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Ferguson Evenings

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October 02, 2014

As the dust from army tanks and military armored vehicles settles on the town of Ferguson, Missouri, and on the gravesite of Michael Brown, perhaps it is time to locate the police shooting of an eighteen-year-old boy within a larger national and geopolitical context. Up to now the reporting of these occurrences, and there have been all too many such occurrences, has been framed within the context of individual and collective agency, e.g. rogue policemen and racially infected police departments, while remedies have been sought through such reforms as changing the racial composition of police departments to better reflect those of the neighborhoods they patrol, or establishing neighborhood councils to which the police must be held accountable. Few commentators, and no one in the establishment media, have attempted to view the Ferguson affair for what it is, an instance of a more general crisis of contemporary capitalism.

For decades now we have been witness to the repressive forces of the American State waging a brutal war on people of color. It is no secret that the United States has the highest prison population in the world, both in terms of absolute numbers and on a *per capita* basis. With just under one percent of the U.S. population behind bars it is no wonder that some have begun referring to a “prison-industrial complex.” The trajectory of mass incarceration is clear: in 1983 there were some three hundred thousand Americans in U.S. prisons; today that number is two and a half million. And of that number the overwhelming majority is Black and Hispanic. It is much more likely that an African-American boy will wind up in prison than that he will find a steady job or go to college. Whether it is the so-called War on Drugs, or the War on Terror, or policies such as stop-and-frisk, three-strikes-you're out, or mandatory prison sentences, young men of color are subject to a relentless regime of surveillance, harassment and incarceration that has become the norm for the economically disenfranchised.

That this came about was no accident; it was the result of deliberate government policy. It is said that the moral compass of a society can be discerned in its national budget. During the administration of President Clinton funding for public housing was slashed by 61%, while spending on the construction of prisons increased by 171%. In the words of Michelle Alexander, this shift in social spending effectively makes "the construction of prisons…the nation's main housing program for the urban poor." (*The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Color Blindness*). Since it is social policy that brought us to this point, and not racist cops (although racist cops are the agents of such a policy), it will not do simply to suggest a reform in profiling police applicants, or to promote neighborhood oversight committees. What is needed first and foremost is an understanding of the structural conditions out of which existing policies emerged.

The latest iteration in the social system of capitalism—a variant that has been designated by such terms as 'globalization', 'neo-liberalism', and 'the Washington consensus'—grew out of the structural crisis of the early 1970s. Beginning in the late 1960s corporate profits worldwide declined dramatically, economies in the major industrial nations contracted, interest rates, especially in Latin America and other parts of the Third World, spiked, resulting in defaults on sovereign debt in many nations of the global South, and the United States and other countries of the economic center experienced the dual phenomena of economic contraction and rising bond yields that came to be known as 'stagflation'.

The tactical response of capital to this crisis was fourfold:

(1) Production facilities were transferred to those areas of the Third World where cheap labor and an absence of decent working conditions served to increase the surplus value created by labor and steer it to the corporate bottom line. These conditions were enforced by repressive local regimes backed by, and in many cases installed by, the U.S. government.

(2) 'Structural adjustment' provisions were attached to bank loans to Third World countries. The ultimate effect of these provisions was the wholesale transfer of public assets such as utilities and telecommunications to multinational corporations, while dispossessing local peasantries of their land and forcing hundreds of millions of peasants into urban slums.

(3) There was a sustained attack on the welfare state and its social programs of government provision. This was accompanied, at least in the major industrial economies, by an ideology denouncing the evils of Big Government and calls for reining in "out of control" government spending.

(4) Finance capital assumed a dominant role in the global economic system, allowing enormous profits to be made from creating and trading securitized assets. Since trading paper does not create wealth, it must be seen for what in fact it is: a mechanism for transferring wealth from

those whose labor creates it to the banks and hedge funds whose business it became to siphon wealth upward to the managers of the Global Casino.

I refer to the above as tactical maneuvers, but there was an additional response to the crisis of the early 1970s that was more strategic in nature, and that was the explosion of credit (debt) throughout the entire system. In an effort to compensate for the loss in aggregate demand that resulted from the dismantling of the welfare state, and from the diminution of real wages even as worker productivity soared, access to consumer credit became the lifeboat for working and middle class families. Unable to sustain their living standards on plummeting wages, a tidal wave of consumer credit came crashing down on American households: credit card debt, auto loans, student loans, second mortgages, refinanced first mortgages with "cash out""—this was the way the system maintained aggregate demand and so realized the enormous quantity of surplus value being generated by a labor force driven by the high octane fuel of productivity-enhancing technologies.

