour Martin Lipset, and Larry Diamond did not include a single communist country because “there is little prospect among them of a transition to democracy.”⁵ These predictive failures cannot be blamed on a lack of information. US media continually gave wide coverage to Communism’s internal problems while scarcely covering events within the US sphere of influence. By comparison to the huge coverage of Tiananmen Square protests in China, for example, the tiny amount afforded the 1980 Gwangju Uprising in South Korea helps explain why Gwangju is often called “Korea’s Tiananmen,” even though it preceded the Chinese movement by nine years.

Just after leading American social scientists offered their predictions of the scant possibility for an increase in the number of the world’s representative democracies, a groundswell of change proved them wrong. As regimes fell one after another in East Asia and Eastern Europe, Huntington quickly abandoned his previous assessment and promulgated the idea of a “third wave” of democratization. Before these insurgencies had emerged, his ideological presuppositions caused him to disregard the profound transvaluation of values ushered in by the movements of the 1960s. In the aftermath of the civil rights movement and New Left, South Africa’s apartheid regime’s days were numbered, as were the reigns of dictators supported by the US (and Huntington) in places like Greece, Portugal, Spain, the Philippines, and many other countries. Whether behind the Communist “Iron Curtain” or in the capitalist “Free World,” dictatorships could not last after the global wave of 1968 had changed the world. When unpopular regimes were, in fact, subsequently swept aside, Huntington invented the “third wave” as a tool to sever democratization movements from their origins in the New Left—and to aggrandize the role of the US in the “democratic wave.”

What is Democracy?

Huntington tells us that, “Elections, open, free, and fair, are the essence of democracy, the inescapable *sine qua non*.”⁶ In so doing he, like Francis Fukuyama, ascribes a universal truthfulness to Western-style representative governments, to “formal democracy,” in which, more often than not, members of the economic elite vie for positions of political power through elections in which only a fraction of the population bothers to vote. Routinely in US national elections, candidates not loyal to the Pentagon and transnational corporate power

³ Michael Crozier, Samuel Huntington, and Joji Watanabe, *The Crisis of Democracy: Report on the Governability of Democracies to the Trilateral Commission* (New York University Press, 1975) pp. 106, 113-115.

⁴ Samuel P. Huntington, “Will More Countries Become Democratic?” *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 99 No. 2, Summer 1984, pp. 217-218.

⁵ Edward Friedman (editor), *The Politics of Democratization: Generalizing East Asian Experiences* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994) p. 33.

⁶ Huntington, *Third Wave*, p. 9.

cannot even be included in televised debates—let alone mount significant fund-raising efforts. As a result, most elections routinely carry less choice than that between Coke and Pepsi. Even when a promising political leader appears, corporate leaders' preponderant economic power renders them irrelevant and circumscribes their options. That is one reason why even the "best" presidents like John Kennedy and Barack Obama enlarge US wars from Vietnam to Afghanistan. Voting has not offered alternatives to decades of corporate looting of the public treasury nor to annual Pentagon budget increases that feed the war machine's unending appetite. Voting every few years may help people feel they have a say in government, but it does little to ensure their actual participation in significant social decisions. The kind of deliberative democracy refigured within the practice of popular insurgencies in the 1960s is out of the realm of possibilities offered by the prevailing system of representative government.

Upon close examination, Huntington's definition of democracy simply as voting, a dichotomous definition (absence or presence) that made for ease of measurement, carries within it major problems. He believes two criteria must exist for democracy to be present: fifty percent of adult males must be eligible to vote, and a "responsible executive" must be supported by an elected legislature or chosen in direct elections.⁷ Contemporary thinkers might wonder why fifty percent of men alone are sufficient for Huntington, why he would exclude women. With current rates of voter participation around 60%, elections by men only would mean only about 30% of citizens would vote. A candidate could then be elected with a "majority" of 16% of citizens—hardly a number worthy of being considered democratic. Even if the franchise is extended to everyone, voting every four years for candidates offering no real alternatives is also a very limited perspective.

