

The War on Terrorism and the American 'Empire' after the Cold War

Edited by Alejandro Colás and Richard Saull



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The American-led 'war on terror' has arguably brought about the most significant shift in the contours of the international system since the end of the Cold War. A new 'imperial moment' is discernible in US foreign policy in the wake of the neoconservative rise to power in the USA, marked by the development of a fresh strategic doctrine based on the legitimacy of preventative military strikes on hostile forces across any part of the globe.

The contributions in *The War on Terror and the American 'Empire' After the Cold War* analyse the historical, socio-economic and political dimensions of the current international conjuncture, and assess the degree to which the 'war on terror' has transformed the nature and projection of US global power. Drawing on a range of critical social theories, this collection seeks to ground historically the analysis of global developments since the inception of the new Bush Presidency and weigh up the political consequences of this imperial turn.

The War on Terror and the American Empire After the Cold War is essential reading for students and academics with research interests in US History and Politics and Global Politics.

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Contents

<i>Notes on contributors</i>	vi
<i>Preface and acknowledgements</i>	ix
Introduction: the war on terror and the American empire after the Cold War	1
ALEJANDRO COLÁS AND RICHARD SAULL	
1 The unique American empire	24
LEO PANITCH AND SAM GINDIN	
2 The logic of American power in the international capitalist order	44
SIMON BROMLEY	
3 Reactionary blowback: the uneven ends of the Cold War and the origins of contemporary conflict in world politics	65
RICHARD SAULL	
4 The intellectual antecedents of the Bush regime	91
BEN O'LOUGHLIN	
5 The imperial republic revisited: the United States in the era of Bush	114
MICHAEL COX	
6 The Bush turn and the drive for primacy	131
PETER GOWAN	

7 The war on terrorism and American empire: emerging development agendas	155
SUSANNE SOEDERBERG	
8 Scenarios of power	180
JAN NEDERVEEN PIETERSE	
<i>Index</i>	194

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Preface and acknowledgements

This book brings together a collection of essays by scholars who have engaged critically – some for several decades, others only recently – with the nature of US global power, both past and present. Early versions of most chapters were presented at a special workshop on the ‘War on Terrorism and the American Empire after the Cold War’ held at the University of London in September 2003, and organised by the British International Studies Association (BISA) Working Group on Marxism and International Relations. We gratefully acknowledge the support provided by the ESRC under its ‘New Security Challenges’ programme (grant no. RES-223–26–2001) and Gary Williams in particular, which made the workshop possible.

Given the topicality of the book’s theme, many of the papers delivered at the workshop were work in progress at the time; others formed part of material that had already seen publication. Either way, we are very grateful to all the authors for the work dedicated to writing, rewriting or revising their contributions and to the following publishers for permission to include here material which has previously appeared elsewhere: ‘The socialist Register’ and Merlin Press for the chapter by Leo Panitch and Sam Gindin, *Third World Quarterly* for Susanne Soederberg’s chapter and *Historical Materialism* for the chapter by Simon Bromley.

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Introduction

The war on terror and the American empire after the Cold War¹

Alejandro Colás and Richard Saull

In recent years, and particularly since the terrorist attacks on the United States (US) in September 2001, scholars and commentators across the ideological spectrum have revived the idea of empire to understand the nature of contemporary American global power – and in some instances promote it. Indeed, until the controversial election of George W. Bush to the US presidency in November 2000, the analytical use of ‘empire’ (and its cognates ‘imperialism’ and ‘imperium’) had been, in the main, effectively marginalised to radical and Marxist accounts of US global power.² During the 1990s the theoretical literature of International Relations (IR) and other related fields was dominated by debates over globalisation and the degree to which this process was heralding the ‘retreat of the state’. The end of the Cold War, so many argued, had opened up the possibility of new world order built on the harmonious triangulation of liberal democracy, economic liberalisation and the respect of human rights. Accordingly, those episodes which punctured this virtuous cycle – from Saddam Hussein’s invasion of Kuwait in August 1990 to the human rights abuses inflicted upon the Albanian Kosovars in 1999 – elicited various US-led collective military responses by the ‘international community’ aimed at upholding human rights, shoring up political sovereignty in ‘failed’ states and undermining that of ‘rogue’ states. Aside from a few lonely murmurings in the West (and perhaps more numerous, but muffled voices elsewhere) these experiments in humanitarian intervention, state-building and policing of wayward states were rarely associated to an American empire or labelled as imperialist. George W. Bush’s arrival at the White House, the atrocities of 9/11 and the war on terror which ensued reversed that trend with some vengeance, and it is the aim of this book to explore the historical and analytical value of the linkage between terrorism, war and empire implicit in such a reversal.

Like most other contributions to the volume, we do not assume in this introduction that the connections between the war on terrorism, American empire and the end of the Cold War are self-evident. In fact, the conjunction of these three phenomena already begs knotty questions about the periodisation of US imperialism, the Cold War and their causal link to the war on terror. Plainly, the USA did not suddenly become an empire – however defined – on 12 September 2001. Empires don’t just emerge through the contingency of electoral contests,

changes in government or acts of terrorism. Empires, understood as hierarchical and exploitative forms of rule over diverse territories and peoples from and for a metropolitan centre, involve enduring structures of domination buttressed by historically specific modes of social reproduction; they are not simply forms of government, nor do they appear and reappear with shifts in foreign policy.

The use of the term ‘empire’ to describe the global power of the USA over recent years, then, must first rest on a historically rooted, substantial and structural account of US power. All the contributions to this volume start from the premise that, if we are to speak of an American empire today, we must first unearth the historical sources and genealogy of such imperialism.³ Readers will note significant differences in the periodisation of this experience and over the emphasis awarded to different ‘moments’ in the history and present of US imperialism – and the contingencies and opportunities these carry with them. But the eminently historical tension between continuity and change – in this context within the USA’s global power projection – is a constant in each of the contributions of the volume, including this introduction. Some of the historical questions which the contributions therefore aim to address include: what role did the Cold War play in shaping an American empire? Has the nature of such an empire been affected by the end of the Cold War? Is it useful to compare the current conjuncture of the ‘war on terror’ with the origins of the Cold War?

Historical periodisation is of course not an innocent chronological or narrative exercise: it complements, strengthens and legitimises particular interpretations and conceptions of power. A second overarching concern of the essays collected in this volume is therefore the peculiar nature of US global power in a post-colonial world, and whether it makes sense to speak of an American empire after 1945. For the US affirmed its socio-economic and geopolitical primacy after 1945 in a world where the formal territorial empires were, to coin a phrase, at bay.⁴ Contrary to previous empires, US global hegemony after World War II was premised not on the relentless expansion of its territorial frontiers and the deprivation of political sovereignty for subject peoples, but on the proliferation of competing centres of political authority and the promotion of formal territorial sovereignty for peoples previously subject to European, Japanese and indeed US imperialism. To use two catchphrases of American historiography, US post-war hegemony thrived in a world of open doors (capitalist markets) and closed frontiers (territorially sovereign states).

Regardless of their specific understanding of US global power, the essays which follow start from the premise enunciated in Simon Bromley’s contribution: ‘[the US] is an empire fully attuned to a post-colonial world’. Given that most, though certainly not all, of the authors in this volume work within the Marxist tradition of social analysis, there is a tacit agreement that the capitalist nature of the US social formation – and the structural separation between politics and economics, state and market which this implies – is critical in explaining American foreign relations. Accordingly, there is no dispute over the productive tension in US external relations between coercion and consent as mechanisms of global power projection: the issue is which end of the equation is preponderant.

Some contributions, like those by Peter Gowan, Jan Nederveen Pieterse and Michael Cox, emphasise the continuity in the coercive forms of US imperialism (both ‘internal’ and ‘external’) from the first European settlement on American lands, via the 1823 Monroe Declaration and its assumption of a manifest destiny, right through to the present experiments in forcible regime change. Susanne Soederberg’s chapter, though not explicitly concerned with historical breaks or continuities, also highlights the coercive mechanisms deployed by US in its external relations – this time through its overseas development assistance. Others, like Simon Bromley, Leo Panitch and Sam Gindin, underline how the very specific historical ruptures created first by World War II and thereafter by the end of Cold War opened up the possibility of deploying more peaceful, multilateral and seemingly consensual mechanisms in the promotion of US global hegemony. Richard Saull’s chapter adds a further dimension to this debate by factoring in the very violent political struggles of the Cold War – particularly outside the North Atlantic theatres – and their legacy in contemporary international relations.

Those closer to the first understanding of the history of US foreign relations underscore the persistence of directly coercive, militarised interventions across the world by American forces and their proxies. To that extent, they argue that formal or informal US foreign policy has been imperialist since at least the nineteenth century by virtue of its violent imposition of American interests and values on those populations unwilling to peacefully and consensually accept such a ‘benevolent hegemony’. Whilst rejecting the classical Leninist conception of imperialism as a militarised inter-capitalist rivalry, these authors tend to see American global power projection as a form of ‘super-imperialism’ where a single superpower imposes its ‘primacy’ upon subordinate states through a multilateral but ultimately coercive ‘hub-and-spokes’ system centred in Washington, DC.

On the opposite end of the spectrum are those of us who, whilst not wishing to underplay the bloody history of US foreign policy, nor indeed its willingness to coerce and subordinate allied states, insist on Washington’s preference for reproducing its post-war global primacy through consensual, multilateral and peaceful means where possible, only deploying its military, geo-strategic might when necessary. This perspective, closer to the ‘ultra-imperialist’ thesis developed by Karl Kautsky, suggests that the USA acts more as a hegemon and coordinator of global capitalist interests, and does so, as Susanne Soederberg demonstrates in her chapter, through market mechanisms and institutions which rely heavily on the aid and collaboration of local elites. The essays that follow therefore engage with – and sometimes go beyond – some of the historical–conceptual debates over the nature of capitalist imperialism, its manifestation after World War II and the usefulness of different, chiefly Marxist conceptions of imperialism in analysing contemporary US power.⁵

Underlying these seemingly academic distinctions between coercion and consent, or empire and hegemony is a third major theme of this book, namely the importance of ideological frameworks, political contestation and historical

contingency, at both domestic and international levels, in analysing the relationship between an American empire and the war on terrorism after the Cold War. This is so in a number of ways. First, it seems to us clear that without the 9/11 attacks, the war on terrorism and the subsequent invasion and occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq by US forces (the most obvious contemporary instances of American imperialism) would not have occurred. It is equally clear that George W. Bush's pyrrhic election victory in 2000 opened the White House gates to a neoconservative clique of 'democratic imperialists' who seized the attacks of 9/11 as an opportunity to activate an especially aggressive, ideologically driven foreign policy which, as Ben O'Loughlin shows in his survey, has a long pedigree in American intellectual history and had been a long time in preparation. The contingent, almost accidental combination of both these events should not blind us to the structural framework in which they unfolded: contingency always assumes, indeed is arguably constituted by structures, in this instance, the long-term historical structures and institutions of US global power, and the accompanying ideological forms expressed, for instance, in the neoconservative Project for the New American Century. In a fashion directly comparable to Truman's construction of a national security state in the aftermath of World War II (culminating with the 'loss of China' and NSC-68), President Bush was able to turn the crisis of 9/11 into an opportunity to secure the endorsement of the American public for a new kind of national security strategy encapsulated in the slogan 'the war on terror'.⁶ The existence of a readily available strategy formulated by a highly experienced and influential cohort of advisers (the so-called 'Vulcans', after the town in West Virginia where Bush's inner circle gathered) was instrumental in this mobilisation, as Gowan, O'Loughlin and Pieterse document in their chapters. These two key historical moments associated with the reinvigoration of US imperialism were certainly built on long-standing ideological and institutional foundations of American state and society, but they required skilful political manoeuvring by what O'Loughlin (with reference to John Kingdom⁷) calls 'political entrepreneurs': they involved the nationalist mobilisation of the US public by various organs of the state and civil society, and an accompanying politicisation of fear through the ideological construction of a homogenous *Feindbild* in the form of 'Reds' and 'terrorists' respectively. Although it is clear that key personalities and currents within the American ruling class during the two key conjunctures of 1945–9 and 2000–1 were committed to globally asserting American power, what was ultimately required was a *casus belli* for such policies, and in neither of the historical moments was this *casus belli* inevitable.

Second, and following on from this, it is worth emphasising that as a liberal democracy, the US's reaction to the terrorist attacks of 9/11 was, as in the origins of the Cold War, heavily conditioned by domestic political forces and dynamics. Islamist attacks on the US mainland had been expected by the security and intelligence services, and once they came, the US, like all other states under the circumstances, had a right (and its administration an obligation) to self-defence. But proclaiming a war on terrorism and quickly resorting to mili-

tary action were not inevitable outcomes of the attacks themselves, as many in the US pointed out from the outset. The naturalisation of the war on terror as *the* only possible response to 9/11 was an initial achievement of the Bush administration and its allies in Congress, the mainstream media and civil society. However, the conflation of the war on terror with the illegal invasion and illegitimate occupation of Iraq and the absence of any palpable anti-terrorist ‘victories’ have taken much of the gloss off this campaign, not least among important sectors of the US foreign policy establishment.⁸ As in the immediate past – most notably during the Vietnam War – political contestation, protest and resistance, both within and outside the USA, plays a significant role in shaping American foreign policy.

Although it would take a mass-based, international political counter-force to undermine US imperial grand strategy – something absent since the demise of historical communism – it is in our view necessary to monitor tactical changes in US foreign policy resulting from the global resistance to the Bush doctrine, if only to construct more powerful counter-strategies to an undemocratic US foreign policy. The final set of questions the volume aims to engage with therefore concern the more contingent aspects of the relationship between the war on terror and American empire after the Cold War: how powerful has the so-called ‘neocon revolution’ been in shifting the parameters of US foreign policy? Have the events of 9/11 generated a break with US Cold War grand strategy? What are the chances of success for the ‘war on terror’? What are the prospects for a renewed anti-imperialism?

The remainder of this introduction offers an overview of the arguments about the war on terror and American empire after the Cold War made in the rest of the book. We have organised the survey along the three broad lines of inquiry identified above – the imperialist nature of US global power, the impact of the Cold War and its aftermath on this experience and the role of historical contingency and political contestation in the projection of American empire, past and present. We aim to highlight both the coincidences and differences between the contributors with regard to these three themes, thereby hopefully reflecting the richness and complexity of the arguments developed in the rest of the volume. Inevitably, however, we also introduce our own standpoint on these debates, and will seek to flesh out some of the points made above in greater historical and analytical detail.

What kind of empire is the US?

Unlike previous empires, the US neither controls nor directly administers foreign territories and peoples for its own benefit. The US plainly visited its own imperial violence upon native Americans, Cubans, Filipinos, Nicaraguans among others prior to World War II, and after 1945 displayed an extensive record of foreign military interventions (through overt or covert means) in support of allied states and the social forces they represented. Indeed, from Korea through to Afghanistan, with Vietnam and Central America in between, Washington has

consistently sided with anti-democratic and reactionary political forces across the world. But its geopolitical aim during this period has been to ‘liberate’, not permanently occupy foreign territories. As Panitch and Gindin point out in this volume, the post-war US empire is ‘[c]haracterised by the penetration of borders, not their dissolution’. This preference for global domination *through* rather than *over* states and peoples is, as will be shortly pointed out, historically unique. It has, furthermore, significant implications for both the understanding of the Cold War as a formative component of US global power and for democratic strategies against American empire.

Empires come in different shapes and sizes, and with such diverse socio-economic and political characteristics that any generic definition is bound to be problematic. For the purposes of this book, however, empires can be usefully distinguished from other forms of rule – city leagues, tribal federations or sovereign states – in their particular organisation of political space. They can also be internally differentiated according to their dominant mode of social reproduction – tributary, mercantile, capitalist. Empires have historically ruled over diverse populations and territories from a metropolitan centre which accrues power and wealth by exploiting an imperial periphery. Empires tend to organise their political space in a heteronomous fashion with centrifugal structures (e.g. revenue collection, military command, the law) competing with centripetal pressures (administrative efficiency, cultural traditions and fresh conquests) to produce variegated and overlapping institutions built around indefinite and shifting boundaries.

A good example is the Roman empire at the start of the Common Era: Augustus famously declared the empire to have reached its territorial limits, yet the imperial frontiers of ICE Rome (certainly in the east and south) were neither fixed nor exclusive in the way that they are in the modern states-system. Recent Roman scholarship indicates that the lines of forts, garrisons and walls surrounding the empire are better conceived as zones of interaction rather than as fixed ‘[l]egal borders between Roman and non-Roman territory’.⁹ These studies cite the primitive character of Roman cartography, the fact that tributary arrangements were made with client-kings not kingdoms and, crucially, that such territorial delimitations as did exist were within the provinces of empire, detached from any defensive lines usually associated to *limes*. Insofar as the Roman empire ‘conquered peoples not land’,¹⁰ its organisation of political space was consonant with the reproductory logic of an essentially tributary empire: one based on a militarised slave economy and a legal-cultural superstructure built around a mixed constitution, a uniquely Roman legal system and a ‘Roman identity’ which, through the everyday sacralisation of political authority, allowed for the construction of an empire of the Roman People (*Populus Romanus*).

Something very similar was true of British empire – the other great reference point in the history of Western imperialism – until the late nineteenth century. Capitalist England had exported agrarian capitalism via colonial settlement to Ireland from the sixteenth century, and subsequently to North America, Southern Africa and Australasia. Prior to the capitalist industrialisation of the

metropole, agrarian capitalism co-existed abroad with plantation slavery and long-distance trade as the principal mechanisms of wealth-creation. To this extent, the ‘first’ British empire of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was principally a mercantile empire built on the Royal Navy’s supremacy over the high seas and its strategic control of the world’s major straits. It certainly exercised control over significant territories, but this was done through indirect rule, unequal treaties and various degrees of self-government for the white settler colonies. Even in its most prized of imperial possessions, the British Raj famously survived by employing a mere 50,000 (mainly Indian) troops and 950 European officials in the policing and administration of this vast territory, right to the end of the nineteenth century.¹¹ Thus, like its ancient Roman predecessor, the British colonial empire was initially built on imprecise boundaries and diverse internal administrative arrangements, this time secured not through land-based legionary and auxiliary forces, but through naval supremacy.

It was with the consolidation of industrial capitalism in metropolitan Europe and its uneven reproduction across the globe that the ‘emptiable’ metric space of the modern, territorially bounded sovereign state emerged as the dominant spatial organisation of political authority.¹² The ‘new’ imperialism of the late nineteenth century witnessed the attempt by imperial powers to close their ‘turbulent’ colonial frontiers and encouraged a turn towards direct, territorial administration of subject populations.¹³ This was the result of a dynamic combination of three historical forces: the increased mobility of factors of production (most notably ‘free’ commodified labour); the ‘horizontal’ geopolitical rivalry for labour and natural resources among capitalist states; and the rise of a mass politics which identified the modern state as the repository of national self-determination and socio-economic emancipation. British and other European imperialists were in the event unsuccessful in fully reproducing the modern sovereign state across their colonial periphery (partly through lack of resources, chiefly as a result of anti-colonial resistance), but they certainly set the socio-political conditions for the post-war struggles for national liberation and the accompanying replacement of empire by nation-states. In this respect, the British imperial experience might best be seen as a long transitional moment between the pre-modern, heteronomous tributary forms of imperial rule and the properly capitalist projection of global power through the authority of a pluri-verse of territorial states.

Comparison to these two influential Western imperial experiences underlines the specificity of American empire. For the USA emerged as the dominant global power in the course of World War II into a world of closed frontiers. Its main task thereafter was to continue opening doors to capitalist markets. Wherever either of these two requirements of capitalist hegemony – closed frontiers and open doors – was threatened; whenever state sovereignty of an allied state was imperilled or democratic social forces challenged the extension of capitalist markets, there and then Washington projected its coercive global power in an attempt to shore up state authority and capitalist social relations. The USA had – and arguably continues to have – various resources in the pursuit of such

aims: as the largest capitalist economy, it had the compulsion of the market on its side; as the leading capitalist state, it enjoyed the authority to coordinate other capitalist states; as a liberal democracy it could elicit the socio-political and cultural consent of its own and other populations; and as a military and nuclear superpower it was able to deploy unsurpassed lethal force by land, air, sea and eventually space. The question is whether any of these resources prevailed over others.

Simon Bromley offers a response to this question built around the distinction between distributive (nakedly coercive) and collective (or cooperative) power. He argues that, in a post-colonial world of discrete territorial jurisdictions, the US has an interest in acting as a global coordinator of capitalist states and economies, chiefly through mechanisms and institutions that favour collective power. On this account, the deployment of American military might ‘can only be effectively parlayed into a stable and durable *political* leadership when it advanced the coordinated interests of an expanding yet still imperial, liberal capitalist order’. Focusing on the post-Cold War conjuncture, Bromley suggests that, ‘Economically speaking, the US has no option but to follow the logic of Kautsky rather than Lenin. Inter-imperialist rivalry is a negative-sum game, a default position of last resort in the economics of the capitalist world.’ This being the case, the doctrine of pre-emption inaugurated by George W. Bush’s first administration is, for Bromley, a risky and misguided grand strategy for US and indeed other capitalist interests. The deployment of distributive, militarised power in Afghanistan and Iraq will only be effective if it results in an eventual return to a world of peaceful cooperation:

[These interventions represent] an attempt to impose a new dispensation of power, such that the resulting states and economies can be successfully coordinated with rest of the capitalist world, rather than a prize to be won by United States at the expense of rival core imperialisms. It is imperialism but it is not, primarily, inter-imperialist rivalry.

Panitch and Gindin also underline the particularity of a post-war American empire built on the multiplication of formal sovereignty. They offer a rich and concise summary of US state-formation and expansion, emphasising the need for a political economy as well as a history of imperialism, but equally insisting that ‘we cannot understand imperialism today in terms of economic crises giving rise to inter-imperial rivalry ... The term “rivalry” inflates economic competition between states far beyond what it signifies in the real world.’ Instead, Panitch and Gindin argue that the key innovation of post-war American imperialism

[w]as that the densest imperial networks and institutional linkages, which had earlier run north–south between imperial states and their formal or informal colonies, now came to run between the US and other rich capitalist states. What Britain had been unable to do in the late nineteenth century

now was accomplished by the US, integrating all the other capitalist powers into an effective system of coordination under its aegis.

Once again, this is an understanding of ‘empire’ as a world-wide coordination of capitalist interests, through state authority and corresponding multilateral authorities.

For the American imperial state ... the internationalization of the state had a special quality. It entailed defining the American national interest in terms of acting not only on behalf of its own capitalist class but also on behalf of the extension and reproduction of global capitalism.

Like Bromley, Panitch and Gindin see the current strategy of forcible ‘regime change’ as an opportunistic and misguided imperialist adventure which undermines the structural reproduction of post-war US global power:

The trouble for the American empire as it inclines in this strategic direction is that very few of the world’s states today, given their social forces and economic and political structures, are going to be able to be reconstructed along the lines of post-war Japan and Germany.

Moreover, the permanent state of global emergency fostered by the current US administration is not one favoured by its key allies. For Panitch and Gindin, the transatlantic tensions over the war on Iraq

[p]ertain very little to economic rivalries ... The tensions pertain rather more to an inclination on the part of [European] states themselves ... to prefer the use of international financial institutions and the WTO to try to fashion the effective states global capitalism needs.

In his contribution, Peter Gowan eschews notions of empire or imperialism in favour of the term ‘primacy’: that is, ‘[a]n activist policy of US global management of world politics: something like an American global government’. Building on distinctions offered by Posen and Ross,¹⁴ Gowan argues that primacy has trumped other options (isolationism, collective engagement and cooperative security) as the principal driver of US grand strategy after the Cold War. On this account, ‘Primacy ... means that the US takes on responsibility for a *community of states* above all for the main core capitalist states, the chief problem zone that primacy is there to address.’ For Gowan, it is this enduring concept of US grand strategy that best illuminates the ‘Bush turn’ in US foreign policy. The aggressive militarism of the ‘Bush turn’ is on this reading not about ‘combating the threat from al-Qaeda or the Taliban or combating “terrorism” or overthrowing the Ba’athist regime in Iraq’ but rather about ‘domestic challenges and the structure of America’s political relations with other main mature and emergent centres of capitalism. Bush’s tactical targets are instruments for

reshaping its relations with other, core power centres.' This strategy for primacy, then, is not one invented, but rather one implemented by the 'Bush turn': the latter represents a tactical, rather than a strategic shift in US global power projection.

Making a powerful case for the strategic continuity in post-Cold War (and indeed post-war) US foreign policy, Gowan suggests that

American primacy ... has not been secured since the collapse of the Soviet bloc. Instead the world has been in a transitional period. The task of the Bush administration was to reconfigure international politics and orientate the United States on a new path to bring that transition to an end.

In order to implement such a reconfiguration, Bush Jr had to succeed where the two Clinton administrations had failed, namely 'find[ing] a way of generating a domestic politics for primacy'. For Gowan, it was the events of 9/11 which 'precisely gave the Bush administration the opening to develop just such a domestic politics for an activist global military-political drive by the American state of equivalent force to that provided earlier by anti-communism'. This last statement does raise the vexed issue of the causal links between 9/11 and US primacy. It would appear from Gowan's argument that Washington could only activate its drive for primacy through the galvanising power of the 9/11 attacks. Yet this then begs the question of why such a powerful state is unable to exercise its grand strategy without provocation; why, in other words, such a historically proactive, 'forward-leaning' superpower would display the reactive behaviour of a slumbering giant at this 'unipolar moment'.

There is, predictably, no straightforward response to this question of causality, but one possibility is that advocated by Michael Cox (and indeed by Panitch and Gindin), namely that the USA is an 'empire in denial'. What if Americans, and in particular their ruling classes, feel insecure in taking up the imperial responsibility they have manifestly inherited from previous empires? Is it perhaps this very ideological reluctance and institutional incapacity to embrace their role as guarantors of world order and prosperity that leads the US imperial eagle to constantly waver between perching on its own nest or preying on the international landscape? Cox offers a lively account of different stages and strands in American thinking on its role in the world, suggesting that there is considerable mileage in using the concept of 'empire' when analysing contemporary US foreign relations, not least because it undermines claims about the 'exceptionalism' of US global power vis-à-vis other historical empires.

Paraphrasing Michael Ignatieff, Cox asks rhetorically,

what word other than 'empire' better describes this extensive system that was the American international order with its host of dependent allies, its vast intelligence networks, its five global military commands, its more than

one million men and women at arms on five continents, its carrier battle groups on watch in every ocean, and its 30 per cent control of the world's economic product?

Yet particularity is not the same as exceptionalism. Cox, like other contributors to this volume, recognises the peculiarities of US empire: aside from its non-territorial character and its reliance on pliant allies,

perhaps the most unique aspect of the American system of imperial power is that few Americans actually feel that they have been involved in the past or might be involved now in the messy business of building an Empire. And this has serious consequences. Most obviously, it means that US actions (such as those in Iraq) have always got to be sold in the most politically acceptable of ways, thus laying it open to the constant charge of hypocrisy and double standards. It also means it is difficult to build a strong domestic platform for continued exertions abroad. Thus when things begin to go wrong – as they invariably do for any empire – great pressure immediately arises at home to cut and run; to look in other words for an exit strategy.

The interrogation which emerges from these discussions, then, is not so much whether America is an empire, but what kind of empire is the US? We assume in the rest of this introduction (as do most contributors in the rest of the book) that its global supremacy in most regions and across most arenas of world politics (military, diplomatic, economic and cultural) make the USA an empire in the generic sense of commanding power beyond its territorial boundaries. However, we also suggest here – as do others in the rest of the book – that the specificity of post-war US global power projection is sufficiently far removed from its historical predecessors to warrant a different terminology – hegemony, primacy, hyperpower – when analysing contemporary American power. This is not to ignore or dilute the classically imperialist elements of US foreign relations today, but rather to analyse the prevailing forms of US global power projection in order to contest them more effectively. It is furthermore, to insist on the specific limits and vulnerabilities of an empire built on the mediation of sovereign states and their attendant social forces. For as we argue in the closing paragraphs of this introduction, the nature and extent of American imperialism ceases to be a purely academic question once it is associated to a politics of anti-imperialism: how US power is conceived plainly affects strategies for combating the undemocratic aspects of that power.

Among the contemporary left, anti-imperialism tends to be associated to any form of resistance to US power, and this in turn is premised on the view of the US as an empire in the historical sense of a hierarchical domination over the known universe by a metropolitan centre. Yet if we replace this conception of empire for one which emphasises the heavily mediated and capitalist nature of US primacy, then US foreign policy ceases to be the only or indeed the chief target of anti-imperialism, and instead other powerful states and their local

ruling classes become the focus of democratic struggles for a more just and equal world.

American empire, the Cold War and its end

Although the US emerged as a global power through its colonial conquests in 1898 and subsequent intervention in World War I, it was the collapse of formal empire, as we have seen, that paved the way for the structures, institutions and relations of a post-war informal American empire. However, no sooner were US wartime planners designing a new capitalist international order than a fresh challenge to this newly ‘embedded’ liberal hegemony was taking shape in the form of the twin forces of Soviet geopolitical power and international communism. This geopolitical and socio-economic contestation was institutionalised in the Cold War, which had momentous implications for the nature of American empire in at least three ways.

First, the communist threat – and its manipulation and exaggeration by the US political elite – was crucial in articulating a peculiar form of US post-war leadership premised on the coordination of allied capitalist states explored above – particularly those of the northwest Atlantic – through multilateral agencies and international organisations.¹⁵ The degree to which post-war US foreign policy rested upon the manipulation of an external (Soviet-communist) threat is arguable. What is less so is the idea that the existence of the USSR and the *form* of its external power and expansion were objectively perceived as a threat by the major capitalist powers, especially in Western Europe. As such, the Soviet bloc was a key external source for encouraging political and economic cooperation amongst the major capitalist states under US political hegemony and military protection.¹⁶ The US-led economic reconstruction of Western Europe and its corresponding promotion of the emerging post-war Social and Christian-democratic social contract between capital and labour further contributed to the widespread political legitimacy of the American ‘protectorate’ over Western Europe after 1945. In contrast to this, the openly coercive, political-military institutionalisation of Soviet-communist power in east-central Europe appeared to be much closer to the classical idea of empire as a hierarchical domination by a foreign metropole than did the American hegemony over the capitalist world. The price of such an ‘empire by invitation’, however, was the ever-present possibility of social forces *within* these states withdrawing the invitation, or at least making their American guests unwelcome.

A second feature of post-war US hegemony conditioned by the Cold War was the existence of an international alternative to capitalism and liberal forces in the shape of communist and other revolutionary forces. For the pronounced mediation of American empire through sovereign states and capitalist markets left open the possibility of a democratic substantiation of sovereignty and the concomitant subversion of capitalist social relations. Indeed, the Cold War itself might be read as a product of this weak link in post-war American empire, as communist and revolutionary movements seized state power and attempted to

construct forms of political sovereignty modelled on the USSR, which effectively sealed off these states from American political and economic hegemony.

The Cold War limits on the penetration of American capitalist power within the domestic affairs of allied states were also evident in a third and more general sense. The war itself had promoted national and class victories associated with subaltern forces, that were to a significant degree antagonistic towards the power of international capital.¹⁷ The post-war (advanced) capitalist state institutionalised significant limits on the power of capital and international capital in particular, through the creation of a welfare state, relatively high (and progressive) levels of taxation, and a significant state-collectivist presence within the economic sphere. Outside Europe, many states which fell under the Cold War aegis of the USA (e.g. South Korea, Taiwan, Indonesia, Turkey, Japan) also initially followed *étatist* models of capital accumulation based upon local industrialisation, protectionism and a prevalence of state regulation over market-directed investment. To be sure, Washington also developed a complex matrix of military agreements to ensure political influence among its allies: it established base rights and other military relationships through mutual defence treaties and formal alliances in the key Cold War theatres, thus establishing itself as the most important external influence on these states.¹⁸ But US military hegemony was also mediated in two important ways: its leadership was deemed to be legitimate only insofar as military power was deployed through multilateral institutions and exercised in cooperation with its allies; and it was conditional upon the US successfully protecting the domestic political autonomy of its allies across the world. As Panitch and Gindin indicate, '[a]ctive mass consent to even informal imperial rule was always mediated by the legitimacy that each state integrated within the American imperium could retain for itself and muster for any particular American state project'.

These dispensations of social power, however, were not to last beyond the 'long boom' of the 1960s. In the course of the 1970s the Cold War witnessed a transition in the nature of American global power and, consequently, the *socio-economic* constitution of American empire from one based on a class compromise between capital and labour and an economy organised around Fordist mass production, to one organised around the social disciplining of the working class and the strategic ascendancy of finance capital as the primary source of capital accumulation. As the essays by Gowan, Panitch and Gindin and Bromley suggest, the sources of this transformation were economic and political, each reflecting distinct contradictions in the constitution of American empire.

Economically, the consequences of allowing state-led projects of capital accumulation to prosper after the war (to a significant degree funded by US capital exports) raised the spectre of autonomous regions of capital accumulation emerging, especially within East Asia and Western Europe, with significant risks for US economic primacy. Such powerful centres of accumulation could threaten to either limit global capital flows to the US and/or suck capital out of the US into Western Europe, thereby endangering the long-term health of the American economy and the social interests of the dominant classes within it.

The private outflow of US dollars centred on the Eurodollar market, combined with the export-based accumulation of dollar surpluses in France, Germany and Japan, rendered US economic leadership highly vulnerable. Simply put, after 1971, the post-war political-economic arrangements which had sustained US hegemony through economic largesse no longer served the socio-economic interests of the American ruling class. Thus, as Simon Bromley's essay highlights, the *political* success of the fashioning of the American empire during the Cold War (and after) rested on the contradiction of 'undermining the *economic* dominance of the US in the world economy'.

The conjuncture of the 1970s was also significant in the constitution of American empire because US economic vulnerabilities were compounded by political contestation at home and geopolitical challenges abroad, evident in the victory of communist forces in South-East Asia and much greater Soviet involvement in the periphery (culminating in the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan in December 1979). The 1970s witnessed a global recession, the breakdown of the post-war contract between capital and labour, and consequently the prospect of democratic challenges to the American empire in its metropolitan zones. Then as now, the American empire was subject to two political limits qualitatively distinct from previous imperial experiences. First, the mobilisation of a mass anti-war movement during the 1970s helped to curtail the executive's power to deploy US military forces overseas, thereby subjecting the so-called 'imperial presidency' to some kind of legislative oversight at home, chiefly through the 1973 War Powers resolution and the 1976 Clark Amendment. Second, on an international plane, military setbacks, epitomised by the Vietnamese experience, demonstrated the potential power of revolutionary nationalist forces in realising their political objectives (with critical Chinese and Soviet assistance) in the face of American imperialist opposition. On top of this a new wave of social revolution – which the USSR sought to take advantage of – swept across the Middle East, Southern Africa, South-East Asia and Latin America (what Carter's national security adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski, termed 'an arc of crisis'). In sum, the American empire was put on the defensive as the international and domestic sources of its power and legitimacy came under combined pressure, to an extent not witnessed before or since.

The 1970s did not see the defeat of American empire or the advent of imperial decline as some predicted. Political struggles within the US instead witnessed the emergence of a new social coalition which provided the basis for a reconstruction of the political and economic pillars of American empire domestically and internationally. The election of Ronald Reagan in 1980 accelerated the shift away from tolerating Soviet and revolutionary advances, already evident under Carter. Consequently, Reagan embarked on an economic programme – neoliberalism and structural adjustment – to rebuild US economic ascendancy over the capitalist world and construct a new social coalition for American empire from the ruins of a collapsed anti-communist social contract. The Reagan administration sought to reconstruct an American-centred international capitalist system for the benefit of the US elite (and its allied social groups

mobilised in place of old labour), and in doing so undermined the national economic autonomy of other capitalist states – North and South – which the Bretton Woods system had helped preserve. The changes were seen in the neoliberal ‘financial deepening’ of the world market through the deregulation of exchange rates set off in the 1970s, and the subsequent dismantling of capital controls, which allowed the US to confound orthodox economic wisdom in the 1980s – as now – by cutting taxes whilst borrowing and spending at the same time. Whereas the post-war American empire had rested on US economic largesse and capital exports, since the 1970s its economic health and political-military strength have rested on sucking in foreign capital and promoting the internationalisation of what Peter Gowan has in a different context labelled the ‘Dollar-Wall Street Regime’, by pressuring other capitalist states to open up their capital and current accounts.

Politically, the US turned the defeats inflicted by the ‘arc of crisis’ into sources of geopolitical pressure on its revolutionary and Soviet foes. Rather than defending allied regimes, as it had done in earlier phases of the Cold War, the US went on the offensive to overturn Soviet-revolutionary victories in the Third World. However, Soviet military advances, together with a Congress and a public suspicious of a new imperial presidency prevented the Reaganite ‘roll-back’ from repeating the pattern of strategic competition that had characterised the post-war American empire, reflected in the commitment of US troops in combat operations against communist and revolutionary forces. Instead, the Reagan administrations countered Soviet military advances by triggering a new arms race and, as Richard Saull’s chapter argues, by sponsoring, funding, equipping, training and offering diplomatic cover (mainly illegally, outside of Congressional supervision) to an assortment of right-wing and reactionary social and political forces, many of whom were skilled practitioners in the art of terrorism.

The significance of Reagan’s licensing of anti-Soviet and counter-revolutionary terrorism obviously highlights a very different understanding of the Cold War’s end than the 1990s triumphalism associated with the victory and spread of liberal democracy and capitalist markets. As Saull’s chapter indicates, the end of the Cold War had paradoxical consequences for the American empire, particularly in the Middle East and central Asia. Whilst in Europe the Cold War ended with

the overthrow of militarised-authoritarian states by ‘popular revolution’ carried through by a re-emergent liberal civil society [...] in parts of the Middle-East, South-East Asia, North Africa and Central Asia, the ends of Cold War were violent and bloody, reflecting not the pull of successful and stable liberal capitalist democracies, but rather the violent defeat of the radical left spearheaded by highly *illiberal* social and political forces.

On the one hand, then, the end of the Cold War witnessed the socio-economic and political expansion of American empire into the former Soviet bloc, whilst on the other hand, the problems of integrating and absorbing

unstable regions of the world – the Middle East and central Asia in particular – into the structures, institutions and social relations of American empire were made that much harder through the sponsoring of illiberal political movements committed to a form of sovereignty antagonistic to that associated with the American empire. Saull terms this ‘reactionary blowback’, but is careful to distinguish the causal agency associated with the emergence of a reactionary-Islamist anti-imperialism, by highlighting the role played by key US allies – Saudi Arabia and Pakistan – in promoting these political-ideological currents and movements in the latter part of the Cold War. These currents and movements, Saull insists, have outlived and indeed been reinvigorated by the end of the Cold War. In this respect, the conventional chronology of Cold War endings betrays a (geographical) Eurocentrism which has been blind to the continuing legacy of the Cold War outside Western Europe. The persistence of deep socio-economic and political antagonisms in the Cold War ‘arc of crisis’ (what Fred Halliday has recently re-labelled as the ‘greater west Asian crisis’¹⁹) lies, on this reading, at the heart of global Islamist resurgence.

It is with this chequered backdrop of Cold War endings, involving liberal triumphalism in the North and unresolved conflicts in the South, that US grand strategy was recast after 1991. As all the chapters in this book highlight in one way or another, the post-Cold War ‘unipolar moment’ was seen by successive administrations above all as an opportunity to secure US primacy in world politics. Conventional wisdom distinguishes the multilateral economic tools of ‘globalisation’ employed by the Clinton administrations in the pursuit of this goal from the unilateral, militarised power of the ‘war on terrorism’ deployed by George W. Bush. But the picture which emerges from the chapters that follow is one with different shades of grey rather than bright contrasts.²⁰ The Clinton years witnessed a succession of military interventions in the Balkans, Sudan, Iraq (and the willingness to deploy the US Pacific fleet across the Taiwan Strait should it be necessary). ‘It was the Clinton administration,’ Gowan reminds us, ‘which officially established the American goal of coercive regime change in Iraq, which constructed the concept of “rogue states” and used it to brand North Korea and Iran as well as Iraq as enemy states.’ Similarly, the fixation on George W. Bush’s allegedly novel doctrine of pre-emption has obscured the Clinton administration’s deep commitment to promoting US primacy through political-economic means.

Susanne Soederberg’s chapter refocuses our attention on the political economy of American empire by considering the Bush administration’s ‘new global development pact’ embodied in the 2002 Millennium Challenge Account (MCA) which ‘replace[s] existing loans to the poorest 79 countries with grants’. Making a direct connection to the National Security Strategy and the ‘war on terrorism’, Soederberg argues that the MCA represents a form of ‘pre-emptive development’ which empowers American-oriented political-ideological institutions to enforce neoliberal globalisation through neoconservative conceptions of democratic governance. Soederberg is careful to place this new turn in US official development assistance within a broader historical context marked by

continuity, suggesting that while the MCA signals a change in the *form* of delivering such assistance, the *content* of its substantive goals remains the same. By ‘withholding funds until all demands made by the donor country are met’, the MCA reverses the conventional sequence of making loans so that demands made by the donors *can* be met. But this shift in method hides a similarity in the goals pursued by previous administrations, namely the deepening of capitalist market relations and the strengthening of their accompanying institutions in the developing world through the ‘golden straightjacket’ of globalisation. Soederberg also insists that the reasons behind this change in form cannot be reduced to the ‘war on terrorism’. The MCA is certainly a reaction to the global security threats posed by the ‘non-integration gap’ of so-called ‘failed states’ (interestingly, Soederberg identifies how the legislation and discourse surrounding US ‘homeland security’ is internationalised through the MCA benchmarks on ‘ruling justly’). But it is also a response to two other structural limits to US primacy faced by all US administrations since Reagan: the lack of private capital flows to the global South and the persistence of the US’s budget and current account deficits, with a capital account surplus.

9/11, the war on terror and anti-imperialism

As in the case of the nature and development of US empire, the question of change and continuity in US foreign policy after the Cold War finds no univocal answer in this volume. Much the same is true of the third and final concern of this book, namely the place of the 9/11 attacks in explaining the current global conjuncture. Addressing this latter issue, Jan Nederveen Pieterse opens his contribution by asking whether the Bush administration’s turn to militarised unilateralism represents an opportunistic seizure of the ‘unipolar moment’ by ideological extremists in the White House and Department of Defense, or the culmination of an ‘imperial episode’ scripted over the last ten years in many other corridors of Washington, DC. Pieterse’s response is that it is both:

The two hypotheses, unipolar moment and imperial episode, may combine in that the Bush II administration views the present constellation ... as a unique window to secure American primacy for the coming decades or more. This is an imperial episode, then, in view of the long-term American *disposition* towards primacy, and an imperial moment in view of the recent perceived *capability* to implement this aim.

It would be fair to say that most other contributors in this book share such a view of the current conjuncture. As we have seen, they emphasise different aspects of change and continuity in US foreign policy, but they all agree that the election (and re-election) of George W. Bush and the 9/11 attacks have at the very least accentuated and facilitated the assertion of unilateral, militarist tendencies latent within the US polity. Pieterse’s chapter argues that the reorganisation of US foreign policy-making in favour of the Pentagon during the 1980s

survived the two Clinton administrations and has been revived under the Bush II regime. Indeed, Pieterse suggests that ‘The Bush II administration is in many ways a Reagan replay’ with its reinvention of ‘rollback’ under post-Cold War conditions, its reliance on experienced Cold War staffers, and its endorsement of policies involving ‘less government, more market, and evangelical patriotism’ built on a Reaganite social base of ‘the Christian right, the white South plus a portion of Jewish votes, wedded through Christian Zionism and the fundamentalist Christian rendezvous with Israel’. Interestingly, however, Pieterse also suggests that the Bush administration’s ‘double nostalgia’ for first and second Cold War politics is at odds with the US business elite:

Its economic policies are biased and contradictory, and tax cuts and deficit spending are opposed by CEOs, blue-ribbon business councils and to some extent even the Federal Reserve, so it is not a typical policy of the ‘capitalist class’. Politics trumps economics in that the fundamental calculus appears to be political (in the sense of party and state-driven) and ideological rather than economic. Unlike neoliberal globalisation, policy is not driven by the Treasury, Wall Street and international institutions.

Ben O’Loughlin underscores this analysis with an intellectual and political history of the current ‘neocon’ ascendancy. He traces the post-war reinvention of American conservatism by European minds (Hayek, von Mises, Rand), its popularisation within academic circles by former leftists in the 1950s and 1960s, and its shift from ‘theory to party politics’ in the course of the 1970s and 1980s under the aegis of conservative think-tanks – ‘notably Heritage, Cato, the Manhattan Institute and a revitalised American Enterprise Institute’. These are, as we saw above, the very institutions of American civil society which have been authorised by Bush’s MCA to benchmark ‘just government’ abroad. In line with recent assessments of American neoconservatism, O’Loughlin emphasises the protracted gestation of this tendency in US politics. But he also demonstrates that its rise to power was not a foregone conclusion: ‘The picture [after the end of the Cold War] is one of the gradual build-up of a conservative foreign policy network – of characters so controversial after 9/11 – but no policy hegemony.’ This policy hegemony only emerged in response to the terrorist attacks in Washington, DC, and New York. Moreover, it was a hegemony that built on the past contributions and present support from conservative democrats like Henry Jackson, Jeane Kirkpatrick and D. P. Moynihan, and one that was not essentially contested by the foreign policy of the Clinton administrations. The neoconservative turn in US foreign policy, then, is for O’Loughlin the result of long-standing ideological and institutional trends within American politics (including a significant Democratic input) being skilfully harnessed to the immediate needs of a Republican administration facing the first foreign attacks on the US mainland since 1812.