Of course this could not last. Eventually the burden of high-interest credit card debt made further borrowing impossible, and when home prices crashed in 2008 the gimmick of using the family home as an ATM machine, a gambit universally encouraged by an army of unscrupulous mortgage brokers, was over. But although new borrowing is down, the old debt remains on the books, with the result that millions of families are trapped in a vice of debt bondage unprecedented in our history.

Debt also entered the global financial system as speculative leverage. With the prices of financial assets rising off their 1975 lows, and with money capital accumulating faster than productive outlets could absorb, banks were only too eager to lend against those appreciating assets. And so money capital flowed into such new investment vehicles as leverage buyout funds, hedge funds, private equity firms, and to the speculative trading desks at the large commercial banks engaged in so-called 'proprietary trading'. As these new funds and investment pools "levered up," they caused asset prices to rise even more, encouraging banks to lend even more, in turn causing asset prices to rise even more… a speculative frenzy built on borrowed money eerily reminiscent of that of the late 1920s, but on a scale that makes the 1920s look like a paradigm of fiscal restraint. By the nature of the beast speculative bubbles eventually pop, and debt-driven bull markets inevitably crash. A market crash is the internal corrective to the excesses of a debt-fueled bull market: plunging asset prices drive valuations back to more realistic levels, while the debt piled on during the bubble phase gets destroyed in a cascade of forced liquidations. It is a "rational" solution to an inherently irrational system.

We had a taste of this in the dot.com crash of 2000-2002, during which time the Nasdaq, the index containing the stocks of the new computer and information technology companies, lost 78% of its value. And we had another, and more severe, example in the subprime mortgage crash of 2008-09, when the bursting of the inflated market value of subprime mortgage securities caused, or rather unveiled, the insolvency of major investment and commercial banks, sending the world into an economic contraction from which it has yet to emerge. And now? I believe we are at forefront of another crash, only this time the catalyst is not the then-relatively small sector of dot.com companies, or the larger but still non-lethal asset class of mortgage securities, but rather the huge and unsustainable amount of sovereign debt overhanging the industrialized nations of the West and Japan. The political consequences of the coming financial debacle are unfathomable, and the fearful reaction of the capitalist state too terrifying to imagine.

The structural transformations in the working of capitalism that began in the late 1970s, coupled with an increase in productivity brought about by the innovations and deployment of information technologies, resulted in the creation of a surplus working population worldwide. The *World Employment Report of 1996-97* by the International Labor Organization (ILO) found that in the late 20th century "some one-third of the global labor force [more than one billion people] was unemployed." The problem that this posed for the new capitalist order was how to contain and control this potentially explosive population.

The first step in the resolution of this problem was the ghettoization of the global unemployed. In his study, *Planet of Slums*, Mike Davis notes that "at least one billion people live in the teeming slums of…global megalopolises, and that there are probably more than 200,000 slums on earth." The surplus populations having been so contained, the next step was that of controlling them. This was accomplished by the militarization of local police agencies and the simultaneous creation of militarized private contractors, resulting in what Stephen Graham in *Cities Under Siege* calls 'the new military urbanism'. Henceforth, in the words of William Robinson, "The distinction between wars within nations and wars between nations becomes ever less meaningful." (*Global Capitalism and the Crisis of Humanity*)

Which brings us back to Ferguson. What shocked the nation was not so much the shooting of an African-American teenager by a white police officer (people of color are shot by white policemen in American cities almost every day of every week), but rather the savagery of the police response to those protesting the killing. For several nights the television images coming out of Ferguson were such that one would be hard pressed to distinguish them from the images filmed during the second battle of Fallujah in Iraq. The militarization of local police departments, a phenomenon going on for years but given scant coverage by the corporate media, was on full display for all to see. What was not so clear was the reason behind this transformation of local police departments into *urban security forces*. However, the reason becomes apparent once we realize that there is just as much need for the containment and control of the American superfluous workforce as there is for its counterpart in Asia or Africa. "In any one year," explains William Robinson, "the [U.S.] prison-industrial complex removes several million surplus workers from the labor market…" (*Global Capitalism and the Crisis of Humanity*). Which means that, in the words of Michelle Alexander, "The nature of the criminal justice system has changed. It is no longer concerned primarily with the prevention and punishment of crime, but rather with the management and control of the dispossessed." (*The New Jim Crow*)

The function of the capitalist State is twofold: it must ensure the conditions of capital accumulation, and it must provide the basis for the legitimacy of the entire system. But since capital accumulation is inherently exploitative there is a fundamental tension between the two. The legitimation function rests on the twin bases of material sufficiency and ideological supremacy. Both are essential if the regime of capital is to maintain its hegemony, in the sense given this concept by Antonio Gramsci, viz. the ability to instill in the popular classes those "common sense" beliefs and attendant emotional responses that result in their *consensual* *domination*. Absent a general consensus as to the naturalness, the inevitability, and the "common sense" of capitalist social relations, the State must rely on coercive measures to ensure the conditions of endless accumulation—that is to say, to ensure the reproduction of capitalist property relations.