In contrast to Huntington's minimalist definition of democracy, a different understanding was formulated within 1960s movements: ordinary citizens could have real power through direct participation in decision-making. Popular input could help bring an end to wars and a phasing out of the military's weapons of mass destruction. Self-managed institutions could determine their own goals and means of operation. Democratization could be "measured on the basis of the decentralization of power and wealth and creation of an independent 'public sphere' in which rational discussion among people can take place and decision-making [can be] pursued."⁸ A democracy worthy of the name would empower all individuals to participate in deliberating upon political matters and to decide what policies to undertake.

The more Huntington's notion of "democratization" is accepted, the more real the risk becomes to freedom. Parliamentary democracy may be a suitable vehicle for legitimization of rule by economic elites, expansion of corporate markets, coordination of the global capitalist economy, and provision of banks with a safe and reliable financial infrastructure. Insofar as the third wave was a tool to open markets and to bring deeper penetration by multinational corporations, such "democracy" was good for business. In another sense as well, representative democracy is ideally suited to a corporate market economy. Candidates can compete like products through advertisements, and voting on personalities—rather than

⁷ Huntington, *Third Wave*, p. 16.

⁸ Peter Hering in Ananda P. Srestha, editor, *The Role of Civil Society and Democratization in Nepal* (Kathmandu: Nepal Foundation for Advanced Studies, 1998) p. i.

on substantive issues—involves the same kind of choice that consumers make in supermarkets.

Waves and Movements

In *The Third Wave*, Huntington argues that democracies have been created in three great waves:

First Wave: 1828 to 1926

Second Wave: 1943 to 1962 (post-World War 2)

Third Wave: 1974 to the book's publication in 1991.

Consistent with his bias against grassroots power, his periodization of the “first wave” severed democracy from the American and French Revolutions, social movements that created modern democracy, and his “third wave” cuts democracy from its roots in 1960s insurgencies. His analysis, however, does not exclude economic developments prior to 1974, only social movements: “In considerable measure, the wave of democratizations that began in 1974 was the product of the economic growth of the previous two decades.”⁹ Huntington’s three waves count victories of capitalist elites and as such relate more to expansion of market economies than to genuine democracy. He does not ignore political developments—only those that he does not approve. He is convinced that “the third wave of the 1970s and 1980s was overwhelmingly a Catholic wave.”¹⁰ He locates the origin of this Catholic wave in the change in the Catholic Church during the 1960s due to Pope John XXIII and the “Christian Left” at the base of the church—but he cannot link it to 1960s movements as a whole. His bias against 1960s movements prevents him from understanding that tens of thousands of people in the Christian Left were not simply subjects of social transformation but also part of the political environment that was transformed by global grassroots movements outside the church.

Huntington framed his third wave as a tribute to US imperial power and democratic prestige. He tells us that “...movements for democracy throughout the world were inspired and borrowed from the American example. In Rangoon supporters of democracy carried the American flag; in Johannesburg they reprinted *The Federalist*; in Prague they sang “We Shall Overcome”; in Warsaw they read Lincoln and quoted Jefferson; in Beijing they erected the Goddess of Democracy...”¹¹ Here Huntington makes a critical error, a value judgment that leads him to misconstrue events. He claims the “Goddess of Democracy” in Tiananmen Square was a copy of the US Statue of Liberty. In fact, Chinese art students explicitly rejected the idea of copying the US statue as too “pro-American” and instead modeled theirs on Russian Communist Vera Mukhina’s monumental sculpture, “A Worker and a Collective Farm Woman,” which held aloft a torch with two hands on the top of the USSR’s pavilion at the 1937 Paris World’s Fair.¹²

⁹ Huntington, *Third Wave*, p. 61.

¹⁰ Huntington, *Third Wave*, p. 76.

¹¹ Huntington, *Third Wave*, p. 286.

¹² Han Minzhu, editor, *Cries for Democracy: Writings and Speeches from the 1989 Chinese Democracy Movement* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990) pp. 343-4.