These two chapters drive home a major argument of this collection, namely that the global projection of American power is always subject to contestation

within and outside the USA. Indeed, the claim made in this introduction has been that without the 9/11 terrorist attacks (and those that preceded them throughout the 1990s, and have followed them since) the militarist, imperial dimensions of current US foreign policy would have been far harder to activate. To that extent, the victims of contemporary US imperialism have bin Laden and his associates as much as George W. Bush and his supporters to thank. Beyond this, however, we are left with two interrelated questions which prompted the debates leading to the publication of this volume, and (exploiting our role as editors) with which we'll conclude this introduction: does the unlimited 'war on terror' herald, to paraphrase Ellen Wood, an American imperialism without end? And what democratic mechanisms are available to prevent such an outcome?

Our response to the first question is negative. Crystal-ball gazing is always a perilous exercise in politics, but if the arguments about American empire conveyed here have any purchase, the USA is an especially vulnerable global hegemon because it relies on the compliance of other powerful states and classes to reproduce this global leadership. Plainly, the recent operations in Afghanistan and Iraq suggest that the US is braced for the coercive, directly imperialist exercise of military power should other avenues fail. But the experiments in Afghanistan and Iraq may also prove to be the exception rather than the rule. For all the bravado of 'Full Spectrum Dominance' and the attendant 'Revolution in Military Affairs' which surrounded Operation Enduring Freedom, US airpower and special forces required the engagement of local Afghani warlords and their militias in old-fashioned, ground combat in order to secure the defeat of what was, in any event, a militarily insignificant enemy. The continued fragmentation of political authority in Afghanistan and the current absence of a monopoly over the means of violence over that territory demonstrates that the US war machine may be able to defeat any enemy, but finds it much harder to thereafter rule over occupied territories and their populations.

Something very similar is true of Iraq. Any illusion that regime change in Iraq would involve a short, sharp 'surgical' operation to simply decapitate the Ba'athist dictatorship and replace it with a healthy pro-Western, democratic body-politic was shattered even before President Bush declared the end of major combat operations on 2 May 2003. Once again, the inherent contradiction between its awesome military strike-force and its reliance on political rule through territorial states makes the American empire uniquely vulnerable. To use a purely technical illustration of this contradiction, a recent Rand Corporation survey on 'America's Role in Nation-Building' compared troop commitments across different post-conflict experiences since World War II and projected force sizes on to the current Iraqi population. It concluded that, 'If Kosovo levels of troop commitment are used, some 526,000 foreign troops would need to be deployed through 2005. At Bosnian levels, this figure would be 258,000 by 2005.' Interestingly, if the Japanese comparison is used (the post-conflict reconstruction model favoured by the Bush administration), US troop levels in Iraq should be 32,000 in 2005 and 21,000 by 2008.²¹ Either way, current US military commitments in Iraq either fall

well below those required of comparable post-Cold war experiments in state-building, or are far too high in comparison to the favoured Japanese experience of post-war pacification. If we add to this the severe shortfalls in the number of fully operational Iraqi constabulary forces, the picture emerges of a military occupation that exercises control over air, sea and space but not land. And since US imperialism is built, as was suggested above, on a system of closed frontiers in the form of territorially bounded sovereign states, then this structural incapacity to directly control territories and their populations arguably emerges as the weakest link in the American imperial order.

What the invasion and occupation of Iraq seems to bear out, then, is that the ‘imperial episode’ in US foreign policy – that is, the use of American military supremacy in a unilateralist fashion to realise its political objectives – may be coming to an end. Based as it is on subverting, though not overthrowing, the mediating structure of state sovereignty, the Bush doctrine might actually be seen as a revolution which undermines the post-war structures of American empire. Paradoxically, the deployment of massive military force under Bush II may prove to have reduced America’s global political power.²² From within, the (continued) acquiescence of the American people to this new kind of empire requiring the long-term deployment of hundreds of thousands of US soldiers overseas in hostile environments, even in a political context where most accept the administration’s (exaggerated) argument about a terrorist threat, seems highly unlikely.²³ And from without, the degree to which a policy based on ‘coalitions of the willing’ can reproduce the same post-war US primacy built on the order, coherence and stability of embedded liberalism is also in question. Indeed, at the time of writing, the second Bush administration appears to be launching a transatlantic rapprochement aimed at realigning US foreign policy towards collective forms of global power projection.

How much of this vulnerability and realignment is a consequence of the global resistance – terrorist or otherwise – to the US military presence in the Middle East and elsewhere is an open question. The multiple and continuing insurgencies in Iraq have, for instance, plainly conditioned the lone superpower’s policy in that part of the world, and have arguably also curbed any existing American appetite for further conquests and occupations of foreign lands. To that extent, there can be no question that the Iraqi ‘resistance’ in its various manifestations – local Sunni fundamentalists, Ba’athist remnants, foreign jihadists – should be factored into analyses of current and future US foreign policy in the region and beyond. But recognising the role of these insurgencies is not tantamount to suggesting that they present a strategic alternative to US-led global capitalism, let alone endorsing their profoundly undemocratic and reactionary programme. It is fanciful to compare, as many on the left do, the contemporary Iraqi or al-Qaeda insurgencies to Cold War anti-imperialist struggles like those which unfolded in Indochina, thereby insinuating that the current conjuncture is similar to that of the 1960s and 1970s. Not only is the wider geopolitical context significantly different, with the absence of great power support for resistance as in the Soviet and Chinese support for the Vietnamese,

or the terrain in Iraq far less propitious for classical guerrilla war than the jungles, bush and mountains of Indochina, Cuba, Central America or Southern Africa, but most importantly, the insurgencies in Iraq (never mind al-Qaeda sponsored terrorism) have none of the popular and democratic components of the national liberation movements of the 1970s – be it the Viet Cong/NLF in Vietnam, the Sandinistas in Nicaragua or the Mozambican Frelimo. Indeed, it is precisely the absence of any mass-based, internationalist counterforce to US-led global capitalism that renders democratic anti-imperialism so elusive today. To be sure, the global justice movement which emerged in the course of the 1990s, coupled with recent left-wing political victories across in Latin America and the successive world and regional social forums, all indicate the immense potential for such a democratic internationalism to take root in the near future. But they also point to the fact that without substantive and radical social transformation within states – including, of course, the most powerful state of them all – the oppression, exploitation and inequality associated to American empire will be hard to defeat.

Notes

- 1 Throughout the book, we have adopted the convention of using ‘America/American’ and the ‘US/USA’ interchangeably, although they plainly aren’t the same. This is not by way of denying that, say, Cubans or Chileans are Americans too, but rather to avoid the linguistic pedantry which simply reverts us to the question as to why a whole hemisphere and its population should be named after an Italian seaman in the first place.
- 2 The idea of American empire was developed by the so-called ‘Wisconsin School’ of US diplomatic historiography and the work of William Appleman Williams in particular. See W. A. Williams, *Empire as a Way of Life*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1980; *From Colony to Empire*, New York: Wiley, 1972; *The Roots of the Modern American Empire*, New York: Random House, 1969. See also the symposium on the ‘Wisconsin School’ in *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 28, No. 5 (November 2004).
- 3 See, for instance, Gareth Stedman Jones, ‘The History of US Imperialism’, in R. Blackburn (ed.) *Ideology in Social Science*, London: Fontana, 1972.
- 4 William R. Louis, *Imperialism at Bay: The United States and the Decolonization of the British Empire*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977.
- 5 The best overview of Marxist debates on imperialism is still A. Brewer, *Marxist Theories of Imperialism: A Critical Survey*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980. See also R. H. Chilcote, *Imperialism: Theoretical Directions*, New York: Humanity Books, 2000.
- 6 This slogan has of course been underpinned by an institutional shake-up of the US national security apparatus: the creation of a Department of Homeland Security, the passing of the so-called ‘Patriot Act’ in 2001 and the recent nomination of a seasoned and controversial Cold Warrior, John Negroponte, as head of an inter-agency office responsible for national intelligence matters all attests to this.
- 7 J. W. Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*, Boston: Little, Brown, 1984.
- 8 However, see Simon Bromley’s chapter for a forceful argument against this proposition.
- 9 F. Millar, ‘Government and Diplomacy in the Roman Empire during the First Three Centuries’, *International History Review*, Vol. 10, No. 3 (August 1988), pp. 345–516, p. 352. See also S. P. Mattern, *Rome and the Enemy: Imperial Strategy in the Principate*, Berkeley, London, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999; and C. Nicolet,

- Space, Geography and Politics in the Early Roman Empire*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1991.
- 10 B. Isaac, *The Limits of Empire: The Army in the East*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990, p. 395.
 - 11 M. H. Fisher, *Indirect Rule in India: Residents and the Residency System 1746–1858*, Delhi and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 8.
 - 12 As argued by R. D. Sack in *Human Territoriality: Its Theory and History*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.
 - 13 The epitome of this attempt at formalising empire was the Berlin Congress of 1884–5, where the myriad indigenous political communities which had existed prior to European encroachment were transformed into forty territorially exclusive states ruled by European powers, thirty of which fell under the British empire. On the ‘closing’ of the imperial frontier and the extension of ‘proconsular’ or ‘jurisdictional’ imperialism, see, respectively, John S. Galbraith, ‘The “Turbulent Frontier” as a Factor in British Expansion’, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (January 1960), pp. 150–68; W. D. McIntyre, *The Imperial Frontier in the Tropics, 1965–75: A Study of British Colonial Policy in West Africa, Malaya and the South Pacific in the Age of Gladstone and Disraeli*, London, Melbourne and Toronto: Macmillan, 1967; John Benyon, ‘Overlords of Empire? British “Proconsular Imperialism” in Comparative Perspective’, *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (1991), pp. 164–202; and W. R. Johnston, *Sovereignty and Protection: A Study of British Jurisdictional Imperialism in the Late Nineteenth Century*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1973.
 - 14 B. R. Posen and A. L. Ross, ‘Competing Visions for US Grand Strategy’ *International Security*, Vol. 21, No. 3 (Winter 1996–7), pp. 5–53.
 - 15 See M. Cox, ‘The Cold War in the Age of Capitalist Decline’, *Critique*, No. 17 (1986), pp. 17–82; and P. Gowan, *Global Gamble: Washington’s Bid for World Dominance*, London: Verso, 1999. Implicit within such arguments is the Leninist idea of inter-imperialist conflict amongst the capitalist great powers derived from the structural contradictions within global capitalism, i.e. without the *deus ex machina* of the Soviet threat to bind capitalist powers together, relations between the major capitalist powers would have been much less harmonious than they ended up being after 1945.
 - 16 Captured in the phrase ‘empire by invitation’, coined by Geir Lundestad, ‘Empire by Invitation? The United States and Western Europe, 1945–1952’, *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 23, No. 3 (1986), pp. 263–77.
 - 17 The industrialised working class in the advanced capitalist states and the cross-class social constituencies (made up of peasants, workers, intellectuals and even elements of the indigenous bourgeoisie) which formed the backbone of national liberation movements in the colonial world.
 - 18 Enshrined in a number of key post-war treaties that established US-led regional/military organisations: the Organisation of American States, 1948; North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, 1949; and the South-East Asian Treaty Organisation, 1954.
 - 19 F. Halliday, *Two Hours that Shook the World*, London: Saqi Books, 2002.
 - 20 For a forceful argument tracing the continuities in US foreign policy after the Cold War, see A. J. Bacevich, *American Empire: The Realities and Consequences of US Diplomacy*, London and Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002.
 - 21 J. Dobbins, K. Crane, S. B. Jones, R. Lal, A. Latham, R. Swanger and A. Timilsina, *America’s Role in Nation-Building: From Germany to Iraq*, Los Angeles: RAND Corporation, 2003, p. 198.
 - 22 This distinction is taken from Edward N. Luttwak in the appendix to *The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire: From the First Century AD to the Third*, Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979. There, Luttwak distinguishes between force (as in Newtonian mechanics, ‘consumed in application’) and power (which ‘works not by causing effects directly, but by eliciting responses – if all goes well the desired responses’), pp. 196–7. He further suggests that, ‘[i]n dynamic terms force and

power are not analogous at all, but they are, in a sense opposites. One is an input and the other an output, and efficiency requires the minimization of the former and the maximization of the latter.'

- 23 In this sense, Simon Bromley is surely right in his essay in correcting Ellen Meiksins Wood's claim (outlined in *Empire of Capital*, London: Verso, 2002) that exemplary militarism can function as a general disciplinary mechanism in a world of nation-states.

1 The unique American empire¹

Leo Panitch and Sam Gindin

The use of the term ‘empire’ or even ‘imperialism’ to characterise the current American role in the world has suddenly become almost commonplace. Yet most of this usage is bereft of any serious political economy or pattern of historical determination that would explain the emergence and reproduction of today’s American empire, and the dimensions of structural oppression and exploitation pertaining to it. This serves as a poignant reminder of why it was Marxism that made the running in theorising imperialism for most of the twentieth century. But the Marxist theory of imperialism’s roots in the inter-imperial rivalries before World War I increasingly lent it an anachronistic cast that diminished its utility as well as usage.² The costs of this for the left were severe. The concept of imperialism has always been especially important as much for its emotive and mobilising qualities as for its analytic ones. This partly explains the popularity of Hardt and Negri’s *Empire*, which made the case that historical materialism needed to be revived on the basis of an entirely different theory of imperialism than the old one. Coming as it did even before the second American war on Iraq, their tome was of course extremely timely, but the notion at the core of their own theorisation (reflecting the widespread notion that the power of all nation-states had withered in the era of globalisation) that ‘*the United States does not, and indeed no nation state can today, form the center of an imperialist project*’ was itself bizarrely out of sync with the times.³ For what is above all needed now is a new historical materialist theorisation of imperialism that precisely allows us to transcend the old theory of inter-imperial rivalry by understanding how it came to pass that *the American empire incorporated its capitalist rivals, and how this was related to the establishment of a truly global capitalism*.

Central to this project must be overcoming the reductionist and instrumental treatment of the state that tended to characterise the classical theories of imperialism at the beginning of the twentieth century. Capitalist imperialism needs to be theorised as an extension of the theory of the capitalist state, not of theories of economic stages and crises. Moreover, while the imperial activities of capitalist states develop historically in relation to the structural logic that tends to the globalisation of capitalist social relations, we must not theorise history in such a way that the trajectories of globalisation and imperialism are merely read off

from abstract economic laws. Rather, as Philip McMichael has put it so well, we need to

historicize theory and problematize globalization as a relation immanent in capitalism, but with quite distinct material (social, political and environmental) relations across time and time-space. In this formulation globalization assumes specific *historical* forms...Globalization is not simply the unfolding of capitalist tendencies but a historically distinct project shaped, or complicated, by the contradictory relations of previous episodes of globalization.⁴

After capitalism's global march was interrupted by World War I and the Great Depression, the crucial phase in the reconstruction of global capitalism came during and after World War II, when the conditions came to exist that allowed for the emergence and realisation of an American imperial project (explicitly conceived as a state-learned response to the earlier breakdowns) of putting capitalist globalisation back on track. And the neoliberal reconstitution and extension of capitalist globalisation after the crisis of the 1970s also reflected the intervention of a unique institution acting as *agency*: the American imperial state. The role the US state has come to play in the making of global capitalism, as we shall see, was not inevitable but nor was it merely accidental; it was not a matter of teleology but of capitalist history.

The US imperial state in historical perspective

Perry Anderson has argued recently that the capacity of the US to 'conjugate' its '*particular* power with the *general* task of coordination' in global capitalism reflected 'the particular matrix of its own social history', and in particular, 'the attractive power of US models of production and culture'. Coming together here were not only the invention in America of the modern corporate form, scientific management of the labour process, and assembly-line mass production, but also Hollywood-style media forms of 'narrative and visual schemas stripped to their most abstract' appropriate to appealing to and aggregating waves of immigrants through the 'recursive common denominators ... of dramatic simplification and repetition'.⁵ It was the economic and cultural infrastructure of American capitalism and its world-wide appeal combined with the universalistic language of American liberal democratic ideology that gave it a capacity for informal empire far beyond that of nineteenth-century Britain.

Anderson's impression is that the American state's constitutional structures (by virtue of being 'moored to eighteenth century arrangements') lacked the 'carrying power' of its economic and cultural ones. Against this stands Thomas Jefferson's observation in 1809 that 'no constitution was ever before as well-calculated for extensive empire and self-government'.⁶ In fact, Hardt and Negri were right to trace the pre-figuration of what they call 'empire' today back to the

American's constitution's incorporation of Madisonian 'network power'. This entailed not only checks and balances within the state apparatus but the notion that the greater plurality of interests incorporated within an extensive and expansive state would guarantee that the masses would have no common motive or capacity to come together to check the ruling class. Yet far from serving as the basis for the sort of decentred and amorphous power that Hardt and Negri imagine characterises the US historically (and 'empire' today), the constitutional framework of the new American state gave great powers to the central government to expand trade and make war.

The state which emerged out of the alliance between Northern merchants and commercial farmers and Southern plantation-owners against Britain's formal empire evinced from its beginnings a trajectory to informal empire. Despite the initial form this took through territorial expansion westward, largely through extermination of the native population, and despite blatant exploitation of not only the black slave population but also debt-ridden subsistence farmers, the fact that the new state could conceive itself as extending republican liberty, and be widely admired for it, was largely bound up with the link between 'extended empire and self-government' that Jefferson discerned as embedded in the federal constitution of the American state. State rights were no mirage: they reflected the two different types of social relations – slave and free – that composed each successive wave of new states. This mode of territorial expansion not only determined the shape of the conflict that finally led to civil war, the defeat of the plantocracy and the dissolution of slavery, but thereafter was the basis for the domination of an unfettered industrial capitalism with 'the crucial advantage of possessing the largest single domestic market in the world', thereby obviating any temptation towards formal imperialism via territorial conquest abroad.⁷

The outcome of the Civil War allowed for a full reconstitution of the relationship between both financial and industrial capital and the state, so that its political function could be inclined away from mercantilism towards extended capitalist reproduction. Herein lies the significance that Anderson himself attaches to the evolving juridical form of the American state, whereby 'unencumbered property rights, untrammelled litigation, the invention of the corporation' led to

what Polanyi most feared, a juridical system disembedding the market as far as possible from ties of custom, tradition or solidarity, whose very abstraction from them later proved – American firms like American films – exportable and reproducible across the world, in a way that no other competitor could quite match. The steady transformation of international merchant law and arbitration in conformity with US standards is witness to the process.⁸

The expansionist tendencies of American capitalism in the latter half of the nineteenth century (reflecting pressures that emanated as much from domestic

commercial farmers as from the industrialists and financiers of the post-Civil War era) were even more inclined to take informal imperial forms, even without a policy of free trade, than was British capitalism. It was through American foreign investment (epitomised by the Singer Company establishing itself as the first multinational corporation by jumping the Canadian tariff barrier to establish a subsidiary to produce and sell sewing machines to prosperous Ontario wheat farmers) that the American informal empire now increasingly took shape.⁹ As compared to the Canadian model of integration into the informal American imperium, the establishment of colonies in Puerto Rico and the Philippines and the annexation of Hawaii 'was a deviation ... from the typical economic, political and ideological forms of domination already characteristic of American imperialism'.¹⁰

The broader ideological articulation of American military intervention, even as expressed by Teddy Roosevelt, already presented itself in terms of the exercise of 'international police power' and 'general world duty'.¹¹ But the American state's genius for presenting its informal empire in terms of the framework of universal rights reached its apogee under Woodrow Wilson. It also reached, with his presidency, the apogee of hypocrisy, especially at the Paris Peace Conference, where Keynes concluded Wilson was 'the greatest fraud on earth'.¹² Indeed, it was not only Congress's isolationist tendencies, but the incapacity of the American presidential, treasury and military apparatus that explained the failure of the United States to take responsibility for leading European reconstruction after World War I. It was only during the course of the New Deal, amidst a collapse of global capitalism to which the American state's previous policies had no little contributed, that the administrative and ideological capacity was developed to transform and vastly extend America's informal imperialism. But for the American state to assume explicit responsibility for the relaunching of capitalist globalisation, also crucially important was the pattern of wartime state-building, during the course of which 'the leverage of corporate executives from industry and finance' inside the state operated to shift 'U.S. state capacities towards realizing internationally-interventionist goals versus domestically-interventionist ones'.¹³

The relationship between capitalism and imperialism took on new shape with World War II. In terms that were uncharacteristically direct, the editors of *Time*, *Life* and *Fortune* magazines jointly set out in 1942 a vision of the world that would emerge after the war, based on the premise that 'America will emerge as the strongest single power in the postwar world, and ... it is therefore up to it to decide what kind of postwar world it wants.' What was wanted, beginning with the integration of the American and British economic systems as the foundation for 'a wider postwar integration' was a world 'in which tariffs, subsidies, monopolies, restrictive labor rules, plantation feudalism, poll taxes, technological backwardness, obsolete tax laws, and all other barriers to further expansion can be removed'. While recognising that 'the uprising of [the] international proletariat ... the most significant fact of the last twenty years ... means that complete international free trade, as Cobden used to preach it and Britain used

to practice it, is no longer an immediate political possibility', nevertheless 'universal free trade, not bristling nationalism, is the *ultimate* goal of a rational world'. Yet,

a new American 'imperialism', if it is to be called that, will – or rather can – be quite different from the British type. It can also be different from the premature American type that followed our expansion in the Spanish war. American imperialism can afford to complete the work the British started; instead of salesmen and planters, its representatives can be brains and bulldozers, technicians and machine tools. American imperialism does not need extra-territoriality; it can get along better in Asia if the tuans and sahibs stay home ... Nor is the U.S. afraid to help build up industrial rivals to its own power ... because we know industrialization stimulates rather than limits international trade ... This American imperialism sounds very abstemious and high-minded. It is nevertheless a feasible policy for America, because friendship, not food, is what we need most from the rest of the world.¹⁴

Among the various dimensions of the new relationship between capitalism and imperialism that emerged with World War II, the most striking and important was that the densest imperial networks and institutional linkages, which had earlier run north–south between imperial states and their formal or informal colonies, now came to run between the US and the other rich capitalist states. What Britain had been unable to do in the late nineteenth century now was accomplished by the US, integrating all the other capitalist powers into an effective system of coordination under its aegis. The devastation of the European and Japanese economies, the weak political legitimacy of their ruling classes at the war's end, the US military occupation and subsequent subordination of its important rival capitalist centres – all this created a historically unprecedented opportunity which the American state was now ready and willing to exploit.

Most important here was the immense attention the Treasury and State Department paid during the war to planning for relaunching a coordinated liberal trading regime and a rule-based financial order via manipulating its main allies' debtor status, the complete domination of the dollar as world currency and the fact that 50 per cent of world production was now accounted for by the US economy. But it was by no means only the cache of dollars at its disposal that was operative here, nor was Britain the only object of America's new informal empire. The American state had studied and learned well from the lesson of its post-World War I incapacity to combine liberal internationalist rhetoric with an actual institutional commitment to manage an international capitalist order outside its own hemisphere, and the Bretton Woods conference confirmed as nothing else had yet done the immense managerial capacity the American state had developed. And with the IMF and World Bank headquarters established at American insistence in Washington, DC, a pattern was set for international

economic management among all the leading capitalist countries that also continues to this day, one in which even when it is European or Japanese finance ministries and central banks who propose, it is the US Treasury and Federal Reserve that dispose.

The dense institutional linkages that bound these states to the American empire were institutionalised, of course, not only through the institutions of Bretton Woods, but also through those of NATO, not to mention the hub-and-spokes networks binding each of the other leading capitalist states to the intelligence and security apparatuses of the US as part of the strategy of containment of communism during the Cold War. However, most of those who stress the American state's linkages with the coercive apparatuses of Europe and Japan, as conceived for instance in terms of what Martin Shaw calls the 'Western Bloc State' (tending to become a 'Global Western State' with the collapse of the USSR),¹⁵ fail to appreciate how far the American 'Protectorate System', as Peter Gowan names it, actually 'altered the character of the capitalist core'. For it entailed, as he puts it, the

internal transformation of social relations within the protectorates in the direction of the American 'fordist' system of accumulation [that] opened up the possibility of a vast extension of their *internal markets*, with the working class not only as source of expanded surplus value but also an increasingly important consumption centre for *realizing* surplus value.¹⁶

But while permitting the other core states to act as 'autonomous organizing centres of capital accumulation', the emulation of US technological and managerial 'fordist' forms (initially organised and channelled through the post-war joint 'productivity councils') was massively reinforced by the penetration of these states by American foreign direct investment. Here, too, the core of the American imperial network shifted away from north-south linkages towards the advanced capitalist core, so much so that Latin America's share of total American FDI fell from 40 to 20 per cent between 1950 and 1970, while Western Europe's more than doubled to match the Canadian share of 30 per cent. It was hardly surprising in this context that sober students of the American informal empire from both Weberian and Marxist perspectives, such as Raymond Aron and Nicos Poulantzas, saw in Europe a tendential 'Canadianisation', bespeaking the 'limited but exemplary instance of the relationship between the USA and Canada' as the model form of integration into that empire.¹⁷ None of this meant, of course, that the old north-south dimension of imperialism became unimportant. But it did mean, as with Canada's place of privilege as a white and rich dependency first in the British and then in the American empire, that the other core capitalist countries' relationships with the third world, including with their growing number of ex-colonies, were imbricated with American informal imperial rule.

This rule, not only in the advanced capitalist world but also in those regions of the third world where it held sway, was characterised by the penetration of

borders, not the dissolution of them. It was not through the territorial expansion of formal empire, but rather through the reconstitution of states as cohesive and integral elements of an informal American empire that global capitalist order was organised and regulated. Nation-states remained the primary vehicles through which (a) the social relations and institutions of class, property, currency, contract and markets were established and reproduced; and (b) the international accumulation of capital was carried out. The vast expansion of direct foreign investment world-wide, whatever the shifting regional shares of the total, far from meaning that capital escaped the state, expanded its dependence on *many* states. At the same time, capital as an effective social force within any given state now included both foreign capital and domestic capital with international linkages and ambitions. Their interpenetration made the notion of a distinct national bourgeoisie (at least outside of the American social formation) largely an anachronism.

A further dimension of the new relationship between capitalism and empire was that the actual historical evolution of globalisation in this context entailed not ‘the constitution of a supra-national state or super-state ... [as if] what was involved was internationalization within a framework of externally juxtaposed states and capitals’, but rather the *internationalization of the state*.¹⁸ This needs to be specifically understood in terms of any given state’s degree of internalisation of the responsibility to manage its domestic capitalist order in ways that contribute to managing global capitalist order. For the American imperial state, however, the internationalisation of the state had a special quality. It entailed defining the American national interest in terms of acting not only on behalf of its own capitalist class but also on behalf of the extension and reproduction of global capitalism. This was encapsulated in the National Security Council document NSC-68 of 1950, which defined the goal of constructing a ‘world environment in which the American system can survive and flourish ... Even if there were no Soviet Union we would face the great problem ... [that] the absence of order among nations is becoming less and less tolerable.’¹⁹

The new integral relationship that developed between American empire and global capitalism could not be reduced to a one-way (let alone solely coercive) imposition. The relationship was often more properly characterised by the phrase ‘imperialism by invitation’. Even so, the notion of US *state* (as opposed to cultural or economic) hegemony only adequately captured the relationship that developed among states and ruling classes. The American state itself did not take as its own responsibility the incorporation of the needs of the subordinate classes of other states within its own construction of informal imperial rule. Active mass consent to even informal imperial rule was always mediated by the legitimacy that each state integrated within the American imperium could retain for itself and muster for any particular American state project. This dimension of the new imperial order, as we shall see later, is proving to have particularly important consequences in the current conjuncture.

Economic crisis and the neoliberal reconstitution of US empire

The specific pattern of American imperial rule established in the post-war period was inherently transitional. The very notion of 'reconstruction' posed the question of what might follow once the European and Japanese economies were rebuilt and became competitive with the American, and the benign circumstances of the post-war years – so central to one of the most impressive periods of growth in world history – were exhausted. Moreover, rising economic nationalism in the third world (in the wake of the decolonisation from the old empires that the American state generally encouraged) and rising working-class militancy in the core capitalist countries (under conditions of near full employment) were bound to have an impact on capital's profits. In less than a generation, the contradictions inherent in the Bretton Woods agreement were exposed. Possibilities of a return to the international economic fragmentation and collapse of the interwar period were widely discussed in the early 1960s as the American economy went from creditor to debtor status, the dollar moved from a currency in desperately short supply to one in surplus, and the gold standard behind the dollar, which had been embedded in Bretton Woods, crumbled.

Yet the past was not replayed. American dominance, never fundamentally challenged, would come to be reorganised on a new basis, and international integration was not rolled back but intensified. This reconstitution of the global order, like earlier developments within global capitalism, was not inevitable. What made it possible was that by the time of the crisis of the early 1970s, American ideological and material penetration/integration of Europe and Japan was sufficiently pervasive to foreclose any considerations of their retreating from the international economy or of posing, from within it, any fundamental challenge to the leadership role of the American state.

Beyond the United States having established itself as the military protectorate of Europe and Japan, and beyond the growing dependence of Europe and Japan on American markets, the crucial factor in cementing the new imperial bond was the growing centrality of American direct investment as the form taken by capital export and international integration. American corporations were evolving into the hubs of increasingly dense host-country and cross-border networks amongst suppliers, financiers and final markets (the importance of free trade itself was greatly enhanced as part of securing the tighter international networks of production). Even where the initial response to the growth of such investment was hostile, this generally gave way to competition to attract that investment, and then emulation to meet 'the American challenge' through counter-investments in the United States. Unlike trade, which involves cross-border exchanges, this penetration of the social formations of host countries directly affected domestic class structures and state formation. Tensions and alliances that emerged within domestic capitalist classes could consequently no longer be understood in only 'national' terms. Though Europe and Japan as centres of accumulation had been rebuilt in the post-war period, the nature of their integration into the global economy tended to tie the successful

reproduction of their own social formations to the rules and structures of the American-led global order. 'The question for them,' as Poulantzas put it in the early 1970, 'is rather to reorganize a hegemony that they still accept ... what the battle is actually over is the share of the cake.'²⁰

Nevertheless, the reorganisation of that hegemony took time, and only succeeded after a sustained period of false starts, confusion and uncertain experimentation. The first and most crucial response of the Nixon administration to the crisis of Bretton Woods, the dramatic end to the convertibility of the American dollar in 1971, restored the American state's economic autonomy in the face of a threatened rush to gold, and the subsequent devaluation of the American dollar did, at least temporarily, correct the American balance of payments deficit. Yet that response hardly qualified as a global solution to the larger issues involved. The American state took advantage of its still dominant position to unilaterally defend its own economic base, but in the process it neither provided leadership in terms of putting forth a universal solution to the problems facing all the developed capitalist economies, nor did it lay the basis for its *own* future dynamism. By the end of the 1970s, with the American economy facing a flight of capital (both domestic and foreign), a presidential report to Congress (describing itself as 'the most comprehensive and detailed analysis of the competitive position of the United States') confirmed a steep decline in competitiveness – one that it advised *could* be corrected, but not without a radical reorientation in economic policy to address the persistence of domestic inflation and the need for greater access to savings so as to accelerate investment.²¹

The concern with maintaining and attracting capital was especially crucial to what followed. The developments that had already been taken in terms of the opening up of domestic and global capital markets provided both opportunities and constraints for the American state. Liberalised finance held out the option of shifting an important aspect of competition to a terrain on which the American economy had its greatest advantages, yet those advantages could not become an effective instrument of American power until other economic and political changes had occurred. This ambivalence was reflected in the American state's policy responses since the 1960s: capital controls were introduced in 1963, but were made open to significant 'exceptions'; the Eurodollar market was a source of concern, but also recognised as making dollar holdings more attractive, and subsequently encouraging the important recycling of petro dollars to the third world. The liberalisation of finance enormously strengthened Wall Street through the 1970s and proved crucial to the broader changes that followed. This should not, however, be seen as coming at the expense of industrial capital. Rather, it was a (somewhat belated) recognition on the part of American capital generally that the strengthening of finance was an essential, if sometimes painful, cost of reconstituting American economic power.

The critical 'turning point' in policy orientation came in 1979 with the 'Volcker shock' – the American state's self-imposed structural adjustment programme. The Federal Reserve's determination to establish internal economic discipline via allowing interest rates to rise to historically unprecedented levels

brought the confidence the money markets and central bankers were looking for, and the restructuring of labour and industry which were considered crucial. Along with the more general neoliberal policies that evolved into a coherent alternative through the 1980s, the state-reinforced new strength of finance set the stage for what came to be popularly known as ‘globalisation’ – the acceleration of the drive to a seamless world of capital accumulation.

The mechanisms of neoliberalism may have been economic (the expansion and deepening of markets and competitive pressures) but the essence of neoliberalism was a *political* response to the democratic gains that had been previously achieved by subordinate classes and which had become, in a new context and from capital’s perspective, barriers to accumulation. Neoliberalism involved not just reversing those gains, but weakening their institutional foundations – including within the state via a shift in the hierarchy of state apparatuses towards the Treasury and Federal Reserve at the expense of the old New Deal agencies. The US was, of course, not the only country to introduce neoliberal policies, but once the American state itself moved in this direction, it had a new status: capitalism evolved to ‘a new form of social rule’ that promised, and largely delivered, (a) the revival of the productive base for American dominance; (b) a universal model for restoring the conditions for profits in other developed countries; and (c) the economic conditions for integrating global capitalism.²²

American labour was restructured to provide American capital with an even greater competitive flexibility vis-à-vis Europe. Inefficient firms were purged (a process that had been limited in the 1970s). Existing firms restructured internally, outsourced to cheaper and more specialised suppliers, relocated to the increasingly urban south, and merged with others – all part of an accelerated reallocation of capital within the American economy. Global savings (and foreign investment) channelled through Wall Street made capital cheaper in America. This enhanced investment in the development of new technologies (which also benefited from public investments in education and subsidies via the military). The available pools of venture capital were in turn integrated into management restructuring strategies and disseminated into sectors far beyond ‘high tech’. The American economy not only reversed its slide in the early 1980s, but also set the standards for European and Japanese capital to do the same.²³

The renewed confidence on the part of American capital consolidated capitalism as a global project through the development of new formal and informal mechanisms of international coordination. Neoliberalism reinforced the material and ideological conditions for guaranteeing ‘national’ treatment for foreign capital in each social formation, and for ‘constitutionalising’, by way of NAFTA, European Economic and Monetary Union and the WTO, the free flow of goods and capital (the WTO was a broader GATT, but one that had also been given teeth). The American economy’s unique access to global savings through the power of Wall Street within global money markets allowed it to import freely without compromising other objectives. This eventually brought to the American state the role, not necessarily intended, of global macro-manager as well as the ‘importer of last resort’ that limited the impact of slowdowns elsewhere, while

also reinforcing foreign investors' and foreign exporters' dependence on American markets and state policies. The G-7 emerged as a forum for Ministers of Finance and Treasury officials to discuss global developments, forge consensus on issues and direction, and address in a concrete and controlled way any necessary exchange rate adjustments. The Federal Reserve, though allegedly concerned only with domestic policies, kept a steady eye on the international context. The BIS re-emerged, in the context of the greater role being played by increasingly 'independent' central bankers, to improve capital adequacy standards within banking systems. The IMF and the World Bank were also correspondingly restructured. The IMF shifted from the 'adjustment' of balance of payments problems to addressing structural economic crises in third world countries (along the lines first imposed on Britain in 1976), and increasingly became the vehicle for imposing a type of conditionality in exchange for loans that incorporated global capitalism's concerns. The World Bank supported this, although by the 1990s, making the case that states were necessary to the making of 'free markets', it focused its attention on capitalist state-building – what it called developing 'effective states'.²⁴

Yet the reconstitution of the American empire in this remarkably successful fashion through the last decades of the twentieth century did not mean that global capitalism had reached a new plateau of stability. Indeed, it may be said that dynamic instability and contingency are systematically incorporated into the reconstituted form of empire, in good part because the excess competition characteristic of neoliberalism and the hyper-mobility of financial liberalisation aggravate the uneven development and extreme volatility inherent in the functioning of this global order. Moreover, this instability is dramatically amplified by the fact that the American state can only rule this order through other states, and turning them all into 'effective' states for global capitalism is no easy matter. Let us turn finally to what this means for the American empire today,

The problems of US imperialism today

If Donald Sassoon was right to say that 'how to achieve the European version of the American society was the real political issue of the 1950s',²⁵ so this once again seemed to be the case in the 1990s, at least in terms of emulation of US economic policies and shareholder values. Now, with the end of the American boom of that decade, and the growing US trade and fiscal deficit, new predictions of American decline and inter-imperial rivalry have become commonplace. The question of the sustainability of the American empire cannot be answered, however, by using short-term and economic measurements.

This is not to say that the current economic conjuncture does not reveal genuine problems for every state in global capitalism, including the American. These problems reflect not the continuation of the crisis of the 1970s, but rather new contradictions that the dynamic global capitalism ushered in by neoliberalism has itself generated, including the synchronisation of recessions, the threat of deflation, the dependence of the world on American markets and the depen-

dence of the United States on capital inflows to cover its trade deficit. There is indeed a systemic complexity in today's global capitalism that includes, even at its core, instabilities and even crises. Yet this needs to be seen not so much in terms of the old structural crisis tendencies and their outcomes, but as quotidian dimensions of contemporary capitalism's functioning and, indeed, even of its successes. The issue for capitalist states is not preventing episodic crises – they will inevitably occur – but containing them.

The American imperial state has, to date, demonstrated a remarkable ability to limit the duration, depth and contagion of crises. And there is as yet little reason to expect that even the pressure on the value of the dollar today has become unmanageable. This is what lies behind the confidence of Andrew Crockett, general manager of the Bank for International Settlements and chairman of the Financial Stability Forum (comprising central bankers, finance ministry officials and market regulators from the G7 states) that 'they have the network of contacts, [and] the contingency plans, to deal with shocks to the markets'.²⁶ Of course such confidence does not itself guarantee that the US Treasury and Federal Reserve, which worked closely with their counterparts in the other core capitalist states during the war on Iraq (whatever their governments' disagreements over that war) just as they did immediately after the disruption of Wall Street caused by the terrorist attacks of 11 September, will always have the capacity to cope with all contingencies. We would, however, argue that the future development of such capacities is not ruled out by any inherent *economic* contradictions alone.

What is above all clear, or at least should be, is that we cannot understand imperialism today in terms of economic crises giving rise to inter-imperial rivalry. The extent of the theoretically unselfconscious use of the term 'rivalry' to label the economic competition between the EU, Japan (or East Asia more broadly) and the United States is remarkable. The distinctive meaning the concept had in the pre-World War I context, when economic competition among European states was indeed imbricated with comparable military capacities and Lenin could assert that 'imperialist wars are absolutely inevitable',²⁷ is clearly lacking in the contemporary context of overwhelming American military dominance. But beyond this, the meaning it had in the past is contradicted by the distinctive economic as well as military integration that exists between the leading capitalist powers today.

The term 'rivalry' inflates economic competition between states far beyond what it signifies in the real world. While the conception of a transnational capitalist class, loosened from any state moorings or about to spawn a supranational global state, is clearly exceedingly extravagant,²⁸ so too is any conception of a return to rival national bourgeoisies. The asymmetric power relationships that emerged out of the penetration and integration among the leading capitalist countries under the aegis of informal American empire were not dissolved in the wake of the crisis of the Golden Age and the greater trade competitiveness and capital mobility that accompanied it; rather, they were refashioned and reconstituted through the era of neoliberal globalisation. None of this means, of course,

that state and economic structures have become homogeneous or that there is no divergence in many policy areas, or that contradiction and conflict are absent from the imperial order. But these contradictions and conflicts are located not so much in the relationships between the advanced capitalist states as *within* these states, as they try to manage their internal processes of accumulation, legitimation and class struggle. This is no less true of the American state as it tries to manage and cope with the complexities of neo-imperial globalisation.

Nor does the evolution of the European Union make the theory of inter-imperial rivalry relevant for our time.²⁹ Encouraged at its origins by the American state, its recent development through economic and monetary union, up to and including the launching of the Euro and the European Central Bank, has never been opposed by American capital within Europe, or by the American state. What it has accomplished in terms of free trade and capital mobility within its own region has fitted, rather than challenged, the American-led 'new form of social rule' that neoliberalism represents. And what it has accomplished in terms of the integration of European capital markets has not only involved the greater penetration of American investment banking and its principle of 'shareholder value' inside Europe, but has, as John Grahl has shown, been 'based on the deregulation and internationalization of the US financial system'.³⁰

The halting steps towards an independent European military posture, entirely apart from the staggering economic cost this would involve (all the more so in the context of relatively slow growth), were quickly put in perspective by the war on the former Yugoslavia over Kosovo – supported by every European government – through which the US made it very clear that NATO would remain the ultimate policeman of Europe.³¹ But this only drove home a point over which pragmatic European politicians had never entertained any illusions. Dependence on American military technology and intelligence would still be such that the US itself sees '[a]n EU force that serves as an effective, if unofficial, extension of NATO rather than a substitute [as] well worth the trouble'.³² And on the European side, Joschka Fischer, as Germany's Foreign Minister, similarly acknowledged that '[t]he transatlantic relationship is indispensable. The power of the United States is a decisive factor for peace and stability in the world. I don't believe Europe will ever be strong enough to look after its security alone'.³³ Indeed, it is likely the very appreciation of this reality within European elite circles that lies at the heart of their oft-expressed frustrations with the current American leadership's tendency to treat them explicitly as merely 'junior' partners. Though it has been argued that the end of the Cold War left Europe less dependent on the American military umbrella and therefore freer to pursue its own interests, this same development also left the US freer to ignore European sensitivities.

As for East Asia, where Japan's highly centralised state might be thought to give it the imperial potential that the relatively loosely knit EU lacks, it has shown even less capacity for regional let alone global leadership independent of the US. Its ability to penetrate East Asia economically, moreover, has been and remains mediated by the American imperial relationship.³⁴ This was particularly

rudely underlined by the actions of the American Treasury in the East Asian crisis of 1997–8, when it dictated a harsh conditionality right in Japan's back yard.³⁵ Those who interpreted Japan's trade penetration of American markets and its massive direct foreign investments in the US through the 1980s in terms of inter-imperial rivalry betrayed a misleadingly economic perspective. Japan remains dependent on American markets and on the security of its investments within the US, and its central bank is anxious to buy dollars so as limit the fall of the dollar and its impact on the yen. And while China may perhaps emerge eventually as a pole of inter-imperial power, it will obviously be very far from reaching such a status for a good many decades. The fact that certain elements in the American state are concerned to ensure that its 'unipolar' power today is used to prevent the possible emergence of imperial rivals tomorrow can hardly be used as evidence that such rivals already exist.

To the extent that there is a crisis of American imperialism today, it arises in relation to the states outside the capitalist core. Where these states are – as in much of the third world and the former Soviet bloc – relatively undeveloped capitalist states, yet increasingly located within the orbit of global capital, the international financial institutions, as well as the core capitalist states acting either in concert or on their own, have intervened to impose 'economically correct' neoliberal structural 'reforms'. In the context of financial liberalisation, this has meant a steady stream of economic crises. Some of these could be seen as a functionally necessary part of neoliberalism's success (as may perhaps be said of South Korea after the Asian crisis of 1997–8), but all too often these interventions have aggravated rather than solved the problem because of the abstract universalism of the remedy. Whatever neoliberalism's successes in relation to strengthening an already developed capitalist economy, it increasingly appears as a misguided strategy for capitalist development itself. As for so-called 'rogue states' – those which are not within the orbit of global capitalism so that neither penetrating external economic forces nor international institutions can effectively restructure them – direct unilateral intervention on the part of the American state has become increasingly tempting. It is this that has brought the term 'empire' back into mainstream currency, and it is fraught with all kinds of unpredictable ramifications.

In this context, the collapse of the communist world that stood outside the sphere of American empire and global capitalism for so much of the post-war era has become particularly important. On the one hand, the rapid penetration and integration by global capital and the institutions of informal American empire (such as NATO) of so much of what had been the Soviet bloc, and the opening of China, Vietnam and even Cuba to foreign capital and their integration in world markets (even if under the aegis of communist élites) has been remarkable. It has also removed the danger that direct US intervention in states outside the American hemisphere would lead to World War III and nuclear Armageddon. The fact that even liberal human rights advocates and institutions through the 1990s repeatedly called for the US to act as an international police power reflected the new conjuncture. But, on the other hand, both the hubris

and sense of burden that came with the now evident unique power of the American state led it to question whether even the limited compromises it had to make in operating through multilateral institutions were unnecessarily constraining its strategic options, especially in relation to ‘rogue states’ outside the orbit of the informal empire.