In the quarter century from 1948 to 1973 the Western states, and especially the U.S. State, were able to ramp up the Keynesian-Welfare-Redistributive model that germinated in the smoldering embers of the Great Depression. The structural crisis of accumulation that struck in the early 1930s resulted in a legitimation crisis for the entire capitalist social order. Through a combination of regulatory constraints on the financial core of the system and policies of social provision funded by a redistributive tax code, FDR's New Deal was able to maintain the system's legitimacy in the eyes of the working class until the command economy of the Second World War brought the country, and the world, out of its deflationary depression.

The physical destruction of productive assets in Europe and East Asia wrought by the war provided the fertile soil upon which capitalist production was able to resurrect itself like Phoenix rising up out of its own ashes. Through the Marshall Plan billions of dollars were funneled through American banks for the reconstruction of the industrial infrastructure of a European continent decimated by war. Much of the wealth created by this explosion in production was channeled to the American popular classes via redistributive tax policies that helped fund the Great Society programs of Lyndon Johnson: Medicare and Medicaid, Head Start and the Jobs Corps, public housing and civil rights legislation, welfare assistance for the poor and government subsidies for higher education. The thirty-five year span between the New Deal and the Great Society saw the creation of the American middle class. And not just in America. In Western Europe and Japan too there developed a consumer-based middle class "life style." It marked the golden age of industrial capitalism.

But by the mid 1960s the reconstruction of Europe was complete, and capital was once again accumulating faster than profitable outlets could be found. The system entered the malaise of the early 1970s. It was in reaction to this disruption in accumulation that capital embarked upon the tactical and strategic reconstitution cited above. Aided by breathtaking technological innovations in information processing and transportation, capital broke free of its confines within the barriers of the nation state and became transnational.

We need to distinguish between the concept of *transnational* and that of *international* or *multi-national*. Capitalism has been international since its inception as commercial capital in the 16th century. A transnational corporation is not simply one that conducts its business across many countries; nor is it one that has subsidiaries in several nations. It is a company that is financed by transnational capital. This capital takes the form of offshore hedge funds, private equity firms, global investment and commercial banks, sovereign wealth funds—investment vehicles funded by wealthy individuals from across the globe and by nations with large capital surpluses such as the oil Gulf States. It does not consider itself a "corporate citizen" of any country and feels no allegiance to a nation state or to the popular and working classes of any state. Attendant upon the rise of the transnational corporation is an emergent transnational capitalist class, the shareholders, directors and senior executives of transnational corporations. (For an excellent theoretical articulation of this new phenomenon, see William I. Robinson, *A Theory of Global*

Capitalism: Production, Class, and State in a Transnational World, The John Hopkins University Press, 2004).

Beginning in the 1980s the agents of transnational capital began to construct a set of transnational institutions whose function it is to ensure the ongoing accumulation of capital on a global scale: the World Trade Organization, the International Chamber of Commerce, the World Economic Forum, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the European Union, to name but a few. Older institutions such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the central banks of the industrialized nations were recalibrated to do the bidding of transnational capital. Private think tanks such as the Cato Institute and the American Enterprise Institute, and government-sponsored organizations such as The Council on Foreign Relations and the Trilateral Commission, provide managerial guidance to the global economic and political elites, while shaping public opinion through the dissemination of ideological discourse. At the same time commodity and capital markets were integrated into global circuits of financial exchange where money capital could move seamlessly across the world in nanoseconds. Creative financial instruments were engineered to hedge the currency and commodity risks of cross-border exchange, instruments that soon became the tools of high-stakes speculation on a global scale. And as for the individual nation states, they were folded into the new world order as constituents of an emerging transnational state, the political arm of the new transnational capitalist class.