Similarly, the Athens Polytechnic students who sacrificed their lives in the movement to overthrow the Greek dictatorship were animated by the global student movement of 1968—which mightily opposed the US war in Vietnam. They identified with the Thai student movement of 1973, also animated by opposition to the US war and decidedly not by American-style democracy.¹³ As was well known to Greeks, the US and Israel had overthrown their democracy and imposed the Papadopoulos junta in its place.¹⁴ Once we understand the actual character of the global insurgency unleashed in this period, we can better comprehend Athens' Polytechnic students, whose actions were a key event in the process of overturning dictatorships in the southern Mediterranean. Huntington ignores Greece and posits Portugal's military coup against the Salazar dictatorship in 1974 as standing at the beginning of the third wave, yet he fails to link Portuguese democratization to insurgent African guerrillas in Mozambique, Angola, and Guinea-Bissau, which had greatly influenced Portugal's colonial army before they successfully overthrew Salazar.

To be sure, the democratic luster of the US—although since compromised by Bush, Cheney, and Co.—remained intact in the 1980s. Gwangju's most militant fighters nicknamed themselves the “SWAT” team after a popular US television show, and many citizens believed that the entry of US aircraft carrier Coral Sea into Korean waters during the uprising meant it had come to save them—when in fact the opposite was true. The dialectical character of American experiences, simultaneously one of the freest societies in world history and one of its most warlike, evidently still allowed for a variety of enthusiastic support in the 1980s. For Huntington, the US “conveyed an image of strength and success.”¹⁵ For others, the image was of a society that supported freedom, where ordinary citizens could live prosperously and enjoy liberties like nowhere else.

Huntington's exogamous model of political development understands democracy as a system that can be imposed upon people from the outside, as in his post-World War 2 “second wave,” when “Allied occupation promoted inauguration of democratic institutions in West Germany, Italy, Austria, Japan, Korea.”¹⁶ Leaving aside the slaughter of 100,000 South Koreans prior to the beginning of the Korean War, the question remains: was Korea a democracy? When we ask which “open, free, and fair” elections in Korea are meant, there is none to which he can point. Admiring more recent democracies imposed from the outside, he welcomed US invasions of Grenada and Panama as bringing them democracy.¹⁷ It quite eluded him that any system of government imposed from the outside hardly qualifies as a democracy—unless of course, something other than “rule by the people” is meant. In a world where Henry Kissinger, who bombed Hanoi on Christmas 1972, and Barrack Obama, who expanded the war in Afghanistan, both received the Nobel Peace Prize, it should be no wonder that scholarly research is also flawed—yet I cannot help but make note of it!

Ideology and Science

¹³ Eraklis Anastasiadis, “The Athens Polytechnic Uprising: The Uprising that Brought Down a Dictatorship,” Wentworth Institute of Technology, Summer 2007.

¹⁴ Stephen Rousseas, *The Death of a Democracy: Greece and the American Conscience* (New York: Grove Press, 1967).

¹⁵ Huntington, *Third Wave*, p. 287.

¹⁶ Huntington, *Third Wave*, p. 18.

¹⁷ Huntington, *Third Wave*, pp. 40, 164.

The above critical insight is, fortunately, not idiosyncratic. In the late 1980s, the US National Academy of Sciences twice refused to admit Huntington on the grounds that his work was “ideology,” not “science.” In his campaign against Huntington’s application, Yale mathematics professor Serge Lang pointed to the book, *Political Order In Changing Societies* (1968), in which Huntington called South Africa under apartheid a “satisfied society.” Huntington’s ideological posturing is also far from unique. Mainstream political science routinely accepts value-laden research as “science.” Huntington’s Cambridge colleague, MIT professor Ithiel de Sola Poole, kept interrogation records of tortured Viet Cong suspects in file cabinets in his office as “data” to analyze enemy motivation, implicitly becoming part of the entire torture apparatus. Despite his complicity in war crimes in Vietnam—or should I say because of them?—Poole’s name today is attached to an annual award of the American Political Science Association. Like Poole, Huntington did not see himself merely as an academic but infused his books with advice for and praise of the military as a “motor of development.”

Following Huntington, a veritable parade of political “scientists” proclaimed, “the essence of democracy is voting.” In so doing, they prepared the groundwork for illiberal democracies like Musharaff in Pakistan and Karzai in Afghanistan, petty dictators maintained in power only through hundreds of billions of US taxpayer dollars, thousands of American lives, and hundreds of thousands of indigenous people’s lives—as well as elaborate ideological obfuscation. The content of the type of “democratization” that Huntington seeks to impose on the world includes Abu Ghraib and the CIA’s rendition program, unending wars in which the vast majority of those killed are civilians, environmental devastation, and trade liberalization that spells death to millions at the periphery of the world system—all implemented without any substantive discussion or choice between real alternatives.