The ‘loneliness of power’ was increasingly involved here. The felt burden of ultimate responsibility (and since 9/11 the much greater sensitivity to US vulnerability as a target of terrorism at home as well as abroad) promotes the desire to retain full ‘sovereignty’ to act as needed. This is what underlies the increasingly unconcealed nature of American imperialism. The problem it now faces in terms of ‘conjugating its particular power with the general task of coordination’ (to recall Anderson’s incisive phrase), can clearly be seen not only in relation to the economic contradictions of neoliberalism discussed above, but also in the growing contradictions between nature and capitalism.

These issues are multiplied all the more by the role the American imperial state now has come to play in maintaining social order around the whole globe. The understanding of the 1950 National Security Council document NSC-68 that ‘[e]ven if there were no Soviet Union we would face the great problem ... [that] the absence of order among nations is becoming less and less tolerable’ anticipated what has finally become fully clear to those who run the American empire. George W. Bush’s own National Security Strategy document of September 2002 (intimations of which were surfacing inside the American state as soon as the Soviet bloc collapsed)³⁶ had a long pedigree.

In this context, just as neoliberalism at home did not mean a smaller or weaker state but rather one in which coercive apparatuses flourished (as welfare offices emptied out, the prisons filled up), so has neoliberalism led to the enhancement of the coercive apparatus the imperial state needs to police social order around the world. The transformation of the American military and security apparatus through the 1990s took place in such a way as to facilitate this, as was already apparent in the responses to ‘rogue states’ under the Bush I and Clinton administrations. The US did work hard to win the UN’s support for the 1990–1 Gulf War and oversaw the long regime of sanctions against Iraq that the American state insisted on through the 1990s. But other governments sensed a growing unilateralism on the part of the US that made them increasingly nervous, if only in terms of maintaining their own states’ legitimacy. The Gulf War had shown that the United Nations could be made to serve ‘as an *imprimatur* for a policy that the United States wanted to follow and either persuaded or coerced everybody else to support’, as the Canadian ambassador to the UN put it at the time. And thus playing ‘fast and loose with the provisions of the UN Charter’ unnerved ‘a lot of developing countries, which were privately outraged by what was going on but felt utterly impotent to do anything – a demonstration of the enormous US power and influence when it is unleashed’.³⁷

Yet at the very same time, it also made American strategists aware just how little they could rely on the UN if they had to go to such trouble to get their way. The United Nations, by its very nature as a quasi-parliamentary and diplomatic

body made up of all the world's states, could not be as easily restructured as were the Bretton Woods institutions after the crisis of the 1970s. This, as evidenced in the repeated use of the American veto in the Security Council since that time, was a constant irritant. And while NATO could be relied on as a far more dependable vehicle for the American war on the former Yugoslavia over Kosovo (with the added benefit of making clear to the Europeans exactly who would continue to wield the international police power in their own backyard), even here the effort entailed in having to keep each and every NATO member onside was visibly resented within the American state itself.

Bush's isolationist rhetoric in the 2000 election campaign, questioning the need for American troops to get involved in remote corners of the globe, was bound to be reformulated once Bush was actually burdened with (and appropriately socialised in) the office of a presidency that is now as inevitably imperial as is it domestic in nature. For this, the explicitly imperial statecraft that the geopolitical strategists close to the Republican Party had already fashioned was ready and waiting. The events of 11 September did not alone determine their ascendancy in the state, but certainly enhanced their status. Their response has revealed all the tensions in the American state's combination of its imperial function of general coordination with the use of its power to protect and advance its national interests. While threats to the US are still seen by it as an attack on global capitalism in general, the American state is increasingly impatient with making any compromises that get in the way of its acting on its own specific definition of the global capitalist interest and the untrammelled use of its particular state power to cope with such threats.

Perhaps the most important change in the administrative structure of the American empire under Bush II has been the displacement of the Treasury from its pinnacle at the top of the state apparatus. The branches of the American state that control and dispense the means of violence are now in the driver's seat; in an administration representing a Republican Party that has always been made up of a coalition of free marketeers, social conservatives and military hawks, the balance has been tilted decisively by 11 September towards the latter. But the unconcealed imperial face that the American state is now prepared to show to the world above all pertains to the increasing difficulties of managing a truly global informal empire – a problem that goes well beyond any change from administration to administration.

This could turn out to be a challenge as great as that earlier faced by formal empires with their colonial state apparatuses. The need to try to refashion all the states of the world so that they become at least minimally adequate for the administration of global order is now the central problem for the American state. But the immense difficulty of constructing outside the core anything like the dense networks that the new American imperialism succeeded in forging with the other leading capitalist states is clear from the only halting progress that has been made in extending the G7 even to the G8, let alone the G20. For the geopolitical stratum of the American state, this shows the limits of any 'effective states' approach outside the core based on economic linkages alone.

This explains not only the extension of US bases and the closer integration of intelligence and police apparatuses of all the states in the empire in the wake of 11 September, but the harkening back to the founding moment of the post-1945 American empire in the military occupations of Japan and Germany as providing the model for restructuring Iraq within the framework of American empire. The logic of this posture points well beyond Iraq to all states ‘disconnected from globalisation’ where are found, as a US Naval War college professor advising the Secretary of Defense has put it, ‘politically repressive regimes, widespread poverty and disease, routine mass murder, and – most important – the chronic conflicts that incubate the next generation of global terrorists’.³⁸ Among the states that are identified as meeting these conditions, and hence as together constituting a ‘strategic threat environment’ to the American state, are: Haiti, Colombia, Brazil and Argentina, the Former Yugoslavia, Congo and Rwanda/Burundi, Angola, South Africa, Israel-Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Somalia, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, North Korea and Indonesia, to which China, Russia and India are added, for good measure, ‘as new/integrating members of the core [that] may be lost in coming years’.

The trouble for the American empire as it inclines in this strategic direction is that very few of the world’s states today, given their social forces and economic and political structures, are going to be able to be reconstructed along the lines of post-war Japan and Germany, even if – indeed, especially if – they are occupied by the US military, and even if they are penetrated rather than marginalised by globalisation. The disagreements over the war on Iraq between France, Germany and even Canada, on the one hand, and the American state, on the other, need to be seen in this light. These tensions pertain very little to economic rivalries. Indeed their bourgeoisies – visibly troubled by and increasingly complaining about not being on the same page as the Americans – are even less inclined to challenge American hegemony than they were in the 1970s. The tensions pertain rather more to an inclination on the part of these states themselves (in good part reflective of their relative lack of autonomous military capacity) to prefer the use of international financial institutions and the WTO to try to fashion the effective states global capitalism needs.

It pertains most of all, however, to the danger posed to these states’ legitimacy once they are located in a framework of American imperialism that is so visibly imperialistic. The American empire, as we indicated before, has certainly been hegemonic vis-à-vis these states and their capitalist classes, but it has never entailed, for all of the American economic and cultural penetration in their societies, a transfer of direct popular loyalty – call it a sense of ‘patriotism’ – to the American state itself. Indeed, the American form of rule – founded on the constitutional principle of extended empire and self-government – has never demanded this. In this sense the unpopularity, and even the absence of core state endorsement, of American military intervention is not new – as evidenced by the distance taken from repeated interventions in Latin America and the Caribbean

by the American state since 1945, and indeed since 1975, not to mention the American subversion of governments elsewhere, or the Vietnam War.

Today, the American state's occupation of Iraq, precisely because it is so flagrantly imperial and is so openly connected to a doctrine that expresses the broader purposes of establishing neoliberal capitalist order on a global scale, has evoked an unprecedented balance of popular opinion against what the US is doing on a similar global scale, including within the capitalist core states. This is especially significant because since the American empire can only rule through other states, the greatest danger to it is that the states within its orbit will be rendered illegitimate by virtue of their articulation to the imperium. To be sure, only a fundamental change in class and structure within each of these states can bring about a disarticulation from the empire, but the political space may now be seen as opening up for the kind of mobilisation from below that can eventually lead to this.

Notes

- 1 This chapter is based on a paper presented at the BISA Marxism and IR workshop on 'The War on Terrorism and American Empire after the Cold War' in London, September 2003. It was originally published in a much longer version, under the title of 'Global Capitalism and American Empire' in Leo Panitch and Colin Leys (eds) *The New Imperial Challenge: The Socialist Register 2004*, London: Merlin Press, 2003.
- 2 See Giovanni Arrighi, *The Geometry of Imperialism*, London: NLB, 1978; and Prabhat Patnaik, 'Whatever Happened to Imperialism?' *Monthly Review*, Vol. 42, No. 6 (November 1990), pp. 1–6.
- 3 Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000, p. xiv, emphasis in text. See our review essay, 'Gems and Baubles in Empire', *Historical Materialism*, No. 10 (2002), pp. 17–43. Our own concern to develop a new historical materialist theorization predates Hardt and Negri's book. See L. Panitch, 'The New Imperial State', *New Left Review*, Vol. II, No. 2 (March/April 2000), pp. 5–20.
- 4 Philip McMichael, 'Revisiting the Question of the Transnational State: A Comment on William Robinson's "Social Theory and Globalization"', *Theory and Society*, Vol. 30 (2001), p. 202.
- 5 Perry Anderson, 'Force and Consent', *New Left Review*, No. 17 (September/October 2002), p. 24.
- 6 Quoted in William Appleman Williams, *Empire as a Way of Life*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1980, p. 61.
- 7 Gareth Stedman Jones, 'The Specificity of US Imperialism', *New Left Review* No. 60 (first series) (March/April 1970), p. 65.
- 8 Anderson, op. cit., p. 25.
- 9 See Leo Panitch, 'Class and Dependency in Canadian Political Economy', *Studies in Political Economy*, Vol. 6 (Autumn 1980), pp. 7–34.
- 10 Stedman Jones, op. cit., p. 63.
- 11 Quoted in G. Achcar, *The Clash of Barbarisms*, New York: Monthly Review Press, 2002, p. 96.
- 12 Letter to Duncan Grant, quoted in Nicholas Fraser, 'More Than Economist', *Harper's Magazine* (November 2001), p. 80. The issue here, of course, was the American state's refusal to forgive Allied war debts, with all the consequences this entailed for the imposition of heavy German reparations payments. See Michael

- Hudson's *Super Imperialism: The Origins and Fundamentals of US World Dominance*, London: Pluto, 2003, Chapter 1.
- 13 Brian Waddell, 'Corporate Influence and World War II: Resolving the New Deal Political Stalemate', *Journal of Political History*, Vol. 11, No. 3 (1999), p. 2.
- 14 'An American Proposal', *Fortune* (May 1942), pp. 59–63.
- 15 Martin Shaw, *Theory of the Global State*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- 16 Peter Gowan, 'The American Campaign for Global Sovereignty', in Leo Panitch and Colin Leys (eds) *Socialist Register 2003*, London: Merlin Press, 2002, p. 5.
- 17 See Raymond Aron, *The Imperial Republic: The United States and the World 1945–1973*, Cambridge, MA: Winthrop, 1974, especially pp. 168 and 217; and Nicos Poulantzas, *Classes in Contemporary Capitalism*, London: NLB, 1974, especially pp. 39 and 57.
- 18 Poulantzas, op. cit., p. 73. And see Robert Cox, *Production, Power and World Order*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1987, especially p. 254.
- 19 Quoted in Williams, op. cit., p. 189.
- 20 Poulantzas, op. cit., p. 87.
- 21 *Report of the President on US Competitiveness*, Washington, DC: Office of Foreign Economic Research, US Department of Labour, September 1980.
- 22 See Gregory Albo, 'The Old and New Economic of Imperialism', in Leo Panitch and Colin Leys (eds) *Socialist Register 2004*, London: Merlin Press, 2003.
- 23 See Sam Gindin and Leo Panitch, 'Rethinking Crisis', *Monthly Review*, Vol. 54, No. 6 (November 2002). Available at <http://www.monthlyreview.org/1102gindin.htm>
- 24 See Leo Panitch, "'The State in a Changing World": Social-Democratizing Global Capitalism?', *Monthly Review*, Vol. 50, No. 5 (October 1998). Available at <http://www.monthlyreview.org/1098pan.htm>
- 25 Donald Sassoon, *One Hundred Years of Socialism*, London: I. B. Taurus, 1996, p. 207.
- 26 *Financial Times*, 26 March 2003.
- 27 Preface to the French and German editions of *Imperialism, The Highest Stage of Capitalism*, in *Selected Works*, Volume I, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1970, p. 674.
- 28 Compare W. Ruigrok and R. van Tulder, *The Logic of International Restructuring*, London: Routledge, 1995 (especially Chapters 6 and 7) against W. I. Robinson, 'Beyond Nation-State Paradigms', *Sociological Forum*, Vol. 13, No. 4 (1998), pp. 561–94; and see the debate on Robinson's 'Towards a Global Ruling Class?' *Science and Society*, Vol. 64, No. 1 (2000) in the 'Symposium' of that journal, Vol. 65, No. 4 (2001–2), pp. 464–508.
- 29 The argument here is much further elaborated in L. Panitch and S. Gindin 'American Imperialism and Euro-capitalism', *Studies in Political Economy*, No. 71/72 (Autumn 2003/Winter 2004), pp. 7–38.
- 30 John Grahl, 'Globalized Finance: The Challenge to the Euro', *New Left Review*, No. 8 (March/April 2001), p. 44.
- 31 See Peter Gowan, 'Making Sense of NATO's War on Yugoslavia', in Leo Panitch and Colin Leys (eds) *Socialist Register 2000*, London: Merlin Press, 1999.
- 32 W. A. Hay and H. Sicherman, 'Europe's Rapid Reaction Force: What, Why, And How?' *Foreign Policy Research Institute*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (February 2001). Available at <http://www.fpri.org/ww/0202.200102.haysicherman.europerapidreaction.html>
- 33 *Economist*, 27 May 2003.
- 34 See Dan Bousfield, 'Export-Led Development and Imperialism: A Response to Burkett and Hart-Landsberg', *Historical Materialism*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (2003), pp. 147–60. The counter-argument, in terms of Japan's 'leadership from behind', was best set out in G. Arrighi and B. Silver, *Chaos and Governance in the World System*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999.
- 35 See Panitch, 'The New Imperial State'.
- 36 See Peter Gowan, 'The American Campaign for Global Sovereignty', pp. 8–10.

- 37 'The United Nations after the Gulf War: A Promise Betrayed', Stephen Lewis interviewed by Jim Wurst, *World Policy Journal* (Summer 1991), pp. 539–49.
- 38 See Thomas P. M. Barnett, 'The Pentagon's New Map: It Explains Why We're Going to War and Why We'll Keep Going to War', *Esquire* (March 2003). Available on the US Naval War College website at <http://www.nwc.navy.mil/newrules/ThePentagonsNewMap.htm>

2 The logic of American power in the international capitalist order

Simon Bromley

The United States strategy and power

It is a commonplace that the United States now exercises something close to a global monopoly over the international use of force and, moreover, that this state of affairs is likely to persist for some considerable time. It is much less clear, however, just what this fact signifies for the conduct of contemporary international politics and even for the future of US grand strategy towards the international capitalist order. For many the Bush administration's 'war on terrorism' is a composite, even if contradictory, attempt to assert permanent US dominance over other states and the system of states as a means of expanding, and policing, a liberal imperialist international capitalist order. 'The primary principle of [US] foreign policy, rooted in Wilsonian idealism and carried over from Clinton to Bush II,' says Noam Chomsky, 'is "*the imperative of America's mission as the vanguard of history, transforming the global order and, in doing so, perpetuating its own dominance*" guided by "*the imperative of military supremacy, maintained in perpetuity and projected globally*".'¹

On this count, the 'war on terror' itself is but the latest in a series of umbrellas under which this project has been pursued since the end of the Cold War. Various names – 'a perpetual war for perpetual peace' (Gore Vidal following Charles Beard), 'a permanent state of war across the globe' (Emmanuel Todd), an 'infinite war' that is 'without end' (Ellen Meiksins Wood) – it dramatically signifies the unashamed claim to global leadership and exclusive status that has long been at the core of American self- and national identity and foreign policy. Similarly, the motivations have been construed in a variety of ways: to sustain the military-industrial complex within the United States; to bolster a wider domestic, right-wing and nationalist agenda; to visit exemplary terror in punitive expeditions; to effect regime change in 'rogue' states; or to discipline allies and (potential) regional competitors – in each case, however, 'the overriding objective is to demonstrate and consolidate US domination over the system of multiple states'.² And while some have contended that the empire over which this power seeks to hold sway is a deterritorialised, globalised field of *economic* and *cultural* power (Hardt and Negri), most sober observers insist that it is nevertheless an

‘empire that must be administered by institutions and powers which do indeed have territorial boundaries’, that is, an order of *politically independent nation-states*.³ Indeed, it is also something of a commonplace that the *differentia specifica* of US capitalist imperialism is that it is exercised indirectly through, between and among states that maintain their *de jure* sovereignty, rather than through direct – that is, colonial – imposition. It is an empire fully attuned to a post-colonial world.

These elements of common understanding conceal a range of important differences of interpretation and some unresolved questions. Is US grand strategy aimed at a classically offensive realist posture, designed to increase its essentially military and coercive power within the system of states, as a means of perpetuating its role as the sole global power and forestalling the emergence of any regional powers that can challenge that pre-eminence?⁴ Or is it, rather, that it is ‘this endless *possibility* of war that imperial capital [that is, capital that operates within and between the developed capitalist states] needs to sustain its hegemony over the global system of multiple states’?⁵ And if it is the latter, how does ‘imperial capital’ relate to US capital – where, if anywhere, are the inter-imperial rivalries now? – and how do both relate to the geopolitics of the United States? Is the military pre-eminence of the United States a precondition for the hegemony of imperial capital over the post-colonial states-system?

And behind these questions lurks another: what are the sources of US power and how does it operate in an international capitalist economy and system of nation-states? Both realists and many Marxists are prone to take military unipolarity as an all-encompassing fact about world politics. For realists this is to be expected, since realism contends that the overriding goal of great powers is to maximise their share of world power and the ultimate currency of power among states is relative military capability. But for Marxists the argument takes a different form: either a claim that uni-polarity in effect produces a form of US super-imperialism as a means of disciplining potential inter-imperialist rivalries, or an argument about the function of exemplary violence in disciplining recalcitrant states.⁶

Others are less impressed by US power *tout ensemble* and less confident about the fungibility of military power. It has largely fallen to the non-Marxist analysts to point out the inherent limitations of military power in a post-colonial world in which economic power is dispersed – and fast dispersing – as never before: Michael Mann writes of an ‘incoherent empire’ that is incapable of producing durable *political* rule or even widespread economic order; Emmanuel Todd charts the sharp economic and demographic constraints of US global power and speaks of a ‘theatrical micromilitarism’ that is less and less convincing; Joseph Nye and other liberals point to myriad ways in which the exercise of coercive power (‘hard’ power) undermines the role of the United States as a target of imitation and pole of attraction (‘soft’ power) and the ways that multilateral arrangements can serve to augment as well as limit US power; a host of conservative critics question the domestic sustainability of unilateral militarism and

bemoan the adverse role of special interests in the making (and frustrating) of US foreign policy; and Niall Ferguson laments the ways in which the nature of American domestic politics precludes a coherent imperial foreign policy.⁷

In my view, Marxist analyses would do well to attend to some of these issues. Surely the fundamental fact about the international capitalist economy in the post-colonial world of nation-states after the Second World War is that capitalist development and the circuits of capital that sustain its expanded reproduction are ever more dispersed across the globe and ever more connected across territories, such that the logic of contemporary capital accumulation and technological innovation is less and less under American control. Moreover, for all its efforts to sustain military pre-eminence, this diffusion of distributive economic power has been a guiding ambition of US foreign policy and it has always been recognised that, as the leading liberal capitalist power, the United States is uniquely incapable of containing these developments. Indeed, as Emmanuel Todd rightly says, underlying all serious American geopolitical analysis since the end of the Second World War has been a haunting vision ‘of an America that, far from being invincible, must cope with *the inexorable reduction of its power within a world of rising populations and economic development*’.⁸ Put another way, it was always envisaged that the long-run decline of US economic preponderance was both cause and consequence of its attempt to transform the global order. It was precisely because relative economic decline was seen as inevitable that the imperative to transform the rest of the world in America’s image was so strong.

Equally pertinent are the questions of the ways in which the domestic political economy of the United States impacts on the process and outcomes of foreign policy-making and the sheer recalcitrance of the vast mass of world politics. Todd may go too far in the opposite direction but there is considerable truth when he writes:

If we want to understand what is happening, we must absolutely lay aside the idea of an America acting on the basis of a global plan that has been rationally thought through and methodically applied. American foreign policy has a direction, but it is about as directed as the current of a river ... Things are no doubt moving but without the least bit of thinking or mastery. This is now the American way – the way of a superpower, there is no question, but one powerless to maintain control over a world that is too big and whose diversity is too strong for it.⁹

Many radical critics accept much of this but argue that this is precisely why the United States increasingly resorts to unilateral and coercive means and policies. It is ‘not clear’, says David Harvey, ‘that the US will follow the rules’ of the open, liberal post-war order: America has ‘given up on hegemony through consent and resorts more and more to domination through coercion’, in large part precisely because the ‘capitalist logic ... points to the draining away of economic power from the United States’.¹⁰ As super-imperialist leadership is eroded, so inter-imperialist emulation and rivalry beckon. In this respect, the

prevention and pre-emption of a 'peer competitor' – that is, China – and a stranglehold over the life-blood of the world economy – Gulf oil – are core inter-imperialist objectives.

Not only does [the invasion of Iraq] constitute an attempt to control the global oil spigot and hence the global economy through domination over the Middle East. It also constitutes a powerful US military bridgehead on the Eurasian land mass which, when taken together with its gathering alliances from Poland down through the Balkans, yields it a powerful geostrategic position in Eurasia with at least the potential to disrupt any consolidation of a Eurasian power.¹¹

There is clearly much that is right with this analysis: it is, after all, the official version of US foreign policy as codified by Brzezinski and many others. But it harks back to a world – of inter-imperialist rivalries – that has gone and it is, I think, insufficiently attuned to the contemporary 'spatial fix' of capitalist development. For Harvey, historically specific, spatial agglomerations of capital necessarily give rise to uneven development and 'regionality' so that 'inter-regional competition and specialization in and among these regional economies consequently becomes a fundamental feature of how capitalism works'.¹² I don't want to quibble about the word 'fundamental' but it is surely even more important that each of these regions now subsists and depends for its reproduction on increasingly open and integrated – though not interdependent – international markets. As Marx put it in the *Grundrisse*:

while capital must on one side strive to tear down every spatial barrier to intercourse, i.e., to exchange, and conquer the whole earth for its market, it strives on the other side to annihilate this space with time ... The result is: the tendentially and potentially general development of the forces of production ... as a basis; likewise, the universality of intercourse, hence the world market as a basis.¹³

Today, the borders of capitalist states are, at least in the more open liberal economies, no longer 'fixed boundaries or barriers' to the flows of capital; they are indeed increasingly open and permeable to such flows, but this mobility of capital across borders presupposes the definition, regulation and enforcement of rights of contract and rights to property, and much else besides, *within* and, crucially, *among* many territorially ordered centres of political power. It is the increasingly liberal codification of these rights and contracts within a growing number of capitalist states, and, perhaps even more importantly, the coordinated processes of aligning one such jurisdiction with another and others, which makes possible the very global mobility of capital that has created the 'world market as a basis'.

In the contemporary epoch this means that the logic of capitalist accumulation, innovation and competition increasingly depends on *many* states, such that

each state – including increasingly even the United States – is compelled to take responsibility for managing its domestic order in ways that sustain the international conditions of capitalist development. It also implies that the regional competition that Harvey highlights is primarily about the terms on which the uneven international circulation of capital is to take place. That is to say, underlying the sound and fury of the competitive game is a wider common interest. To be sure, there are no guarantees that common interests will be realised and the nexus among the competitors is more asymmetric than interdependent – after all, interdependence is just mutual dependence and mutual does not imply equal – but all have a primary interest in an increasingly co-ordinated liberal capitalist international order.

The central analytical question at stake here is this: what is the relation between the coordinated liberal capitalist order and the collective empowerment of states and capital thereby promoted, on the one hand, and the hierarchy of domination and subordination among its constituent states, on the other? The central claim of what follows is that US military pre-eminence can only be effectively parlayed into a stable and durable *political* leadership when it advances the coordinated interests of an expanding, yet still imperial, liberal capitalist order. Of course, US military power can be exercised unilaterally in certain circumstances, but it will only contribute to US hegemonic leadership when it addresses the common interests of the dominant centres of capital accumulation and their international economic relationships.

In the light of this central claim, I will argue that the Bush doctrine – broadly speaking, that a unilateral and coercive exercise of US power, especially military power, can reshape the world to America's advantage such that others will follow its continued leadership – represents a fundamental misreading of the realities of US power, globally considered. And, if it were ever implemented consistently across the field of global geopolitics, the strategy would be bound to fail. In fact, rather than seeing the Bush doctrine as a general roadmap for US grand strategy, it is probably better seen as an opportunistic response to the events of 11 September 2001 and a reckless attempt to deal with some very specific, but real and long-standing, problems of US strategy in the Middle East. Reading US strategy *in toto* through the optic of military uni-polarity – in particular through the 'war on terror' and specifically the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq – is to get things the wrong way around. *Pace* Alex Callinicos, Peter Gowan and David Harvey, while the war against Iraq was of course in some sense about the control of oil, it was not primarily an inter-imperialist manoeuvre.¹⁴ And *pace* Ellen Meiksins Wood, exemplary militarism cannot function as a general disciplinary mechanism in a world of many states. Leaving aside the very real question of whether the United States is capable of sustaining a coherent grand strategy at all, I conclude that coordinated economic multi-polarity is as much the key to the future of the international capitalist order in a system of many states as is military uni-polarity.

Coordinated power in a liberal capitalist international order

In order to address these questions, we need to recognise something that has been implicit in what has been said above: namely, that the uneven distribution of economic and military resources across the world of capitalist states underpins relations of power of two fundamentally different kinds. In the first place, there is what I will call distributive or coercive power. This is the notion of power implicit in realist balance of power (and hegemonic stability) thinking and in the Marxist literature on inter-imperial rivalries and super-imperialism. Distributive power is the capacity of one party to get another to comply with its goals; power relations are hierarchical relations of super- and sub-ordination; there is a given distribution of power in which some have more at the expense of others having less, and power operates by imposing costs on others (or by means of a credible threat to do so).

And second, there is what I will call collective power. This is the notion of power implicit in the idea that states have common interests that can be advanced by forms of cooperation. Collective power is a property of a group of cooperating actors, in which the total ability to effect favourable outcomes is increased, over and above that which could be achieved by each acting independently. Collective power works, not by imposing costs on some, but by producing gains for all. This is the notion of power implicit in the Gramscian idea that hegemony is a pole of attraction, that there are benefits in coordinating multiple poles of capitalist power, and that international order is basically ultra-imperialist.¹⁵ (These two forms of power are often difficult to disentangle for two reasons: first and most straightforwardly, the gains from collective empowerment are often distributed unequally based on different bargaining power; and second, what looks like a voluntary exercise of collective power may, in fact, represent a response to an anterior – and perhaps hidden – exercise of distributive power.)

The distinction between distributive and collective power is not to be confused with that between military and economic means of exercising power. There is, of course, a sense in which military means of exercising power are always distributive for some, since they involve imposing costs on others (or at least a credible threat to do so), but military means can be turned to collective account, at least for some against others. This is precisely how US military power functioned during the Cold War as far as its capitalist allies were concerned. Economic power need not be distributive for any in a wide class of cases.

After the Cold War

During the Cold War, two different objectives of the United States – first, ‘making the world safe’ for capitalism, and second, ensuring its hegemony within the capitalist world – reinforced one another. The first ambition involved containing the power of Russia in Europe and Asia and of China in Asia, including the ability of these communist states to support revolution outside their borders, among the

anti-colonial struggles in the developing world. In pursuit of this aim, America's capitalist allies were generally willing to follow its political leadership. Since the collapse of communism, the project of making the world safe for capitalism has gone global, with China and Russia as the biggest potential prizes. What does 'making the world safe' for capitalism now involve? Already, during the Cold War, the economies of Western Europe and Japan grew more rapidly than that of the United States (at least until the latter half of the 1990s), thereby eroding US economic leadership. What, then, might become of the ambition to ensure hegemony within the now much expanded capitalist world?

Is America's role that of a key directive player in an ultra-imperialist order or is it still a super-imperialism capable of disciplining potential inter-imperialist rivals? In both cases, the underlying idea is that the stability of the capitalist world depends upon the performance of certain global political functions – stabilising the periphery, combating transnational ideological challenges, solving conflicts of policy among the leading centres of the capital accumulation – in order to uphold the common interests of different, and potentially rival, capitalist classes and states. Both ultra- and super-imperialism refer to cooperative relations among the leading capitalist powers: but in the former ultra-imperialist case, cooperation results from coordination to mutual advantage; and in the latter super-imperialist case, cooperation is enforced by the superior power of one state such that it eventually ceases to be a form of cooperation at all.

In a powerful defence of the latter view, Peter Gowan describes Washington's pursuit of liberalising pursued since the international economic turmoil of the 1970s and 1980s as a 'global gamble' for world dominance, a Faustian bid to utilise the uni-polar moment following the end of the Cold War to restructure the international political economy in ways that serve the particular interests of the United States, and especially those of the Wall-Street-Treasury axis.¹⁶ In effect, Gowan argues that the end of the Cold War restored the status of US super-imperialism: he highlights what he sees as 'the central fact of contemporary international relations: one single member ... has acquired absolute military dominance over every other state or combination of states on the entire planet'.¹⁷ This military dominance is what imposes unity on the capitalist world, 'whose empire is guarded not by any supra-state authority, but by a single hegemon'.¹⁸ There is, says Gowan, an 'ultra-imperialist project of West Europe' with the added 'super-imperialist twist' of Washington.¹⁹

And while not dissenting from the identification of post-Cold War, military uni-polarity as the moment of coercion in US hegemony, Perry Anderson has recently argued that the 'ultra-imperialist' need for coordination 'can be satisfactorily resolved only by the existence of a superordinate power, capable of imposing discipline on the system as a whole, in the common interests of all parties'.²⁰ He continues:

Such 'imposition cannot be a product of brute force. It must also correspond to a genuine capacity of persuasion – ideally, a form of leadership that can offer the most advanced model of production and culture of its

day, as target of imitation for all others. That is the definition of hegemony, as a *general* unification of the field of capital.²¹

On Anderson's account, this 'target of imitation' is what accounts for the *consensual* nature of the United States's ability to direct the coordination of the capitalist world as a whole, while its military preponderance forms the moment of hegemonic domination. This Gowan–Anderson thesis is surely an important qualification of the standard super-imperialist story.

But we should not overlook the fact and consequences of coordination itself. The fundamental point about coordination is that it is, in the parlance of game theory, a positive-sum process, in which all parties are better off afterwards than in the pre-cooperative status quo. That is to say, all prefer coordination to an absence of coordination, *even if some would have preferred to coordinate differently*. Coordination on unfavourable terms is still better than no coordination at all. As well as US capitalism being a target of imitation for other centres of capitalist power, the coordination of those centres is itself a process by which all benefit.

More specifically, contra the Lenin–Bukharin thesis that continues to underpin notions of (incipient) inter-imperialist rivalries, there are marked differences between the economic competition of many capitals and the political competition of many states. Competition between states – for market shares, for access to internationally mobile capital and for leadership in the field of technological innovation – is not a zero-sum phenomenon in the way that competition between capitals is in any given market, because the overall process of competition, capital accumulation and technological innovation is constantly expanding the size of the market. And in so far as capitalism involves an historically specific privatisation of the relations of production, freeing property relations from fixed territorial bases, it correspondingly fixes the general political aspects of domination in the territorial (national) state. This tends to result in a general subordination of the economy to the rule of law and of money functioning as capital. Its political correlate is the impersonal bureaucratic state also operating according to the rule of law. This separation is a process that is constantly repeated and it is always an object of class struggles, but it provides, in liberal capitalist states, a general framework for accumulation. Moreover, since the liberal state is dependent for its tax base on the tempo of accumulation in the domestic economy as a whole, it is routinely compelled to attend to the general functioning of the economy, both domestically and internationally.

Self-destructive competition among states, potentially ruinous for the system as a whole, remains a standing possibility but it is not the general case. In short, states that are able to uphold broadly liberal forms of economic and political regulation, checking the monopoly, rent-seeking activities of capital, are able to compete with one another to mutual advantage, and, because of this, they have strong incentives to coordinate with one another in order to govern this competition. That is to say, the liberal form of regulating capitalism is as much a project of international management as it is a set of domestic arrangements. Its international elements involve the subordination of key aspects of the external

economic policies of states to individual rights to trade, to ownership and to travel across borders, including the extension of these rights to foreign nationals. Any given state thus becomes a 'local guardian of the world republic of commerce',²² in which states coordinate with one another to ensure mutual gains.

Finally, it is mistaken to assume – as realists and some Marxists such as Anderson do – that such coordination requires a superordinate power 'capable of imposing discipline on the system as a whole, in the common interests of all parties'. Anderson's (and Gowan's) contention is that with *military*, if not economic, hegemony unambiguously restored by the collapse of Soviet power, the United States is such a power. But while the existence of a superordinate power may make coordination easier, there is no reason why a multi-polar system of capitalist power centres cannot coordinate on common policies and institutions to realise a range of mutual gains. In the absence of a superordinate power able to impose discipline on the system as a whole, the coordinated outcome is a function of the bargaining power of the parties concerned, measured by the degree of their preference for the pre-cooperative status quo.

This is not, in any sense, to deny the fact that in the contemporary world 'domination', or force, especially military force, is concentrated – as never before – in the hegemonic power. But it is to question whether this is either necessary or sufficient for inter-capitalist coordination among liberal capitalist states. It is not necessary because if there is scope for coordination – that is, if there are common interests in which being coordinated is better than not being coordinated – then multiple centres can effect the necessary agreements. And it is not sufficient because unless there is scope for coordination, in the sense just defined, then domination does not serve the common interest. Rather, domination becomes a zero-sum game in which one state gains at the expense of another.

The tendency to economic multi-polarity

The historic core of the contemporary capitalist world – Western Europe, North America and Japan – today operates on the basis of a system of states that are partly coordinated with one another to their mutual advantage, organised in networks of international governance whose principal purpose is to enhance the openness of their territories and peoples to the competitive dynamics of capital. This represents a partial consolidation of a liberal capitalist order, within and among the leading capitalist states. It is, of course, a highly asymmetric order, in which there are marked disparities of distributive power, despite the more or less universal maintenance of *de jure* sovereignty. There is, in short, a hierarchy of economic and military power among the constituent states of that coordinated international order. Undoubtedly, US hegemony has played, and continues to play, a key role in bringing this order into being.

However, the very success of the United States in fashioning this order and, hence, the steady expansion of its membership is undermining the *economic* dominance of the US in the world economy. Thus, the world economy is multi-polar

and will become more so in the future, even though the United States has a privileged position because of its technological lead, the scope and depth of its financial markets, the global role of its currency, and the size of its domestic market and the asymmetric integration of the latter with the world market. But the unchallenged position that the US economy enjoyed after the Second World War – technological leadership across all sectors, dominance of world output and unrivalled competitive position on the world market, the international role of the dollar as the only effective currency and the dominant place of US foreign direct investment – has gone for good.

US distributive economic power persists but it is a wasting asset. First and most obviously, there is the sheer size and rate of growth of the US economy, which remain impressive; second, there is the relative insulation of the US economy from events in the rest of the world market as compared with the effects of the US economy on others, though this asymmetry is diminishing; third, there is the distinctive manner in which the internationalisation of US capital has occurred, primarily through foreign investment rather than exports, but other centres of capitalist power are following suit; and fourth, there is the specific form of that internationalisation, a selective and asymmetric form of liberal capitalism based on the relative separation of the economic and political moments of capitalism, but this presupposes a coordinated multi-state international order.

Moreover, it is essential to notice that the third and fourth of these advantages have depended on the construction and reproduction of models of capitalism more or less consistent with US priorities outside the territory of the United States. This was, in part, the legacy of the defeat of rival models of capitalist development in the Second World War, the subsequent role of the US in post-war occupation and reconstruction, and the distributive power associated with US hegemony. But increasingly it rests on the fact that access to the world market is an essential precondition for successful accumulation and, especially, technological innovation for all capital, including US capital. As these processes increasingly incorporate larger and larger elements of the world economy, the first and second advantages of US economic power will diminish, and its third and fourth features will increasingly be shared by others. In short, the governance of the world economy is something that has to be accomplished collectively, if it is to be accomplished at all.

Military uni-polarity undoubtedly confers advantages on the United States that it did not possess during the Cold War, at least not after the Soviet Union attained a rough strategic parity in the early 1970s, but the collapse of bipolarity and, perhaps more importantly, the absence of a clear ideological division defining the fault lines of international politics, renders the purpose of military power more opaque and makes the cost–benefit calculus involved in its exercise immeasurably more complicated. Who is to be deterred from doing what? Who is to be compelled to do what? And how can deterrence and compellence reassure allies when there is no longer a single axis of strategic political competition?

The Gowan–Anderson thesis argues as if US super-imperialism has been effectively restored by military means, such that the level of cooperation among the core capitalist countries can be read as a product of Leninist means. Such an account emphasises the role of political power in shaping the international capitalist order, specifically the military power of the United States. As the consensual basis of US leadership declines – either because of the end of the Cold War or because of a reduced ability to operate as a pole of attraction – its hegemony can be expected to take an increasingly unilateral and predatory form, thereby prompting reactions in other power centres. Gowan says that ‘US policies are tending to conflict with the collective interests of major capitalist centres’,²³

On the other hand, if inter-capitalist relations are, for the most part, closer to those anticipated by Kautsky than Lenin, and if a coordinated liberal order provides benefits to all, even if the United States has greater bargaining power within that order than any other single state, then the role of US military power is much more ambiguous. In these circumstances, while US military power can always be used unilaterally, it will only serve as a means of hegemony when it is used to protect and advance the common interests of the coordinated liberal order.

Expanding the capitalist core

The boundaries of the liberal capitalist world are essentially political, economic and hard to define with any precision but its historic, geographical core has been the transatlantic alliance forged after the Second World War. Among the European states of this order – that is, roughly speaking, the newly expanded membership of the European Union – and those of North America, the generation of collective power plays an important role. (Japan is, of course, strongly integrated into the Atlantic order by virtue of its economic links with the West and its security arrangements with the United States. Thus, Japan is politically, if not geographically, part of this order, but it also has one foot in a rather different configuration of power among the leading Asian states.) In this region, US power in the international system and that of what Gramsci called ‘Americanism’ outside the territory of the United States can be thought of in largely positive-sum terms. Most of the power generated in this arena depends upon cooperation, mutually advancing the interests of all, even if there is hard bargaining to determine the distribution of the gains from that cooperation. Overall, the collective production of power through coordinating the United States with the emulation and replication of liberal capitalism outside America overrides distributive conflicts. In shorthand, Gramsci and Kautsky are better guides to inter-capitalist relations in this region than Bukharin and Lenin.

Unlike the bulk of the transatlantic order, both China and Russia – perhaps like France and Germany in Europe – envisage a long and complicated struggle between American efforts to preserve its uni-polar moment and their desire to hasten the transition to a multi-polar world. However, until such a situation

evolves, neither has anything to gain from directly antagonising the United States. Nor are they likely to forge an alliance hostile to US interests. China and Russia share a long border that constitutes a zone of potential instability and there is scant prospect that either will trust the other to guarantee its security. Moreover, it is far from clear how they could gain from establishing closer links with one another than they have with Washington. On the other hand, aggressive unilateral action by the United States – especially in the Middle East and Central Asia – is likely to enforce a greater degree of (reactive) cooperation between China and Russia.

As yet, forms of capitalism organised along broadly liberal lines, let alone liberal democratic norms of politics, have not sunk deep roots in China and Russia – nor is there much indication that they will in the foreseeable future. Correspondingly, the level and depth of economic cooperation and coordination among the United States, China and Russia do not match those found in the transatlantic arena. However, China has now joined the World Trade Organisation and Russia has expressed an ambition to do likewise. Assuming that China and Russia integrate smoothly into the existing institutional framework of the capitalist world, hegemony cannot rest on the kinds of economic preponderance that the United States enjoyed in respect of its European and Japanese allies on the eve of the Second World War. US distributive economic power can only continue to decline in this scenario.

As with Western Europe and Japan after the Second World War, US policy will have little option but to aim at the maximum reproduction of the economic aspects of Americanism outside the United States, and at keeping the US economy at the leading edge of productivity and technological development (even as its share of world income declines). Its economic power in relation to these other centres of capital accumulation and innovation will increasingly come from the coordination of the US economy with these economic competitors. Already, US–China macroeconomic policy relationships, and trade and investment integration, are a key factor in the overall regulation of the international economy. Economically speaking, the US has no option but to follow the logic of Kautsky rather than Lenin. Inter-imperialist rivalry is a negative-sum game, a default option of last resort in the economics of the capitalist world.

Militarily speaking, however, the uni-polar moment offers a temptation to attempt to freeze the current position of US superiority for the foreseeable future, to maintain its distributive military edge over all other powers. This is what the Revolution in Military Affairs and the National Missile Defence programme are all about. At present, US military strategy aims to prevent the emergence of any regional power capable of matching its military might. One element of that strategy is continued investment in technological innovation in military affairs as well as the maintenance of forces on land, at sea and in the air (and in time in space) that are so far in advance of those of other powers that they see little point in attempting to compete with the United States. As of now, neither Russia nor China, let alone Europe, is seeking to compete with the United States in any of these domains and none is currently capable of doing so.

The most they can do is to maintain a nuclear deterrent against direct attack. This is likely to be the case for a generation or more.

The other element of military preponderance is open access, by means of markets and corporations, armoured by forward-basing and military cooperation agreements, to key strategic resources that underpin economic and military power. China and India have a growing dependence on Middle East oil, and the largest expansion of oil consumption over the next several decades will be in Asia. On current trends, an increasing proportion of world oil exports will be accounted for by the Persian Gulf region, over one-half and perhaps as much as two-thirds by 2020. Maintaining influence in the Middle East, and countering the influence of Russia, China and Iran in Central Asia is thus becoming an increasingly important element in US thinking. Of course, this is in effect an extension of the Carter Doctrine of 1980, attuned to new circumstances.

The United States will have to reconcile its economic and military ambitions. One way in which the choices have been debated is in terms of whether to treat Russia and China as ‘strategic partners’ in the project of managing the global capitalist order, that is, to enlist them as partners in the production of collective power, or to deal with them as ‘strategic competitors’ that threaten that order, as potential adversaries in clashes of distributive power. Until now, and for a while yet, the obvious answer is to do both. The important point to understand, however, is that at some point this will involve a strategic choice, in a situation in which the decisions of the United States, China and Russia are interdependent. Even the much (selectively) quoted 1992 *Defense Planning Guidance* about preventing the emergence of a new rival noted that:

There are three additional aspects to this objective. First, the US must show the leadership necessary to establish and protect a new order that holds the promise of convincing potential competitors that they need not aspire to a greater role or pursue a more aggressive posture to protect their legitimate interests. Second, in the non-defense areas, we must account sufficiently for the interests of the advanced industrial nations to discourage them from challenging our leadership or seeking to overturn the established political and economic order. Finally, we must maintain the mechanisms for deterring competitors from even aspiring to a larger regional or global role.²⁴

In truth, treating China only as a strategic competitor would be tantamount to a new policy of containment and it makes little sense. On the one hand, it is not obvious that the United States possesses the distributive power to stall Chinese industrialisation to any significant degree. And on the other hand, there is no evidence that Western Europe, Japan and Russia could be brought into a collective alliance directed to such an end. If anything, US hostility to China’s emerging great-power status would likely drive China and Russia closer together, as its attempted dominance would look increasingly threatening to both. In short, for as long as China continues its integration into the world economy, the United States really has no option but to accommodate the rise of its power.

Policing the periphery

The ‘war on terrorism’, declared by President George W. Bush in the aftermath of the attacks on America of 11 September 2001, is shorthand for a complex set of problems that defy easy summary. Many analysts took issue with the use of the word ‘war’, because the perpetrators of the acts were not states but part of a transnational network, a cellular structure that crossed a number of territories on a clandestine basis, and because there was no obvious way in which the war aims could be specified and measured. Terrorism is, after all, a tactic – the continuation of politics by other means – and how can one fight a tactic? Other commentators saw the actions of al-Qaeda as an example of an ‘asymmetrical conflict’, that is, a conflict whose nature is determined by the marked lack of symmetry in the power of the contending forces. President Bush’s response seemed determined, if anything, to increase this asymmetry and to use a *criminal* act as an expedient for a mobilisation for *war*.