No longer joined at the hip to a nation state, capital was able to disengage from any particular national workforce, and from its erstwhile powerful unions that heretofore had been able to exert pressure on capital through the intermediation of elected government officials committed to the Keynesian project of enhancing aggregate demand. Through a process both political and ideological those government functionaries were now beholden to the dictates of transnational capital, especially to the fraction of transnational *finance* capital that had assumed a hegemonic position in the new capitalist order. The result was that the old imperial division between a global North and a global South now cut through the individual states of both the North and the South, so that pockets of hopeless poverty and political exclusion are found not only in Asia and Latin America, but across the United States and in every state in Europe.

One consequence of these transformations was that the material basis of the system's legitimacy was crushed in the stampede to the economic bottom. And when the system can no longer be propped up by mechanisms of consensual domination, when, absent a material base, the dominant ideology can no longer foster an aura of its own legitimacy, it must of necessity have recourse to coercive means. The Keynesian-Welfare-Redistributive model that had governed the system in the middle half of the twentieth century gave way to a neoliberal-exclusionary-militaristic paradigm of social control. In the United States, and across Europe as well, criminality became racialized in an attempt to divide the dispossessed against itself along the lines of color and creed. In this way race and class converge.

There is another aspect to the story, one that is as disturbing as it is ingenious: the mechanisms through which militarized control is carried out are themselves loci of accumulation in their own right, apart from any political considerations. The prison-industrial complex, along with the older military-industrial complex, is a profit center of no small significance. With the introduction of privately owned and operated prisons, the caging of millions of surplus workers became a $200-billion-a-year business in the United States alone. In this way the problem of surplus workers is resolved by their enforced removal from the workforce, while at the same time the problem of over-accumulated capital is relieved by its investment in building the security apparatus through which the removal of a surplus population is effected. Here we have a stunning example of how the system overcomes, at least temporarily, its internal contradictions through, and not in spite of, the crises created by those very contradictions.

There is a flipside to this relationship of social control and accumulation: just as obvious instruments of social control are at the same time mechanisms of capital accumulation, so there are obvious instruments of accumulation that function as mechanisms of social control. I referred earlier to the debt bondage in which a large segment of the American population is held. A family with a large amount of high-interest credit card debt, and large monthly mortgage payments, may be just one missed paycheck from foreclosure on their home, or one illness away from bankruptcy. For such a family—and this is now the norm for the middle class—its working members are tied to their jobs, regardless of how low the wages or how long the hours or how miserable the conditions. In such cases (and I repeat, they are the norm for the beleaguered middle class) the metaphor of debt bondage becomes the reality of *debt peonage*. Although consumer debt appears on the surface to be no more than a profit-center for the banks, and thus an instrument of accumulation (or more accurately an instrument for the concentration of previous rounds of accumulation), it serves at the same time as a mechanism of control over the working population. Middle class workers today are bound to their jobs through the intermediation of finance capital in a way similar to the way peasants in medieval times were bound to the soil through the intermediation of feudal social and political structures. Their room to maneuver for higher wages, health care and pension benefits, better working conditions, and the right to organize into unions is constrained by the threat of dismissal—and the loss of that one paycheck standing between them and home foreclosure.

But perhaps the most pernicious form that consumer debt has taken over the past quarter century is student debt. Just as stagnant wages have forced millions of workers into credit card debt peonage, so the defunding of higher education, and the consequent skyrocketing of tuitions at both public and private colleges and universities, has burdened millions of college students with unconscionable debt loads, in many cases exceeding fifty thousand dollars even before they graduate. This year student debt in the United States topped the one trillion dollar mark, surpassing credit card debt and making it the largest segment of consumer debt outside of home mortgages.

In an impromptu talk before an Occupy group one afternoon, Vijay Prashad, a young up-and-coming political scientist, shared a telling insight into one of the consequences stemming from the fact that, as a result of mounting debt, students feel compelled to spend their time on those subjects that promise a good-paying steady job upon graduation. As in the case of workers bound to their jobs and rendered docile through what seem to be normal and extraneous banking practices, so here the intellectual horizons of young college students are constricted by what presents itself as standard lending practices by banks and government agencies such as Sallie Mae. While the grantors of student loans praise themselves for making it possible for lower-middle and middle class kids to go to college, those very loans make it so that time spent in studying literature or history or philosophy is an unaffordable luxury, since it is time taken from course studies in computer science or corporate finance, courses which hold out the promise of a job at Google or Goldman Sachs. In this way, hidden within the readily perceived function of generating profits for banks, student debt functions also as a mechanism of social control over the thinking and understanding of the 'best and the brightest' of our young people. It rivets their intellectual capacities to a predominantly functional role, and it prevents those who are most open to new ideas from arriving at a clear understanding of the social system in which they live, and of the power relations that configure that system.