For “dispassionate” and “value-free” political scientists like Huntington, elite dynamics are primary variables. Since they assume an elite will govern, the only question becomes, “which elite?” Can democratic transitions be managed for the maintenance of elements of an old elite? Administrative social research seeks to categorize the character of transitional regimes, classifying them as *transplacement* in which key leaders maintain themselves within a new arrangement of power, unlike a wholesale *replacement* of an old elite, or a *transformation* of an old elite into a new elite. *Abolition* of elite rule altogether and creation of substantive democracy remains out of their realm of possibilities. As a self-described “aspiring democratic Machiavelli,” Huntington offered “tips” to leaders on how to isolate radical opposition.¹⁸

Emphasizing elite actions, Huntington downplays the role of civil society in the democratization groundswell at the end of the twentieth century. He claims “demonstrations, protests and strikes played central roles in only six transitions completed or underway at the end of the 1980s.” (The Philippines, South Korea, East Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Romania).¹⁹ Like Huntington, O’Donnell and Schmitter believe that it is preferable for elites to transfer power to some fraction of their supporters or to negotiate a transition with

¹⁸ Huntington, *Third Wave*, p. xv.

¹⁹ Huntington, *Third Wave*, p. 146.

reform-minded members of the opposition rather than for elites to be outright overthrown by opposition movements.²⁰ That is one reason why elites embrace non-violence: it permits negotiations between old and new rulers and facilitates the peaceful accommodation of the old within the new. It is also why reformist parties can be so useful. Haggard and Kaufman realized that "...as we have seen in several of our cases, reforms have sometimes been more effective when they are implemented by 'left' parties that can provide some possibility of political influence and compensation to those negatively affected by the reform process."²¹ According to their view, popular movements cannot lead to more democracy; they may prove to be "uncontrollable" and lead either to revolutionary overthrow of the existing system in its entirety or increased repression.²²

Whatever their different purviews, mainstream sociologists, economists, and political scientists subscribe to the notion of the "rational" individual actor laying at the core of society. As with Adam Smith's "invisible hand," they believe that "rational choice," or personal advancement of compartmentalized self-interests will lead to maximization of the social good. In the first place, individualized instrumental rationality is but one form of rational action—and often an unreasonable form at that. Collective instrumental rationality and value-rationality are other forms, which play central roles in animating social movements. With important exceptions like E.P. Thompson and George Rudé, social scientists have traditionally viewed crowds as less rational than individuals. In extreme interpretations, crowds were understood to embody a form of "contagion," of authoritarian domination and unintelligent action, such as lynch mobs. According to this conventional wisdom, crowds lead individuals to suspend their individual rationality and act according to base instinctual passions.

In contrast to this view, millions of ordinary people who unite in social movements can be regarded as proof of another dynamic: ordinary people, acting together in the best interests of society, embody a reasonability and intelligence far greater than that of elites which rule nation-state and giant corporations. One does not need to be a radical to subscribe to the idea of group intelligence. Recent observers of technology have penned simple insights that speak volumes: the Internet and the World Wide Web have facilitated "the wisdom of crowds" and "smart mobs."²³

In the case of South Korea, political scientists' bias in favor of elite-led transitions compelled the Carnegie Commission to ignore the contribution of the insurgent movement in the country's democratic transition. Instead they credited Roh Tae-woo (who was subsequently imprisoned for his crimes against the people of Gwangju).²⁴ Juan Linz and A. Stepan studied East Germany and came to the conclusion that "regime collapse" had

²⁰ See *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions About Uncertain Democracies* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986).

²¹ Haggard and Kaufman, p. 377.

²² Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe Schmitter (editors), *Transitions from Authoritarianism: Comparative Perspectives* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986).

²³ See the recent books by non-academic and non-movement observers James Silewecki, *The Wisdom of Crowds* (New York: Random House, 2005) and Howard Rheingold *Smart Mobs: The Next Social Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Perseus Publishers, 2003).