The immediate background to the rise of al-Qaeda was the civil war in Afghanistan. The rise to power of the pro-Soviet People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) in 1978 provoked a civil war as significant elements of the Muslim society resisted its secularising and socialist measures. The decision of the United States to arm the mujahidin was taken, according to President Carter’s National Security Adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski, in the summer of 1979 in order to ‘induce a Soviet military intervention’. Brzezinski later said that: ‘The day that the Soviets officially crossed the border [24 December 1979], I wrote to President Carter, saying: “We now have the opportunity of giving to the USSR its Vietnam War”.’²⁵ Moreover, when the USSR finally withdrew from Afghanistan in 1988, on condition that the West and Pakistan stop supporting the mujahidin, the Reagan administration illegally continued such support. After years’ more civil war, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia created and financed the Taliban and supported their conquest of power between 1994 and 1996.

Al-Qaeda was created during this Western-, Saudi- and Pakistani-backed operation to finance and organise the mujahidin’s resistance to communism in Afghanistan and to recruit (mainly Arab) Muslims from abroad to fight in that cause. Once the Taliban came to power in Kabul (1996), they formed a close alliance with Osama bin Laden’s al-Qaeda organisation – indeed, in some respects al-Qaeda was the military arm of the Taliban.²⁶ However, while the Saudis had been willing to provide support for the fight against the PDPA, they were not prepared to accede to demands for a strict Islamism of the Saudi state and, in particular, the demand that the United States withdraw from the Arabian peninsula. This would have amounted to a transfer of control of the Saudi state from the monarchy to Islamist forces. And so, after helping to evict the Soviets from Afghanistan, al-Qaeda turned their attention to their erstwhile Western backers who were also engaged in the military support of the monarchical regime in Saudi Arabia. The result was explosive, as Fred Halliday explains:

Three elements therefore came together: a reassertion of the most traditional strands in Islamic thinking, a brutalization and militarization of the

Islamic groups themselves, and a free-floating transnational army of fighters drawing support from Pakistan, the Arab world, south-east Asia and Chechnya with its base in Afghanistan. In the context of the greater west Asian crisis, and the revolt against the states of the region, as well as their western backers, there now emerged an organized and militant challenge.²⁷

By its very nature, asymmetric conflict is extremely hard to deter. In particular, violent asymmetric conflict carried out by clandestine adversaries is almost impossible to deter. The operation of the balance of power and the logic of deterrence presuppose conflicts of interest as well as a common recognition of certain shared objectives – namely, survival. The logic of deterrence is, says Thomas Schelling, ‘as inapplicable to a situation of pure and complete antagonism of interest as it is to the case of pure and complete common interest’.²⁸ Faced with an adversary that has an absolute hostility, that is prepared to risk all, deterrence is largely irrelevant. As Gilbert Achcar has argued, in this situation ‘the causes of “absolute hostility” must be reduced or eliminated, in such a way that a “common interest” emerges as a possibility’.²⁹

One way of reducing the hostility of al-Qaeda would have been to address the issues that provoked its hostility in the first place, broadly US foreign policy in the Middle East and, in particular, its military support to the regime in Saudi Arabia. Another response was to try to eliminate al-Qaeda. If the asymmetry of US power was producing absolute antagonists that could not be deterred, then why not use that very same power to destroy the adversary, even before it attacked, and engineer a new situation capable of producing some minimal common interests? This is the core of the doctrine of pre-emption, as some in Washington came to believe that both the destruction of the enemy *and* addressing the issues that provoked the hostility could be achieved by one and the same means.

Since al-Qaeda was, in effect, the military arm of the Taliban government in Afghanistan, the latter was directly implicated in the attacks of 11 September. The precondition for treating the attacks as a criminal matter – that the state from which the attackers operated was prepared to uphold international law – arguably did not obtain. In any case, this was no part of Washington’s agenda and, in truth, there was precious little international support for such a strategy. Nor were the war aims of the United States unlimited. They may not have been wholly clear, but destroying al-Qaeda’s ability to operate inside a state that itself repudiated all international responsibilities was not especially opaque. And although the war against al-Qaeda has not been fully successful, there is little doubt that its capacity for organised activity was dramatically curtailed by its eviction from Afghanistan; the Taliban government that had existed in symbiosis with al-Qaeda and allowed its territory to be a haven for transnational terrorism was routed; the salafist–jihadist elements in the Muslim world have received a decisive setback, notwithstanding the post-invasion turmoil in Iraq; a new administration was established in Kabul that had some chance of ending the long-running Afghan civil war; and the United States was able to establish a

(temporary?) military presence in resource-rich Central Asia. There are no guarantees that any of this will prove durable, but from the point of view of the United States it is hard to see that it is a worse situation than that which existed prior to 11 September 2001. In that sense, those who questioned whether it was a war that could be won were on shaky ground: it was a war, and from Washington's viewpoint a major battle has been won.

As far as Iraq was concerned, the question for the United States was whether continued deterrence made better sense than pre-emption. (Remember that 'regime change' had been Washington's and Congress's policy since 1998.) It is perhaps not surprising that the United States believed that what was done in Afghanistan could also be done in Iraq, for all the differences between the two cases. Strategically, the only real difference was that the action in Afghanistan could be presented as a defensive response, whereas that in Iraq was clearly pre-emptive. Important though this difference may be, the underlying rationale was, I believe, broadly similar: namely, state- or nation-building. In order to see why pre-emption was in some ways an attractive alternative, it is necessary to situate Iraq in relation to the broader role of the United States in the Middle East.

Ever since the Iranian Revolution of 1979, US policy in the Middle East had been based on a series of contradictory commitments that increasingly undermined its ability to play a directive role. Its hegemony had increasingly relied on its military power. Yet the lesson of the Iranian Revolution was that this was an unsustainable strategy in the long run. Prior to the second US-led war against Iraq (March/April 2003), its policy in the Middle East comprised hostile relations with Iran, a failed attempt permanently to disarm Iraq (because of a collapse of support from Russia and France on the Security Council) and support for Saudi Arabia and the smaller Gulf states that was generating considerable opposition among many Arab Muslims, to say nothing of its support for the hard-line policies of Israel in its conflict with the Palestinians. There was, in short, precious little basis on which the United States could construct even a minimal set of common interests with the region.

Between the end of the Gulf War of 1991 and 11 September 2001, US policy towards Iraq had been one of containment and deterrence. This was based on two principles: UN-monitored disarmament and economic sanctions. By the late 1990s, these had stalled and demonstrably failed to achieve their objectives. (The Russians and Serbs, for example, had been active in rebuilding Iraq's air defences; the French and Russian governments were more concerned with commercial links to Baghdad than completing the disarmament process; and there was growing international criticism of the disastrous effects of sanctions, as implemented by Saddam Hussein, on the civilian population of Iraq.)

In the light of the failure to find either the weapons or the links to al-Qaeda that were the official justification for the war, it is as well to remember that the core neoconservative case for the forcible removal of Saddam Hussein – that is, on the grounds that America's long-term position of dual containment of Iraq and Iran and support for the increasingly fragile and brittle polity in Saudi Arabia were unsustainable at acceptable political cost – was advanced explicitly

on the basis that his regime probably did *not* have 'weapons of mass destruction'. This is what made it politically and militarily feasible to 'finish the job'. If Saddam Hussein ever regained such weapons in significant quantities and a realistic capability of using them, it might well be too late.³⁰

A new start in Iraq, however, might provide the beginnings of a strategy for dealing with what Halliday has called the 'west Asian crisis', a series of crises affecting the region that encompasses the Arab states of the Middle East, Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan. The new logic of US policy thus became pre-emption, in order to establish common interests, by means of 'nation-building'. The overwhelming military power of the United States gave it the confidence to regard pre-emption as favourable to a messy combination of containment and deterrence. Reconstituting states that are able to operate successfully within, rather than against, the prevailing capitalist order of coordinated sovereignty was the prize. If Saddam could be removed from Iraq, US troops could be withdrawn from Saudi Arabia, thereby putting pressure on, but also giving space for, the monarchy to address its domestic opposition; Syria and Iran could be pressured into withdrawing support from radical Palestinian factions that undermined the ability of the 'moderate' leadership to commit meaningfully to peaceful negotiations with Israel; and a new round of the Palestinian–Israeli 'peace process' could begin.

The alternative, as viewed from Washington, was: a continuation of hit-and-run guerrilla tactics against terrorist cells as and when they could be found; economically ruinous and otherwise ineffective sanctions, and a policy of dual containment – of Iraq and Iran – that had already lost the determined support of key Security Council members and, in the case of Iran, lost the support of the European Union and even the United States's closest imperial ally, the United Kingdom; continued support by Syria and Iran for radical Palestinian elements; and a general disaffection across the Arab, and increasingly the Islamic, world. In this context, Iraq presented a golden opportunity. What made this particular region of crisis a candidate for this approach was, of course, its strategic and resource significance: the oil and gas resources of the Middle East and Central Asia are a vital economic interest for the dominant capitalist powers (and increasingly for China and India too). And what made the new approach something more than a reckless gamble was the overwhelming military preponderance of the United States after the end of the Cold War.

In the absence of states capable of and willing to coordinate with the capitalist core, the United States had no operating principles to guide its interventions, save the obvious attempt to control or protect strategically important sources of raw materials and, by extension, the regimes that facilitated access to them. This was an expensive and risky policy of crisis management based on regimes that were liable, at best, to generate more opposition to US interests, and at worst, to be overthrown by even less palatable forces. It was not a realistic basis for a durable international order that guaranteed US economic interests. Pre-emption, followed by nation-building, appeared to offer the possibility of constructing the requisite stability and common interests.

That, at least, was the theory. What this might mean in practice and how, or even if, it can be implemented is not at all clear. It is imperialism more in the manner of Marx and Luxemburg – that is, the variable political moment of incorporation into international markets – than Bukharin and Lenin. It is an attempt to impose a new dispensation of power, such that the resulting states and economies can be successfully coordinated with the rest of the capitalist world, rather than a prize to be won by the United States at the expense of rival core imperialisms. It is imperialism but it is not, primarily, inter-imperialist rivalry.

Thus far, its bearers have been the military forces of the United States and the United Kingdom. Even if Afghanistan and Iraq are not a one-off enterprise (some kind of military action against Syria and Iran cannot be discounted), a composite response made possible by the events of 11 September 2001 and the corresponding (yet probably temporary) shifts of public opinion in the United States itself, this turn of policy does not represent a significant departure, let alone a new doctrine for global order. The United States's definition of self-defence to include, in certain circumstances, pre-emptive attacks may have shocked the pieties of the UN, but if this is an innovation at all, it was only one in the *declared* politics of military strategy consonant with a strand of US thinking that has existed since considerations of pre-emptive nuclear strikes against the Soviet Union in the early 1950s and the string of interventions in the South throughout the Cold War.

Conclusions

Given the nuclear revolution and the end of colonial rule, the direct and indirect utility of military dominance to compel adversaries is much diminished compared with the widespread use of great power military force prior to the Second World War, though the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq demonstrate its continuing importance in imperial settings. But outside of a marked deterioration in inter-capitalist relations, wars against China, India and Brazil, for example, are not feasible, even for the United States. Ellen Meiksins Wood's 'infinite war' is not directed at them, even as the United States seeks to maintain its military uni-polarity. What about the indirect uses of military power to deter enemies and reassure allies? A comparison with the position during the Cold War is instructive in this regard. America's NATO allies (and Japan) were willing to defer to its political leadership of the capitalist world on many issues because they reckoned that its military containment of the Soviet Union served their *collective* interests. For the same reason, if America's military power were to be enlisted in purposes that are not recognised as based on a collective interest, if it comes to be seen as serving the self-interest of the United States alone, then it will cease to generate the consensual leadership that has served it so well in the past. The collapse of the Soviet Union, and with it the advent of the uni-polar moment, massively frees the hand for the use of US military power, as Gowan, Anderson and others have rightly insisted, but, for the same reason, it

correspondingly reduces the role of that power as a lever of integration *within* the capitalist world unless it serves genuinely common interests.

For example, if the revolution in military affairs and a successful national missile defence programme were effectively to decouple the security of the United States from the balance of power in Europe and Asia, that is, if the United States were able to retreat from its continental commitments and seek security in more unilateral ways, then it would be unable to command the political leadership of the capitalist world that it has treasured since 1945. In short, the price of that leadership is a forward commitment to maintaining stability in Europe and Asia. But that stability has to be one that genuinely accommodates the interests of Europe and Asia, not one that merely serves the self-interest of the United States.

The trick for the United States is, as Stephen Walt has argued, to keep the rest of the world ‘off-balance’, to stop other powers (individually or collectively) balancing against it, to coordinate so as to prevent inter-imperialist rivalries from developing. Some Washington neoconservatives argue that uni-polarity means that the United States has no need to act strategically. Some Marxists agree. In Walt’s summary, these arguments say that:

So long as the United States maintains a healthy economic advantage and a global military presence that is second to none, other states will not dare to balance against it. Potential rivals will be unwilling to invite the ‘focused enmity’ of the United States and key US allies like Japan and Germany will prefer to free-ride on US protection rather than trying to create stronger military forces of their own.³¹

This is a prescription of perpetual dominance for perpetual leadership, but is it realistic? Or, rather, given that it is realistic, militarily speaking, how is the distributive power based on military primacy to be turned to economic advantage? Seeking primacy vis-à-vis an adversary that threatened your potential allies – as the Soviet Union did during the Cold War, even posing a threat to China after the early 1960s – made eminent sense, as leadership over those allies followed as a by-product. But seeking *military* primacy over a range of powers – Western Europe, Russia, China, India, etc. – when the strategic alignments among them are varied and changeable, and when all subsist in a world market that can only be governed by a significant degree of common endeavour, does not translate into *political* leadership. As John Ikenberry has pointed out: ‘The Bush administration wants both to serve as the global provider of security and simultaneously to pursue a traditional conservative foreign policy based on narrowly defined self-interest ... It cannot do both – it must choose.’³² The United States has little to gain and much to lose by choosing a narrow definition of the national interest.

For it is, and will increasingly be, the case that, in the field of international economic relations, the key to US power includes *both* the specific assets of the territorial USA *and* the reproduction of ‘Americanism’ outside in the rest of the

capitalist world, and the coordination of the one with the other. This system has, of course, been designed to secure US interests. But it has equally served the interests of the other leading capitalist powers. Increasingly, the United States will lose the ability to determine the shape of this coordination on a unilateral basis. Just as other centres of capital have needed to coordinate with the United States, so the US market will increasingly need to coordinate with the most dynamic poles in the rest of the world. The United States still has a greater ability to determine the nature of this coordination than others – this is what constitutes its specifically directive role within the hierarchy of capitalist powers – but this nonetheless presupposes collective benefits to all deriving from that coordination. In so far as it amounts to a coherent grand strategy – and that is something that is all too easily overestimated – the Bush doctrine has nothing to contribute to these fundamentals. It is for this reason, perhaps, that it has not in fact been employed beyond the Middle East. As Stefan Halper and Jonathan Clarke say, the liberal imperialism of the neoconservatives is focused almost exclusively on ‘the Middle East and military power, most of all the use of military power in the Middle East’.³³

Notes

- 1 Noam Chomsky, *Hegemony or Survival: America's Quest for Global Dominance*, London: Hamish Hamilton, 2003, p. 43, quoting Andrew Bacevich, *American Empire: The Realities and Consequences of US Diplomacy*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002, p. 215, emphasis in the original.
- 2 Ellen Meiksins Wood, *The Empire of Capital*, London: Verso, 2003, p. 167.
- 3 M. Hardt and A. Negri, *Empire*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000; and Wood, op. cit., p. 168.
- 4 J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, New York: W. W. Norton, 2001.
- 5 Wood, op. cit., p. 165.
- 6 Peter Gowan is probably the best exponent of the first alternative, Ellen Meiksins Wood of the second.
- 7 See, respectively, M. Mann, *Incoherent Empire*, London: Verso, 2003; E. Todd, *After the Empire: The Breakdown of the American Order*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2003; J. Nye, *The Paradox of American Power: Why the World's Only Superpower Cannot Go It Alone*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2002; and I. Daalder and J. Lindsay, *America Unbound: The Bush Revolution in Foreign Policy*, Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 2003; C. Prestowitz, *Rogue Nation: American Unilateralism and the Failure of Good Intentions*, New York: Basic Books, 2003, C. Johnson, *Blowback: The Costs and Consequences of the American Empire*, London: Time Warner Books, 2002, and *The Sorrows of Empire*, London: Verso, 2004, H. Kissinger, *Does America Need a Foreign Policy?* revised edition, London: Free Press, 2002, Z. Brzezinski, *The Choice: Global Domination or Global Leadership*, New York: Basic Books, 2004, S. Halper and J. Clarke, *America Alone: The Neo-Conservatives and the Global Order*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004; and N. Ferguson, *Colossus: The Rise and Fall of the American Empire*, London: Allen Lane, 2004.
- 8 Todd, op. cit., p. 7; cf. Z. Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives*, New York: Basic Books, 1997, and *The Choice*.
- 9 Todd, op. cit., pp. 143–4.
- 10 D. Harvey, *The New Imperialism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003, pp. 73, 201, 206.

- 11 *Ibid.*, p. 85; see also A. Callinicos, *The New Mandarins of American Power: The Bush Administration's Plans for the World*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003; and P. Gowan, 'The American Campaign for Global Sovereignty', in Leo Panitch and Colin Leys (eds) *Socialist Register 2003*, London: Merlin Press, 2002.
- 12 Harvey, *op. cit.*, p. 103.
- 13 K. Marx, *Grundrisse* (translated and with a foreword by Martin Nicolas), Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973, pp. 539, 542; also cited in G. Albo, 'The Old and New Economics of Imperialism', in Leo Panitch and Colin Leys (eds) *Socialist Register 2004*, London: Merlin Press, 2003 – a key contribution with which I am in more or less complete agreement.
- 14 For a discussion of US policy towards Middle East oil and its place in a wider geopolitical strategy, see S. Bromley, 'Oil and United States Hegemony', in *Government and Opposition* (vol. 40 No. 2, 2005, PP. 225–255).
- 15 To forestall any misunderstanding, in adopting Kautsky's phrase I am not claiming any direct contemporary relevance for his ideas and I am certainly *not* arguing that cooperation predominates primarily because capital is in some sense *transnational*. I merely use it as a shorthand for the priority of inter-state coordination among developed capitalist states over their many-sided competitive relations. This is the only sense in which I argue that we are in Kautsky's world.
- 16 P. Gowan, *The Global Gamble: Washington's Faustian Bid for World Dominance*, London: Verso, 1999.
- 17 P. Gowan, 'Neoliberal Cosmopolitanism', *New Left Review*, Vol. II, No. 11 (2001), p. 81.
- 18 *Ibid.*, p. 89.
- 19 Gowan, 'American Campaign for Global Sovereignty', p. 25.
- 20 P. Anderson, 'Force and Consent', *New Left Review*, Vol. II, No. 17 (2002), pp. 20–1.
- 21 *Ibid.*, p. 21.
- 22 P. Hirst, *War and Power in the 21st Century*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001, p. 64.
- 23 Gowan, 'American Campaign for Global Sovereignty', p. 22.
- 24 Cited in Callinicos, *op. cit.*, p. 46.
- 25 Quoted from an interview with *Nouvel Observateur*, 15–21 January 1998, in Johnson, *Blowback*, p. xiii.
- 26 A. Rashid, *Taliban*, London: Pan Macmillan, 2001.
- 27 F. Halliday, *Two Hours that Shook the World: September 11, 2001: Causes and Consequences*, London: Saqi Books, 2002, p. 45.
- 28 T. Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960, p. 11.
- 29 G. Achcar, *The Clash of Barbarisms: September 11 and the Making of the New World Disorder*, New York: Monthly Review Press, 2002, p. 69.
- 30 The real case is set out most powerfully in K. Pollack, *The Threatening Storm: The Case for Invading Iraq*, New York: Random House, 2002.
- 31 S. Walt, 'Keeping the World Off Balance: Self-Restraint and US Foreign Policy', JFK School of Government, Harvard University, Faculty Research Working Papers Series No.00–0132000, pp. 11–12.
- 32 G. John Ikenberry, 'A Liberal Leviathan', *Prospect* (October 2004), p. 47.
- 33 Halper and Clarke, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

3 Reactionary blowback

The uneven ends of the Cold War and the origins of contemporary conflict in world politics

Richard Saull

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to highlight the interconnections between the Cold War emergence of reactionary forms of politics and terrorist violence in recent years. In particular, my concern is to trace the origins of Islamist-inspired violence in the varied and uneven ends of the Cold War, and the role played by US anti-leftist and anti-communist strategies in fermenting the social and political constituencies associated with such violence.

Understanding the end of the Cold War involves more than simply recognising the geopolitical transformation wrought by the collapse of communist power in east-central Europe and the demise of the military challenge of the USSR during 1989–91. Rather, because the Cold War ended in a varied and uneven manner across time and space, the differentiated nature of its ending(s) planted the seeds of a reactionary form of politics and violence most evident in the current activities of Islamist terrorist groups.

The Cold War ended in a paradoxical fashion. On the one hand it concluded with the overthrow of militarised-authoritarian states by ‘popular revolution’ carried through by a re-emergent liberal civil society. This end to the Cold War in east-central Europe provided the basis for the liberal triumphalism characteristic of Fukuyama and others¹ in the 1990s, highlighted in the successful spread of liberal democracy and capitalist markets to a number of former communist states in east-central Europe. On the other hand, the manner and timing of the Cold War’s end in other parts of the world was quite different. In many parts of the world the political challenge of the (pro-Soviet) revolutionary and nationalist left to the local and (American-led) international capitalist social order had been seen off some time before the late 1980s, and this had been achieved not through the triumph of ‘people power’ or a re-emergent liberal civil society. Instead, in parts of the Middle East, South-East Asia, North Africa and Central Asia, the ends of the Cold War were violent and bloody, reflecting not the pull of successful and stable liberal capitalist democracies, but rather the violent defeat of the radical left spearheaded by highly *illiberal* social and political forces.

What unites the violent and bloody ends of the Cold War in many parts of the South with the overthrow of communist power by civil society in east-central

Europe are two common outcomes. First, the defeat of states and movements committed to statist forms of political and economic transformation based upon a range of socialist-inspired ideas and, by association, the social constituencies that supported and benefited from such projects. Second, the emergence of new forms of opposition and 'resistance' to US-led Western capitalist power and the liberal-universalist discourses associated with it, that share a number of common political and ideological characteristics.²

Simply put, the major source of political resistance to American global power no longer comes from the revolutionary left but the reactionary right. While this is most pronounced in the form of Islamist terrorism, it also relates to the political and cultural response to the consequences of neoliberal globalisation in many Western states evidenced in the rise of the politics of the far right. In spite of the mass mobilisations of the anti-capitalist movement from Seattle in 1999 to the more recent campaigns against the Anglo-American invasion of Iraq, politically, and for the moment, the post-communist left has not managed to transform such mobilisations into an effective challenge to American power.³ Although these movements are unique to their own particular historical, cultural and social genesis, and have different views on the role of violence in their political strategies, I will try and show that the term 'reactionary' can be usefully applied to them, as they share a number of common features. These movements oppose not only the American-led post-Cold War international order, particularly as it is represented by (neoliberal) globalisation, but also localised secular, democratic and universalist-modernist political currents within the states where they are active, and this hostility towards the radical and secular left reflects a political-ideological *continuity* with the era of Cold War.

To a significant degree, the disorders of the post-Cold War era are a consequence of the paradoxical character of the American 'victory' in the Cold War. Many of the sources of disorder and resistance to US global power projection can be considered as 'reactionary blowback',⁴ in that many of the political movements that were central to the defeat of leftist and communist political movements during the Cold War, particularly in the Islamic world, were either cultivated and supported by the United States during the Cold War or tolerated as alternative poles of political legitimacy and state formation to that of secular radical nationalist and communist movements. It was from the support given to these movements and their political ascendancy over the left out of which reactionary politics and terrorism has developed.

The rest of the paper will develop the argument outlined in this introductory section in more depth. It has two main parts. The first will discuss the concept of reactionary politics, the degree to which such a term can be applied to very different social and cultural contexts, and the relationship between forms of globalisation and the re-emergence of reactionary political movements. The second section examines the idea of understanding the end of the Cold War as a series of ends, and the overall paradoxical nature of the Cold War's end. It will focus on those areas of the world that have provided the geographical focus for the current war on terror, and how the specific form of the ending of the Cold

War in these locales and the role of the United States on these developments encouraged the revival of reactionary politics and violence.

Reactionary political movements in the post-Cold War era and neoliberal globalisation

Reactionary political movements have played a significant role in world politics, dating from the French Revolution of 1789. Simply put, ‘reactionary’ is a modern political perspective characterised by an antagonism towards the secular, democratic, egalitarian and universalist goals that have inspired revolutionary social and political change. For our purposes, however, focused, as we are, on the end of the Cold War and post-Cold War world politics, the relationship between social revolution – the actuality or spectre of – is not as central, today, in the constitution of reactionary political movements, as it was in the past. Rather, the focus of the hostility of reactionary movements and the social and political context from which they have re-emerged is associated with the ‘revolutionary’ transformations wrought by capitalist globalisation. Furthermore, whereas in the past reactionary political movements, particularly in Europe during the inter-war period, benefited from the cultivation of political links with sections of the ruling class and elements within the state, this is no longer the case.⁵

The substance of reactionary politics is not only a violent (real or potential) opposition to radical change inspired by universalist and egalitarian principles, but also an idealisation of the past and the upholding of particularist, exclusivist and hierarchical social orders. This is significant with respect to globalisation, because the spectre of the global is, *a priori*, a threat. However, it also relates to the universalist nature of both capitalism and liberalism, and how each undermines the social forms and political structures idealised by reactionary political movements.

To understand the emergence and nature of reactionary political movements in the post-Cold War era requires a recognition that these movements share a number of common and general features, but where their concrete manifestation is a product of very particular and local factors. In this sense, then, although we can use the concept ‘reactionary’ to describe the French Front National and the Egyptian-based Takfir wal Hijra (Excommunication and Flight), it is quite clear that these two movements are quite different. What are the shared and distinct features of these groups?

To begin with, as I have already indicated, reactionary movements are based upon a hostility to the universalist, egalitarian and secular tendencies within modernity – particularly the liberal-socialist modernity that emerged from the French Revolution, and which has been replicated and reinforced by subsequent revolutionary movements and states committed to modernisation, secularisation and democratisation. This secular universalism is an important feature of contemporary globalisation, but it also relates to the ideologies and policies of the two superpower blocs during the Cold War. Both claimed a universalism and global application regardless of the particular social and cultural contexts where

such ideologies and policies were absorbed and implemented. In this sense, then, the disruptive – indeed, ‘revolutionary’ – impact of attempts at secular modernisation – communist or capitalist inspired – during and after the Cold War, especially in the South, provoked political responses that emphasised atavistic cultural, ethnic and historical traditions in opposition to *secular*-modernising tendencies. Such responses are reactionary not only in the sense that they were opposed to radical or ‘progressive’ social transformation, as exemplified, in calls for sexual equality, the formal commitment to universal rights and principles based on the equality of different ethnic or religious groups, but also in that opposition to these and other developments, fundamentally challenged traditional sources of knowledge and social order based on gender and ethnic-based social hierarchies, and unreflexive attitudes towards knowledge.⁶

The appeals of reactionary political movements have obviously varied in time and space, and this is as evident today as in the past. However, as Aziz Al-Azmeh has argued, in spite of the differences in the use of symbols, rhetoric and context, such differences should not be exaggerated.⁷ For example, both European and Islamic anti-leftist political movements share a concern with the declared ‘decadence’ of existing political elites and patterns of social behaviour alongside a nostalgia for an idealised past centred on the idea of ‘authentic’ and ‘organic’ social institutions and patterns of behaviour, free of the ‘corrupting influence of alien ideas’.⁸ In this sense, despite the obvious hostility between European and Islamic reactionary political movements towards each other – indeed, for the former, the supposed ‘threat’ from Islam to a ‘European way of life’ has been a key foil for attacking ethnic integration and the idea of a pluralist society – they are both ‘modern’ forms of political movement, products of a crisis of a distinctly modern nature.

This crisis of cultural identity, political representation and socio-economic welfare is directly associated with the consequences of the end of the Cold War, and how the defeat of a democratic secular-universalist form of politics has been compounded by the intensification of neoliberal globalisation during the 1990s. In the case of the former, the end of the Cold War removed an ‘external source’ of political identity; that is, during the Cold War, a key if not defining source of political identity/loyalty focused on which one of the rival social and ideological systems one identified with. With the end of this binary ideological division, ideological fragmentation was always likely, and ‘new’ sources of ideological legitimation based on national, ethnic and cultural identities have become much more prevalent.⁹ Indeed, for some, the appearance of identity politics, based on cultural, religious or ethnic identity, has posed a serious challenge, especially, but not limited to the South, to the idea and reality of the secular state which was the generalised source of state legitimacy for most of the Cold War period.¹⁰

With respect to the extent to which the intensification of neoliberal globalisation has contributed to the rise of the extreme right, the picture is more ambiguous. As most studies have shown, economic globalisation has been spatially highly uneven and concentrated within particular regions of the world – the transatlantic economy – and, with the rise of China, East and South-East

Asia.¹¹ Consequently, the socio-economic change associated with neoliberal globalisation in Europe, for example, highlighted by the combination of immigration, the decline in traditional patterns of male employment and cuts in state-based welfare programmes, has played a major role in the popular appeal of the extreme right. In other parts of the world – the Middle East, Africa and Central Asia in particular – that participate in globalised economic exchange to a much lesser degree, the role played by economic transformation produced by neoliberal globalisation on transforming political identities is much less clear.

To be sure, these regions have been affected by neoliberal globalisation, notably through the policies governments have implemented following loan agreements with the IMF and World Bank.¹² However, the rise of reactionary political currents in these regions, and the Middle East in particular, has also been greatly influenced by the impact of US political and military power after the Cold War, highlighted by its continuing acquiescence towards Israeli policies in the occupied territories, and the two wars against Iraq (1990–1 and 2003 onwards). In this sense, the qualitatively distinct character of reactionary politics in the Islamic world – the role of violence and the centrality of (a distorted understanding) religious faith in political identity – is a product of the role of Islamist groups and political ideas in defeating the revolutionary and secular left in the Middle East *and* the intrusive US political-military presence in a region that the US sees as central to its economic and geopolitical interests. In this region, then, the political-ideological outcomes of the end of Cold War have been accentuated by a combination of the economic dislocation caused by IMF/World Bank-inspired policies alongside the continuing spectre of great power interference in the area.

The uneven consequences of global capitalist development are nothing new, nor are the manoeuvrings of great power politics. These are both phenomena of modernity. This modern international context is associated with the very modern nature of reactionary movements in the Islamic world as much as in Europe. This modernity lies not only in the organisation of these movements in Europe and the Islamic world, but also in the social constituencies and ideologies they espouse. Thus, with respect to the former, these movements, particularly in the Islamic world, have drawn on support from well-educated, lower middle-class strata, those social groups that traditionally have provided the bedrock of the capitalist social order and, in the Middle East, formerly the key beneficiaries of statist modernisation such as teachers, civil servants and engineers.¹³ In Europe the far right has capitalised on appearing to listen to and reflect the grievances of those economically marginalised amongst sections of the working class and the *petit bourgeoisie* by neoliberal globalisation.

With respect to ideology there is evidence to suggest a similarity between Islamist political movements and secular/revolutionary political movements committed to political independence and national autonomy. Most of these movements and groups, including al-Qaeda, are committed to removing the Western/American political, economic and cultural presence from the countries

and regions where they are active, an objective shared by other political movements, and reflecting a longer-term historical aspiration emanating from these countries and regions.¹⁴ Furthermore, evidence based on interviews with Egyptian Islamic militants, conducted in the late 1970s, indicated that their idea of social justice and how to realise it – to their consternation – bore a good deal of similarity with that of traditional European social democracy.¹⁵ The point here, then, is that these movements have very modern political objectives though they draw on reactionary political and ideological principles, references and symbols with which to try and achieve them.

In understanding these movements as reactionary it is also important to recognise, as in the past, the commonalities between these movements and revolutionary forms of politics. In form, through the use of violence and in terms of organisational structure,¹⁶ it is possible to identify commonalities between ‘reactionary’ and ‘revolutionary’ forms of politics. In the case of contemporary European and Islamic reactionary political movements, there is also a ‘revolutionary’ element, at least in their commitment to a fundamental transformation in the nature of the state and social relations in general. Although such change would be in a reactionary direction – exclusivist, hierarchical and dogmatic – it would also be transformatory, in terms of the degree and intensity of change.

It is possible, then, not only to employ the concept of ‘reactionary’ to political movements operative in different social and cultural contexts, but it is also possible to recognise the impact of the end of the Cold War and the intensification of neoliberal globalisation in different social and cultural contexts that have produced similar political outcomes. There is, however, a significant degree of difference in the character of contemporary reactionary political movements, particularly regarding the use of violence by Islamist movements in the Middle East and elsewhere inspired by a reactionary politicised Islam. The proclivity to use violence for political ends based on religious justification is certainly not confined to Islamist groups. However, the social and political context out of which reactionary Islam has emerged has made violence a more obvious means of securing political ends than in other social contexts.

This is something that I will focus on below, in the next section. To provide a shorthand of what will follow: those parts of the world – the Middle East, Central Asia and parts of South-East Asia – where violence and reactionary politics have become most interconnected, primarily in Islamic-inspired reactionary political movements, the historical context has been crucial. Thus, these movements emerged out of a political context of patronage from both local and external states during the Cold War, where violence was not only tolerated in the achievement of political objectives, but was actively encouraged.¹⁷ On top of this, civil society within many of these states has been deeply fractured and fragmented by the consequences of neoliberal globalisation, thus exacerbating existing social and cultural tensions within these already fragile states, and providing a new foundation on which reactionary political movements can base their ideological and political appeals.

Reactionary politics and the uneven and paradoxical ends of the Cold War

The end of the Cold War, at least according to most accounts, occurred with the dissolution of the Soviet bloc in 1989 and the subsequent disintegration of the USSR two years later.¹⁸ With the end of the bipolar geopolitical structure that had dominated world politics since 1945, a new global dispensation of power emerged, and with it the possibility arose, through globalisation, for the expansion of Western values and institutions into those zones of the world formerly hostile to all things Western. Such a perspective looks woefully optimistic from today's standpoint. However, whether or not one shared the rosy prognosis of the early 1990s of a 'new world order' based on the universal legitimacy of liberal-democratic values and capitalist markets, most discussions of the end of the Cold War have understood it as the end of the post-war bipolar confrontation centred on Europe.

The focus on the transformation in the bipolar relationship and the geopolitical structure of Europe, however, overlooks those aspects of the Cold War beyond the Eurasian landmass. In the South the ending of the Cold War was an altogether different story. For one thing it is possible to argue that the Cold War, in many parts of the world, ended prior to 1989. In this sense, the Cold War, as much as it had numerous and shifting fronts of conflict and crisis, also had shifting temporal and spatial ends. However, whereas the ending of the Cold War in Europe signalled the end of the 'East–West' military stand-off and thus a 'normalisation' of relations within and between most of the former communist states, the ending of the Cold War conflicts in the South has, in many cases, failed to usher in a period of 'normalisation' or civil peace.¹⁹ In cases such as Afghanistan, quite the opposite was the case.

Such a view obviously rests on a particular understanding of what the Cold War was. If it is seen as a geopolitical conflict based on the relative strengths of the military power of states, then considerations outside of the central strategic superpower relationship are obviously peripheral. However, if the ideological and socio-economic properties of the states involved in it, not just the superpowers, are taken seriously, then the Cold War was obviously a conflict that went beyond the currency of military competition and strategic rivalry, and involved actors other than states. In this latter sense, although the events in the Soviet bloc between 1989 and 1991 are central to understanding the end of the Cold War, the Cold War amounted to more than this and included armed conflicts, political movements, ideological struggles and social mobilisations in other parts of the world; these also need to be factored into any explanation of the Cold War's end and an understanding of its consequences.

Conceptualising the Cold War as a global social conflict based upon the expansion and contraction of different social systems (capitalism and communism) the end of the Cold War looks very different from the prevailing account. Although developments within the South were obviously influenced by superpower involvement and conflict within the South took place within a political-military structure determined by the superpower relationship, social and

political developments in the South were not reducible to the bipolar structure. Furthermore, as the Soviet concept of 'correlation of forces' suggests, the outcomes of political and military struggles in the South (and elsewhere) had an impact on the bipolar relationship – the Vietnam War and the war in Afghanistan being two obvious cases.²⁰

Any discussion of the end of the Cold War needs, then, to recognise developments within the South – to what extent the struggle between the two social systems and the social forces and political movements each could mobilise had, to some extent, been 'resolved', prior to 1989 – or not, as in the case of North Korea and, to a lesser degree, Cuba. The Cold War was, then, a 'war' or conflict 'in movement' across time and space rather than a singular, homogenous 'front' consisting of the superpowers and their subordinates. In this respect, the character of opposition to US global power and the overall disposition of the 'correlation of (social) forces' could be seen as an important factor in Soviet policy in general and Gorbachev's policies in particular. Whereas the USSR could count on widespread support in the early post-war decades based upon its anti-colonial credentials stemming from the Comintern period and its official line of hostility towards imperialism, as well as the leading role played by communist and radical nationalist forces sympathetic to Moscow in national liberation struggles, by the early 1980s the international context for the international communist movement was quite different. In a word, despite the 'successes' of the 1970s indicated by what Zbigniew Brzezinski called the 'arc of crisis' of revolutionary victories from the Horn of Africa to Central Asia and Latin America, the tide was beginning to turn away from the USSR and its allied international movement.²¹

Even before the early 1980s, the communist challenge to American capitalist power had effectively been contained or defeated in many parts of the world. In the most economically important part of the world, at least for decision-makers in Washington and Moscow in the early years of the post-war era, Europe, the communist-revolutionary challenge had been effectively seen off by the late 1940s. In other parts of the world, as much as the points of confrontation between East and West shifted in time and space, so did the outcomes of global social-systemic struggle. Whereas civil peace reigned in Western Europe, civil disorder and violence reigned in most other parts of the world – in Asia, the Middle East, Africa and the Americas. The leading forces of opposition and resistance were of the secular and radical left either officially tied to Moscow through the involvement of communist parties and cadres, or linked through the more general persuasion of anti-imperialism and a commitment to state-led economic development and political independence from the major capitalist states.

It was the uneven transformation in the socio-economic and political context of these two 'zones' from the 1970s onwards that has provided the context out of which the contemporary reactionary right and the new forms of violence have emerged. In the advanced capitalist states the changes have been most pronounced economically from the early–mid 1970s with the construction of a

new global economic order commonly known as 'globalisation'. This has rested on a transformation in the post-war relationship between state and market combined with a redistribution of the socio-economic gains from these new economic relationships. In effect, globalisation has seen the dismantling of the 'social contract' between capital and labour that provided the social basis of anti-communism for most of the Cold War, and a re-ordering of social forces within these societies. This new socio-economic terrain, which by the 1990s had come to be characterised by a greater sense of economic insecurity, rising levels of economic inequality and the fracturing of the post-war bonds and institutions of social solidarity, has provided fertile ground for the extreme right to take advantage of.

In the South the transformation has been both economic and political in almost equal measure, with the ending of the Cold War amounting to the transformation in the political and ideological character of states and the principal political movements of resistance, alongside the transformation of economies through neoliberal globalisation. In sum, the combined impact of these developments has been the marginalisation and undermining of secular radical and nationalist political forces and the political ascendancy of reactionary political forces in the 1990s, whose basis of political mobilisation and ideological orientation is ethnic or religious identity, or a combination of the two.

The point that I want to emphasise about these outcomes is that, although self-evident by the mid-late 1990s, they initially surfaced at different times in different places and, in a number, before 1989. In the remaining part of this section I will concentrate on the uneven and paradoxical character of the end(s) of the Cold War, focusing on the South, and how the ends of the Cold War laid the foundations of, and in some cases were caused by, the forces of the reactionary right.

Reactionary political movements, American strategy and the ends of the Cold War

Discussion of the end of the Cold War, as I have already indicated, has tended to focus on the events within the USSR and the Soviet bloc between 1989 and 1991, with theoretical accounts giving explanatory primacy to either the triumph of liberal democratic values/institutions or US material power.²² What this debate has largely ignored is the role of extreme right-wing anti-communist political forces in the containment and 'roll back' of radical nationalism and communism, and US support for such forces throughout the Cold War, but particularly during the 'new' Cold War of the 1980s.²³ Incorporating these movements and ideological currents into explanations of the Cold War and its end highlights not only the uneven and shifting nature of the Cold War, but also the paradoxical nature of its ending that mainstream accounts have tended to overlook.

During the 1980s, under the Reagan doctrine of 'low intensity warfare', the USA was instrumental in helping to organise, finance and support a range of

reactionary right-wing political movements and armed (and terrorist) groups in their local campaigns against radical nationalist and communist movements and states.²⁴ Throughout the period of the Cold War the US had come to rely on right-wing political forces as the principal means for containing and defeating the spread of communism and Soviet influence throughout the world.²⁵ Although it is possible to identify a reactionary political strand in the politics of a number of states, including the United States,²⁶ since the end of the Cold War, it has been in the Islamic world – in the Middle East, Central Asia and South-East Asia – where the nature of reactionary blowback has been most pronounced and lethal. Furthermore, it is within these states – and the political movements and terrorist groups active within them – that the US-led ‘war on terror’ has been most concerned.

The ‘Saudi-Egyptian axis’ and the Middle East

With respect to the Middle East, the structural impact of the Cold War on the states and societies within this region was obviously fractured through the Arab–Israeli conflict and, after 1979, the Iranian Revolution. Although communist movements played significant roles in the struggle for independence in a number of states within the region, particularly Iran, Iraq and Egypt, the general orientation of post-imperial states was of a radical nationalist orientation in the form of secular Arab nationalism and socialism, which sometimes rested on the persecution of local communist parties.²⁷ The principal pole of opposition to this trend, reflecting what could be labelled as a form of intra-Arab ‘cold war’,²⁸ were from the Gulf monarchies led by Saudi Arabia. These states under the military protection of the United States and its allies based their political legitimacy not on anti-imperialism, secularisation or modernisation, but rather the defence of Islam, which was seen as the principal bulwark against the ‘contagion’ of the atheism of communism.²⁹ These rival sources of legitimacy led not only to intra-Arab conflict in the 1960s, but also to different Arab states siding with different superpowers in the Cold War.

The turning point for the Cold War in the Middle East and the rival sources of domestic political legitimacy – Islam and the particular puritanical variant propagated by the Wahhabi strand of Saudi Arabia, and Arab nationalism and socialism based on the rhetoric of revolutionary anti-imperialism – came with the catastrophic defeat of the combined Arab armies by Israel in the June 1967 Arab–Israeli Six-Day War. With this defeat not only had the alliance of radical Arab states, particularly Egypt, with the USSR shown itself to be ineffectual, at least from the perspective of the Arab states in their failure to withstand an Israeli attack, but the military debacle had also appeared to highlight the inherent weaknesses and failings of the radical Arab states.

With the discrediting and humiliation of secular Arab states, a widespread perception developed in the Arab world, and Egypt in particular, that the cause of defeat was in part due to the un-Islamic nature of the major Arab states. This was combined with popular demands for a return to Islam as the best way of

defeating Israel. In short, the pan-Arabist vision was shattered by the 1967 defeat and opened the way for the rise of Islamist forces to come to the fore.³⁰

The outcome of the 1967 defeat was not only to see a shift in the external orientation of the most important Arab state, Egypt, away from the USSR and towards the United States, but also the beginnings of an internal societal transformation. This was encouraged by Sadat, who came to power in 1970 after Nasser's death and who sought to establish an alternative source of domestic legitimacy separate from the apparently discredited politics of the pan-Arab socialism of Nasserism.³¹ The first sign of this shift in the ideological and social bases of the regime's legitimacy came in May 1971, when Sadat carried out an internal coup against the socialist-leaning Ali Sabri section of the ruling party – the Arab Socialist Union – and his active encouragement of Islamist tendencies as a counterweight to the left.³² These also extended to allowing the establishment of Islamic student associations, and the cultivating of the Islamic clerical establishment based in al-Azhar university through the construction of state-supported mosques.³³ By the late 1970s, state-supported anti-leftist Islamic student associations, committed to a greater role for Islam in public and private life, dominated universities.³⁴

Sadat himself also tried to emphasise his personal Islamic convictions by assuming the title of 'Believer-President'.³⁵ The greater public profile and legitimacy of Islam within Egypt and the wider Arab world was given a further boost with the 1973 Yom Kippur War. The Egyptians redeemed themselves in the eyes of the Arab public and Islam was formally associated with the military 'success'.³⁶

Although the Sadat regime was never fully reconciled to the Islamists in Egypt – indeed, it launched a number of crack-downs on Islamic militants – and Sadat was subsequently assassinated by an Islamist group in 1981, the shift away from the secular ideology of pan-Arabism and Nasserism was crucial to helping transform the fortunes of reactionary Islamist groups in Egypt and the wider Middle East.