When viewed as a global phenomenon, and not just as a national aberration, it becomes apparent just how critical the militarization of the world is to reproducing the regime of endless accumulation. Together, the worldwide military-industrial complex (with its requirement of permanent war), and the various national security apparatuses (with their need for ever new categories of 'criminality') are primary drivers of accumulation on a global scale, what William Robinson calls 'militarized accumulation'. According to a U.N. report, in 2011 there were some twenty million private security guards worldwide, twice the number of government-employed police officers. "In the decadent world of global capitalism," writes Robinson, "War, conflict and instability generate an environment for permanent accumulation." (*Global Capitalism and the Crisis of Humanity*)

Connect the dots: The global War on Terror (an ideological construct justifying a condition of permanent war); a worldwide network of secrete detention centers ("black sites"); the mass surveillance of every citizen of every country (under the guise of national security); the War on Drugs (with transnational finance capital funding both sides); the racialization of crime and the mass incarceration of the economically disenfranchised (which some, with a straight face, can still refer to as a criminal *justice* system); police brutality against people of color as unstated public policy; entire sections of inner cities as population containment zones for the hopelessly dispossessed—connect the dots and you have part of the mosaic that is the crisis of global capitalism.

Which brings us back once again to Ferguson. As I hope this analytical expose has made clear, Ferguson (and the hundreds of Fergusons across the country) is part of the domestic front of what is a global war being waged by the transnational capitalist class against the dispossessed populations that it itself creates, and cannot help but create. The World Bank estimates that approximately three billion people, almost half the world's population, live on two dollars a day or less, have little or no access to fresh water and sanitary waste facilities, and enjoy at best intermittent access to medical care. When pockets of resistance emerge, those resisting are branded 'terrorists' and are greeted by the full repressive force of the global security apparatus.

What frightens the elites of the new order the most is when any show of resistance happens here in the American homeland, the jugular of transnational capital. Just consider how quickly and how violently the U.S. security state crushed the Occupy Wall Street Movement, what I call 'the pepper spray repression,' by the forceful closure of the public space. It was not just that the mantra of the 99% brought increasing income inequality into the light of day; it was that the juxtaposition of the 1% and the 99% brought back into relief the hierarchical class composition of American society. And through that juxtaposition the point was made not simply that the 1%

has a lot more money than the 99%, but that its money was made through the ongoing brutalization of the 99%. Further (and herein lay the rub), by staging their occupation outside the New York Stock Exchange it poked a finger into the eye of that fraction of capital which, in the present conjuncture, provides the mechanisms through which class domination is exercised, viz. transnational *finance* capital. It is the specter of resistance by the broad masses of the American citizenry, more than the threat of foreign-hatched terrorist plots, that explains why there is a Department of Homeland Security, and why every American citizen is a target of surveillance by the National Security Agency. And it explains the surge in military policing exemplified by the fact that while in the 1980s SWAT teams in the United States were called out around three thousand times a year, they are now deployed on average some *forty thousand times a year*.

We stand today on the brink of a global deflationary depression the likes of which hasn't been seen since the 1930s. A dress rehearsal of this depression was experienced in the credit crisis brought on by the mortgage meltdown of 2008-09. Today's global financial system of large transnational banks and the shadow banking network of giant hedge funds and private equity firms is so interlinked via cross-party obligations that the insolvency of one firm can bring down the entire house of cards. In 2008 the prospect of the failure of just one insurance company, AIG, which had insured countless portfolios of mortgage-backed securities with a financial derivative known as a credit default swap, and for which it did not have on hand the cash sufficient to cover even a fraction of its insurance liabilities, caused the freezing up of credit throughout the world. The crisis that looms before us now is not mortgage debt, but sovereign debt, the sheer magnitude of which cannot be papered over by government bailouts.

Those of the financial elite who have been paying attention understand full well the seriousness of the situation they have helped to create. In an attempt to preempt the crisis the central banks of the major economic nations, with the U.S. Federal Reserve at the forefront, have been engaged in a herculean effort to reflate asset values through unprecedented monetary policies: near-zero short term interest rates which render capital virtually cost-free; and quantitative easing programs—the purchase of fixed-income securities by central banks from the world's large commercial banks—pushing trillions of dollars of new money and debt into the world economy.