²⁴ See Volume 1, pp. xxx for more discussion.

occurred despite substantial evidence that popular mobilizations transformed the political landscape.²⁵ When fractions of previous authoritarian regimes play some role in the new democratic regime (as in South Korea, East Germany, Romania, Indonesia), the reasonability, and even gullibility, of insurgent movements is a key reason, not their lack of influence. People's generosity often allowed deposed dictators to keep much of their ill-gotten fortunes—as Duvalier, Marcos, Chun Doo Hwan, and Suharto all did.

As is often said, the victors write history in large script. Yet at the margins, a more accurate understanding, one not tied to predominant ideology, may be possible. Although apparent failures since they did not seize power, previous waves of social movements in 1848, 1905, and 1968 profoundly changed values and ushered in new political epochs.²⁶ After 1848, workers won greater employment rights and citizens' voting rights expanded; after 1905, movements for national liberation became increasingly legitimate; and since 1968, women's and minority rights as well as the environment have become central concerns. The transvaluation of values produced by robust insurgent movements may be longer lasting and of greater significance than transitory implementation of new voting regimes.

Huntington uses the notion of “snowballing” as an explanatory metaphor for the emergence of so many movements in the same period of time.²⁷ Snowballing is a postmodern version of domino theory that guided American anti-communism in the 1950s. Since there is a single point of origin, the concept expresses the paranoid fears of a control center that perceives itself to be surrounded by enemies, not the wondrous joy at the simultaneous emergence of freedom struggles. Tied as he is to Washington policymakers, Huntington could not comprehend the emergence of polycentric, grassroots movements. Only reluctantly did he acknowledge that, “It seems probable, although little evidence is available, that events in the Philippines and Korea helped stimulate the demonstrations for democracy in Burma in 1988 and those in China in the fall of 1986 and the spring of 1989, as well as having some impact on the liberalization that occurred in Taiwan.”²⁸ Observing these events as an outsider, he tells us, “Whatever economic connections may exist between them, the fundamental cultural gap between Asian and American societies precludes their joining together in a common home.”²⁹

What Huntington calls snowballing has been described by others—even by progressive academics within what Barbara Epstein has called the “social movement industry”—through terms like demonstration effect, diffusion, emulation, domino effect, and contagion. The number of labels is one indication of the phenomenon's recent emergence as a significant variable. Leaving aside the difference in values embedded in disease-laden labels like “contagion” and less pejorative terms like “diffusion” and “demonstration effect,” they all assume a single, external point of origin. None of these concepts comprehends the

²⁵ J. Linz and A. Stepan, *Democratic Transitions and Consolidation: Eastern Europe, Southern Europe and Latin America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996) pp. 316-328.

²⁶ See my book, *The Imagination of the New Left: A Global Analysis of 1968* (Boston: South End Press, 1987) pp. 13-18.

²⁷ Huntington, *Third Wave*, p. 46.

²⁸ Huntington, *Third Wave*, pp. 103-4.

²⁹ Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (London: Simon and Schuster, 1996) p. 307.

simultaneous appearance of insurgencies among different peoples, even across cultures. While the influence of one event upon another is no doubt substantial, to comprehend movements as externally induced—much as a collision of bowling balls—is to miss something essential about their inner logic and meaning. Simultaneous emergence and mutual amplification of insurgencies are alternative understandings, ones embedded in the notion of the “eros effect.”³⁰ Rather than a simple monocausal process of protest, the eros effect provides a way to comprehend the polycentric—indeed decentered—source of movements’ energies. For Huntington, simultaneity is “impossible,” and he excludes it in advance.³¹ The distance between his theory and law enforcement officials is not great. As the US civil rights movement accelerated in the 1960s, sheriffs and police continually blamed Martin Luther King or Malcolm X for their own city’s problems, and campus administrators often insisted that “outside agitators” caused university protests.

Evaluating Uprisings

Uprisings are the best of times; they are the worst of times. Tremendous changes occur, great setbacks are possible. People make new lifelong friends, others watch in horror as their loved ones are murdered and blood flows in the streets. How do we evaluate whether or not the sacrifices were worth the benefits?