The irony in Sadat's attempt to reconstitute the domestic political legitimacy of the Egyptian state in the 1970s by stressing his and the regime's Islamic credentials was that after the 1973 war Sadat committed Egypt to pursuing peace negotiations with Israel under the auspices of the United States in direct opposition to the Islamists. In cooperating with the United States and moving into its strategic orbit, the Sadat regime helped create a major contradiction that has continued to fracture Egyptian society – the re-emergence of reactionary Islamist tendencies and the undermining of the secular and modernising project associated with Nasser, and the shift towards the United States, politically in the shape of concluding a peace treaty with Israel and economically by the opening up of the Egyptian economy to the forces of the global economy.³⁷

The rise of reactionary Islam in Egypt was then directly associated with the apparent failure of the secular radical nationalist project, *and* the deliberate cultivation of Islamic tendencies by the regime. With the shift in the domestic basis of the most important Arab state and the increased influence of the USA in the

region, arguably the Cold War had come to an end in the Middle East by the mid-1970s. After 1973 the USSR was effectively marginalised in the region, apart from its continued support of Syria and Iraq and the PLO. The dynamic of the Arab–Israeli conflict was, then, crucial to determining the character and outcome of the Cold War in the Middle East. However, although the end of the Cold War in the region was influenced by the policies of the United States, what was ultimately determinant was the transformation of the politics of resistance within the region.

Whereas the emergence of radicalised mass-based movements with strong socialist and communist involvement were crucial to the overthrow of pro-Western regimes in the region in the 1950s, thus signalling a new front in the Cold War, it was the appearance of new resistance movements in the 1970s that effectively ended the Cold War in the region as the source of ‘social–systemic conflict’ was no longer one waged between the forces of Western-capitalist and radical nationalist/communist forms of modernity, but one now between pro-Western authoritarian states committed to capitalist development and integration into the ‘civilised’ West against reactionary Islam, committed to the expulsion of Western influence and a regressive project of political transformation. In this sense the ‘systemic’ social and political conflict within the Middle East had become, by the mid-1970s, heteronomous of the Cold War.

The rise of reactionary Islam in the Middle East, and US involvement in its cultivation, extended beyond developments in Egypt and the Arab–Israeli conflict. As I mentioned above, during the Cold War in the Middle East the politics of the region was divided between the radical pro-Soviet regimes and conservative pro-US regimes. The leading pro-US regime in the Arab world was Saudi Arabia. The Saudi royal family feared not only the menace of Soviet communist influence in the region but also, and more seriously, the threat from Arab social revolution as had befallen the monarchies in Iraq, Egypt and North Yemen. With the rise of Nasserism and pan-Arabism in the late 1950s, the Saudis sought to contain the regional challenge their regime faced from Nasser’s secular radicalism by promoting the Wahhabi version of Islam.³⁸ With petrodollars and the huge increase in revenue with the oil price rise of 1973, under Prince Faisal the Saudis championed a pro-Islamic politics, based on Saudi Arabia’s role as custodian of Islam’s two holiest sites, Mecca and Medina, and the huge wealth from petro-dollars that were channelled into Islamist charities and other proselytising organisations.³⁹

The significance of political-ideological conflict in the Middle East during the Cold War was that Saudi Arabia came to play a major role in cultivating the movements and ideologies that form the basis of contemporary reactionary political violence. Consequently, if there is one state more responsible than the United States for the emergence of Islamist terrorism it is Saudi Arabia. Too often, left-leaning analysis overlooks the role played by smaller ‘dependent’ states in the origins of conflict and disorder, giving greater emphasis to the causes of crisis and conflicts to (American) imperial power.

Saudi Arabia⁴⁰ has been a key US ally in the Middle East since 1944 under US geopolitical protection. Further, as the ‘swing producer’ of OPEC, it has pumped oil to fuel the global capitalist economy and its principal benefactor, the United States, and the billions it has earned from oil rents since 1973 have been invested in the West. Yet at the same time, the ideological and institutional basis of al-Saud rule has seen elements within the Saudi state and ruling class promoting the spread of a fanatical and deeply reactionary religious dogma – Wahhabism – throughout the Islamic world.⁴¹ Wahhabism has been directed at two enemies: first, what it sees as the ‘infidel’ form of Islam represented by Shi’ism,⁴² and second, secular-universalist currents in the Islamic world originating from the West. During the Cold War – and hence its usefulness to Washington – Wahhabite ‘internationalism’ countered the secular-universalism inspired by Arab nationalism, socialism and communism. Since the end of the Cold War, Wahhabite dogma has projected its hostility towards liberal universalism.

The contradictions between Wahhabite dogma and liberal-capitalist modernity were hidden during the Cold War mainly because of the mutual ideological, geopolitical and economic interests that emerged between Riyadh and Washington in the context of the communist-revolutionary threat of the Cold War. Thus, both parties opposed the spread of leftist currents in the Middle East, and the US was content to support a brutal dictatorship as long as it kept the oil flowing and led regional anti-communism, whilst the Saudis depended on oil earnings from Western markets to construct a state and economy that helped sustain al-Saud rule and keep at bay the leftist currents that swept across the region in the 1950–60s.

During the Cold War, then, and particularly after 1973 and 1979 (the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan), Saudi Arabia emerged as a source promoting a distinct form of anti-communism, heteronomous from and implicitly hostile towards the secular-universalism of the United States. Consequently, whereas liberal universalism won out in the Soviet bloc, anti-universalism was triumphant in the Middle East and Central Asia. Further, American Cold War strategy and the nature of US imperial power was mediated by local political and ideological structures that Washington promoted in Riyadh. By encouraging Saudi autonomy the US promoted a political space that it did not dominate or control, in spite of its geopolitical dominance in the region, effectively allowing Saudi Arabia (or elements within it) to cultivate an ideological agenda and political network that would come to challenge Western interests after the defeat of communist–socialist universalism.

Pakistan, Afghanistan and Central Asia

By the 1970s, then, with Saudi financial support, Islamist groups, particularly those sympathetic to the reactionary Wahhabi version, had spread throughout the Middle East and other parts of the Islamic world. Even in Pakistan, a secular-leaning government under Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, trying to deal with the

aftermath of the loss of East Pakistan in 1971, turned to the Saudis for economic help. The support was forthcoming but required the Pakistani government to 'brand' its policies as a form of 'Islamic socialism'⁴³ and to promote Islamic education alongside a greater public role for Islam within Pakistani society, including a greater Islamic dimension to law. Alongside the increasing profile of Islam in Pakistan's domestic public policy, Bhutto also began to sponsor Islamic guerrilla movements in neighbouring Afghanistan, thus beginning the long and bloody involvement of Pakistan in the Afghan civil war.⁴⁴

These tendencies were to be strengthened after 1977 with the US-backed military coup d'état led by General Zia ul-Haq that overthrew the Bhutto government and established a military dictatorship legitimised by its appeal to Islam and the cultivation of reactionary Islamist tendencies within Pakistan. Under Zia, Saudi-financed Islamic *madrassas* proliferated throughout Pakistan. The *madrassas* offered free education, food, shelter and military training, and became the chief institutions of recruitment and indoctrination for the Islamic resistance in Afghanistan.⁴⁵ In 1971 there were fewer than a thousand *madrassas* in Pakistan. By the time of Zia's death in 1988 the number of *madrassas* had increased to approximately 8,000, with over 25,000 unregistered ones educating tens of thousands of students.⁴⁶

The 'Islamicisation' of Pakistan went beyond the provision of social welfare with a reactionary Islamic orientation, particularly in the 'Pashtun belt',⁴⁷ but also extended to the encouragement of Islamist tendencies within key institutions of the Pakistani state. Thus, Zia promoted Islamist currents within parts of the army, and the Inter-Service Intelligence (ISI) agency's relationship with the Pakistani Jamaat-e-Islami (Islamic Party) and the Afghan Hezb-e-Islami (Islamic Party), led by Gulbuddin Heymatyar, in funnelling aid to the Afghan mujahidin contributed to even greater Islamist influence at the heart of the Pakistani state.⁴⁸

The importance of reactionary political movements in the Middle East and Central Asia were crucial, then, to the transformation of the political fortunes of the superpowers within these regions, and to the wider social-systemic struggle between the rival projects of modernity that each superpower represented and which local political movements had championed. Developments in these regions, particularly from the mid-1970s onwards, highlighted how localised developments led the way with the United States taking advantage of the demise of radical nationalist and communist movements in the region.

In this case the US was less of a direct instigator of political transformation, but certainly a benefactor of the rise of reactionary Islam. However, the benefits accrued to the US and its Cold War struggle against the USSR through the emergence of Islamic movements was far from guaranteed. Although Khomeini-directed Islamic forces had crushed leftist and communist movements by 1980, thus preventing the Iranian Revolution from turning into a socialist revolution and moving into the Soviet sphere, the militant anti-Americanism of the new regime was hardly a source of satisfaction for Washington.⁴⁹ Throughout the 1980s (and beyond), the Islamic Republic was a focus of US hostility and Iranian

backing for Shi'ite forces in Lebanon, who waged a successful campaign of violence against the US, culminating in the bombing of US marines in October 1983 and highlighting the contradictory relations the US government cultivated between different strands of Islamic extremism.

Broadly speaking, then, the Islamic impact on the Cold War was complex and multi-dimensional. On the one hand it served US interests quite unambiguously, whilst on the other hand, highlighted by Iran and Iranian-backed forces, it was directly hostile to both superpowers and the forces that they sought to sponsor. However, for our purposes, with respect to post-Cold War reactionary blowback, it has been those forces that the US cultivated and benefited from in the closing stages of the Cold War, and not those Islamic groups backed by Iran, that have become the sources of reactionary Islamic opposition to the United States and its allies. US policy towards Afghanistan in the 1980s under the rubric of the 'Reagan Doctrine' reflects this more clearly than any.

In Afghanistan in the 1980s, the US took on a much more active role in helping to establish⁵⁰ a reactionary political movement and, in this respect, was much more the author of the reactionary blowback that came to have such devastating consequences on 11 September 2001. While in the Middle East the Soviet and communist presence had been less pronounced, the situation after December 1979 with the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan was dramatically different. Soviet 'aggression'⁵¹ provoked an American response that saw the funnelling of US\$ 4 to 5 billion in aid to the 'Islamic resistance' to the Soviet occupation between 1980 and 1992. These US funds were matched by financial support from Saudi Arabia,⁵² which amounted to a massive influx of lethal weaponry into the Afghan conflict.

The social and political basis for the Cold War conflict in Afghanistan waged between the forces and allies of each superpower led to the emergence of a backward-looking Islamist movement armed and funded by the United States along with the support of its regional allies, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. Although the main means of conditioning developments within Afghanistan during the 1980s was through the provision of funds and arms – the organisational and logistical aspects of the 'Afghan operation' was channelled through the Pakistani secret service – the US, and the CIA in particular, also contributed to the shaping of strategy of the Afghan mujahidin.⁵³ Thus, in 1986, the CIA not only persuaded the US Congress to provide the mujahidin with Stinger anti-aircraft missiles along with US (and British) training of Afghan guerrillas, but the US also agreed to support mujahidin attacks on the southern republics of the USSR – Tajikistan and Uzbekistan – and gave its backing to the recruitment of Muslims from around the world to join the Islamic resistance in Afghanistan.⁵⁴ This last initiative was to be particularly significant, as it led to the creation of a world-wide network – out of which groups such as al-Qaeda have drawn recruits – of armed Islamic militants throughout the Muslim world, from Algeria to Indonesia. The major consequence of this has been that these returning fighters have become leading actors in Islamic-inspired terrorist movements in a number of countries in the Middle East, South-East Asia, North Africa and Central Asia.⁵⁵

The significance of the Afghan conflict and the role of the political forces of reactionary Islam, then, went well beyond Afghanistan. US support for the Islamic resistance in Afghanistan not only contributed to the weakening of Soviet power, it also helped create an armed international Islamic movement of over 35,000 combatants from 43 countries committed to a particularly reactionary and anti-secular version of Islamic 'renaissance'.⁵⁶ It was also a major factor in the changes in Soviet foreign policy in the late 1980s under Gorbachev, in response to the economic and human costs on the USSR of maintaining an occupation and containing the mujahidin in Afghanistan.⁵⁷

Indonesia and South-East Asia

Although concentrated in the Middle East and Central Asia, Islamic-inspired reactionary politics and violence has had a wider reach in the post-Cold War era. In South-East Asia and Indonesia in particular, reactionary political violence has become a major source of instability in the region. In this context, however, the relationship between the rise of a reactionary Islam and the end of the Cold War is less obvious, as the 'Indonesian front' of the Cold War was effectively terminated in the late 1960s with Indonesia's shift towards the United States and away from the politics of radical nationalism and anti-imperialism, yet without the political ascendancy of Islamist forces, as had been the case in a number of other Muslim states. This shift in Indonesia's international orientation was marked by domestic political developments, the most important and tragic being the mass murder of tens of thousands of communist cadres who, under Sukarno, had provided one of the main pillars of the regime.

The destruction of the political base for any radical socio-economic transformation and the dominance of the army in Indonesian politics signalled the end of the systemic conflict that had dominated Indonesian politics under Sukarno. Thus, the advent of the pro-Western Suharto dictatorship in effect ended the systemic conflict of the Cold War, with Indonesia choosing the path of integration into the US-led political and economic institutions and processes and distancing itself from the 'revolutionary' alternative of socialist-orientated economic development and political independence tied to the communist bloc, which Sukarno had flirted with throughout his period in power. As in Chile in September 1973, the possibility of cementing anti-imperialism in a revolutionary state associated with the communist bloc was thwarted by pro-US elements within the military.⁵⁸

Traditional Muslim leaders had played an important role in the rounding-up and killing of thousands of PKI cadres in the late 1960s, particularly the Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia (Indonesian Council for Islamic Prediction),⁵⁹ but beyond this, the defeat of the communist-revolutionary threat in Indonesia, and with it, the Cold War in Indonesia, was not, as in the case of Central Asia or the Middle East, brought about by the ideological and political ascendancy of reactionary political forces. Rather, with respect to an organised and politicised Islam, the Suharto regime throughout the 1970s and 1980s was concerned to

maintain an apolitical Islam loyal to the state and its ideology of *Pancasila*. Furthermore, if and when Islam became a force 'on the streets', as it threatened to be in September 1984, the state responded with an iron fist of ruthless suppression resulting in over two hundred deaths.⁶⁰

The rise of a reactionary Islam in Indonesia (and South-East Asia in general) did not, then, emerge out of a Cold War crisis, as in the Middle East and Central Asia, but rather out of social and political contradictions heteronomous of the dynamic of the Cold War. These contradictions were associated with the political legitimacy of the Suharto dictatorship in the 1990s combined with the devastating socio-economic impact of the Asian financial crisis of 1997–8.⁶¹ And, in this sense, it would be more accurate to highlight the political and economic consequences of globalisation as the key explanatory formula for assessing the emergence of 'reactionary blowback' in Indonesia.

However, the character of the ending of the Cold War in Indonesia, particularly in the crushing of the left and the eradication of any secular outlets of political dissent, ended up orientating not only the political opposition to Suharto's 'New Order' but also any open discussion of public issues to Islamic institutions – schools and mosques – and Islamic publications.⁶² In this respect, as in other cases, the 'post-Cold War' resolution of political and economic problems in Indonesia was much more likely to be addressed and championed by Islamic-inspired political movements⁶³ rather than secular communist/nationalist movements as during the Cold War. Consequently, it was the combination of a socio-economic crisis triggered, in the long term, by Indonesia's economic liberalisation and opening to the world economy and, in the short term, by the Asian financial crisis of 1997–8, with a political structure of an authoritarian state facing a crisis of political legitimacy and an opposition dominated by Islamic currents, that provided the context for the emergence of reactionary-inspired political violence.

The changing global context of economic globalisation and Western states' wariness of being seen to be too close to regimes that abused human rights provided the global context for developments in Indonesia in the 1990s. Economic globalisation undermined the New Order ideology of *Pancasila* (which was committed to a form of national social solidarity), and with a changed political climate Suharto was keen to expand his political base beyond his extended family and the armed forces. While economics would play a leading role in promoting reactionary politics after 1997–8, politics and Suharto's political survival strategy were to be the key factors in the promotion of reactionary Islamic forces in Indonesia throughout the 1990s.

As in the case of Egypt under Sadat and the post-communist Central Asian leaders, the fortunes of political Islam also improved with the official endorsement of the Indonesian president after 1989. Thus, much as other leaders, when confronted with destabilising rapid social and political change, have sought to legitimate themselves according to something new but organic, Suharto tried to reconstitute his regime as more in tune with the Islamic culture of the Indonesian people than with its traditional and fraying source of support in the

army. The Suharto regime began to cultivate Islam ‘from above’, highlighted by the regime’s courting of the Islamic Nahdlatul Ulama (Revival of Islamic Scholars) and Suharto’s attendance at its 1989 Conference.⁶⁴ However, this policy of co-opting official Islam was always going to be difficult to pull off because of the growth of an Islamic political culture ‘from below’ on university campuses and within the wider public sphere through the 1980–90s, not tied to the state and in many respects critical of it.

Thus the Suharto regime was confronted with an opposition movement demanding democratic reform that was strongly influenced by leading Muslim intellectuals and organisations.⁶⁵ Suharto’s response was ‘divide and rule’ by cultivating reactionary and violent Islamic tendencies, in particular organisations such as the KISDI (Indonesian Committee for Solidarity with the World of Islam) and the DDII (Indonesian Council for Islamic Prediction), with the aim of depicting the democracy movement as un-Islamic. It was through this state sponsorship rather than any indigenous and grass-roots appeal that reactionary and violent Islamism took root in Indonesia in the 1990s.

The reactionary nature of these two movements was/is beyond question. Both are based on puritanical Wahhabi-influenced doctrines of Islam quite out of character with mainstream traditional Islamic practices in Indonesia.⁶⁶ Both were associated with anti-Semitic, anti-Christian, anti-Chinese and anti-Western political platforms, in particular a hostility towards liberal democracy and international capital. Their reactionary and violent tendencies were put to ‘good use’ by the Suharto regime. In particular, Suharto’s son-in-law and ‘rogue’ general Prabowo Subianto played a key role in cultivating reactionary Islamic elements associated with the DDII and KISDI in promoting attacks, including physical attacks on the Chinese and Christian minorities, throughout the archipelago as a way of blaming outside elements and non-Muslims for Indonesia’s political and economic woes, especially after the onset of the financial crisis in later 1997 and throughout 1998.⁶⁷ Through the release of crude and inflammatory propaganda, the actions of *agents provocateurs* and the general aim of instilling a climate of paranoia and conspiracy, the Suharto regime used reactionary Islamic groups to prevent the success of the democracy movement in Indonesia.

These groups, though co-opted by the state, had their own objectives, and with the fall of the Suharto regime in 1998 and the opening up of the possibility of democratisation in Indonesia, groups such as DDII and KISDI continued to promote a reactionary political agenda that has given succour to such groups as Laskar Jihad and Jeemah Islamiyah.⁶⁸ At first glance there seems to be little direct American involvement in the emergence of these reactionary Islamist groups in Indonesia and elsewhere in South-East Asia. However, the shadow of the Afghan Jihad also extends to distant South-East Asia. This is indicated by the fact that many, if not all, of the leading figures that came to lead and organise Islamist terrorist groups in this region (and in Algeria in the early 1990s) were veterans of the Afghan War and the recipients of US financial and political support.⁶⁹

Conclusions

This chapter has argued that the contemporary sources of terrorist-political violence and, in particular, those sources identified with reactionary political and ideological currents can be seen as products of the endings of the Cold War. The ends of the Cold War have been uneven – in time and form – but also paradoxical, in that the defeat/collapse of the communist challenge has led to, and in some cases was based upon, the rise of militant and reactionary forces. It was the combined failure and undermining/destruction of the ‘radical nationalist-communist project’ that has provided the context for the emergence of new, reactionary sources of opposition and resistance to the projection of US global power. Although this failure and defeat appeared clear after 1989 with the collapse of the ‘communist Rome’, the demise of the ‘actually existing alternative’ to the American-led global order was a more gradual and variable phenomenon than a focus on events in east-central Europe between 1989 and 1991 would suggest.

The ends of the Cold War, particularly in the South, suggest a heteronomy to the conflicts within world politics from the 1980s, if not before. Although the Cold War had not officially come to an end, and although the United States and its allies identified the USSR and the international communist movement as the primary threat to global order, as evidenced in the ‘new’ Cold War of the 1980s, social and political conflict in many parts of the world were, or had already emerged, outside of the dynamic of ‘inter-systemic’ conflict. These new sources of opposition and conflict were about something other than the struggle between communism and capitalism, notwithstanding their relationship to each of these socio-political phenomena, involving other social and political forces organised in a different way, mobilising different people according to ‘new’ ideological dogmas.

Thus, opposition to the projection of American global power heteronomous of the Cold War conflict, either from the perspective of the affiliation or alliance with the USSR and/or the political and ideological basis and objectives of such ‘resistance’ movements, was evident in parts of the South sometime before 1989. Such developments highlight the uneven ends of the Cold War in that the social-systemic conflict founded upon the two rival systems of capitalism and communism, and based on mobilisations of particular social groups organised into distinct forms of political agency – the party cadre or revolutionary guerrilla – had come to an end in large swathes of the world, not only the South, sometime before 1989. Consequently the dynamic of social and political conflict was also different, in terms of those who were contesting the social order, how they were challenging it and the objectives they sought.

Our discussion of the end of the Cold War has also highlighted the role and actions of the United States in determining the character of the end of the Cold War, in particular the way in which US policies ‘cultivated’ the reactionary right, especially in the Islamic world. In this sense the United States has been the author of its own destiny and is now suffering ‘reactionary blowback’, where political movements it supported during the Cold War have turned on the US.

What this tends to suggest is not only the short-sightedness of US policy towards many states and situations during the Cold War, but also its dependence on local actors in the securing of US objectives and the mediated nature of the US imperium. If this is so, then it also suggests that we should temper the degree to which we apportion any ‘responsibility’ to the US for Cold War and post-Cold War political developments, as compared to the determining influence of local actors, because local political conflicts and struggles (both inside and outside state institutions) impinged on the ‘delivery’ of US policies, and local political priorities sometimes distorted the outcomes of US policy as well.

The character of US policy, then, a product of the influence of domestic political debates on US foreign policy, and the nature of the United States as a liberal-democratic state have not only reduced the ability of the US to direct and determine political outcomes across the globe, but have also provided political spaces for local actors and issues to subvert or alter the outcomes of US policy. In all of the cases that this chapter has looked at, local actors and local situations have impinged on the meeting of US objectives, making outcomes more contingent and politically subjective than a simple recourse to the determining agency of US imperialism might suggest. The nature and outcome of local political struggles have, then, been the key to the dynamic of Cold War and post-Cold War political developments, and the degree to which they have seen the realisation of US objectives.

The significance accorded to local rather than global or US conditioning on the rise of reactionary political movements also relates to the relationship between the Cold War and globalisation. As I suggested in the introduction, globalisation was part of the Cold War dynamic in the sense of the intensification of economic, political and cultural linkages across and within states associated with the US-led international order, but also in the way that such processes contributed to the undermining of the more autarchic and insular state structures that emerged after 1945. The US was at the centre of both these processes. However, through the 1990s post-Cold War globalisation saw a reorientation of US global power projection. Whereas during the Cold War political developments were always defined in national security terms, with the end of the global threat from the USSR/communism the degree to which the United States busied itself in the affairs of far and distant countries was transformed. Thus, as much as there were political spaces for local political actors and issues to determine US policy outcomes during the Cold War, such spaces expanded with the refining of US power projection in the 1990s and, furthermore, the re-ordering of national security priorities.

In practice, throughout the 1990s this meant a reduction of US concern and influence in particular states that, previously, had been a focus of US concern – Afghanistan being the obvious yet not only case – providing opportunities for the influence of other external actors, sometimes promoting forces and currents inimical to US *global* interests. Ironically, then, the economic priorities of globalisation have, in contrast to the Cold War, seen a *reduction* in the projection of US global power and the ability and will of the US to determine political outcomes

in all parts of the world, at least until 9/11. This stands in contrast to the Cold War, where global developments were judged according to the priorities of US national security and the global systemic struggle against the USSR and international communism. The era of globalisation outside of the Cold War saw a more pristine economic dynamic govern US power projection, which has resulted, in practice, in a reduction of a US global political presence, mainly because significant parts of the world are not part of this process.

The 'war on terror' has obviously transformed US global priorities so that countries outside the zones of globalisation (the Middle East being second only to sub-Saharan Africa in this respect) like Afghanistan have become a much higher priority. The degree to which the emergence of reactionary political violence is a product of US neglect is debatable, but it should at least caution us to the role of more localised factors in assessing the sources of the current disorder in world politics.

The emergence of reactionary forms of political violence in the 1990s, then, is a product of a number of factors not reducible to US policy. However, what is clear is that the focus of US policy during the Cold War – on the destruction of the secular/radical left – not only rested on the strengthening of the reactionary right but, in the light of the political fragility of these states and the way in which US anti-communism contributed to the disfigurement of *civil* society, made reactionary and violent responses to post-Cold War political crises all the more likely.

Notes

- 1F. Fukuyama *The End of History and the Last Man*, London: Penguin, 1993; T. Friedman *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*, London: HarperCollins, 1999.
- 2However, the increasingly rightward drift of the US under the Bush presidency, wrapped up in the policies associated with the 'war on terror' in domestic and foreign policy, points to an increasingly illiberal and militarist USA, reflecting – in its disdain for international law and international institutions, and its proclivity to use force justified by crude depictions of world politics as a struggle between 'good and evil' – some degree of similarity with the political outlook of the Islamist terrorist groups that it opposes.
- 3The international political weakness of the left has led to a situation where sections of left-wing opinion (see the editorial 'Vichy on the Tigris', *New Left Review*, Vol. II, No. 28 (July–August 2004)) have endorsed the armed resistance to the American occupation of Iraq from groups such as the Mahdi army of Moqtada al-Sadr, whose social and political agenda could be considered as highly reactionary in its commitment to an Islamic state in Iraq.
- 4The idea of (reactionary) 'blowback' has risen to prominence, particularly since the attacks on the United States on 11 September 2001. Chalmers Johnson's *Blowback: The Costs and Consequences of American Empire*, London: Time Warner Paperbacks, 2002, outlines a more generalised examination of how US Cold War policy has come back to haunt the United States in the post-Cold War era. Johnson is more concerned to highlight the idea of 'imperial overstretch' in post-Cold War US foreign policy and also focuses exclusively on developments in east Asia. Whilst highlighting some important fault lines in US foreign policy, his analysis does not really address the *reactionary* blowback that I am concerned with. Mahmood Mamdani's *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: America, the Cold War, and the Roots of Terror*, New York: Pantheon Books, 2004, sketches an impressive and nuanced discussion of the rise of Islamist terrorism,

- arguing that the Afghan War was an American Jihad. Whilst my argument is informed by and sympathetic to Mamdani's I give greater emphasis to the localised sources of Islamist reaction.
- 5 However, in parts of the South, states, and not just the United States, have played a central role in cultivating reactionary political movements, highlighting the continuing linkage between state power and reactionary violence.
 - 6 Indeed, within the Islamist form of reactionary politics there is a deep hostility to (scientific) reason as the basis for political and legal order, and instead – parroting the mythical elements within fascism based on appeals to the glorious past – Islamist movements justify themselves according to an untouchable and unquestioning reference to the Koran and an ahistorical view of a glorious Islamic past. See M. Ruthven *Fundamentalism*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004.
 - 7 A. Al-Azmeh 'Postmodern Obscurantism and the "Muslim Question"', in Leo Panitch and Colin Leys (eds) *Socialist Register. Fighting Identities: Race, Religion and Ethnonationalism*, London: Merlin Press, 2003, pp. 28–50.
 - 8 *Ibid.*; and E. Arnold (ed.) *The Development of the Radical Right in France*, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000, pp. xii–xix.
 - 9 This has been most pronounced within the former communist bloc, in particular Yugoslavia and Soviet Central Asia. In both of these cases, religious and ethnic influences quickly replaced conceptions and practices of identity based on multi-ethnic secular politics. Whereas Western policies, particularly those encouraged by private and public lending institutions, exacerbated ethnic tensions in the Balkans contributing to ethnic conflict, in the former republics of Soviet Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan), it was the over-spill of the US Cold War policy of destabilising Afghanistan along with the flood of 'Islamic missionaries' into these newly independent states that contributed to laying the foundations for subsequent Islamist violence. On the break-up of Yugoslavia see S. Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy: Chaos and Dissolution After the Cold War*, Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1995; and on Central Asia, see A. Rashid, *Jihad: The Rise of Militant Islam in Central Asia*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002.
 - 10 See M. Juergensmeyer, *The New Cold War? Religious Nationalism Confronts the Secular State*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993; M. Guibernau, *Nationalisms: The Nation-State and Nationalism in the Twentieth Century*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996.
 - 11 See P. Hirst and G. Thompson, *Globalisation in Question*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995.
 - 12 The decision by the Sadat government to follow IMF advice and suspend state subsidies on food in January 1977 triggered serious rioting in Cairo forcing the reversal of the measure.
 - 13 In Egypt after 1962 all university graduates were guaranteed a job in the public service upon graduation. See M. Yapp, *The Near East Since the First World War*, London: Longman, 1991, p. 215. The end of this provision is not coincidental with the rise of militant Islam.
 - 14 See G. H. Talhami, 'Muslims, Islamists, and the Cold War', *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (2003), p. 113.
 - 15 See M. Ruthven, *A Fury for God*, revised edition, London: Granta, 2002, pp. 99–133; and D. Meiring, *Fire of Islam*, London: Wildwood House, 1982, p. 142.
 - 16 Some Islamist movements are structurally organised in a way not dissimilar to the Leninist vanguard party of highly educated and motivated militants, and their sophisticated use of information and communications media highlights an embrace of modern technology.
 - 17 See Mamdani, *op. cit.*, pp. 63–177.
 - 18 Standard accounts are J. Lewis Gaddis, *The United States and the End of the Cold War*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1992; and M. Hogan (ed.) *The End of the Cold War: Its Meaning and Implications*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

- 19 There are exceptions where the end of the Cold War has promoted the ending of regional military conflicts. Thus, the political situation in a number of countries has improved through the 1990s, in part through the localised impacts of the end of the superpower conflict, as in Cambodia, Northern Ireland, Southern Africa and Central America. For a discussion of the impact of the end of the Cold War on conflicts in the South see M. Ayoob, *The Third World Security Predicament: State Making, Regional Conflict and the International System*, Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1995; and T. Weiss and M. Kessler (eds) *Third World Security in the Post-Cold War Era*, Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1991.
- 20 See T. Barkawi and M. Laffey, 'Retrieving the Imperial: *Empire* and International Relations', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 1 (2002), pp. 109–34, for a discussion of the impact of developments within 'the regions' of the world on the politics of the major powers.
- 21 See P. Shearman and P. Williams (eds) *The Superpowers, Central America and the Middle East*, London: Brasseys, 1988.
- 22 See R. Lebow and T. Risse-Kappen, *International Relations Theory and the End of the Cold War*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1995.
- 23 Mamdani, op. cit., pp. 63–118, highlights the impact of the US defeat in South-East Asia manifested in the fusing of terrorist and criminal elements organised by sections of the US national security state apparatus who coordinated covert and illegal anti-leftist activities outside of congressional and democratic oversight.
- 24 See F. Halliday, *From Kabul to Managua: Soviet–American Relations in the 1980s*, New York: Pantheon, 1989; and M. Klare and P. Kornbluh (eds) *Low Intensity Warfare: How the US Fights Wars Without Declaring Them*, London: Methuen, 1989.
- 25 For discussions of US support for forces opposed to radical political and economic transformation before and during the Cold War, see W. LaFeber, *The American Age: United States Foreign Policy at Home and Abroad, 1750 to the Present*, New York: W. W. Norton, 1994; and G. Kolko, *Confronting the Third World: United States Foreign Policy, 1945–1980*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1988.
- 26 See M. Rupert, *Ideologies of Globalization*, London: Routledge, 2000; C. Berlet and M. Lyons, *Right Wing Populism in America*, New York: Guilford, 2000.
- 27 However, these regimes, particularly Nasser's Egypt, were firmly opposed to a politicised Islam. Any such tendencies were ruthlessly dealt with, as exemplified in the execution by the Egyptian state of the leading ideologue of the Muslim Brotherhood and leading thinker of reactionary Islam, Sayyid Qutb, in 1966. See D. Hiro, *Islamic Fundamentalism*, London: Paladin Books, 1988, pp. 67–8.
- 28 For a discussion of the political and ideological conflict between radical Arab nationalism and Islamic-inspired conservatism in the Arabian Peninsula, see F. Halliday, *Arabia Without Sultans*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974, pp. 58–9, 105–14.
- 29 See D. Hiro, *War Without End*, London: Routledge, 2002, p. 144.
- 30 *Ibid.*, p. 68.
- 31 J. Esposito, *Unholy War: Terror in the Name of Islam*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2002, pp. 83–4.
- 32 Hiro, *Islamic Fundamentalism*.
- 33 According to John Cooley, the US actually endorsed Saudi plans to fund anti-leftist pro-Islamic elements through the rector of al-Azhar University; John Cooley, *Unholy Wars: Afghanistan, America and International Terrorism*, London: Pluto 2000, p. 43.
- 34 See M. Heikal, *Autumn of Fury*, London: Deutsch, 1983, pp. 140–7, 220.
- 35 Esposito, op. cit., pp. 86–90.
- 36 Prior to the war, Sadat had expelled Soviet military advisers in 1972, upon which Egypt's military planning and defence had been heavily dependent. One reason suggested to explain this was that Sadat's decision was meant as a signal to the US of Egypt's openness to US influence. When the US did not respond by pressuring Israel

- to the negotiating table, Sadat cynically turned to Moscow again for arms, and then finally ended the 'alliance' in 1974 after securing his diplomatic objectives. See A. Al-Sayyid Marsot, *A Short History of Modern Egypt*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985, pp. 133–4.
- 37 This was known as *intifah* or 'opening'. It rested on encouraging foreign investment and ending the state's dominance over the economy through tax breaks and other instruments to promote domestic private capital accumulation.
- 38 There were a number of Saudi initiatives throughout the 1960s to counter the pervasive influence of Nasser's pan-Arab socialism. In 1969 a Saudi initiative established the first official pan-Islamic organisation of inter-governmental cooperation amongst Muslim states, the Organisation of Islamic Conference. See Hiro, *War Without End*, p. 145.
- 39 Esposito, op. cit., pp. 106–7.
- 40 See Ruthven, op. cit., pp. 134–68, for an excellent succinct analysis of Saudi Arabia.
- 41 Saudi funding for such bodies as the World Islamic League based in Mecca has also seen the spread of Wahhabite doctrine and practice to mosques in Europe and the United States. See Ruthven, op. cit., pp. 176–7.
- 42 After the 1979 Iranian Revolution, Saudi Arabia saw its support for anti-Shi'ite forces in Afghanistan as a way of undermining Iran's claim to leadership of the Islamic world. See Talhami, op. cit., p. 119.
- 43 Esposito, op. cit., p. 109.
- 44 See M. Griffin, *Reaping the Whirlwind: The Taliban Movement in Afghanistan*, London: Pluto, 2001, pp. 17–32.
- 45 The *madrassas*, along with Pakistan's Inter-Service Intelligence (ISI) agency, have also played an important role in strengthening reactionary Islamist movements in the former Soviet republics of Central Asia. This began under Zia but continued through the 1990s, contributing to continuing instability within these states and Pakistan. See Rashid, op. cit., pp. 212–18.
- 46 A. Rashid, *Taliban*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000, p. 89.
- 47 The reactionary orientation of the politics that emerged within this social milieu was not only a product of the reactionary Wahhabi and Deobandi interpretations of Islam that gained widespread appeal through the *madrassas*, but was also due to the pervasive influence of personal identities based upon tribal loyalties. The issue of tribal loyalty was a key issue in the fragmentation of the Islamic resistance to the Red Army and the subsequent civil war, and provided an important ingredient in the reactionary political cocktail that characterised most of the groups within the Afghan mujahidin during and after the war against the Soviets. Further, Pakistan was committed to the 'fragmentation' of the Afghan resistance and only funded religious rather than Afghan nationalist groups so as to prevent any nationalist tendencies that might sow unrest within Pakistan's 'Pashtun belt'. See Talhami, op. cit., pp. 120–1.
- 48 See T. Ali, *Clash of Fundamentalisms*, London: Verso, 2002, pp. 189–95; Rashid, *Taliban*, pp. 82–94; M. Weinbaum, *Pakistan and Afghanistan: Resistance and Reconstruction*, Boulder: Westview, 1994, pp. 29–52; J. Burke, *Al-Qaeda: The True Story of Radical Islam*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2004.
- 49 For analysis of the Iranian Revolution see F. Halliday, *Islam and the Myth of Confrontation*, London: I. B. Tauris, 2002; S. Bakhash, *The Reign of the Ayatollahs*, London: I. B. Tauris, 1987. Although the Iranian Revolution in some senses reflected an 'Islamic challenge' to the United States, it was also perceived as a Shi'ite challenge to Sunni orthodoxy. Consequently, as much as it united Muslims against the United States it sowed division between the two major branches of Islam, one upshot of which was an increase in Saudi support for Sunni–Wahhabi sectarian anti-Shi'ite Islamic groups across the Muslim world, as well as helping to ignite communal strife between Sunni and Shi'ite factions in Pakistan leading to thousands of deaths. See O. Roy, *The Failure of Political Islam*, London: I. B. Tauris, 1999.

- 50 However, we need to be clear: the United States did not create the reactionary Islamic militias. Rather, the US took advantage of a situation within Afghanistan 'of a revolt against the modernizing secular state'. In this respect Afghans and specific factions within the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan, in particular, were to blame. See F. Halliday, *Two Hours that Shook the World*, London: Saqi Books, 2002, p. 37.
- 51 In an interview in the French weekly *Le Nouvel Observateur* in January 1998, President Carter's National Security Adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski, confirmed that Carter agreed to aid Islamic resistance to the pro-Moscow leftist PDPA in July 1979, some months prior to the Soviet intervention in December, knowing that this might provoke Soviet intervention. Cited in Ali, op. cit., p. 207.
- 52 A. Rashid, *Taliban: The Story of the Afghan Warlords*, Basingstoke: Pan Books, 2001, p. 18.
- 53 The decision by the Reagan administration to break the international agreement it had made with the USSR in Geneva concerning the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan by continuing to support the mujahidin was also a crucial factor in determining developments in Afghanistan after the Soviet withdrawal. See Halliday, *Two Hours that Shook the World*, pp. 37–8.
- 54 *Ibid.*, p. 129.
- 55 See R. Crockatt, *America Embattled*, London: Routledge, 2003, p. 104; Cooley, op. cit.
- 56 Rashid, *Taliban: The Story of the Afghan Warlords*, p. 130; Griffin, op. cit., pp. 128–40.
- 57 See F. Halliday, 'Soviet Foreign Policy-Making and the Afghanistan War', *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 4 (1999), pp. 675–91, and R. Reuveny and A. Prakash, 'The Afghanistan War and the Breakdown of the Soviet Union', *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 4 (1999), pp. 693–708.
- 58 Documentary evidence indicates that both the British and American governments were aware of the coup plot against Sukarno and the subsequent murderous campaign against the PKI, which they did nothing to prevent. See the National Security Archive at <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB52/>
- 59 R. Hefner, *Civil Islam: Muslims and Democratization in Indonesia*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000, pp. 107–9.
- 60 M. Vatikatis, *Indonesian Politics under Suharto*, London: Routledge, 1993, p. 128.
- 61 Between August 1997 and February 1998, the Indonesian currency lost 70 per cent of its value vis-à-vis the dollar, provoking a debt crisis which caused the closure of factories and the shedding of jobs, all of which contributed to the ballooning of the levels of poverty from 14 per cent to over 40 per cent of the population. See Hefner, op. cit., p. 198.
- 62 R. Hefner, 'Islam and Nation in the Post-Suharto Era', in A. Schwarz and J. Paris (eds) *The Politics of Post-Suharto Indonesia*, New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1999, p. 43.
- 63 It is important to note that the influence of Islamic-inspired political movements in Indonesia in the 1990s went beyond the reactionary and violent strands of Islam to include a number of mass-based movements, notably the United Development Party that sought to promote a distinctly Indonesian brand of Islam far removed from Wahhabite interpretations and officially committed to some form of parliamentary democracy. Furthermore, the mobilisation of moderate Muslims played a key role in the toppling of Suharto in 1998. See Hefner, *Civil Islam*.
- 64 Hefner, *Civil Islam*, p. 169.
- 65 Including Amien Rais of the Muhammadiyah (Followers of Muhammad) and Abdullah Wahid of the Nahalatul Ulama, as well as the many thousands of Muslims who supported Megawati's Indonesian Democratic Party.
- 66 Both were also sponsored and funded by Saudi-based charities and groups. See M. Davis, 'Laskar Jihad and the Political Position of Conservative Islam in Indonesia', *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 24, No. 1 (2002), pp. 12–32.

- 67 See Hefner, *Civil Islam* and 'Islam and Nation'; Davis, op. cit. The blaming of outside forces, of course, focused on an internal element as well and conformed to a classic 'Hitlerite' conspiracy formula of blaming local communists and left-wing forces *in alliance with* international Jewry and finance capital aimed at the destruction of Indonesia's Muslim way of life.
- 68 See Davis, op. cit.; Z. Abuza, *Militant Islam in Southeast Asia*, Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2003.
- 69 On South-East Asia, see Abuza, op. cit. With respect to Algeria, the influence of Afghan veterans also extended to the involvement of non-Algerian nationals in Islamist political campaigning in the early 1990s. See Cooley, op. cit., pp. 183–214.

4 The intellectual antecedents of the Bush regime¹

Ben O'Loughlin

Introduction

This chapter provides a concise overview of some of the key intellectual-ideological debates that have formed the intellectual and political outlooks of some of the key individuals within the Bush administration. Charting the trajectories of different conservative ideas, and of the networks of people holding them, shows the Bush foreign policy since 11 September 2001 is radical but not altogether surprising. The second section begins with American conservatism in the 1940s, showing how traditional and libertarian strands became synthesised in the 1950s and 1960s as, propelled by the rise of the Sun Belt, a 'movement conservatism' formed to overturn a liberal establishment that was fragmenting amid disputes over Vietnam, the war on poverty, and the question of how virtuous or moral technocratic policy-making could be. Conservatives ensured politics would remain in the terrain of values by contesting the scientific basis of policy, setting up think tanks to market policies whose truths, being conservative, were always already known, and which exerted clear influence upon the Ford and Reagan administrations.

The third section focuses attention on foreign policy. As Democrats gained a reputation for weakness under Carter, traditionalist and neoconservative groups took hold of Republican strategy at the expense of libertarians and paleo-conservatives. Yet Reagan and Bush proved pragmatic, and after the Cold War ended the neoconservative group split. Older figures such as Irving Kristol and Jeane Kirkpatrick settled on a traditional realism to safeguard gains made, while younger figures such as Norman Podhoretz and Charles Krauthammer took on a 'democratic imperialist' mantle: Fukuyama had declared the end of history had been reached, the victory of liberal democracy, so why not universalise this end through hi-tech military means? Multilateral failures in the 1990s strengthened their hand as they created institutions such as the Project for the New American Century to advance their bold agenda.

The final section addresses the Bush presidency since 2000. It explains how Bush's acceptance of the democratic imperialist agenda since 11 September 2001 involved discernible activity of policy entrepreneurs such as Dick Cheney and Paul Wolfowitz and certain linguistic devices such as 'war on terror', 'axis of

evil' and the entire National Security Strategy document of 2002. Such terms locked the US into a new direction, and the course of action was made easier by a public made acquiescent and Democratic 'opponents' supportive of muscular intervention. However, such an explanation of the intellectual antecedents of the Bush regime may contain indications of the limits of democratic imperialism. The contingent if well-orchestrated synthesis of often contradictory conservative traditions is as liable to be 'mugged by reality' as the liberal hegemony it overturned.