Notwithstanding the near-biblical faith in the omnipotence of central banks that is widespread in the investment community, the fact is that they are not succeeding in their stated objectives. Commodity prices peaked in 2008, crashed with the subprime mortgage collapse in the second half of that year, then rallied back to lower highs in April and May of 2011 (clearly a counter-trend rally)—and have been falling again ever since. Copper prices, that bellwether of economic activity, are down 36% from their high in the spring of 2011. Even precious metals have been unable to withstand the gravitational pull of underlying deflationary forces: gold prices are down 35% from their September 2011 high, while silver has lost more than 60% from its peak in late April of 2011. The only thing that such a desperate monetary policy has succeeded in doing is to create a bubble in the U.S. stock market and in the U.S. and European bond market. But this too is fast approaching an end, as evidenced by a host of objective and quantifiable market indicators, although the investment community remains in flagrant denial.

That these frantic central bank programs are failing was brought home on September 4th with the announcement by the head of the European Central Bank that a new round of aggressive quantitative easing is about to begin in the face of negative economic growth across much of the Eurozone. And though the financial media continue to report increases in job creation, the vast majority of these jobs are in the low-wage retail and fast food sectors. The crisis of over-accumulated capital or, looked at from the other side, the free fall in aggregate demand, has not been dented despite all the machinations of the world's central banks. Nor will it.

It is against this impending economic catastrophe, and the anticipated reaction of the American popular and working classes, that we need to understand something that has gone totally unreported in the mainstream press. The United States has for the first time in history established a Military Command ready to coordinate and carry out military operations in the heart of the American homeland. You've probably heard of Central Command (CENTCOM), located in Florida and coordinating U.S. military operations in the Middle East, and perhaps of the recently established Africa Command. There is now a Northern Command. Headquartered in Colorado Springs, it has its sights set squarely on the North American continent. In preparation for what it sees as the inevitable confrontation with the resistance of "its own" citizenry, "the U.S. government has gradually reduced long-standing legal barriers to military deployment within U.S. cities. Urban warfare training exercises now regularly take place in U.S. cities." (Robinson, *Global Capitalism and the Crisis of Humanity*)

Along with contingency preparations to use military force against its own citizens, the U.S. government has recently passed legislation that gives legal cover to the use of such force. During the Congressional Christmas break in December of 2011 President Obama signed into law the 2012 National Defense Authorization Act authorizing the annual budget for the U.S. armed services. Embedded in the bill are provisions which gut our civil liberties as defined in the Bill of Rights of the United States Constitution. In general, they define the entire world as a battlefield in the war on terror, with the implication that we are officially in a state of global civil war. As a practical matter it means that a person picked up anywhere, whether on the streets of New York or in the hills of Afghanistan, can be said to have been captured on a battlefield. In its specifics the provisions strip away the last line of defense between the coercive powers of the State and the protection of every American citizen from the arbitrary use of those powers.

The bill was passed with no congressional hearings, no public debate, and with hardly a mention in the mainstream media. The most relevant provisions in the bill for U.S. citizens are contained in Section 1021. It creates a federal statute to the effect that the government has the legal authority to arrest and place under *military detention, indefinitely and without charges,* any United States citizen, apprehended anywhere on earth, including on U.S. soil, who is suspected of participating in terrorist activities, or who is suspected of aiding or associating with any person or group intending to carry out terrorist activities. The statute authorizes legal detention "under the law of war *without trial* until the end of hostilities." (italics mine). Since there is no end in sight to such hostilities, the statute in effect authorizes the military detention for life, without legal remedy, or even legal counsel, of any American citizen so much as suspected of terrorist associations. Mind you: not someone *proved* to have engaged in terrorist *activities*; but anyone *suspected* of having terrorist *associations*—however this may be construed.

The language of the bill is so chilling, its provisions so sweeping, that together with the establishment of the aforementioned Northern Command, both the legal and coercive architecture of a proto fascist regime stand ready to be activated and put in place. *The New York Times*, hardly a purveyor of radical commentary, opined that "the legislation could…give presidents the authority to throw American citizens into prison for life without charge or trial." The *Times* editorial goes on to warn that the bill contains "terrible new measures that will make indefinite detention and military trials *a permanent part of American law*." (italics in text).

The global elites know full well the dire economic conditions that await us, and their agents in the national security apparatuses are getting ready. Do we have any inkling of what's coming? All we have to do is recall Ferguson and connect the dots. What we are prepared to do about it is the reigning question that will shape the economic and geopolitical landscape over the next several decades. The choice is straightforward: stand up and be counted, or sit back and be counted out.