For Huntington as for most political scientists, uprisings’ outcomes are mainly understood in terms of changes in elite power. That is certainly one analytical method, yet there are far more significant outcomes. One is to assess broad indications of people’s well-being and happiness, their material standards of living and working, new rights of subaltern groups, and expanded liberties. To what extent have onerous burdens and dictatorships been brought to an end? A second evaluative dimension was enunciated more than two hundred years ago, when Immanuel Kant replaced eudemonistic criteria for judging progress with indications of the degree to which reason becomes an important determinant of morality and culture. If we extrapolate his insight into a framework of gauging freedom in people’s lives, we can ask: Have people been able to become deliberative subjects of their social and political affairs? To what extent have liberties won by ordinary citizens resulted in free public conversations, increased ordinary citizens’ involvement in policymaking, changed patterns of authority, and activated civic organizations? What kinds of lessons for future freedom movements have been produced? What new directions for activism have emerged

³⁰ By the eros effect, I mean the spontaneous rapid spread of revolutionary aspirations in a chain reaction of uprisings and the massive occupation of public space—the sudden entry into history of millions of ordinary people who act in a unified fashion, intuitively believing that they can change the direction of their society. In moments of the eros effect, universal interests become generalized at the same time as the dominant values of society (national chauvinism, hierarchy, domination, regionalism, and possessiveness) are negated. The eros effect is not simply an act of mind, nor can it simply be willed by a “conscious element” (or revolutionary party). Rather it involves popular movements emerging as forces in their own right as thousands of ordinary people take history into their own hands. When people identify with insurgent movements and massively rise up, the basic assumptions of a society—patriotic nationalism and the authority of the government, hierarchy, the division of labor, and specialization—vanish overnight. During moments of the eros effect, popular movements not only imagine a new way of life and a different social reality, but millions of people live according to transformed norms, values, and beliefs. The conscious spontaneity of self-directed actions of hundreds of thousands of people—sometimes millions—who come together in beloved communities of struggle is a new tool in the struggle for freedom.

³¹ Huntington, *Third Wave*, p. 33

because of experiences accumulated and sacrifices made? Bound as they are to maintaining the political control center, Huntington and mainstream political science refuse to prioritize such outcomes.

The Continuing Wave

The late twentieth century wave of uprisings is inseparable from the ongoing assaults on elite rule that continue today in global insurgencies knocking at the doors wherever leaders of the global neoliberal economic system gather. Without anyone telling them to do so, millions of people all over the world have selected the world capitalist regime as the target of their protests. These popular contestations of power seek democratic deliberation of the global economic system's goals and rules. Elite summit meetings of the G-8, WTO ministerials, and World Bank gatherings have all been greeted by thousands of protesters. Yesterday winning formal democracy and today demanding an end to world poverty by challenging the concentration of humanity's collective wealth in the hands of a few billionaires, the global justice movement, which has emerged most publicly in world media after the battle of Seattle in 1999, is a continuing democratic wave. A new pluralist and decentralized global economy is visible in the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre and in regional alliances autonomous of the WTO/World Bank/IMF axis. How long can the short-lived system of nation-states—which Elise Boulding called “10,000 societies living inside 168 nation-states”—be maintained? How much longer will humanity tolerate the current abomination of waste and warfare that condemns millions of human beings to living hell on earth?

From the grassroots, social movements' energies resonate across national boundaries, stimulating each other with greater velocity and more force than goods and services can be traded. Without highly paid trainers, insurgent activists adopt new technologies (from fax machine to cell phones, text messaging to blogs) and bring them into use faster than even the corporate elite. Groups form and disband, crowds gather and scatter—but they leave behind a residue of collective capacity for thought and action that builds upon its previous incarnations. As people are transformed through insurgencies, they refuse to tolerate previously accepted forms of domination. Popular wisdom grows and in the next iteration of the movement's emergence, ever-new aspirations animate action. In the never-ending struggle for freedom, we continually advance part of the way to our goal but never arrive at the end of history.

As we move ahead within the continuous wave of activism that has animated progress for centuries, Huntington's notion of the third wave should be seen for what it is: an ideological justification for expanded US imperial rule, decidedly not a measure of more democracy or greater freedom.