Disparate conservatisms find a common voice

In the 1940s conservatism seemed marginal in US political life. Associated with the South and thus racism, with isolationism and thus reluctance to fight Nazism, and with selfish big business, it stood in the shadow of a post-New Deal liberalism triumphant after winning the Second World War, and that had begun constructing the international institutions that would cement thirty years of Pax Americana. Yet though conservative thinking may have seemed 'obsolete, impotent, even quaint',² the diverse if marginal conservative thinkers emerging in this period began to express a dissatisfaction that found resonance among the newly affluent suburban public. These diverse voices provide a useful introduction to strands of conservative thinking still present in the Bush regime. Potentially contradictory traditionalist and libertarian strands were united by anti-communism and a loathing of liberalism – not dissimilar to the Republican Party of today, with traditionalist and libertarian factions united by opposition to anti-Americanism of any kind (Islamic fundamentalism, 'Old Europe' intransigence) and again a loathing of liberalism, typified by attacks on the lifestyles of Bill and Hillary Clinton as much as their policies.

The most important libertarian conservatives in the 1940s were Ludwig von Mises, Friedrich von Hayek and Ayn Rand. All three were European immigrants fleeing state oppression, who then (over)generalised this experience to form doctrines expressing varying degrees of distaste for the state. At one end of the distaste spectrum we find Rand's comic-book depictions in *The Fountainhead* (1943) and *Atlas Shrugged* (1957), built around Nietzschean super-individuals from an exceptional America struggling against the second-rate and the collective. This tapped into a public psyche: 'a feeling that mass society, bureaucracy, mediocrity, were robbing the individual, as citizen, as employee, as consumer and human being, of individuality'.³

In works such as *Human Action* (1949), Mises took neoclassical economics and used it to express similar contempt for the state, identifying civilisation with capitalism and arguing that only market society could bring the freedoms and rights that liberals sought. Finally, in *The Road to Serfdom* (1944) Hayek made what was dogmatic in Rand and Mises into a simple, short and passionate argument that political freedom could only exist alongside economic freedom, and that economic equality as aimed for by European socialists required political coercion to bring about: 'Socialism can be put into practice only by methods of which

most socialists disapprove.⁴ Instead of planning society, which led to totalitarianism, humankind should rely upon the spontaneous order generated by the actions of free individuals. Individual liberty, operating through the impersonal market, became consistent with a stable, increasingly wealthy society.⁵

Traditionalist conservatives also sought a stable, moral order, but through a life based around tradition, not spontaneous forward-moving forces. Richard Weaver was a socialist in North Carolina until studying for his PhD at Vanderbilt, Tennessee, where he became influenced by a group called the Southern Agrarians, reactionaries who saw the highest virtues in the ways of the Old South – a feudal, religious, chivalrous and ‘nonmaterial’ order. Thinking along these lines, in his 1948 book *Ideas have Consequences*, Weaver argued that humankind went wrong when it rejected God, Thomas Aquinas and universal values in favour of secular enlightenment, rationality and knowledge legitimated by human consciousness, not a higher source. Russell Kirk was another reactionary, opposed to mass society. Detesting his home town of Detroit, his experiences in the war and working for the Ford motor company, Kirk went to Duke and wrote an MA thesis on the Southern conservative John Randolph, then, with help from the GI Bill, went to the University of St Andrews in Scotland where he became an admirer of Edmund Burke and wrote a PhD on Burke’s influence on the US and UK. Burke was a supporter of the notion of a natural aristocracy, and saw the state as a ‘divinely ordained moral essence’ in a society, uniting ‘those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are to be born’.⁶ Opposing the utilitarianism of J. S. Mill and Jeremy Bentham, Kirk preferred the Romantic worldview and, despite his fears of social degradation, he was optimistic because he suspected the American public to have an inherently conservative streak:

Despite the disruptive forces of mass communication, rapid transportation, industrial standardization, a cheap press, and Gresham’s Law operating in affairs of the mind ... despite the decay of the family economy and family affections, most men and women in the twentieth century still feel veneration for what their ancestors have believed, and express a pathetic eagerness to find stability in a time of flux ... Conservatives may yet appeal to an unsatisfied emotion of gigantic potency.⁷

As we shall see, conservatives certainly did continue to appeal to certain unsatisfied emotions. However, the final traditionalist conservative of note is the – recently increasingly infamous – Leo Strauss.⁸ His philosophy, discernible from his commentaries on Plato, Machiavelli, Hobbes and others, advocates a society commanded by independent statesmen guided by intellectuals schooled in the wisdom of the ancients. Such a society maintains its moral strength by conducting wars against the enemies of its civilisation. The masses are incapable of dealing with either the wisdom held by the intellectuals or the strategies implemented by the statesmen, and so government must operate behind a veil of secrecy, tell ‘noble lies’ and sustain national myths to rally its people.

The contradictions between these libertarian and traditionalist conservatisms are clear: where Rand embraced industrial progress, Kirk fled Detroit for Scotland and Weaver to Tennessee; and where Kirk and Weaver advocated a traditionalist, reactionary conservatism, Hayek embraced the apparently dynamic forces unleashed by individual freedom and indeed penned an essay, 'Why I Am Not a Conservative', in which he argued the traditionalist strand was a complacent ideology that, unable to present a positive vision, would allow collectivism to take over a society.

These strands were brought together, however, by particular individuals and a particular notion. The individuals were William F. Buckley Jr and Frank Meyer, and the notion was anticommunism. An important current became clear in the 1950s: anticommunist liberals began to connect professionally with conservatives. *Life* and *Fortune* magazines, owned by anticommunist Henry Luce's Time Inc., featured many such writers, including former Trotskyist-turned-CIA-official James Burnham, liberal social scientist Daniel Bell and former communist Willi Schlamm. Schlamm then took over the libertarian monthly *The Freeman*, and tried to recruit Buckley as publisher. Buckley had been a star student at Yale but shocked his alumna by writing *God and Man at Yale* (1951), in which he attacked his liberal secular professors. This attack was threefold: he argued that the departments of religion and philosophy were dominated by atheists and agnostics (traditionalist); that the departments of economics, politics and sociology were awash with 'collectivists' (libertarian); and he put this all within the context of the struggle against communism (anticommunist).

This synthesising effort was continued as Buckley and Schlamm set up the journal *National Review*, in which Buckley proclaimed to stand 'athwart history, yelling "Stop," at a time when no one is inclined to do so'.⁹ The magazine defined the political moment as Social Engineers versus disciples of Truth, with the former including not just liberal Democrats but Republicans too.¹⁰ The magazine was committed to international engagement in the 'Last Battle' against godless communism, and it supported Joseph McCarthy's red purge as a means to attack liberals. The traditionalism of Kirk provided a philosophical basis for the synthesis – a reading of the nature of humanity, its rights and duties, and social order; Hayek's libertarianism provided the strategy for bringing about this society, unleashing humankind's energies to renew a moral order; and Buckley's anticommunism provided the military, political and economic tactics to defeat a perceived pressing threat.

At the *National Review*, Frank Meyer became the grand negotiator between traditionalist and libertarian wings. In his 1962 essay, 'Freedom, Tradition, Conservatism', which became the 1964 book *What is Conservatism?*, he argued the two strands were compatible because they 'have their roots in a common tradition and are arrayed against a common enemy'.¹¹ Virtue meant the necessity of choosing one's own end and choosing to be moral. The duty of conservatives in the mid-twentieth century was *not to conserve, but to restore* this society of free and moral individuals. Conquering communism was necessary for rescuing the Western tradition, or civilisation. Thus, a fusion was possible between liberty,

tradition and relentless anticommunism. As we see in the next section, Meyer's 'fusionism' gave conservatives heart and galvanised them to political action. William Rusher, a player and chronicler of *The Rise of the Right*, recalls the effect this synthesis had on him: 'Now I had a new sign under which to conquer ... I was a conservative.'¹²

Movement conservatism

By the 1960s, then, conservatism was a banner under which the radical right could gather, and as young conservatives 'got political' they found a leader in Barry Goldwater and an organisation in Young Americans for Freedom, formed in 1960. The climate among this group was revolutionary. Rusher recalls how Cliff White rounded up young Republicans to launch Goldwater's 1964 nomination drive:

it was nothing less than a revolution that White and his colleagues were planning – the seizure of control of the Republican Party by brand-new forces, based in the Midwest, the South, and the West rather than in the East and dedicated to the fast-growing cause of conservatism rather than to either liberalism or that pusillanimous cop-out called moderation.¹³

This zealous attitude found expression in Goldwater's nomination speech:

I would remind you that extremism in the defense of liberty is no vice! And let me remind you also that moderation in the pursuit of justice is no virtue!¹⁴

Though Goldwater lost in a landslide to Lyndon Johnson in 1964, the tone for the coming decades was set: movement conservatism had moved from theory to party politics. The movement was underpinned by changing socio-economic conditions that were instantly captured by Kevin Phillips in his 1968 book, *The Emerging Republican Majority*.¹⁵ Offering the use of his projections, Phillips became special assistant to Nixon campaign manager John Mitchell. He argued that the Democratic coalition was fracturing because allowing 'the Negro socioeconomic revolution ... carried [the Democrats] beyond programs taxing the few for the benefit of the many (the New Deal) to programs taxing the many on behalf of the few (the Great Society)'.¹⁶ This sparked a populist counter-revolution by those finding civil rights 'obnoxious',¹⁷ i.e. the white working and middle classes of what Phillips termed the 'Sun Belt', Southern and Western states such as Florida, Texas, Arizona and California. Not only were Republicans gaining votes in new regions, but these regions featured population growth and thus a future majority of voters:

The persons most drawn to the new sun culture are the pleasure-seekers, the bored, the ambitious; the space-age technicians and the retired – a

super-slice of the rootless, socially mobile group known as the American middle class. Most of them have risen to such status only in the last generation, and their elected officials predictably embody a popular political impulse which deplores further social (minority group) upheaval and favors a consolidation of the last thirty years' gains.¹⁸

As McGirr¹⁹ notes in her study of conservative populism in Orange County, California, in this period, these voters were not against modernity per se: they worked day to day in the US military-industrial complex developing new technologies and space programmes, they had moved their families across the country, and they were comfortable with rapid, unplanned property development. Paradoxically, an ethos of frontier self-reliance and anti-collectivism flourished among people who relied on government for work. Private property development in Orange County meant a lack of public space and sense of community which only fuelled citizens' individualism and desire for some moral certainty, which they found in Protestantism and patriotism.

In parallel with demographic and socioeconomic changes, Phillips described how the power-base of the Republican Party had moved from the North-East to Goldwater, Nixon and Reagan in California, who better represented the anti-establishment impulses of Sun Belt voters. Hodgson²⁰ makes the important point that the new populism in these states was *not necessarily conservative*, but was 'captured by conservatives'. Nixon's strategy, for instance, involved attacking Main Street (local elites) and Wall Street (uncaring, distant business elites) but standing up for Elm Street – articulating concerns about social instability, inflation and high taxes held by the suburban, white middle classes. McGirr shows how the deliberate capture of these citizens involved the active diffusion of conservative ideas by local and national leaders and businesses, distributing literature and organising book clubs and rallies. The affluent society had been found in America's Sun Belt, and conservative politicians expressed the felt sentiment that this society had to be defended – against the liberal elite at home and communists abroad.

It was around this time that liberalism split, intellectually and politically. The early 1960s had been the intellectual and political zenith of American liberalism. In his 1961 inaugural address President Kennedy proclaimed 'man holds in his mortal hands the power to abolish all forms of human poverty and all forms of human life'.²¹ Whether through nuclear destruction or anti-poverty programmes, rational planning could transform as it chose. This liberal pragmatism in the policy world and the political success of Democrats was underpinned by the empirical, materialist philosophy of William James and John Dewey. During the Johnson presidency, however, the liberal pragmatic intellectual community fragmented. On a personal level, Johnson did not trust the liberal elite – Kennedy's 'brain trust' – and that elite was fragmenting anyway amid internal differences over the Vietnam War, social unrest and a critique of pragmatism-influenced policy-making in which the radical left and emerging neoconservative right questioned whether the 'revolving door'²² that existed

between university research institutes, management consultancies and government agencies resulted in a focus on policy/means at the expense of defining desirable values/ends.²³

Objective policy failure also undermined the liberal consensus. The Great Society programmes – including the war on poverty, Medicare and Medicaid – featured unforeseen cost inflation at a time when Vietnam was adding to the government's fiscal woes. Johnson would not ease on either front, allowing conservatives to invoke what Hirschman²⁴ later described as the 'rhetoric of reaction': government interventions such as welfare were *perverse* (created dependency), *jeopardised* gains society had made (e.g. a drain on wealth), and were *futile* anyway because human nature is flawed. Attempts to revitalise inner cities were a clear target. The fortunes of cities such as New York, Washington, DC, and Los Angeles, Fred Siegel²⁵ notes, had national implications since they were centres of media, government and business, influencing all America as symbols of liberalism and indeed integral to America's self-image: the celebrated disorder of the street as source of innovation in art and economy. From the 1950s onward, however, the street became a source of menace; by the 1970s the American city had become a cultural object denoting violence and poverty, and the 1980s saw the affluent flee urban spaces not just for suburbia but for suburban private compounds. In this context, it was not difficult to argue that liberal politics did not work.²⁶

Political division stemmed from these emerging policy failures. Between 1968 and 1972 the Democratic Party split along New Left versus Southern and moderate/conservative Democrats lines. Structural changes to the party after the 1968 election defeat gave the former power.²⁷ Northern working-class voters and Southern whites were alienated, as well as neoconservative Democrats such as D. P. Moynihan and James Q. Wilson, who felt the New Left's social liberal, authority-questioning agenda was a moral challenge to America, and that a growing culture of entitlement was harming the legitimacy of the welfare state they supported. Moynihan, angry with the liberal denunciation of his essay on the 'Negro Family', even became an aide to President Nixon, alerting his boss to the *Kulturkampf* that had brought neoconservatives into movement conservatism.

A crucial shift in the early 1970s was that *conservatives politicised knowledge*. The move from Democratic to Republican Party by liberal intellectuals was reflected in a change to the political role of think tanks at that time. The technocratic mode of policy-making dominant during the Democrats' Great Society years, dominated by technically trained knowledge elites and their social science methods, was overturned by a conservative 'counterintelligensia'.²⁸ Conservatives *politicised expertise*, courting experts' allegiance for conservative ideas by getting conservative business leaders to fund research and education projects. Social science was portrayed as an ideology that had failed; public disillusionment with scientific solutions or notions of progress was kindled by the failure of 'social experiments' in health and welfare. The result was a proliferation of conservative think tanks in the 1970s – notably Heritage, Cato, the Manhattan Institute and a

revitalised American Enterprise Institute – at war²⁹ with liberalism and scientific knowledge. Where liberal think tanks such as the Brookings Institution sought a non-partisan, ‘objective’ approach to policy advice, conservative think tanks were openly biased. This shift from *objective to subjective* expertise was justified by a growing belief that society was such a complex organism that no social science advice would be all-seeing, while unforeseen consequences could be all-damaging. Hence, why not attempt to organise and control expertise towards political ends?

Liberals had been unprepared for this counterintelligensia. Analytically, the work of J. K. Galbraith, the leading liberal economist, focused on industrialism, not capitalism; on companies as social organisations, not on markets, entrepreneurship, and the role of motivation in economic life. Psychologically, liberals dismissed the New Right. For Richard Hofstadter³⁰ it was a movement motivated by persecution and paranoia. For Daniel Bell³¹ and Seymour Martin Lipset and Earl Raab,³² the radical right were motivated by status-anxiety amid the relentless upheavals of progress in modernity. Bell proclaimed *The End of Ideology*. The resuscitation and revitalisation of conservative ideas through a radical movement of the Right was not a notion liberal intellectuals took seriously.

Traditionalist, libertarian and anti-communist strands continued to gain institutional strength. The shaping of public opinion to inculcate a set of virtues match the philosophy of Leo Strauss – for whom the noble lie to the mindless mob kept order and tranquillity – and by the 1970s Straussians were beginning to gain important positions in movement conservatism. Irving Kristol and his wife Gertrude Himmelfarb saw themselves as part of the ‘happy few’³³ to understand Strauss: liberals who had been taken by surprise by the 1960s counterculture: ‘Suddenly we discovered we had been cultural conservatives all along.’³⁴ Though Himmelfarb remained an independent critic of liberalism,³⁵ Kristol became intellectual aide to President Ford. Not only was Kristol, according to Bob Goldwin, ‘the most articulate spokesman today of ideas and themes ... wholly in accord with the spirit and style of the Ford Administration’,³⁶ but he purposefully advised Ford³⁷ of:

the men who head small and sometimes obscure foundations [who were] unbeknownst to it, being helpful to this Administration, to the Republican party, and to conservative and moderate enterprise in general.³⁸

Through this business-funded network, neoconservatives and traditionalists joined with libertarians and anti-communists behind the Republican Party. Politicised knowledge networks became institutionalised in government throughout the 1980s and 1990s and a web of ‘movement conservatives’ developed: the Reagan administration had manifold links to Chicago’s economic and law schools,³⁹ and to conservative think tanks – indeed, in 1980 the Heritage Foundation published *Mandate for Leadership*, a tome of policies across all issues for the Republican administration to implement in its first hundred days, almost *two-thirds* of which Heritage claim were passed.⁴⁰ Again, the dominance of

policy-making by one intellectual group in a post-war administration was not new; the change was the nature of appointing conservative ideologues committed to overturning the policies and the scientific foundation of the previous liberal consensus.

Movement conservatism and foreign policy

The Carter years

From the mid-1970s, foreign policy debates among conservatives featured a clash between moralist movement conservatives and pragmatic moderates. This first became clear at the 1976 Republican convention, when Sun Belt Reagan supporters voted against the party's détente strategy, so closely associated with Henry Kissinger, in favour of the aggressive and moralistic Jesse Helms platform that criticised détente and concessions to the USSR on nuclear testing. Reflecting the power shift in the party, the internationalist wing lost. For the moralists, détente 'meant you accepted the right of the communists to occupy a large part of the world, which was not to be tolerated'.⁴¹ Neoconservative thought would elide with this new aggressive voice. After the Israeli victory in the Six Days War, Norman Podhoretz argued that the anti-Zionist backlash among Western intellectuals indicated anti-Semitism, and that such sentiment was usually heard among those voicing anti-American opinions.⁴² The 1974 UN resolution 'Zionism is a Form of Racism and Racial Discrimination' added grist to Podhoretz' mill that American liberals, Europeans, Arabs and now the UN were all to be opposed. Thus, the familiar pattern of cohering ideas by constructing something to be *against* was evident in foreign as well as domestic policy debates.

Policy networks formed to underpin these positions. As hard-line conservatives grew restless at a foreign policy based on arms control, the Committee on the Present Danger (CPD) was set up by Paul Nitze and Eugene Rostow to lobby for a strengthened US military role. The body's list of board members reads like a 'who's who' of American neoconservatism, with almost fifty members campaigning for Reagan in 1980. Its influence continues to the present day – Kristol and Kagan's *Present Dangers*⁴³ begins by commemorating the CPD. Similarly, in 1976 George H. W. Bush, then CIA Director, set up 'Team B' to reinterpret intelligence information in order to find that the USSR had far more aggressive intentions than was realised and recommend that arms control was not an option. Team B included a young Paul Wolfowitz, and operated from the offices of the Coalition for a Democratic Majority, an organisation set up by the hawkish Democrat Henry 'Scoop' Jackson to put pressure on the USSR over the issue of Jewish emigration. Democrats had by the late 1970s become associated with foreign policy 'weakness', partly due to the bitter open contest during the Carter presidency between the hawkish national security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski and dovish secretary of state Cyrus Vance.⁴⁴ The radical half of the

Democrats held views of the role of the US in Vietnam that drove conservative Democrats into the new policy networks. For example, Jeane Kirkpatrick, who became Reagan's US Ambassador to the UN in the 1980s.

Though Leo Strauss is often cited as a formative influence on the neoconservatives entering these networks, Wolfowitz and Richard Perle themselves cite Albert Wohlstetter as the chief author of the ideas to shape US foreign and military strategies under Bush today. For Wolfowitz,⁴⁵ the link to Strauss is 'a product of feverish minds ... Wohlstetter is a much more relevant figure', though Wohlstetter was a protégé of Strauss.⁴⁶ Wohlstetter argued for a moral foreign policy, principally the minimising of innocent casualties in war, and the use of new technology wherever possible to improve weapons accuracy. With less wastage and more power, US military intervention could expand. Wohlstetter set up the New Alternatives Workshop to address this strategy in 1974, and the impact was felt in the 1991 Gulf War. Perle attended school with Wohlstetter's daughter and became an 'attentive pupil' to theories of high technology warfare.⁴⁷ A registered Democrat throughout, Perle became Scoop Jackson's senior aide and known as the 'Prince of Darkness' for opposing any form of arms control. He later joined the AEI, became a resolute critic of the Clinton foreign policy, and influential after 2000. Such individuals are a manifest link of twentieth-century conservative ideas to current US policy.

The Reagan years

The most important development in the Reagan years was the hardening of policy positions that would form the basis of debates within the Bush administration after 2000. As Halper and Clarke write:

In the course of the Reagan administration, the conservative camp around Pat Buchanan with its roots in nativism and isolationism began to dig itself into a hole from which it was never to extricate itself ... This opened the way to an alliance – one is tempted to call it a marriage of convenience – between the neo-conservatives and Christian evangelicals who, drawing on their missionary roots, including Christian proselytization in the Muslim world, shared their ideas of forceful external intervention.⁴⁸

This synthesis is slightly better captured in the categories of Daalder and Lindsey,⁴⁹ who argue that the neoconservatives are 'democratic imperialists' in alliance with 'assertive nationalists' or traditional conservative hawks 'willing to use American military power to defeat threats to US security but reluctant, as a general rule, to use American primacy to remake the world in its image'. The paleoconservatives are written off as 'sovereigntists'.⁵⁰ It should be added that even libertarians somehow found it possible to support US foreign intervention in the Cold War as a means to eliminate communism. For example, the determined Grover Norquist at Americans for Tax Reform, the libertarian organisation most famous for persuading numerous congressmen to sign a no-

new-taxes pledge, urged his colleagues to be silent on Reagan policies they disagreed with and simply to 'do everything we can to institutionalise the conservative revolution and *make it permanent in the minds of the people*'.⁵¹

This is not to say that tensions dissolved. The continued influence of moderates prevented the neoconservatives from dominating US foreign policy, and though their goal was achieved – victory in the Cold War – the manner upset many. By this time it is remarkable how many figures from the Committee on the Present Danger alone found positions under Reagan: Richard V. Allen as Reagan's initial National Security Advisor; CIA Director William Casey; Ambassador to the UN Jeane Kirkpatrick; Fred Ikle, Under Secretary for Defence Policy; Department of Defence Assistant Secretary Richard Perle, and Kenneth Adelman and Eugene Rostow at the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency.⁵² However, neoconservatives such as Perle, Adelman, Ikle and Kirkpatrick held to a differing anticommunism to the moderate Casey, Rostow and Allen, the latter closer to the bipartisan consensus of the pre-Vietnam era of US foreign policy. Hence, neoconservatives were appalled when the moderate George Schultz and Paul Nitze (among others) negotiated the Intermediate Nuclear Force (INF) Treaty with Gorbachev in 1987. Perle and Adelman resigned over the matter; as democratic imperialists they wanted to take the fight to the USSR. Based on the early, bold announcements from Reagan about confronting an 'evil empire', John Lewis Gaddis⁵³ had written that the 'Reagan Administration has rejected détente'. However, in Reagan's first term Norman Podhoretz⁵⁴ wrote in horror of 'The Neo-Conservative Anguish over Reagan's Foreign Policy' and in 1984 lamented 'The Reagan Road to Détente'. That even Reagan was condemned for appeasement shows that a hardening of policy since 2000 in a second Bush administration featuring a return of these neoconservative figures may not be altogether surprising. It also suggests that the adoration of Reagan by today's neoconservatives entails a discrete rewriting of history.

The first Bush presidency

The end of the Cold War offered an opportunity for fresh thinking in US foreign policy, but the first George Bush came to power disparaging the very 'vision thing' that allowed Reagan and the movement conservatives to redefine the political agenda over the past decades. Even his own aides were critical, Jim Pinkerton observing on his administration's progress on cutting leaks, 'the reason there are no leaks is easy to understand: There's nothing to leak.'⁵⁵ Yet the collapse of communism left the world more complex as the nature of foreign policy challenges altered. Countries held together by the Soviet Union faced the difficulties of self-determination; those such as Iraq, previously held in check, could pursue independent strategies such as invading their neighbours. Bush talked of a 'new world order', but when disorder occurred, e.g. in Yugoslavia in the early 1990s, the US had no policy, summed up by the phrase 'We don't have a dog in that fight.'⁵⁶ Even by 1992, as atrocities were committed in Bosnia the US did nothing, pretending to know nothing, for 'to know about it and not to act

was a profound embarrassment'.⁵⁷ Yet such conflicts offered none of the good versus evil certainties that cohered policy narratives during the Cold War.

A neoconservative split occurred. Older neoconservatives advocated a foreign policy based upon a narrow, realist self-interest. Irving Kristol⁵⁸ warned against the US assuming the role of world policeman, Robert Tucker⁵⁹ warned against the imperial temptation, and Jeane Kirkpatrick⁶⁰ wrote an article asking only that the US be 'A Normal Country in a Normal Time'. With the battle that defined their lifetimes over, this generation sought to enjoy a moment of peace. However, younger neoconservatives interpreted the new uncertainty very differently. After writing 'Universal Dominion: Toward a Unipolar World', Charles Krauthammer⁶¹ urged the US to use its 'preeminence' to create a world free of an imminent threat, 'the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction'.⁶² Meanwhile, Joshua Muravchik⁶³ added an idealist dimension to unipolarity in *Exporting Democracy: Fulfilling America's Destiny*. As older neoconservatives shrank from the democratic imperialism of the Cold War, the younger generation renewed and intensified the call.⁶⁴ Meanwhile, within the Bush administration the Under Secretary for Policy at the Pentagon, Paul Wolfowitz, released a study in 1992, 'Defense Planning Guidance', arguing that a unipolar moment should be made a unipolar era through the preemption of any emerging threat to US hegemony. The document made it no further than a leak to the *New York Times*.⁶⁵ Hence, dismay at Bush's leadership – not removing Saddam Hussein from Iraq or pushing for democracy, alongside inaction and lack of moral purpose in Bosnia – even led some to endorse the Clinton candidacy of 1992. Muravchik,⁶⁶ then at the American Enterprise Institute, argued Clinton offered a moral clarity, derived from working with the centrist Democratic Leadership Council, that Bush lacked; he took heart from Clinton's words, 'a strong America ... remains the world's best hope'.⁶⁷

These debates would become affected by two important works, Francis Fukuyama's article 'The End of History?'⁶⁸ and Samuel Huntington's article, 'The Clash of Civilizations?'⁶⁹ Fukuyama, once a student of Huntington, argued that history had been a struggle between competing ideologies, but the end of the Cold War marked 'the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government'.⁷⁰ Huntington replied that ideological competition only occurred in the Western world. The new clash was between cultures or civilisations, and liberal democracies required strong militaries to protect themselves in forthcoming battles. Where Fukuyama's position vindicated the democratic imperialism of younger neoconservatives (why not speed up the telos towards universal democracy?), Huntington was adamantly anti-universalist. He had earlier argued that US society could not be a template for others because the historical formation of US institutions depended on a particular blend of circumstances. On the Cold War he remarked, 'The West won the world not by the superiority of its ideas or values or religion but rather by its superiority in applying organized violence. Westerners often forget this fact, non-Westerners never do.'⁷¹ Eliding the Democratic Wilsonian tradition with contemporary

democratic imperialists, Huntington suggested US foreign policy misadventures such as Vietnam demonstrated that, of this idealism, 'it is false, it is immoral, and it is dangerous'.⁷² This position was thus closer to the older neoconservatives, suggesting support for strong defence but not its external projection for noble causes.

The Clinton years

Those neoconservatives expecting a strong American military presence reshaping the world in the American image were quickly disappointed. For Halberstam,⁷³ Clinton's victory reflected the continued desire among the US public for a 'peace dividend'. Where Bush spoke of a new world order, Clinton summed up the priorities of the nation: 'It's the economy, stupid.' Clinton's priority was deficit-reduction, which became a constraint on military expansion, while he appointed Colin Powell as Chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, a man whose experiences in Vietnam made him reticent about overseas interventions. The Democrats lacked respected foreign policy experts, and there was personal animosity between the two most viable, Anthony Lake and Richard Holbrooke. Clinton further lost the military's support by promising to end discrimination against gays in the military as his first act as president. Administrative muddle translated into uncertain policy. By 1994 foreign policy weakness – no firm policy in Bosnia, a disastrous attempt at nation-building with the UN in Somalia, no action on genocide in Rwanda – began to affect perceptions of domestic policy strength as the 'Gingrich revolution' took Congress. The Serbian siege of Srebrenica pushed the Clinton administration into action, though even after military intervention against the Serbs and the Dayton Peace Accord the US would only commit peacekeeping troops for twelve months, or for as long as would cover the 1996 presidential race, leading Halberstam⁷⁴ to conclude the 'Clinton people had a settlement in Bosnia, but they still did not have a foreign policy'.

The lesson young neoconservatives drew from this period was not that a world order based on multilateral institutions had to be strengthened, but that such an order was impossible. The manner in which an accord in Bosnia was reached – through US hi-tech military intervention – appeared to vindicate the Wohlstetter view of the positive moral force of aggressive unilateralism. After the debacle in Somalia it was not just democratic imperialists who felt this way. In Congress, Republicans such as Robert Dole, John McCain and John Warner teamed up with Democrats such as John Kerry, Joe Lieberman and Robert Byrd in pushing for greater unilateralism. Democratic imperialists such as William Kristol and Robert Kagan were emboldened, and in 1996 they outlined a case for a 'Neo-Reaganite' foreign policy where they restated the case for unipolarity through pre-emptive interventions. The 'main threat the United States faces ... is its own weakness', they wrote,⁷⁵ and, as Strauss had argued, internal weakness could only be overcome through external war.

This assertiveness took institutional form. William Kristol set up the Project for the New American Century (PNAC) in 1997 with a clear intention to redirect

US foreign policy. The PNAC was an extension of previous networks but with a hitherto unashamed public message. Its statement of principles⁷⁶ began:

American foreign and defense policy is adrift. Conservatives have criticized the incoherent policies of the Clinton Administration. They have also resisted isolationist impulses from within their own ranks. But conservatives have not confidently advanced a strategic vision of America's role in the world. They have not set forth guiding principles for American foreign policy. They have allowed differences over tactics to obscure potential agreement on strategic objectives. And they have not fought for a defense budget that would maintain American security and advance American interests in the new century.

We aim to change this. We aim to make the case and rally support for American global leadership.⁷⁷

The PNAC appeared a step behind the governing consensus. In May 1998 PNAC wrote a letter to the Speaker of the House and the Senate Majority Leader calling for the removal of Saddam Hussein from power in Iraq. The same month the Clinton administration hesitated from using airpower against Slobodan Milosevic after his army wrought violence in Kosovo. However, by December the threat of impeachment had galvanised Clinton to call for military intervention – in Iraq. In March 1999 US-led NATO bombing of Serb forces finally happened, but even then Clinton's policy appeared ad hoc rather than driven by an overarching strategy. He stated, 'I do not intend to put our troops in Kosovo to fight a war', but this implied no plan B should airpower fail, and it was not until May that Clinton would say, 'All options are on the table', and then only because the British prime minister, Tony Blair, had made clear he would commit troops himself.⁷⁸

These developments only confirmed the democratic imperialist commitment to unipolarity. As Halper and Clarke⁷⁹ document, Kagan⁸⁰ could argue with some merit that Europe had been unable to deal with an internal conflict, for reasons of political confusion and military weakness, and the US had to save the day. This only weakened Europe's moral legitimacy in any debates about world order. The case for American unilateralism was stronger when the transatlantic alliance could be painted as a hindrance on US actions, and the UN a failure after Bosnia.

The Bush regime: 9/11 as window of opportunity

Before 11 September 2001 the logic of Bush's foreign policy was defined more by taking the opposite positions to his predecessor – the ABC of 'anything but Clinton'. Bush set priorities; China was a 'competitor', not a partner; allies in Asia would be courted, but North Korea would face tougher treatment; above all there would be no hubristic – or 'promiscuous'⁸¹ – nation-building, for America was to be a humble power, as Bush outlined on the campaign trail in 1999:

Let us reject the blinders of isolationism, just as we refuse the crown of empire. Let us not dominate others with our power – or betray them with our indifference. And let us have an American foreign policy that reflects American character. The modesty of true strength. The humility of real greatness.⁸²

Many Bush policies happen to fit democratic imperialist positions, e.g. the rejection of multilateral treaties such as the ABM Treaty, the Kyoto Protocol and the establishment of the International Criminal Court. However, other policies were clear contradictions of what the likes of Krauthammer and Kristol had been advocating. Defence spending was not increased, Russia and Vladimir Putin were treated as allies, Iraq faced only sanctions, little was actually done about North Korea, and in 2001, to the chagrin of many neoconservatives who viewed the People's Republic of China (PRC) as a clear threat to US unipolarity, after a US jet collided with and brought down a Chinese plane and landed on Chinese territory, the PRC government demanded an apology and got one. Colin Powell had led the response, Brent Scowcroft and Henry Kissinger were brought in to smooth the diplomatic process, and the Bush administration appeared thoroughly pragmatic. The *Weekly Standard* declared the episode a 'profound national humiliation' and called for 'the active containment of China' because weakness invites exploitation.⁸³

The 9/11 terrorist attacks opened a window of opportunity for the democratic imperialists, one they enlarged to finally push through an agenda that, as we have seen, was formulated over the course of preceding decades. A useful way to understand this shift is through John Kingdon's⁸⁴ 'agenda setting' model of policy change. For Kingdon, problems, policies, and politics are three relatively independent 'streams' through which various participants cooperate and compete to place items on the agenda. Policy entrepreneurs play a dominant role, and when the three streams coincide, a window of opportunity opens and the entrepreneur forces their solution through. The *problem* in September 2001 was a 'focusing event' – the terrorist attacks. The existing *policies* on offer – the primeval soup of proposals floating around policy networks, think tanks and governmental agencies – ranged from the neoconservative plans for aggressive unipolarity, the traditional hard-line neorealism or 'assertive nationalism' of Condoleezza Rice,⁸⁵ the moderate conservative position of Brent Scowcroft or James Baker, to instinctively liberal multilateral positions, e.g. the positions of France and Germany.

But more important was the manner in which policy entrepreneurs managed to define the *politics* of the situation. Certain terms locked the US into a democratic imperialist course of action. First, Bush was persuaded to label the situation a 'war on terror'. As many have remarked, a military campaign against an abstract noun contained useful ambiguities – there would be no objective standard of who constituted the enemy, where or how the battle would occur, and what victory would look like. With the bully pulpit, Bush was best placed to define these matters in due course. Second, in the 2002 State of the Union

address Bush labelled Iran, Iraq and North Korea an 'axis of evil'. This defined the situation as an unavoidable battle against specific states, a moral necessity, but was not a tactical masterpiece as the Bush administration thereafter had to explain why action was taken against the only one of the axis not able to threaten the West with nuclear capabilities. By the summer of 2002 the president had been persuaded to openly propose the preventative use of force in speeches in Germany in May and at West Point in June, and this was made formal in September through the publication of the National Security Strategy, a document that made clear that the future conduct of US foreign policy would mean, to begin with, invading Iraq.

Halper and Clarke⁸⁶ trace how Iraq came to the policy agenda despite being unconnected to the attacks on the US. As we have seen, neither democratic imperialists such as William Kristol nor policy-makers such as Wolfowitz were content with the outcome of the 1991 Gulf War, and had been recommending 'regime change' throughout the 1990s. On 15 September 2001 a meeting was held at Camp David at which Wolfowitz argued for an invasion on this basis:

I think what September 11th to me said was this is just the beginning of what these bastards can do if they start getting access to so-called modern weapons ... So there needs to be a campaign, a long-term effort, to root out these networks and to get governments out of the business of supplying them.⁸⁷

Wolfowitz left the meeting feeling Bush would invade Afghanistan for immediate tactical reasons, but would also invade Iraq as part of that longer strategy. On 20 September prominent neoconservatives wrote an 'ultimatum'⁸⁸ to the White House demanding action on Iraq, bin Laden, Syria and Lebanon. The State Department, led by Colin Powell, objected to such an agenda and over the following year Bush managed a clash between State and Pentagon, but through the summer of 2002 Vice President Cheney convinced Bush to follow Powell's route – action backed by UN resolutions – towards the democratic imperialist goal of invasion of Iraq. Public resistance to this radical foreign policy was diminished through the cultivation of fear. Envelopes containing anthrax sent to political and media figures, the Washington sniper shooting citizens around the District of Columbia, and terror danger levels broadcast on TV moving from amber to red to green all bred terror and acquiescence. Where Reagan's rhetoric in the 1980s sought to appeal to 'the better angels of our nature', the rhetoric of the war on terror openly preys on citizens' fears and insecurities.

Resistance was diminished in other circles. If they were not democratic imperialists, most high-ranking figures at the Pentagon were 'hegemonists',⁸⁹ e.g. Donald Rumsfeld as Secretary of Defence, Douglas Feith as Undersecretary, and Dov Zakheim as Comptroller. With John Bolton at the State Department and Condoleeza Rice advising Bush, Powell was isolated. Just as important, Democrats were reluctant to criticise the strategy. After Bush had effectively defined the war on terror as a situation in which somebody is either for or against

the US, some Democrats were afraid to appear unpatriotic. Others supported the strategy. The centrist wing of the party, the Democrat Leadership Council (DLC), saw the situation as a chance to finally win the battle against the left of the party raging since Vietnam in favour of ‘muscular internationalism’,⁹⁰ and the DLC’s foreign policy voice, Will Marshall, signed up to PNAC’s support for military action in Iraq.⁹¹ The question is whether the war they got is what Democrats thought they were supporting; as Kennedy⁹² said in another context, ‘those who foolishly sought power by riding the back of the tiger ended up inside’.

The language of the National Security Strategy⁹³ did not so much lock the US into further action as insinuate the broader project into terms the public might relate to. The argument in the NSS will by now be familiar. America is exceptional, capable, pursuing a ‘distinctly American internationalism’ (p. 1) by which ‘Our principles will guide our government’s decisions’ (p. 4) along ‘the path of action’ (p. v). Nevertheless, contradicting Samuel Huntington, these exceptional principles are in fact universal: ‘the United States must defend liberty and justice because these principles are right and true *for all people* everywhere. No nation owns these aspirations, and no nation is exempt from them’ (p. 3, emphasis added.). The path of action, then, is to actively universalise these values. This mission is advertised with more ambiguity. Apart from leaving terms such as freedom and justice undefined, the NSS presents this universalising mission as a choice for the countries being subjected to the mission:

all nations and all societies can choose for themselves the rewards and challenges of political and economic liberty.
(p. iv)

this path is not America’s alone. It is open to all.
(p. 1)

As well as deliberate indeterminacy – the strategy presented will ‘make the world not just safer but *better*’ (p. 1, emphasis added) – the NSS deploys a consistent *Self/Other* dichotomy. The American, distinct yet universal Self is the agent of freedom and justice. The Other, however, is depicted using biological metaphors and allusions to criminality. The enemy seeks ‘fertile ground’ (p. 6) where its ‘cells’ (p. 5) will ‘spawn’ (p. 6) – organic imagery suggesting a disease-like, natural spreading threat. Or else the threat is from ‘shadowy’ (p. iv) ‘foes’ (p. vi) in their ‘rogue’ (p. 13) states who ‘hate the United States’ (p. 14) and will ‘blackmail us’ (p. 13) wielding ‘catastrophic power’ (p. 13) ‘without warning’ (p. 15) using ‘terrible weapons’, since they are ‘willing to take risks, gambling [even] with the lives of their people’ (p. 15). But the NSS emphasises the special promise of the *moment*. Though it ‘has taken almost a decade for us to comprehend the true nature of this new threat’ (p. 15) (alluding to Wolfowitz’s report of 1992) this is a ‘moment of influence’ (p. 1) because ‘Today, the United States

enjoys a position of unparalleled military strength and great economic and political influence' (p. iv).

The chosen course of action, and the shift away from the specified US foreign policy prior to 11 September 2001, is preventive war: 'as a matter of common sense and self-defense, America will act against such emerging threats before they are fully formed' (p. v). Though the NSS suggests the US wishes to form alliances and 'Wherever possible' (p. 7) work with (not through, or within) international institutions, 'we will not hesitate to act alone' (p. 6). No mention is made of whether it is acceptable for other countries to act alone; in any case it is imperative for the US to 'build and maintain our defenses beyond challenge' (p. 29) and 'dissuade potential adversaries from pursuing a military build-up in hopes of surpassing, or equaling the power of the United States' (p. 30). Thus, the balance of power is a thing of the past. Finally, in line with William Kristol's philosophy of national greatness,⁹⁴ the frequency of the term 'great' is noticeable – the first page alone speaks of great struggles between great powers with their great armies and great industrial capabilities to dispel the great chaos of terror. The repeated target bestowed upon China in particular is 'national greatness' (p. v, p. 27).

From marginal pastime to defining the role of the US in the world, we have followed strands of thought in American conservatism in the twentieth century to arrive at an understanding of the ideas behind the Bush administration's foreign policy. It is clear that the NSS is a neoconservative text. American exceptionalism, timeless principles, the path of action – of war against a morally degenerate enemy – to maintain virtue at home, and the notion of national greatness: all are neoconservative notions, and, but for the fact that the document makes the rulers' purposes explicit to the masses, it is Straussian in particular. Specifically, in its radical, unashamed promise to universalise American values it is democratic imperialist. In this way, Halper and Clarke⁹⁵ are correct to suggest a 'hijack' of policy; the political art was defining the situation after 11 September 2001 as one in which such a hijack was necessary.

Concluding remarks

Irving Kristol famously described himself as a 'liberal mugged by reality', suggesting that American liberalism acquired an idealism that resulted in damaging policies such as Lyndon Johnson's Great Society programmes and the war in Vietnam. The liberal consensus and Democratic Party shattered in the 1960s as movement conservatism offered an alternative understanding of the world based on a synthesis of traditionalist, libertarian and emerging neoconservative thought motivated by common threats to America and Western civilisation, a synthesis with great public appeal in an America progressively dominated by the Sun Belt. The question now is how movement conservatism, hijacked by democratic imperialism since 11 September 2001, will face the practical limits of its own idealism. Just as Fukuyama's end of

history thesis conflicts with Huntington's clash of civilisations, democratic imperialism conflicts with other strands of thought in the Republican Party. How long and to what extent the conditions will hold that allowed this radical doctrine of preventative unipolarity to define American foreign policy – powerful rhetorical devices, common perceived enemies and an insecure public – remains to be seen.

Notes

- 1 The author would like to thank Richard Saull and Alejandro Colás for all their help putting this chapter together, Routledge's external reviewers for their comments, and in particular Marc Magee for many useful discussions.
- 2 G. Hodgson, *The World Turned Right Side Up*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1996, p. 23.
- 3 *Ibid.*, p. 34.
- 4 F. von Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1943, p. 102.
- 5 Hayek's work benefited from well-crafted publicity. After its publication in Britain, *The Road to Serfdom* was published in the US by the University of Chicago Press, as a condensed version in the *Reader's Digest*, and led Hayek on to a lecture tour across the US (R. Cockett, *Thinking the Unthinkable*, London: Fontana, 1995, revised edition, pp. 77–101). At the same time as cultivating mass opinion through *Reader's Digest*, Hayek formed the Mont Pelerin Society to influence elite opinion, a regular gathering of intellectuals which continues today. See www.montpelerin.org
- 6 E. Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, Harmondsworth: Penguin [1790] 1969.
- 7 R. Kirk, *The Conservative Mind*, London: Faber and Faber, 1953, p. 398.
- 8 For critical reviews of Strauss's philosophy, see S. B. Drury, *The Political Ideas of Leo Strauss*, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988, and for the connection of these ideas to contemporary US politics, see S. Drury's *Leo Strauss and the American Right*, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997.
- 9 Buckley, 1955, cited in Hodgson, *op. cit.*, p. 78.
- 10 Less radical conservatives were critical: there may have been the need for a good conservative magazine, argued Dwight McDonald in the rival *Commentary*, but *National Review* was 'neither good nor conservative' (D. McDonald, 'Scrambled Eggheads on the Right', *Commentary* (April 1956), cited in M. Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory: A Conceptual Approach*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996, p. 35).
- 11 F. S. Meyer, *What is Conservatism?* New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964, p. 332.
- 12 W. A. Rusher, *The Rise of the Right*, second edition, New York: National Review Books, 1993, p. 20.
- 13 *Ibid.*, p. 122.
- 14 Cited in *ibid.*, p. 122.
- 15 K. Phillips, *The Emerging Republican Majority*, second edition, New York: Anchor Books, 1970.
- 16 *Ibid.*, p. 37.
- 17 *Ibid.*, p. 39.
- 18 *Ibid.*, p. 437.
- 19 L. McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001.
- 20 G. Hodgson, *In Our Time*, London: Macmillan, 1976, p. 421.
- 21 J. F. Kennedy, Inaugural Address, Washington, DC, 1961 Available at: http://www.pbs.org/greatspeeches/timeline/j_kennedy_s1.html

- 22 F. Fischer, 'Policy Discourse and the Politics of Washington Think Tanks', in F. Fischer, F. Forester and J. Forester (eds) *The Argumentative Turn in Policy Analysis and Planning*, London: UCL Press, 1993, p. 25.
- 23 J. A. Smith, *The Idea Brokers: Think Tanks and the Rise of the New Policy Elite*, New York: The Free Press, 1991.
- 24 A. O. Hirschman, *The Rhetoric of Reaction: Perversity, Jeopardy, Futility*, Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1991.
- 25 F. Siegel, *The Future Once Happened Here*, New York: The Free Press, 1997.
- 26 See E. J. Dionne, *Why Americans Hate Politics*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 2004, pp. 57–66.
- 27 A consensus-seeking Democratic National Committee (DNC) allowed New Left party members to establish a commission to reform the nominating rules of the party. The McGovern–Fraser Commission increased the influence of liberal, feminist and racial minority groups, prompting the AFL-CIO and Southern Democrats to resign from the Commission. Reforms ensued, giving more power to party members and voters and less to the party elite. However, to win nomination in this new open field, a candidate needed to construct an organisation and mobilise voters him or herself, meaning a greater role for campaign teams, benefiting wealthier, better-educated New Left activists. In turn, candidates had to appeal to these activists, increasing their ideological drift away from the centre. See K. Baer, *Reinventing Democrats*, Lawrence, KS: Kansas University Press, 2000.
- 28 W. E. Simon, 1979, from N. J. Easton, *Gang of Five*, second edition, New York: Touchstone, 2002.
- 29 As Smith, op. cit., points out, this shift from pragmatism to idealism and from science as objective knowledge to science as a political tool was evident in the changing fashion in metaphors. From the late nineteenth-century medical metaphors curing social afflictions, and early twentieth-century engineering metaphors as social scientists sought efficiency as they designed and evaluated systems, by the 1970s these terms had fallen flat and conservatives flourished the rhetoric of warfare and marketing.
- 30 R. Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics, and Other Essays*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979.
- 31 D. Bell, *The Radical Right: The New American Right*, New York: Doubleday, 1963.
- 32 S. M. Lipset and E. Raab, *The Politics of Unreason: Right-Wing Extremism in America, 1790–1977*, New York: Harper and Row, 1978.
- 33 Cited in Dionne, *ibid.*, p. 7.
- 34 *Ibid.*, p. 31.
- 35 On education, for instance, for Himmelfarb its function was the 'creation, preservation and transmission of [Western] knowledge and culture' (G. Himmelfarb, 'What to Do about Education: The Universities', *Commentary*, Vol. 94, No. 2 (1994), p. 2). Available at: <http://www.mugu.com/cgi-bin/Upstream/People/Himmelfarb/universities.html>. This realm was besieged from the GI Bill onward, as money and people flowed into the university system, the money directed by government and business to solve social problems affecting the lives of the previously academically excluded. The university became, to Himmelfarb's disgust, a 'participatory democracy' (*ibid.*, p. 3) where women's studies, black studies and ethnic studies replaced the teachings so esteemed by the neoconservatives. She concluded that it was 'not only higher education ... at stake; it [was] all of education and the whole of culture' (*ibid.*, p. 13).
- 36 R. Goldwin, Memo to Donald Rumsfeld, 31 January 1975, Ford Library, James E. Connor files, Box 13, cited in T. Troy, *Intellectuals and the American Presidency: Philosophers, Jesters, or Technicians?* Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002, p. 118.

- 37 One could write volumes on conservative networks in this period (and some have, e.g. J. S. Saloma, *Ominous Politics: The New Conservative Labyrinth*, New York: Hill and Wang, 1984), but one crucial connection was Ford's Treasury Secretary, William Simon, who left government to become President of the John M. Olin Foundation; the Director of the John M. Olin Institute for Strategic Studies at Harvard University is Samuel Huntington, a conservative intellectual who will feature later in this chapter.
- 38 Letter, I. Kristol to R. Goldwin, 30 January 1975, Ford Library, Robert A. Goldwin Papers, Box 22, cited in Troy, op. cit., p. 117.
- 39 Chicago-ite conservative figureheads Richard Posner, Antonin Scalia and Robert Bork were all proposed court appointments, while Chicago student David McIntosh founded the Federalist Society, a legal discussion group including Bork, Clarence Thomas and Kenneth Starr, initially funded personally by Irving Kristol and William Simon (President of the Olin Foundation) and then by Scaife, Olin and Smith Richardson.
- 40 The figure is 'some 60 per cent' in Lee Edward's history of the Heritage Foundation, *The Power of Ideas*, Ottawa, IL: Jameson Books, 1997, p. xiii.
- 41 D. Halberstam, *War in a Time of Peace: Bush, Clinton and the Generals*, London: Bloomsbury, 2001, p. 60.
- 42 M. Gerson, *The Neo-Conservative Vision: From the Cold War to the Culture Wars*, Langham, MD: Madison, 1996.
- 43 W. Kristol and R. Kagan (eds.) *Present Dangers*, San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2000.
- 44 Halberstam, op. cit.
- 45 P. Wolfowitz, 'Interview with Sam Tannehaus', *Vanity Fair*, 2003, available at <http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/2003/tr20030509-depsecdef0223.html>
- 46 S. Halper and J. Clarke, *America Alone: The Neo-Conservatives and the Global Order*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.
- 47 I. Daalder and J. Lindsay, *America Unbound: The Bush Revolution in Foreign Policy*, Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 2003, p. 28.
- 48 Halper and Clarke, op. cit., p. 70.
- 49 Daalder and Lindsay, op. cit., p. 15.
- 50 *Ibid.*, p. 31.
- 51 Norquist cited (emphasis added) in B. Hart (ed.) *The Third Generation: Young Conservative Leaders Look to the Future*, Washington, DC: The Heritage Foundation, 1987.
- 52 T. Langston and E. Sanders, 'Predicting Ideological Intensity in Presidential Administrations: The Case of G. W. Bush', paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Philadelphia, 27–30 August 2003.
- 53 J. L. Gaddis, 'The Rise, Fall and Future of Détente', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 62, No. 2, pp. 354–77.
- 54 N. Podhoretz, 'The Neo-Conservative Anguish over Reagan's Foreign Policy', *New York Times Magazine*, 2 May 1982.
- 55 Quoted in Troy, op. cit., p. 161.
- 56 Halberstam, op. cit., p. 46.
- 57 *Ibid.*, p. 131.
- 58 Cited in O. Harries (ed.) *America's Purpose: New Visions of US Foreign Policy*, San Francisco: ICS Press, 1991.
- 59 R. W. Tucker and D. C. Hendrickson, *The Imperial Temptation: The New World Order and America's Purpose*, New York: New York University Press, 1992.
- 60 J. Kirkpatrick, 'A Normal Country in a Normal Time', *National Interest*, No. 21 (1990), pp. 40–4.
- 61 C. Krauthammer, 'Universal Dominion: Toward a Unipolar World', *National Interest*, No. 18 (1989), pp. 48–9.
- 62 C. Krauthammer, 'The Unipolar Moment', *Foreign Affairs*, No. 70 (1991), pp. 26–8.

- 63 J. Muravchik, *Exporting Democracy: Fulfilling America's Destiny*, Washington, DC: American Enterprise Institute, 1991.
- 64 Another prominent member of the younger generation focused his attention on domestic politics. In 1989 William Kristol got the chance to put Strauss into practice. Strauss had written, 'The political philosopher who has reached his goal is the teacher of legislators' (L. Strauss, *The Rebirth of Classical Liberalism*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989, from Easton, *ibid.*, p. 223). Kristol became Dan Quayle's adviser and teacher, grooming the vice president for future presidency – for moral leadership that could redeem a fallen nation. Kristol had a vision called 'national greatness' based on a 'politics of liberty, a sociology of virtue'. Quayle's public gaffes, within the context of a fading presidency that had lost the defining purpose the Cold War had offered and that was suffering economic recession, prevented Kristol achieving his ends through the vice president.
- 65 'Excerpts from Pentagon's Plan: "Prevent the Re-Emergence of a New Rival"', *New York Times*, 8 March 1992.
- 66 J. Muravchik, 'Conservatives for Clinton', *New Republic*, Vol. 207, No. 19 (1992).
- 67 Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 22.
- 68 F. Fukuyama, 'The End of History?' *National Interest*, No. 16 (1989), pp. 3–18.
- 69 S. P. Huntington, 'The Clash of Civilizations?' *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 72, No. 3 (1993), pp. 22–8.
- 70 Fukuyama, *op. cit.*, p. 4.
- 71 S. P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996, p. 51.
- 72 Quoted in R. D. Kaplan, 'Looking the World in the Eye', *The Atlantic Monthly*, Vol. 288, No. 5 (December 2001), p. 11.
- 73 Halberstam, *op. cit.*, p. 158.
- 74 *Ibid.*, p. 360.
- 75 R. Kagan and W. Kristol, 'Towards a Neo-Reaganite Foreign Policy', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 75, No. 4 (1996), p. 23.
- 76 Its signatories were: Elliott Abrams, Gary Bauer, William J. Bennett, Jeb Bush, Dick Cheney, Eliot A. Cohen, Midge Decter, Paula Dobriansky, Steve Forbes, Aaron Friedberg, Francis Fukuyama, Frank Gaffney, Fred C. Ikle, Donald Kagan, Zalmay Khalilzad, I. Lewis Libby, Norman Podhoretz, Dan Quayle, Peter W. Rodman, Stephen P. Rosen, Henry S. Rowen, Donald Rumsfeld, Vin Weber, George Weigel and Paul Wolfowitz.
- 77 <http://www.newamericancentury.org/statementofprinciples.htm>
- 78 Halberstam, *op. cit.*
- 79 Halper and Clarke, *op. cit.*
- 80 R. Kagan, 'Power and Weakness', *Policy Review*, No. 113 (2002); *Of Paradise and Power: America and Europe in the New World Order*, New York: Knopf, 2004.
- 81 Daalder, *op. cit.*, p. 48.
- 82 G. W. Bush, 'A Distinctly American Internationalism', speech at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, Simi Valley, California, 19 November 1999. Available at: <http://www.lcrga.com/archive/199911190000.shtml>
- 83 R. Kagan and W. Kristol, 'A National Humiliation', *Weekly Standard*, 16–23 April 2001, pp. 11–15.
- 84 J. W. Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*, Boston: Little, Brown, 1984.
- 85 C. Rice, 'Promoting the National Interest', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 79, No. 1 (2000).
- 86 Halper and Clarke, *op. cit.*
- 87 Wolfowitz, *op. cit.*
- 88 Halper and Clarke, *op. cit.*, p. 149.
- 89 Daalder, *op. cit.*, p. 58.
- 90 *New Dem Daily*, 'Good Night, Vietnam' (2003). Available at: http://www.ndol.org/ndol_ci.cfm?contentid=251439&kaid=131&subid=192

91 <http://www.newamericancentury.org/iraq-20030319.htm>

92 Kennedy, op. cit.

93 <http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss.html>

94 See note 64 earlier. The article that perhaps first elucidated Kristol's approach was W. Kristol and D. Brooks, 'What Ails Conservatism', *Wall Street Journal*, 16 September 1997.

95 Halper and Clarke, op. cit., p. 139.

5 **The imperial republic revisited**

The United States in the era of Bush¹

Michael Cox

Introduction

One of the more remarkable features of American intellectual life since the end of the Second World War has been its preoccupation with the issue of power and whether or not the United States continued to possess enough of this vital commodity to underwrite stability in the wider international system. This obsession should not particularly surprise us. After all, if Americans have been serious about anything since 1945, it has been about the uses of power on the not entirely unreasonable grounds that if international history taught anything it was that order was impossible without the deployment of a great deal of power by a single conscious hegemon. What history also revealed, these scholars argued, was that when great powers did not lead – as the British had been unable to do by 1914 and the United States manifestly failed to do after 1918 – then the inevitable outcome was chaos and disorder. The question of power, therefore, was not merely of academic interest but went to the heart of the central question in modern world politics: namely, under conditions of anarchy what policies would the United States have to pursue and what advantage of power would it have to possess in order to maintain the peace? Liberals no doubt might have found all this self-absorbed discussion about the capabilities of one particular state decidedly too realist for comfort, parochial even. A large number of Americans, not surprisingly, have not. Indeed, what could be more vital, they felt, than trying to measure how much power the country actually had, and whether or not it was exercising it with sufficient determination so as to deter enemies and reassure allies in a world where it remained (according to its own heady rhetoric) the truly indispensable nation?²

The opening salvo in this debate was fired in the post-war period by a generation of writers obviously impressed by the new Rome sitting on the Potomac. And impressed many seemed to be. With its vast military machine, enormous material resources and ideological self-confidence, the United States, it was obvious, was like no other power on earth. Admittedly, it could not always get its own way; revolutions often upset its calculations, and there was always the obvious problem of the USSR and China, the only significant states with assets enough to limit its reach. Nonetheless, in spite of these various difficulties, the

United States still went on to build a new kind of global peace, and did so in spite – some would even suggest because – of the threat posed by international communism. In fact, in a world of uneven strategic competition, where the United States faced a much overstated menace in the shape of that incomplete superpower known as the Soviet Union, Washington successfully managed to unite former enemies, mobilise its own people, contain the foreign policy ambitions of others, and pump-prime the larger world economy with regular injections of large-scale military spending that kept a once less than convincing capitalist show on the road. Indeed, Pax Americana not only seemed to serve the narrower US interest, but led to the disbursement of a mass of public goods that appeared to help many other nations too. Hence what seemed good for the United States for twenty-odd years seemed good for most of the ‘free world’ as well.³

The next step in this discussion followed defeat in Vietnam but was provided with clearer academic shape by a number of influential American political economists writing in the 1970s. In their view the conditions of US hegemony no longer pertained – largely because of a declining competitive base and rising deficits – and over time this was bound to have implications for a global order whose very stability, they insisted, depended on a continued American capacity for underwriting the openness of the wider capitalist system.⁴ This view, based largely on a liberal reading of world politics, was given sharper definition still a few years later by an English import of realist persuasion. Indeed, having conceded that the United States could be – had to be – compared to other great powers of the past, Paul Kennedy went on to point out that the American era was most definitely over; and the sooner it adjusted to the fact the better. Challenged by what he famously termed ‘imperial overstretch’ (a concept Kennedy had used in earlier writings to explain the decline of the British Empire) the United States, he believed, really had no alternative but to pull in its horns. The nation that had brought us hegemonic stability was hegemonic no longer, and in a post-hegemonic era it would have to do what all other great powers had been compelled to do before: that is, withdraw from some positions abroad, reduce expenditures on national security, and share the burdens of leadership with others. To act otherwise would be sheer folly. The age of Pax Americana was over. In reality, the United States was becoming, if it had not already become, an ordinary country.⁵

The declinist thesis so-called came under attack from two important sources: first, from writers like Susan Strange who pointed to America’s still unique structural position within the larger society of states,⁶ and second from what Harold Macmillan once famously described as ‘events, dear boy, events’. And it was to be a very important succession of events – beginning with the unexpected collapse of the communist systems in Europe, continuing with the equally significant collapse of the Japanese economic miracle, and concluding with one of the longest booms in American economic history – that not only undercut the intellectual case for decline, but compelled critics to face and ask perhaps the most revisionist kind of question: namely, that if the United States was not in fact

going the way of all other great *imperiums*, should we not accept that there was something very special indeed about the American system; and that much as one might have resisted the idea before, should we not concede that the United States was the exception to the golden rule of great power decline?⁷ The answer, for some at least, appeared to be self-evident. As one of the new triumphalists noted in a tough attack on the pessimists of old, those who had earlier anticipated, and in some cases looked forward to, US decline had been proved completely wrong.⁸ The country had recovered its nerve, proved its economic mettle, increased its military lead over others, and so entered the new millennium in fine shape. Another ‘American Century’ beckoned. Rome stood on the Potomac – once again – and there was no necessary reason to assume it would not endure for ever.⁹ As one American scholar put it, American hegemony was ‘here to stay’ and the sooner we adjusted to this brute fact the better.¹⁰

The fourth moment in this ongoing discussion came about because of 11 September and the dramatic impact this then had on the US outlook. Indeed, having been elected on a foreign policy platform that was decidedly cautious (though essentially hegemonist) in nature, Bush unveiled a controversial strategy that not only saw America going to war twice in as many years, but also witnessed a major expansion of US interests, to the point where there seemed to be no place on earth – from East Africa to the Philippines, Uzbekistan to Ukraine – where it did not have a direct stake. The turn to muscular globalism was a most remarkable one. So too was the rather interesting debate it now provoked amongst supporters and critics alike.¹¹ For if, as it now seemed, the United States was embarking on an international ‘crusade’ to defeat transnational terrorism, and was doing so with its own very impressive set of capabilities (even Kennedy now talked glowingly about an ‘American eagle’ resurgent), should Americans not perhaps begin to think the unthinkable: namely, that in an era of unchallenged US military supremacy where its reach was becoming more extensive than ever, the nation was either becoming, or in fact had already become, something more than just another great power: to wit, an empire? Admittedly, it was an empire with very special American characteristics. One writer even referred to it as ‘virtual’ and another ‘inadvertent’.¹² However, that did not make it any the less of an imperial power with all the essential features of an empire, including the capacity to punish transgressors and set the larger rules of the game.¹³ Indeed, what else should it be known as? As one of the more celebrated (non-American) theorists of the modern era was to remark – in some frustration – what word other than ‘empire’ better described this extensive system that was the American international order with its host of dependent allies, its vast intelligence networks, its five global military commands, its more than one million men and women at arms on five continents, its carrier battle groups on watch in every ocean, and its 30 per cent control of the world’s economic product? None at least that he could think of.¹⁴

The ‘imperial turn’ in the age of Bush was perhaps less of a surprise than the fact that some people were now prepared to use the word ‘empire’ to describe what America was, should be or ought to become. By any stretch of the imagi-

nation this was a most remarkable phenomenon, particularly in a country where 'one of the central themes of American historiography' was that whatever else one might call the United States, the last thing Americans were likely to call it was empire.¹⁵ It not only sounded odd: it sounded decidedly un-American too. As another American academic remarked, one year into the Bush term, 'a decade ago, certainly two', the very idea of empire would have caused 'righteous indignation' amongst most US observers. But not any longer.¹⁶ As Ronald Wright noted, 'how recently we believed the age of empire was dead', but how popular the idea had now become – at least in some circles.¹⁷ Yet something interesting and strange had happened along the way. For whereas in the 1960s the term had been the monopoly of a radical left keen to attack American power in the world (and in the hands of some writers, remained so),¹⁸ in the post-9/11 era, it was fast becoming all the rage on the neoconservative right. Moreover, what many of them seemed to be suggesting sounded as if America was no longer the exception to the historical rule. In fact, what some of the new cohort appeared to be saying was that that under conditions of international anarchy, where order remained the highest moral purpose, the United States still had much to learn from others. Indeed, according to one of the more outspoken neocons – not to mention the school's best-known British advocate¹⁹ – it could do a lot worse than turn to the chroniclers of the Greek, Roman and British empires 'for helpful hints about how to run American foreign policy'.²⁰ Of course, politicians might not want to use the term; and no doubt President Bush would repeat the old mantra that 'America' had no 'empire to extend'.²¹ But that is precisely what the United States would have to do now. Other existing methods had been tried and found wanting. Now, in a new era, where old forms of deterrence and traditional assumptions about threats no longer held, it was up to America to impose its own form of 'peace' on a disorderly world: to fight the savage war of peace (to quote one of the new theorists of empire) so as to protect and enlarge the empire of liberty.²² As another writer more critical of the new imperial turn remarked, in an age of unparalleled US dominance and global terror it looked as if the United States had now arrogated to itself the international role of setting standards, determining threats, using force and meting out justice.²³ Define it as unilateralism. Call it the necessary response to new threats. It still looked like imperialism and empire by any other name. The idea that had 'dared not speak its name' for at least a generation had been thrust back on to the agenda.²⁴

In what follows I want to argue two apparently contradictory points. The first is that one does not have to be a neocon, an apologist for empires in general, or the Bush Doctrine in particular, to take the notion of an American empire seriously.²⁵ Indeed, I want to suggest that the concept has much to recommend it. Admittedly, as applied to the United States, it has its limits, like any concept.²⁶ But as the new radical conservatives have been quick (and right) to point out, the idea as such – ambiguous warts and all – does have its uses as a comparative tool of analysis, one which has not been fully exploited in the past: partly for methodological reasons, partly because it goes against the American grain, and partly

because it has for so long been associated with a radical critique of American foreign policy.²⁷ Not only has this limited the uses to which the idea has been put hitherto, it has in effect made it almost impossible for commentators to employ the concept at all. My argument here is that it is now time to rescue the idea and put it back where it belongs at the centre of the discussion of what in fact has become the most extensive international system in history.²⁸

The second point I want to make, however, concerns the problematic future of this entity. Here I argue for empirical and historical balance. It is obviously premature to speak as some have done in the past of a rapid decline of American power.²⁹ On the other hand, as Michael Mann has shown, the American empire is already in deep trouble.³⁰ The most immediate reason for this is Iraq, a classic example of where dangerous myths about inconsequential threats can easily lead great powers into dangerous quagmires.³¹ However, a much larger issue concerns what Andrew J Bacevich and Niall Ferguson have defined separately as imperial denial.³² As Michael Ignatieff has pointed out, though the United States has huge assets and an international reach without equal, in the last analysis it has no real ‘consciousness of itself’ as a world power.³³ In denial about what it is, and thus lacking an ideology for what it is seeking to achieve globally, it is hardly surprising that Americans have, in the main, been unwilling to pay the price or go anywhere to build what some see as a new world order under US tutelage. Not only that. The Bush strategy of throwing off the shackles imposed on it by the ‘real world’ – normally referred to in the modern literature as American unilateralism – was always a highly risky approach, one that has already cost the United States dear since he assumed office. The American empire obviously retains many obvious assets.³⁴ And Bush did manage to get himself re-elected in 2004. However, the US confronts some very serious challenges; and, as we shall see, these are more likely to increase rather than diminish in the years that lie ahead. The empire might be in better shape than some of its critics suggest. These should not blind us, however, to the problems it is bound to face as time passes. In some larger sense, we are perhaps at the beginning of the end of a very long American era.³⁵

Talking empire

The term ‘empire’ is one that has provoked a good deal of heat but rather less light. This has been especially true in the United States. Indeed, in spite of the fact that the Founding Fathers themselves actually thought they were building an ‘Empire of Liberty’ that would stretch from sea to shining sea, many Americans have recoiled from the idea of an American empire on the grounds that unlike other more traditional imperial polities the United States at least never acquired, and did not seek to acquire, the territory of others. This in turn has been allied to another obvious objection to the notion of empire: the fact that the US has often championed the cause of political freedom in the world, as it now claims it is doing in Iraq. Thus, how can one talk of empire when one of the United States’ obvious impulses abroad has been to advance the cause of national

democracy and self-determination? Finally, the point is frequently made that the modern world is either too complex, diverse or out of control for it to be controlled from one single centre. As two of the more radical critics of the contemporary world have argued, the international system in some bigger sense might be defined as an 'empire', but it would be quite wrong to think of the United States being able to rule this entity.³⁶

Let us deal first with the issue of territory. It is obviously the case that most empires in the past, from the Greek to the Spanish, the Ottoman to the Russian, have been defined as such because they brought vast swathes of land belonging to other people under their control. It is equally true that the United States in the main has not practised such forms of annexation beyond its current boundaries. And to some, therefore, this is proof that the United States is not an empire in any meaningful sense of that word. This is a fair point even though it might be considered a rather narrow definitional base upon which to discuss and compare all empires. But even if we were prepared to – just for the moment – this still ignores one rather important historical fact: that America has indeed done more than its fair share of land grabbing. In fact, those who would claim that the United States is not an empire because it has never acquired other people's territory seem to forget that the nation we now call the United States of America only became the United States of America because it annexed a great deal during the nineteenth century: from France and Russia (through purchase), Spain and Mexico (by military conquest), from Britain (by agreement) and, most savagely, from those three million native Americans who were nearly all eliminated in the process. Admittedly, this tells us little about how it then used its massive geographical power base in the global arena. Nor can we assume that what it did in the process of conquering the American interior, it would do, or would want to do, to the rest of the world. But it does at least hint at the possibility that ruthlessness and ambition in the pursuit of power and the American experience are not quite so alien to each other as some would have us believe.³⁷

Then there is the small matter of Latin and Central America. Admittedly, neither were ever formally colonised by the US. But should that preclude us from thinking of the US relationship with its immediate south in imperial terms? Perhaps so, if you are an American from the United States. But that is not the way most Latin Americans look upon their own problematic connection with their very large and extraordinarily powerful neighbour to the north. Nor, to be blunt, do many North Americans. As even the more uncritical of them would readily concede, the whole purpose of the famous Monroe Doctrine was not to limit American influence in the region but to embed it. Moreover, the story thereafter is not one of US disengagement from the region but the latter's more complete integration into an American-led system – one which presupposed a definite hierarchy of power – was sometimes brutally exploitative in character, and was constructed around some fairly typical racial stereotypes of the 'other'. More than that. It was built on the good old-fashioned ideology – much beloved by European colonials – which assumed that certain areas should, of right, fall within the sphere of influence of one of the great powers. In fact, it was

precisely because the Americans thought in such terms that policy-makers in Washington (even more liberal ones) rarely felt any compunction in intervening in the region whenever and wherever they saw fit. If this was not imperialism by any other name, then it is difficult to think what might be.³⁸

However, there still remains the more general question about territory and the degree to which America's overall lack of territorial ambition means we should either not use the term or only do so in the most qualified fashion possible. There is no unambiguously straightforward answer. In the end it very much depends on whether or not territory, and territory alone, constitutes the basis of empire. Many would insist that it does. Dominic Lieven, for example, has argued that 'there has to be some sort of direct rule over the dominion for a power to be classified as an empire'.³⁹ Others, however, would point to the complex forms which all empires have taken through time; indeed, a study of the most developed would indicate that they have invariably combined different forms of rule, none more successfully than America's presumed predecessor, Great Britain. As the famous Gallagher and Robinson team showed in their justly celebrated work, British imperialism entertained both formal annexation and informal domination, direct political rule and indirect economic control. The real issue for the British, therefore, was not the means they employed to secure the outcomes they wanted, but the outcomes themselves.⁴⁰ Thus if one could create a system overall that guaranteed the right results – which for Britain meant a stable international space within which its goods could find a market and its capital a profitable home – then that was perfectly fine. And what was fine for the British, it could be argued, has been equally fine for the Americans. In fact, not only did they adopt a similar set of criteria after 1945 by which to measure success, but many of its more able leaders like Dean Acheson were great admirers of the British empire. The British, he felt, had done a very good job in the nineteenth century defending the world trade system by pumping their surplus capital into other countries; and there was no reason why the United States with its vast wealth and enormous power after World War II should not do the same. In many ways, it had no real alternative in his view. For as he argued at the time, global order presupposed power, power resided with states, and it was up to the strongest state – the hegemon to use the jargon – to pay the bills and enforce the rules of the game. And, if it did not do so (as it had failed to do in the inter-war period) then the international system was doomed.⁴¹

Of course, nobody would be so foolish as to suggest that the United States achieved total control of the whole world as a result. Nor did it always get its own way, even with the most dependent of its allies.⁴² Nonetheless, it still achieved a very great deal and did so in a quite conscious fashion. Indeed, in a relatively short space of time, following what amounted to a thirty-year crisis, it managed to construct the basis for a new international order within which others – old enemies and traditional rivals alike – could successfully operate. But not only did they manage to operate; the international economy as a whole flourished, to such an extent that between 1947 and 2000 there was a twenty-fold increase in the volume of world trade and 700 per cent rise in gross world

product. And the US achieved all this under the most testing of political conditions with all sorts of ideological ‘barbarians’ constantly trying to pull down what it was attempting to build.⁴³ So successful was it, in fact, that after several years of costly stand-off it even began to push its various rivals back – initially in the contested and unstable Third World, then in Eastern Europe, and finally in the enemy’s heartland itself. Not for it, therefore, the Roman fate of being overrun by the Mongol hordes or the British experience of lowering the flag in one costly dependency after another. On the contrary, by the beginning of the 1990s, the American empire faced neither disintegration nor imperial overstretch, but found itself gazing forth upon a more open, seemingly less dangerous world in which nearly all the main actors (with the exception of a few rogue states) were now prepared to accept its terms and come under its umbrella. Clearly, there was to be no ‘fall’ for this particular empire.⁴⁴

But this still leaves open the problem of how we can legitimately talk of an American empire when one of the United States’ primary objectives in the twentieth century has involved support for the right of self-determination. The objection is a perfectly reasonable one and obviously points to a very different kind of empire to those which have existed in the past. But there is a legitimate answer to this particular question – that if and when the US did support the creation of new nations in the twentieth century, it did not do so out of pure idealism but because it realistically calculated that the break-up of other empires was likely to decrease the power of rivals while increasing its own weight in a reformed world system. As the great American historian William Appleman Williams noted many years ago, when and where the US has combated colonialism – both traditional and communist – it did so in its own mind for the highest possible motive. But the fact remains that it only acted in this fashion (and then not always consistently) in the full knowledge that it would win a host of new and potentially dependent allies as a result.⁴⁵ Imperialism, as others have pointed out, can sometimes wear a grimace and sometimes a smile; and in the American case nothing was more likely to bring a smile to its face than the thought that while it was winning friends amongst the new states, it was doing so at the expense first of its European rivals (which is why so many of Europe’s leaders disliked Wilson and feared FDR) and then, after 1989, of the USSR.⁴⁶

This brings us then to the issue of influence and the capacity of the United States to fashion outcomes to its own liking under contemporary conditions. The problem revolves as much around our understanding of what empires have managed to do in the past, as it does about what we mean by influence now. Let us deal with both issues briefly – beginning with the first question about influence.

As any historian of previous empires knows, no empire worth the name has ever been able to determine all outcomes at all times within its own *imperium*. All empires in other words have had their limits. Even the Roman, to take the most cited example, was based on the recognition that there were certain things it could and could not do, including, by the way, pushing the outer boundaries of its rule too far.⁴⁷ Britain too was well aware that if it wanted to maintain

influence it had to make concessions here and compromises there in order not to provoke what some analysts would now refer to as ‘blowback’.⁴⁸ How otherwise could it have run India for the better part of two hundred years with only 50,000 soldiers and a few thousand administrators? Much the same could be said about the way in which the United States has generally preferred to rule its empire. Thus, like the British, it has not always imposed its own form of government on other countries; it has often tolerated a good deal of acceptable dissent; and it has been careful, though not always, not to undermine the authority of friendly local elites. In fact, the more formally independent they were, the more legitimate its own hegemony was perceived to be. There was only one thing the United States asked in return: that those who were members of the club and wished to benefit from membership had to abide by the club’s rules and behave like gentlemen. A little unruliness here and some disagreement there was fine; so long as it was within accepted bounds. In fact, the argument could be made – and has been – that the United States was at its most influential abroad not when it shouted loudest or tried to impose its will on others, but when it permitted others a good deal of slack. It has been more secure still when it has been invited in by those whose fate ultimately lay in its hands. Indeed, in much the same way as the wiser Roman governors and the more successful of the British Viceroyalty conceded when concessions were necessary, so too have the great American empire-builders of the post-war era. Far easier, they reasoned, to cut bargains and do deals with those over whom they ultimately had huge leverage rather than upset local sensitivities. It was only when the locals transgressed, as they did on occasion by acting badly abroad or outside the bounds of acceptable behaviour at home, that the US put its foot down firmly to show who was really in charge.⁴⁹

Yet the sceptics still make a good point. Under modern conditions, it is extraordinarily difficult for any single state to exercise preponderant influence at all times, a point made with great force in both a recent radical attempt to theorise the notion of empire⁵⁰ and a liberal effort to rubbish it.⁵¹ The argument is well made. In fact it is obvious: under conditions of globalisation, where money moves with extraordinary speed in an apparently borderless world, it is very difficult indeed for any state – even one as powerful as the United States – to exercise complete control over all international relations. There is also the question of its own economic capabilities. The United States might have a huge military capacity. However, in the purely material realm it is far less powerful than it was, say, twenty years ago – before Europe and China became more serious economic actors – or immediately after the war when it controlled 70 per cent of the world’s financial resources. All this much is self-evident and any honest analysis of the ‘new’ American empire would have to take this on board. But one should not push the point too far. After all, the US economy continues to account for nearly 30 per cent of world product, it is roughly 40 per cent bigger than any of its nearest rivals, the dollar still remains mighty, and Wall Street is still located at the heart of the international financial system. Furthermore, as the better literature on modern globalisation shows, the world economic system is not

completely out of control; governments still have a key role to play; and the enormous resources at the American government's disposal not only give it a very large role in shaping the material environment within which we all happen to live, but also provide it with huge influence within those bodies whose function it is to manage the world economy. America's control of these might not be complete, and the outcomes might not always be to its liking. But they get their way more often than not. As one insider rather bluntly put it, 'IMF programmes are typically dictated from Washington.'⁵² Furthermore, as Robert Wade has convincingly shown, by mere virtue of its ability to regulate the sources and supply routes of the vital energy and raw material needs of even its most successful economic competitors, the US quite literally holds the fate of the world in its hands. This in the end is why the war in Iraq will prove to be so important: not just because it will allow the world to enjoy lower oil prices – though it should – but because it will prove once again that the United States alone has the ability to determine the fate of the region, and by so doing will reinforce its central role in the wider world system.⁵³

Finally, any assessment as to whether or not the United States is, or is not an empire, has to address the problem of perception, or more concretely of how US leaders view America's role and how the world in turn looks upon the United States. It is difficult to make easy generalisations. Nonetheless, it would not be a million miles away from the truth to suggest that most members of the Washington foreign policy elite do tend to see themselves as masters of a larger universe in which the United States has a very special part to play by virtue of its unique history, its huge capabilities and accumulated experience running the world for the last fifty years. At times they may tire of performing this onerous task. Occasionally they falter. However, if it was ever suggested that they should give up that role, they would no doubt throw up their hands in horror. Being number one does have its advantages, after all. It also generates its own kind of imperial outlook in which other states are invariably regarded as problems to be managed, while the United States is perceived as having an indispensable role to perform, one of such vital importance that there is no reason why it should always be subject to the same rules of the international game as everybody else. This is why the United States, like all great imperial powers in the past, is frequently accused of being 'unilateral'. The charge might be just, but basically it is irrelevant. Indeed, as Americans frequently argue (in much the same way as the British and the Romans might have argued before them) the responsibilities of leadership and the reality of power means that the strong have to do what they must – even if this is sometimes deemed to be unfair – while the weak are compelled to accept their fate. So it was in the past; so it has been, and will continue to be, with the United States.

But how then do others look upon the United States? With a good deal of loathing in some quarters, to be sure; and rather jealously in others, no doubt. But this is by no means the whole story. For while many may resent the metropolitan centre, most are conscious of the fact that the benefits of living under the American *imperium* normally outweigh any of the disadvantages. In

fact, this is one of the reasons why the American empire has been so successful. After all, given the choice of living within its compass or trying to survive outside it, most nations – and most people – have invariably chosen the former over the latter. If nothing else, life is likely to be safer and conditions more prosperous. As one of the more surreal looks at one former empire illustrated only too graphically, even the more discontented are well aware that life under imperial rule may not be quite so bad as some would have us think. Recall the famous scene in *The Life of Brian*. The anti-imperialist leader, trying to stir up revolt, asks his rather small band of followers the following: ‘Tell me then, what has the Roman empire ever done for you?’ No doubt he later wished he had not asked the question in the first place, for the reply was simple and arrestingly honest: ‘Well, actually, quite a lot in fact’ – from building straight roads to keeping the Huns and the Visigoths at bay, to constructing a decent sewage system through to maintaining law and order. This surely is the issue. Many empires, including the American, have not always been benign; and they have not always been sensitive. However, the more successful, including the American, have lasted not just because they were feared, but because they performed a series of broader political and economic functions which no other state or combination of states was willing or able to undertake. Indeed, one suspects that the US still has a very long way to go. For whereas other more formal empires in the past failed in the end because they could not withstand progressive change, the United States will go on and on – or so some feel – precisely because it embraces and celebrates change. Not for it, therefore, the ignominy of being outflanked by history, but the very real chance of being in its vanguard. If the optimists are to be believed, the sun may never set on this modern empire.⁵⁴

After empire?

This essay began with a reflection on the ongoing debate about American power and went on to argue – no doubt controversially – that in spite of its possible imperfections as a concept, the notion of empire has a good deal to recommend it. Nowhere, of course, have I tried to insist that the idea is without its flaws. Nor have I attempted to understate the differences between American as a democratic empire with very special features, and other kinds of empire. What I have tried to suggest, though, is that by employing the term in a creative rather than dogmatic fashion, it does at least make it possible for us to make useful – and not necessarily misleading – comparisons between the United States and other ‘great powers’ in history. To this extent I very strongly disagree with those who would argue that the term does not enrich our understanding of the United States.⁵⁵ Indeed, it is only by making such comparisons that we are able to challenge one of the more restrictive and stultifying concepts that has made intelligent discussion of America so difficult in the past: namely, the notion that it is so exceptional that it is impossible to compare it with anything at all. If nothing else, the idea of empire drags the United States back into the historical mainstream where it should be, and hopefully will remain.

Recognising the utility of the idea of empire, however, is one thing; speculating about the future of empires is quite a different matter, especially in the American case where so much of this in the past has veered between blind optimism on the one hand and deep pessimism on the other. In many ways, we now stand at another such crossroad today. Thus we find some – like the neocons and their friends – continuing to assert that ‘the United States bestrides the globe’ like some ‘colossus’,⁵⁶ others meanwhile believe that the empire’s best days are already behind it and the future looks anything but certain. It is all deeply confusing. For the optimists all the key indicators – except those provided by the situation in Iraq – point to continued American hegemony. Pessimists meanwhile look at the problems facing the American economy and the growing influence of new power centres in the world, not to mention the spread of nuclear weapons, and conclude that whilst the conventional wisdom might be that the ‘American era’ might be ‘alive and well’ in the heads of some misguided Americans, it is not alive in that entity known as the real world.⁵⁷

The simplest and indeed the most satisfactory way of resolving this apparent conundrum lies in distinguishing between the immediate and the structural: that is, between the factors that continue to support US hegemony (the size of its market, the still central position of the dollar in the world economic system, its productivity levels, its extensive international alliances and military wherewithal) and those factors that are gradually beginning to limit (and have probably limited for some time) what it is able to do. The situation is thus complex and cannot be easily summed up by either asserting the United States is bound to lead for ever or is inevitably bound to decline. America still has a great deal of power. That much is obvious. However, as Max Weber and Lord Acton have taught us, power is not the same thing as authority, and unlimited power is always likely to corrupt those who exercise it. And this, it would seem, is precisely what has happened to the United States under Bush over the past few years. Possessed of vast capabilities following a decade of renewal that left the US in an unrivalled position in a unipolar world, Bush proceeded to wield American power in a fashion that was bound to cause disquiet at best and deep resentment at worst. This all began to manifest itself in various forms before 9/11, but took off with a vengeance as the US prepared and then went to war with Iraq. As one American commentator admitted, never had the country gone into battle (with the sole exception of Vietnam back in the 1960s) with so few allies actually prepared to back it enthusiastically.⁵⁸ In fact, never had such a war, even before it began, generated so much global opposition, the overwhelming bulk of it caused less by any sympathy that people might have had towards America’s intended target, and more by what many regarded as the dangerously aggressive policies of an over-powered state led by a president with little concern for global opinion.⁵⁹ As one friendly European critic remarked, rarely in history had one nation mobilised so much hard power in such a short space of time: and never had it lost so much soft power in the process.⁶⁰

The first problem facing the United States, therefore, revolves around the issue of power and the extent to which its own imperial behaviour is already

beginning to generate various forms of resistance. This in turn raises a second question about the conditions under which the United States exercises its power. As Nye amongst others has pointed out, America may be the world's only superpower, but this does not necessarily mean it can always go it alone, and at the same time hope to maintain friendly or amicable relations with other countries. Coalitions are wonderful things, and coalitions of the very willing even better. But when coalitions are compelled into being by fear rather than consent, then something is not quite right. Of course, the new hegemonists in Washington take a typically hard-nosed view of all this. As they point out, the US still managed to build an alliance of sorts against Iraq; former critics meanwhile are now running for cover; so why all the fuss? The answer should be obvious: because the more secure empires in history are those which can lead rather than coerce, inspire affection rather than suspicion. And while the United States might still have more than its fair share of friends around the world, it is currently testing their loyalty to the utmost.⁶¹

A third challenge concerns the United States itself. Views about the last remaining superpower have always been deeply divided and will almost certainly remain so. Nonetheless, for most of the post-Cold War period when the nation was at peace with itself, and liberals of both a Republican and Democratic persuasion were defining the political agenda, international attitudes towards the United States – with some obvious exceptions – tended to be positive. This, however, has changed since 11 September, and has done so in large part not just because of what America has been doing abroad, but also because of what has been happening on the home front. Indeed, in the process of securing the nation against further terrorist attacks, America appears to have become a decidedly less open and welcoming society. One should not exaggerate. To talk of a new 'empire of fear', as some on the left have already done, might be going too far. However, there are some deeply worrying signs, and if the American state becomes ever more intrusive, and many of its people less and less tolerant, in a world that seems to be more and more threatening, then the great shining city on the hill is going to look anything but in the years ahead – especially in those European countries where anti-Americanism is already on the rise.⁶²

This in turn raises a question about the domestic sources of the 'new' American empire. As we have already suggested, perhaps the most unique aspect of the American system of imperial power is that few Americans actually feel that they have been involved in the past or might be involved now in the messy business of building an empire. And this has serious consequences. Most obviously, it means that US actions (such as those in Iraq) have always got to be sold in the most politically acceptable of ways, thus laying it open to the constant charge of hypocrisy and double standards. It also means it is difficult to build a strong domestic platform for continued exertions abroad. Thus when things begin to go wrong – as they invariably do for any empire – great pressure immediately arises at home to cut and run; to look, in other words, for an exit strategy. This is precisely the dilemma the United States is currently facing in Iraq. As Cheney and others have suggested in private, there are very powerful long-term

reasons for the US to have what Cheney has aptly termed a permanent footprint in the sands of a key region like the Middle East. This, however, is not how the American people see things. Socialised into believing the best of their own nation, and educated into thinking that while other great powers might do conquest they only do liberation, it is hardly surprising they find it difficult to stay the course when the going gets rough. Moreover, lacking what Niall Ferguson has called the necessary attention span to keep focused on affairs abroad – even ones as important as those unfolding in Iraq – it follows that they find it very difficult indeed to sustain support for a policy originally sold as not necessarily being in the American national interest but in the interest of Iraq itself. Significantly, according to one poll, the American people even now seem to have little stomach for continuing the battle for Iraq alone, and over time this cannot but have consequences for the conduct of US foreign policy.⁶³

Finally, the success of empires in general, and it could be argued of the American empire in particular, has in the end rested on its ability to deliver a bundle of economic goods in the form of improved living standards, economic opportunity and growth world-wide. This in large part brought the United States victory in the Cold War and self-confidence for most of the 1990s. However, as recent economic events have revealed only too graphically, none of this can any longer be taken for granted. Naturally, we should beware crying wolf.⁶⁴ The US capitalist system continues to have huge reserves and an even greater capacity for regenerating itself. Yet the warning signs are there; and to make matters worse, Europe is beginning to show clear signs of challenging the United States economically.⁶⁵ This will not necessarily undermine America's position of material (let alone strategic) privilege within the wider international system; if anything, under conditions of crisis, its position is likely to be augmented rather than weakened simply because it has greater political capacity and market space. Nonetheless, the economic dominance it once enjoyed can no longer be taken for granted, especially in an age when it is becoming increasingly dependent on the financial largesse of others to manage its growing debt.⁶⁶ America and Americans live, in other words, in deeply troubling times where the old economic truths are coming under challenge. In some ways, the modern imperialists in Washington could not have thought of a more inauspicious time to start building their 'new' American empire.

Notes

- 1 I deal with some of the issues addressed here in my 'The Empire's Back in Town or America's Imperial Temptation – Again', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 1 (2003), pp. 1–28, and 'Empire, Imperialism and the Bush Doctrine', *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 4 (2004), pp. 585–608. See also the extended debate around my work in the June 2004 issue of *Security Dialogue*.
- 2 I discuss this in more detail in my 'Whatever Happened to American Decline? International Relations and the New United States Hegemony', *New Political Economy*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (2002), pp. 311–40.
- 3 See Ronald Steel, *Pax Americana*, London: Hamish Hamilton, 1967.

- 4 For a good discussion of hegemonic stability theory and the challenges it faced see Stefano Guzzini, *Realism in International Relations and International Political Economy: The Continuing Story of a Death Foretold*, London: Routledge, 1998.
- 5 Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000*, London: Unwin Hyman, 1988.
- 6 See Susan Strange, 'The Future of the American Empire', *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 42, No. 1 (1988), pp. 1–18.
- 7 See, for example, G. J. Ikenberry (ed.) *America Unrivaled: The Future of the Balance of Power*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2002.
- 8 Bruce Cumings, 'Still the American Century', in Michael Cox, Ken Booth and Tim Dunne (eds) *The Interregnum: Controversies in World Politics, 1989–1999*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, pp. 271–99.
- 9 For an example of 1990s triumphalism see Alfredo Valladao, *The Twenty First Century Will Be American*, London: Verso, 1996.
- 10 John M. Owen, 'Why American Hegemony is Here to Stay', Symposium: *Pax Americana or International Rule of Law*, 16 January 2003.
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- 12 See Martin Walker, 'America's Virtual Empire', *World Policy Journal*, Summer 2002, pp. 13–20. Robert Dujarric, *America's Inadvertent Empire*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004.
- 13 Clyde Prestowitz, *Rogue Nation: American Unilateralism and the Failure of Good Intentions*, New York: Basic Books, 2003, pp. 19–50.
- 14 Michael Ignatieff, 'Empire Lite', *Prospect*, No. 83 (February 2003), pp. 36–43.
- 15 William Appleman Williams, 'The Frontier Thesis and American Foreign Policy', *Pacific Historic Review*, Vol. XXIV (1955), p. 379.
- 16 Charles S. Maier, 'An American Empire', *Harvard Magazine*, Vol. 105, No. 2 (November–December 2002), pp. 28–31.
- 17 Ronald Wright, 'For a Wild Surmise', *Times Literary Supplement*, 20 December 2002, p. 3.
- 18 See Alex Callinicos, 'The Grand Strategy of the American Empire', *International Socialism*, No. 97 (Winter 2002), pp. 3–38.
- 19 Niall Ferguson, *Colossus: The Rise and Fall of the American Empire*, London: Allen Lane, 2004.
- 20 Robert Kaplan, *Warrior Politics: Why Leadership Demands a Pagan Ethos*, New York: Random House, 2002, pp. 152, 153.
- 21 George Bush speeches to cadets at West Point (June 2002) and to veterans at the White House (November 2002).
- 22 Max Boot, *The Savage Wars of Peace: Small Wars and the Rise of American Power*, New York: Basic Books, 2002.
- 23 G. John Ikenberry, 'America's Imperial Ambition', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 81, No. 5 (September–October 2002), p. 44.
- 24 See Niall Ferguson, 'The Empire that Dare Not Speak its Name,' *Sunday Times*, 13 April 2003.
- 25 As Pierre Hassner makes clear in his *The United States: The Empire of Force or the Force of Empire?* Chaillot Papers, Paris, No. 54 (September 2002).
- 26 See, for example, Martin Shaw, 'Post-Imperial and Quasi-Imperial: State and Empire in the Global Era,' *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 2 (2002), pp. 327–36.
- 27 'Those who by virtue of age and sobriety can remember the 1960s may recall the term "American empire" as a bit of left-wing cant', Ronald Wright, *Times Literary Supplement*, 20 December 2002, p. 3.
- 28 For an earlier plea along similar lines see the useful piece by Tarak Barkawi and Mark Laffey, 'Retrieving the Imperial: Empire and International Relations', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 1 (2002), pp. 109–27.

- 29 See, for example, Emmanuel Todd, *Après L'Empire: Essai sur la décomposition du système américain*, Paris: Editions Gallimard, 2002; and Charles A. Kupchan, *The End of the American Era*, New York: Vintage Books, 2002.
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- 33 'Empire Lite', *Prospect*, No. 83 (February 2003), pp. 36–43.
- 34 See Thanh Duong, *Hegemonic Globalisation: US Centrality and Global Strategy in the Emerging World Order*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003.
- 35 For a balanced critique of the Bush foreign policy see Chris Reus Smit, *America and World Order*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003; and Barry Buzan, *The United States and the Great Powers*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004. See also Dimitri K. Simes, 'America's Imperial Dilemma', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 82, No. 6 (November–December 2002), pp. 91–102.
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- 37 I discuss this in my 'America and the World', in Robert Singh (ed.) *Governing America: The Politics of a Divided Democracy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003, pp. 13–31.
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- 40 See John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson, 'The Imperialism of Free Trade', *Economic History Review*, second series, Vol. 6, No. 1 (1953), pp. 1–25.
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- 42 See G. John Ikenberry, 'Rethinking the Origins of American Hegemony', *Political Science Quarterly*, No. 104 (1989), pp. 375–400.
- 43 Figures from Martin Wolf, 'American and Europe Share the Responsibility for World Trade', *Financial Times*, 23 April 2003.
- 44 See the chapter on 'Imperial Anticolonialism' in William Appleman Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*, Cleveland: World Publishing, 1959.
- 45 On the uses of self-determination as a means of advancing US influence see Michael Cox, G. John Ikenberry and Takashi Inoguchi (eds) *American Democracy Promotion: Impulses, Strategies, Impacts*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- 46 On British suspicion of Wilson and Roosevelt see Niall Ferguson, *Empire: How Britain Made the World*, London: Allen Lane, 2003.
- 47 See John Wacher (ed.) *The Roman World*, two vols, London: Routledge, 1990, p. 139.
- 48 A term recently coined by Chalmers Johnson op. cit.
- 49 'Empire is the rule exercised by one nation over others both to regulate their external behavior and to ensure minimally acceptable forms of internal behavior within the subordinate states'; quoted in Stephen Peter Rosen, 'An Empire, If You Can Keep It', *National Interest*, No. 71 (Spring 2003), p. 51.
- 50 'The US does not and indeed no nation-state can today form the centre of an imperialist project'; cited in Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000, pp. xiii–xiv.
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- 55 See Philip Zelikow, 'The Transformation of National Security: Five Redefinitions', *National Interest*, No. 71 (Spring 2003), p. 18.
- 56 'America's World', *The Economist*, 23 October 1999, p. 15.
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- 58 Fareed Zakaria, 'Arrogant Empire', *Newsweek*, March 2003.
- 59 On forms of anti-Americanism see Richard Crockatt, *America Embattled*, London: Routledge, 2003, esp. pp. 39–71.
- 60 Charles Grant, Comment at the Centre for European Economic Reform. May 2003.
- 61 See, for example, Thomas Risse, 'Beyond Iraq: Challenges to the Transatlantic Security Community', unpublished paper presented to the American Institute for Contemporary German Studies, Washington, DC, 24 January 2003.
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6 The Bush turn and the drive for primacy

Peter Gowan

A man always has two reasons for the things he does – a good one and the real one.

(J. P. Morgan)

This essay is an attempt to interpret and explain the Bush turn from 9/11 through to the attack on Iraq. It takes a distinctive view on three cardinal issues: how we understand the *agency* which initiated this turn; how we understand the *problematique* of this agency;¹ and how we understand the *goals* of this agency in formulating and implementing the Bush turn.

My argument can be briefly stated. First, the agency which constructed and carried through the turn was not just the Bush team, but rather a much broader coalition of social forces which can best be understood as the leaders of the American business class and state. The Bush team was responsible for the tactical inflection and implementation of the turn, but not for its programmatic and strategic goals for these are broadly consensual amongst American class and state leaders.

Second and consequently, I reject the idea that the turn was driven simply by the ideology of the base of the Republican Party, or by a group of neocon ideologues or by an interest group coalition of a military-industrial complex plus an oil lobby. All these elements played their parts, but these were small parts as instruments of a much wider coalition.

Third, 9/11 offered an opportunity for American class and state leaders to tackle some of the main strategic problems which have faced the United States since the collapse of the Soviet bloc. These strategic problems can best be understood as problems of reconfiguring the relations between the American state and its external and internal environment in ways that will assure that state a world order in which American capitalism can flourish as a socio-economic, political and ideological phenomenon.

To understand these strategic problems we need to appreciate the programmatic goal of American grand strategy. This can be understood in terms of concepts such as global hegemony or a Pax Americana. But a more precise, operational concept in American grand strategic culture is the concept of primacy. The strategic problems facing the American state since the end of the

Cold War have been the problems of rebuilding American primacy. The Bush administration seized upon 9/11 as the opportunity to develop a new path towards resolving the strategic problems of rebuilding American primacy in the new conditions after the Soviet bloc collapse.

The strategic problems of rebuilding American primacy have not been the problems of combating the threat from al-Qaeda or the Taliban or combating 'terrorism' or overthrowing the Ba'athist regime in Iraq. By targeting these forces in particular ways, American leaders have believed that they could work towards overcoming the real strategic problems of re-establishing primacy. These real strategic problems concern both domestic challenges and the structure of America's political relations with the other main mature and emergent centres of capitalism. Bush's tactical targets are instruments for reshaping its relations with other, core power centres.

This argument implies that American primacy and thus American hegemony has not been secured since the collapse of the Soviet bloc. Instead, the world has been in a transitional period. The task of the Bush administration was to reconfigure international politics and orientate the United States on a new path to bring that transition to an end. Finally, I argue that the link between American political primacy and the security of American capitalism is strong and important.

Within the space of this chapter I cannot explore and justify the main concepts in this perspective against other approaches. My emphasis is rather to deploy the perspective operationally to show how it can reorganise the way we interpret the Bush turn.

The Bush turn's programmatic goal, its elite support and its meaning

We have some journalistic evidence of the subjectivity of the Bush team about its ultimate goals in making its turn on and after 9/11.² We also have some documentary evidence on these goals and some scholarly work on them. All this material points fairly clearly in the direction of one big programmatic goal: what is called, in the jargon of American grand strategy debates, 'primacy'.

Journalistic accounts, notably a series of articles by *Washington Post* journalists Bob Woodward and Dan Balz, show that in the days following 9/11 the Bush team saw the event as an opportunity for reshaping American relations with the rest of the world via a big strategic turn. Afghanistan and Iraq were to be tactical steps in this larger strategic turn to change US–*global* relations, and 9/11 was to be the legitimating mechanism for this strategic turn.

Describing the Cabinet meeting on 14 September 2001, Woodward and Balz report: 'Like Bush, Powell saw the attacks as an opportunity to reshape relationships throughout the world.'³ In other words, 9/11 gave the US an opportunity in the field of *grand strategy*.

On 11 September 2001 Bush had ordered Rumsfeld to prepare for an attack against Afghanistan.⁴ The following day, at the National Security

Council attended by Bush and his top officials, according to Woodward and Balz's account, the key issue was the risk that after crushing al-Qaeda and the Taliban regime in Afghanistan the whole new campaign might fall apart or fizzle out. To avoid this danger Cheney gained agreement that the campaign should, from the start, be not only against terrorism but also against states that sponsor terrorism. This was agreed. Rumsfeld, backed by Wolfowitz, urged that Iraq be made a target from the start. Others (Powell and Shelton) disagreed. Bush decided that first there would be a mobilisation to attack Afghanistan and then, after that had been accomplished, the target could be shifted to Iraq later.⁵

Rumsfeld later explained to Woodward and Balz that the first 36 hours were vital because 'You've got to think of concepts and strategic action.'⁶ It is evident that this remark from Rumsfeld does not refer to strategic action for the campaign against the Taliban or against Iraq. Rather, it refers to strategic action for global goals – for reshaping relationships throughout the world. The attacks on Afghanistan and Iraq were to be *tactical* means in a global strategy for global programmatic goals. Woodward and Balz report that as early as 12 September 2001 Rumsfeld spelled out his global strategic goal: the idea that 'US power was needed to help discipline the world'.⁷ The war on Afghanistan and then Iraq as well as the other campaigns against the axis of evil and the Palestinian armed resistance should thus be seen as steps towards the goal of asserting *US disciplinary power at the global level*.

Rumsfeld's phrase about US global disciplinary power is really a synonym for a unipolar or monopolar world. Cheney has used another formula for the same idea, stating in the run-up to the attack on Iraq that 'the world is in our hands'.⁸ In the contemporary American language of grand strategy debates these are all synonyms for the doctrine of American *primacy*. The Woodward and Balz reportage thus suggests that 9/11 was used by the Bush team as *the occasion* for launching a campaign for US global goals on the level of world order construction.

Another journalist who has also carried out interviews with a wide range of the key foreign policy officials of the Bush administration, Nicholas Lemann, provides further enlightenment on this concept of 9/11 as an opportunity for achieving US global goals. He had lunch with National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice and she brought up the idea of 9/11 as an opportunity, or rather as creating *opportunities* in the plural. Lemann reports as follows:

Rice said that she had called together the senior staff people of the National Security Council and asked them to think seriously about 'how do you capitalize on these opportunities' to fundamentally change American doctrine, and the shape of the world, in the wake of September 11th. 'I really think this period is analogous to 1945 to 1947,' she said, that is, the period when the containment doctrine took shape, 'in that the events so clearly demonstrated that there is a big global threat, and that it's a big global threat to a lot of countries that you would not have normally thought of as being in the coalition. That has started shifting the tectonic

plates in international politics. And it's important to try to seize on that and position American interests and institutions and all of that before they harden again.⁹

These comments by Rice again reinforce the centrality of global programmatic goals and introduce a conception of the global conjuncture. She suggests that we are in a period analogous to 1945–7: a period, in other words, where a new global order can be established. But she also makes clear that 9/11 was an *opportunity* for building a new global order and not the source of the need for a new global order. That source is not spelt out by Rice, but it is implied, through the references to the late 1940s. Then the US reshaped global politics as a confrontation between the capitalist world and the Soviet bloc. It thereby constructed the Cold War world order that lasted for over forty years. The source of the need to repeat that kind of operation is the collapse of the Cold War world order – the Soviet bloc collapse. Rice's phrase about what Acheson called, biblically, 'the creation' – when the US world was made in the late 1940s – is illuminating. She saw the turn as being on the same scale as that: a new 'creation' or perhaps a 're-creation'.

Turning to documentary evidence, one document is enough to reinforce the case that the Bush administration's goal in making the turn is primacy: the September 2002 National Security Strategy. This document makes it abundantly clear that the Bush administration is driving for a world order anchored on US primacy. In that document, the administration presents the American state as the guardian not of American security but of global security. The US must have the task of deciding, for the world, who the world's friends and enemies are. And it will lead the world in crushing the world's enemies. And it will do so on its own if necessary but with friends if possible. And in language reminiscent of the Platt Amendment it speaks of 'convincing or compelling states to accept their sovereign responsibilities'.¹⁰

Thus, we see that the leading figures in the Bush administration did not approach the opportunities presented by 9/11 merely as Republicans or neocons or leaders of interest groups. They approached 9/11 as an opportunity for the American state to tackle issues of grand strategy and world order.

But Nicholas Lemann also discusses another lunch he had, this time with a 'senior' official whom Lemann does not name, though Cheney obviously comes to mind as the unattributable source. Whoever it was makes an important point about one of the great gains achieved by 9/11. Lemann reports as follows:

Inside government, the reason September 11th appears to have been 'a transformative moment', as the senior official I had lunch with put it, is not so much that it revealed the existence of a threat of which officials had previously been unaware as that it drastically reduced the American public's usual resistance to American military involvement overseas, at least for a while.¹¹

This is surely a key political truth, which at the same time underlines the absolute analytical necessity for viewing the American state as a political force which is radically distinct from the mass of American citizens. The fact was that, try as they might during the 1990s, the American state elite had not been able to pull the US public over to supporting their ambitions for an assertive use of American power abroad. Finally, with 9/11, they could now bridge that gulf. The mass of the American citizenry had been a strategic *problem* for the American state leadership after the end of the Cold War, because it was resistant to the necessary international military-political effort for American global power; 9/11 offered the opportunity for surmounting that problem and building the necessary strong domestic political base for an activist, forward strategy to build a new world order.

The breadth of the coalition for primacy

Much of what the Bush team did after 9/11 was patently partisan in American electoral terms. But what concerns us here is whether the global goals and the approach to 9/11 as a strategic opportunity for meeting these global goals were those of a partisan group or faction, of whether they commanded broad elite support among the leaders of the American business class and state.

We can, for the moment, take Rumsfeld's formula on America as a global disciplinary force as a shorthand for the goal of American global *primacy*.¹² So the question we are interested in is the breadth of support for the Bush team's goal of primacy among American class leaders. Both scholarly and journalistic literatures suggest that a commitment to American primacy runs very deep in these circles.¹³ A lengthy and detailed study in the late 1990s by Posen and Ross notes that primacy was the programmatic goal for the elder Bush administration and was also the goal of the Dole candidacy.¹⁴ But Posen and Ross also note that key figures amongst strategic thinkers associated with the Democrats also share the goal of primacy. And they add that despite the presence of some opponents of primacy, notably amongst Defence Department officials, the basic concept of the Clinton administration was also that of primacy, albeit wrapped up in the language of cooperative security.¹⁵ Clinton's National Security Adviser Anthony Lake made this very clear in his first major keynote speech on US grand strategy. Lake stressed the fundamental

feature of this era is that we are its dominant power. Those who say otherwise sell America short ... Around the world, America's power, authority and example provide unparalleled opportunities to lead ... our interests and ideals compel us not only to be engaged, but to lead.

The word 'lead' here is code for primacy. And he continued, 'The successor to a doctrine of containment must be a strategy of enlargement – enlargement of the world's free community of market democracies.'¹⁶ The Clinton NSC's

chief analyst Philip Bobbitt also leaves us in no doubt about his own passionate commitment to US primacy in his book, *The Shield of Achilles*. It was also strongly supported by Madeleine Albright and her mentor, Zbigniew Brzezinski.

Paul Wolfowitz, a leading architect of the contemporary doctrine of primacy, acknowledged before the Bush administration came to office that the Clinton administration had espoused the doctrine as outlined by himself and others around Dick Cheney in the first Bush administration. Although Wolfowitz acknowledges that when he, Lewis Libby and others in the Bush Senior administration first expressed the doctrine in the Defence Policy Guidelines, leaked in 1992, there was a great deal of criticism, he claims that the doctrine had by 2000 become the consensus, questioned only by Pat Buchanan on the right.¹⁷ Wolfowitz's criticism of the Clinton administration was not that it rejected his goal of primacy (or Pax Americana). It was that it did not pursue it vigorously and boldly enough. As he puts it, 'in reality today's consensus is facile and complacent ... Still, one should not look a gift horse in the mouth.'¹⁸ William Pfaff, from a different political standpoint than Wolfowitz's, nevertheless concurs on the broad consensus for primacy. He points out that Al Gore shares the same programmatic goal of American primacy or unipolar hegemony as the neocons.¹⁹ And he adds that the American coalition for this programmatic goal is very wide, including the leadership of the US business class.

Posen and Ross make a further important point about the Clinton administration's grand strategy. They point out that despite its commitment to the goal of primacy, the Clinton administration failed to find a way of generating a domestic politics for primacy. It failed to find a language that could anchor a powerful domestic electoral-political constituency to an activist assertion of American global power. This problem was precisely what led Wolfowitz to refer to the consensus for primacy as being facile and complacent. But 9/11 precisely gave the Bush administration the opening to develop just such a domestic politics for an activist global military-political drive by the American state of equivalent force to that provided earlier by anti-communism.

This does not, of course, mean that there is a very broad base of support across American elites for all aspects of the Bush turn; just that there is agreement over its ultimate goal of primacy and over the need for an activist, forward strategy to achieve it. There can be sharp disagreements, of course, on Bush's chosen strategic path to primacy, over the main instruments the administration uses for the strategy, over the military and diplomatic tactics, the discourse of the public diplomacy and so forth.²⁰ Some very influential and respected American class leaders have intervened publicly and brutally against some of Bush's tactical ideas.²¹ And like the leaders of any ruling class, American leaders are interested to see if the Bush repertoire actually works and to have a plan B – and a team B – in case it doesn't.

The areas of difference are less about basic political goals, on which the leaders of the American ruling class broadly agree. The differences about instruments, tactics and so forth will also entail differences of political constituency and coalition in American politics. The Bush team's external tactics and

methods are, of course, also designed to strengthen its specific political base domestically and to feed the interests of Bush's backers in specific business sectors. This is the normal way that American politics works. There should be, in a well-managed American state, consensus among respected and authoritative class leaders on the goals, and that consensus should set limits to the choice of a candidate's team of policy-makers. But candidates then have their own sponsors to pay back and their constituencies to feed. And even though Clinton himself did not privilege the military instruments in his drive for the grand strategy, there seems indeed to have been a broad consensus at the time of the election on the need to beef up the military and give it a more prominent role in foreign policy in the post-Clinton era. It was Gore, after all, who outdistanced Bush in calling for a really massive expansion of the military during the presidential campaign. Similarly, it was the Clinton administration which officially established the American goal of coercive regime change in Iraq, which constructed the concept of 'rogue states' and used it to brand North Korea and Iran as well as Iraq as enemy states. And it was Zbigniew Brzezinski who had constructed the concept of central Eurasia as being a crucial geopolitical target for American power projection.²² All these elements became central components of the Bush turn after 9/11, but were already set out in the Clinton period.

The meaning of primacy

The notion of 'primacy' is an old, long-established concept in American elite debates about grand strategy. It surfaced prominently in the deep splits within the elite in the 1970s.²³ And it has been a central concept in elite debates on US grand strategy since the collapse of the Soviet bloc.

Posen and Ross distinguish between primacy, selective engagement, cooperative security and isolationism as the different grand strategy programmes or doctrines in play within American elite debates in the 1990s. They remark that all such doctrines have their economic dimension but do not treat this economic dimension. Indeed, although we know that the economic dimension looms large in discussions of grand strategy, it is typically not covered in public materials discussing political and military dimensions of grand strategy.

The contemporary isolationist doctrine is, in reality, a doctrine for a US military pull-back from its massive power projections abroad. It does not imply that the US will play no role as a leading international political power. Cooperative security implies that the United States will be the biggest player (by far) in various international security institutions and the UN, but will broadly accept their institutional disciplines and will thus pursue a collegial policy, at least with the other core capitalist liberal democratic allies. It thus posits a basic, organic harmony of interests (as well as values) with these states. But both primacy and selective engagement have a different analysis of the situation. They both see other capitalist liberal democracies as the main potential threats to American interests in the twenty-first century. They may also see China, of course, as eventually falling into the same category. The reasons why these powers could pose a

threat is because of their industrial and technological capacities and because of the possibility of their forming regional blocs that could then have a scale that would make them equal to the US.

There is an obvious capitalist economic dimension to this potential threat as well: such regional powers would also be very large centres of capital accumulation, generating huge credit power, product market power and bases for launching new growth sectors. They would thus also act as magnets for swathes of other capitalisms in their vicinity. And they could use these capacities to challenge the US on the rules of the international capitalist economy: most crucially the rules on international monetary arrangements and financial flows, but also the rules on the terms of competition between capitals.

But the two doctrines differ critically on their programmes for dealing with these potential threats. Selective engagement is really a doctrine of off-shore balancing, akin to the approach adopted by Britain towards nineteenth-century Europe.²⁴ It involves the idea that the US will make its programmatic goal a purely negative one: that of ensuring that the regions in question remain internally divided, thus ensuring that no threatening coalition or bloc could emerge within them in the future. The US should thus have a policy of tilting and balancing off the main powers at each end of Eurasia.

The doctrine of primacy offers a quite different solution to the problem. It says America should lead and manage the other powers' relations with the rest of the world. It is an activist policy of US global management of world politics: something like an American global government. Such management is above all focused upon the construction of security alliances in which the American state takes charge of the main external security challenges confronting its allies. Such alliances have a hub-and-spokes character in which each ally's geopolitical orientation is directly shaped by its relationship with the US rather than through cooperation with its regional neighbours by-passing the US. The code for this alliance approach in US strategic discourse is a commitment to 'strong alliances'.

Primacy does not mean abandoning international institutions like the UN and many others. It does mean, however, that the US exercises a kind of sovereignty over them such that it is not bound by their rules, can decide unilaterally when the world faces a state of emergency and what should be done about it. The US can also decide who is an enemy of the world and who is not. The institutions in normal circumstances can handle humdrum issues according to their rules, but all understand that when the hegemon is roused by what it sees to be a threat or major challenge to the world order, it can be bound by no institutional constraints.

Primacy thus means that the US takes on responsibility for a *community of states*, above all for the main core capitalist states, the chief problem zone that primacy is there to address. And the US must pay a price and actually secure benefits of some kind for the members of the community, tackling real problems that they perceive themselves to face and producing real solutions. But, in return, it will gain the privileges owing to the hegemon.

Yet what this elite discourse about primacy does not spell out is exactly who are the members of this community. They are usually called states, but it would be more accurate to call the members 'capitalisms'. Primacy does not, of course, enhance the international power and international influence of the member states of the community-under-primacy. But it is designed to enhance the social power, security and wealth of the member capitalisms. For American primacy means a global programme designed to enhance the power of capital over labour everywhere and to provide capital everywhere with an overall development project, in economics, social and political life. In the eyes of the American proponents of primacy, it is a positive-sum game for the capitalisms of the world. This is what the neocons mean with their insistence that their projected American empire is a benevolent empire. Yet what many commentators have overlooked²⁵ is that primacy over the entire capitalist core is not just a concept. It was the reality of the American-centred capitalist order during the Cold War.

US Cold War primacy over the capitalist world as a model

The reality of US primacy over the capitalist world during the Cold War offers a number of insights into the way that the US establishment has understood how primacy can be established and consolidated and how it works as a world order.²⁶ Many of these things have been missed because a purely formal statist view of the Cold War period ignores the centrality for the US of the social world of capitalism and sees only global bipolarity rather than US primacy over the capitalist world.

The American official march to dominance over the capitalist world began with Pearl Harbour and was achieved by 1945. But the character of US primacy was only set in stone at the end of the 1940s (or more accurately perhaps when the Eisenhower administration accepted the Achesonian framework in the early 1950s). It is worth tracing the path from the general goal of dominance to the precise programme of primacy very briefly.

As the war ended, the US dominated the entire capitalist core, occupying the two big industrial centres – Germany and Japan – holding Britain in a financial and monetary vice, and facing a prostrate France and Italy. But the leaders of American capitalism actually went through three different ideas of how to turn this dominance into a coherent political form of world order.

The first world order idea favoured in Washington was that of cooperative security (the UN) in which US resources would give it *de facto* leadership combined with a political-economy structure that would be hegemonic – Bretton Woods and so forth. The second idea, that of Kennan, was essentially off-shore balancing and selective engagement by the US: a kind of repeat of the British programmatic orientation towards Europe in the nineteenth century. Anti-communism would, of course, have been present in both these conceptions, and both these conceptions would have involved some conflict with the USSR. But

neither of them entailed a great military build-up, great power projection abroad and permanence.

The third idea was direct US leadership of the entire capitalist core in a global political cleavage with the Soviet bloc and communism. This was not cooperative security or selective engagement; it was the US taking command of the core and leading its relations with the world beyond the core. And it would profoundly change the domestic structures of the US state and economy. This was the concept of primacy, Acheson's big idea, consolidated in Korea. The subordinate allies joined up for all kinds of reasons, none of which had anything to do with any mortal danger from the USSR.

Under primacy, the pre-war capitalist world of separate spheres of influence was scrapped and instead the whole capitalist core became a unified American sphere of influence (although the European empires were allowed to maintain their fiefdoms as sub-systems within the overall American sphere. This was entirely new: it never existed under British hegemony in the nineteenth century.

The specific form of the community-under-primacy was that of a set of military-political alliances all led by the United States and all directed against the Soviet bloc and communism. The US began a campaign to organise a great global cleavage between the US and the USSR, drew the whole of the capitalist core into military alliances against the USSR and then adopted a drive of aggressive confrontational pressure upon the Soviet bloc with forward deployments of US forces. This then established a real political and material structure of confrontation between the two blocs. *And it was this bipolar bloc structure* which underpinned American primacy over the core. The structure threatened the security of the subordinate allies in ways that only US strategic services could tackle. And because US actions vis-à-vis the Soviets could have grave consequences for the allies, they had to be obsessively concerned to influence Washington's policy.

Furthermore, the US did not confine its role as the protector power to the fronts facing the Soviet bloc and China. It also took command of the peripheries of the Eurasian allies: the Mediterranean and Middle East at the western end of Eurasia and South-East Asia at the other end, as well as mineral-rich parts of Africa. As a result it policed the supply routes of allies for strategic raw materials and the sources of many of the key materials. This was a service for the allies, but also a source of their dependency on the US.

A third political front of the primacy system was the domestic front of the allies themselves. The global cleavage sank very deep into the domestic politics of the allies, shaping their domestic political systems: the political mainstream was shaped as anti-communist, anti-Soviet and thus pro-American, while communists and their socialist fellow-travellers were anathematised. And where the latter were strong, there was an understanding that the US commitment to liberal democracy was conditional: only its commitment to anti-communism was unconditional. All capitalist political systems need hard, aggressive political forces in reserve in case major restructuring of class balances was/is needed. These political forces on the mainstream right were firmly in the American anti-

communist camp. This also meant that even when the US made moves which were perceived to threaten or undermine the interests of a subordinate protectorate, the structure of mass politics in the domestic arena was strongly biased against a strong public polarisation against the US. And pretty much any US power play internationally legitimated by anti-communism or anti-Sovietism would meet muted response from the subordinate allies. Only one allied political system broke to some degree from this pattern: France under de Gaulle.

It is important to stress also that there was a facade/arcanum institutional structure in this US protectorate system. First, there was the presentation of NATO as a set of states with equal rights and a 'consensus' principle of decision-making. This was a facade: there were varying degrees of consultation with the allies, but the US decided. It was a unipolar structure with the US able to take decisions unilaterally if it needed to.

Second, there was an official US support for West European unity but an operational US policy of keeping the West European states fragmented in a hub-and-spokes structure of relations in the military-political field. The US supported the banner of European unity and the reality of legal structures and institutions of West European integration, but never the emergence of a European caucus on military political policy, far less that caucus having autonomous collective military structures.

At the same time, the structure ensured that the US could invigilate the external strategy of the other core states to ensure that all the states concerned remained within the parameters judged necessary by the hegemonic power. This was a very robust system, which lasted right up to the Soviet collapse.

How primacy reshaped American capitalism

Although it is widely held, particularly among Marxists, that economics shapes politics rather than the other way round, this was evidently not the case in the twentieth century, where politics in the shape of wars profoundly shaped and reshaped the economics of capitalism, while economics also reshaped politics.²⁷ And the primacy order of the Cold War profoundly influences the reshaping of American capitalism. In the first place, it facilitated a major outward expansion of American capitalism in terms of its geographical reach. We can no longer conflate US capitalism with the US domestic economy. The latter, in the 1990s, climbed to about \$11 trillion dollars in GDP. A significant slice of this is, of course, not American owned (and the US executive monitors this shift to foreign ownership in minute detail). But the overseas fixed assets of US capital produced, by 2000, some \$3 trillion of sales revenue, the largest slice of which, \$1.4 trillion, is in Western Europe.²⁸ If we add on the revenues from American exports and above all the revenues from US financial international financial operations abroad, we would reach a figure for the internationally dependent operations of US-based corporations which probably amounts to about half of US GDP. This real bifurcation has reached a point where the American state really needs to have a policy field about the domestic economy, another policy

field about American internationalist capitalism, and a third about the world capitalist economy. And the bifurcation has become, since the 1980s, an important cleavage line in American politics between an internationalist capitalist mainstream and a range of domestic economy oppositions.

In managing this shift, American leaders since the Reagan administration have exploited American primacy to make its own fiat currency the global monetary unit, while ensuring that the dollar's management is an exclusive American prerogative. And successive administrations have then used this dollar dominance to enable the American national economy to escape the normal rules of the international political economy which make a country's balance of payments a critical constraint on its economic activity. These arrangements have become ever more important to American capitalism and give it a critical stake in the preservation of a primacy order, blocking regionalist challenges at either end of Eurasia.²⁹

In the second place, the primacy structure made the central military budget and the military-industrial networks within US domestic capitalism very important and powerful. This plays such an important economic but also political role in the US domestic economy that no section of the American capitalist class proposed decisively scaling it down after the Cold War.

Third, from the time of the crisis of the American industrial capitalist model in the 1970s, internationalist US capitalism was restructured in distinctive ways, linked to the primacy structure. Instead of reorganising the domestic base as a new industrial power house – the course pursued by Japan and Germany – there was a shift towards forms of accumulation that exploited US primacy: the imposition of the dollar as the world's fiat currency, the drive to open the financial systems of other capitalisms and to tie them in to New York and London; the drives for US financial operators to take commanding positions within the financial sectors of other economies; the felt need to use the IMF (and the resources of its members) as an insurance system and debt collector on behalf of American rentiers and the need to use the IMF to tackle crises in important American client states – all these are examples of the ways in which the shape of US expansion abroad since the 1970s has come to depend increasingly on American global 'disciplinary power'. Since the 1980s the US has more generally been trying to reorganise the internal institutions of political economies all over the world so that these political economies fit with the new forms of American economic expansionism. This reorganisation effort generates enormous social and political strains in many states – something that did not apply in the earlier industrial phase of US expansionism.³⁰ And although this does not require American primacy over the whole capitalist world – simply expansive coercive imperial pressure – it benefits greatly from a primacy order. And it results in great swathes of acquisitions of capitals overseas – some 23,000 US affiliates overseas in 2000 – whose interests require the support and defence of an American state with global reach.

Fourth, primacy gave the US the possibility of using Western Europe as a key base and transmission mechanism for the expansion of US capitals and for the

spreading of regimes suitable for US capitalism on to the global stage. West Europeans may view this as a largely cooperative relationship involving partnership. But for the US, its construction of the EC system and its support for the banner of 'European Unity' was both very important for the spread of US capitalism and at the same time potentially risky. The risk was that Western Europe might actually unite politically and seek to go autonomous. But the gains for the spread of US capital accumulation abroad and for securing its legal-institutional requirements for the world capitalist economy were very great. Roughly half of all US fixed assets abroad remain in Europe and the transatlantic partnership in reorganising the political economy of capitalism internationally remains very important. But what made all this safe, in the eyes of the American business class leaders, was the reality of the Cold War primacy structure.

Of course, the increasing outwards drive by American capitalism was neither an autonomic result of US primacy nor an autonomic working out of some organic and autonomous economic logic. It was in large part the result of deliberate decisions and deliberate non-decisions. When the industrial crunch of the 1970s came, the American state could have responded like Japan or Germany with massive efforts to defend, strengthen and modernise its industrial base using German-style banking and strong education systems for skilled labour, or with Japanese-style methods. The American state could have launched a huge deepening of domestic accumulation through public investment in domestic infrastructure, etc. But it opted for the private financialisation switch, transforming the entire financial sector; the business class opted for downsizing and shifting one or more elements in its reproduction circuit abroad. It also opted for the Dollar-Wall Street Regime³¹ and the other aspects of the new international accumulation drive of the US.

Making sense of the Bush campaign as a strategy for primacy

The United States had primacy over the capitalist world during the Cold War *in the form of the Cold War*. So with its end the United States faced a major political problem. It was the dominant world power on all indices. It had gained a great ideological triumph for its form of social organisation, capitalism. But its means of disciplining and shaping the politics of the capitalist world had in large part disintegrated.

During the post-Cold War period, this has been the central political problem facing the leaders of the American state: how to build a new primacy *structure*. This was not the only programmatic problem which the US faced. Its leaders were also desperately worried at the start of the 1990s about restoring American capitalism's economic lead, a problem which was exacerbated by the seeming dynamism of the Japanese economy and indeed of Western Europe in the late 1980s. But the two problems were related. The forms of American capitalism had been profoundly reshaped by the political structure of primacy during the Cold War. And this gave the internationalist wing of American capitalism an

increasingly strong stake in maintaining a primacy structure. Thus while the Clinton administration's main focus was on the economic problem of reviving US economic dominance, it was simultaneously trying to find the path towards forging a new political order on a global scale.

The programmatic problems posed by the Soviet collapse

The first big problem for rebuilding primacy after the Soviet collapse has been the fact that it has to be built as a *global order* and not just an order for the capitalist core. This is especially true if China and Russia do become fully fledged capitalist states. Creating a community-under-primacy embracing those two powers is far from easy.

A second problem is that, already, the capitalist core has expanded during the Cold War, especially with the rise of East Asia, and there is a real overall consolidation of capitalist relations of production in some very large and important 'emerging markets', in the very populous South-East Asian countries, India, Brazil and so on. Most of these countries are excluded from the largely Atlantic institutions of management of world capitalism. We are thus in a different social world of capitalism from the world of 1945.

In these circumstances an American primacy order would have to be one of constant political manoeuvre by the United States, swinging this way and that in the political field and doing so without any very stable set of rules and institutional commitments on the part of the US. It is simply too weak to manage world politics in any other way. It would also have to be constantly activist, to keep the initiative and keep a grip on the global political agenda. The very stable basic ideological and institutional infrastructures of the Cold War would not be possible. But this activist manoeuvring creates big uncertainties and insecurities and these are the enemy of business confidence.

A third problem is that the Soviet collapse freed Western Europe from its quasi-protectorate dependence on US military power. It has begun moves towards forming a political caucus in world affairs, and it has developed a rather strong push for the United States to support a world order based on stable institutional rules and cooperative, collegial decision-making approaches on a world order level, with the US leading simply through its being the biggest power. Of course, there is bad faith in the West European political stance: they ultimately want a cooperative security approach of the *Atlantic powers* over the world or of the G7, and the US can play on this with other powers in its drive for primacy. And at the same time, the main West European states are themselves riven with petty jealousies and rivalries. Nevertheless, this West European stance for a collegial, institutionalised system with the US leading within its rules is a major threat to the primacy coalition in the United States. It has a powerful appeal in other core capitalist countries, it seems to offer greater certainty to international business, with its emphasis on predictable international law, and it exploits the fact that, with the collapse of the Cold War structure, the Rooseveltian institutional structure of the UN, residualised during the Cold War, rises from the margins as

a mechanism to restrain US power thrusts. It is also a serious challenge because Europe has largely supported the new global political economy programme of the US, it remains the most important overseas location for American business, its banner of European unity has been supported in US declaratory policy since 1947, and it remains a vital political transmission-belt for US initiatives in world politics, especially in the political economy field.

During the Cold War, the domestic political systems of Western Europe were lined up with the US on world politics to a great extent through the centrality of the anti-communist/anti-Soviet cleavage within these political systems. The US could thus use this alignment to swing European mass politics behind it. But the collapse of communism has led to the crumbling of all that.

This is not, of course, old-style inter-imperialist rivalry, despite the existence of real tensions on both economics and politics. Western Europe is not trying to break up a core capitalist community to construct its own imperial sphere of influence and defend it militarily against the US. It is pursuing a politics of maintaining that community under US *de facto* leadership but under a collegial leadership structure rather than a primacy structure and, within that collegial structure, a more autonomous West European caucus could exert real influence over the direction of US policy. It is not balancing against US military power with its own military power. It is seeking to render the US military instrument – its key card in statecraft for primacy – collegially accountable and under rules restraint. And this enrages the US primacy coalition, especially those parts of it most enamoured of the transformative political role of militarism. But the West Europeans also want to preserve their autonomous EU base: their great treasure as a framework for capital accumulation and political influence. They assume that the US business class gets such benefits from the rules of the single market and from the transmission-belt role of Western Europe that the US cannot break and polarise against them. This is, indeed, a problem for the US primacy coalition. But against that there is the threat that European world order ideas get the backing of the East Asians, the Chinese and the Russians in a ganging up against primacy.

The Clinton administration sought to work on the most urgent issues in the field of reconstructing US primacy: seeking to make NATO the central institution of pan-European politics and thus to give the US primacy over the European theatre. At the same time, it worked to ensure that the new Russia would emerge as a capitalist state closely tied to the US. But the Clinton administration's efforts in these fields did not work very well. Despite the NATO war on Yugoslavia, the European caucus building did not end. And there was a blow-out on the policy towards Russia first in 1998 and then deepened in 1999 with the NATO war over Kosovo.

And the Clinton administration was unable to come up with a mass politics for primacy either in the US or internationally. It was stuck in the language of cooperative security, and consequently its efforts to build primacy in Europe, for example, had a 'manoeuvrist' character of manipulations. And it never managed to develop a language for anchoring the support of the American population for

American global primacy. It continued with the huge military apparatus and budget but could not explain to the American people what great global cause it was there for. The Bush team came into office determined to address these problems. This was its mission. But it didn't know quite how to carry out its mission until 9/11.

The Bush strategy for achieving primacy

One of the great illusions of many observers of American politics is the belief that the leaders of the American state are stupid. This illusion derives largely from the fact that the observers themselves do not understand what the American state is attempting to do. This has been true in relation to the Bush strategy.

The Bush strategy has been centrally concerned with pulling the state elites of the main international powers, especially the West Europeans but also the East Asians, Russians and Chinese, into a new *structure of dependence* on the services of the American state. Its programmatic target is thus other core capitalist powers as well as China and Russia – quite different from its tactical and military targets.³² But in line with the American strategic tradition, the Bush strategy seeks to achieve this *indirectly*. It has not attempted to bully any great power into accepting US primacy or else face American military might. Instead it has tried to change the environment they face in such a way that they will, as Joseph Nye put it, want what America wants.³³ The components of the Bush drive can be summarised under a number of headings:

The geopolitics

To change its relations with all the Eurasian great powers, it launched big power thrusts into the region lying between all of them – the region from China's western border to the eastern Mediterranean, at the heart of which is the great bulk of the world's oil reserves. For all the Eurasian great powers this region is very important for various different reasons. For the West Europeans and East Asians (though not for Russia) it is vital for oil. For Russia and China it is vital for political and military security. For Europe, the Middle East is an obvious political and military security issue as well as an obvious zone for expanding Europe's political and economic influence. By taking command of it, America could construct new relations of dependency for all these powers.

A new mass politics for American primacy

At the same time, the thrust into this region was accompanied by the construction of a new global political cleavage in mass politics. Formally, it was of course a cleavage against 'terrorism'. But informally and substantially it was a cleavage between traditionalist Islam and 'Western values'. The Bush administration has evidently wanted this cleavage to develop. Its tactics on Palestine demonstrate

this. Its approach to the attack on Iraq do so too. In both cases, the Bush administration was not simply attacking the dominant values of the Islamic and Arab world. It was also attacking the dominant liberal internationalist values in the entire capitalist world. But it could realistically hope that large political forces in the Islamic world would respond in ways that the Western media could present as a new conflict between Islam and Western civilisation.

This, then, could generate a new global cleavage at the level of mass politics which could become a functional equivalent of the Cold War cleavage. It could have a defensive form and an activist form: defending 'the West' against Islamist 'terrorism'; and an activist mission to 'modernise' and democratise the Islamic world for the good of its people. But the crucial issue was that the cleavage had to become real, as the Cold War cleavage did: not just a matter of US propaganda. In this way it could restructure politics within all the core capitalist countries and provide a mass base for the US strategy for primacy over the core capitalist countries.

The deliberate challenge to the legitimating institutions of international relations

One of the most striking novelties of the Bush administration's turn was its readiness to directly flout the legitimating institutions of international relations. It did this through its National Security Strategy document, through its tactics at the UN and through its aggression against Iraq. On all these levels the Bush administration made clear that it claimed the right for itself to disregard the institutional division of the world into sovereign states with sovereign rights and the authority of the UN Charter as the fount of international law.

This is often described as the Bush administration's break with multilateralism in favour of unilateralism. But such notions do not capture the novelty of the tactics. The Clinton administration and other US administrations had frequently engaged in unilateralism. They had also frequently flouted the principles of the UN Charter. What was novel about the Bush administration's approach was that it publicly proclaimed its right to flout these official normative orders.

This was above all a challenge to the European powers. They had sought to develop an international politics of using the legitimating institutions of international relations as a check on US power while simultaneously presenting themselves as US allies. The Bush administration was thus forcing them to choose, in the knowledge that this choice could very well split them.

Material power projection and symbolic politics

There was a striking asymmetry in the Bush turn, in that the states which were most materially threatened by the new strategy were simultaneously the states offered the greatest support in the field of symbolic politics, while the states least threatened materially by the turn were faced by the greatest threat in the field of symbolic politics. Thus, the projection of American power into Central Asia and into the Caucasus constituted a material challenge to Russia and China. Both

these powers had been seeking to cooperate through the Shanghai Forum to assert their influence in Central Asia, while Russia had been seeking to exert pressure on Georgia and Azerbaijan. The US has disrupted these efforts. But it has simultaneously given political support to Russia against Chechen insurgents and to China against opposition in Xinjiang province.

The bait and switch tactics and the coalition against terrorism

The Bush campaign was launched as a 'war' against international terrorism, structured as a hub-and-spokes coalition under US command, by-passing all collegial institutions such as NATO or the UN. Each individual ally would have to negotiate its role directly with the US. And all states were offered a stark choice: either join the coalition or risk being branded as an enemy of the war against terrorism. And in so far as they joined the coalition they had to accept that the US alone would decide the missions and targets.

At the same time, by the late autumn of 2001 it had become clear that the Bush administration was engaged in bait and switch tactics: the 'war' against al-Qaeda was simply the bait for forming the coalition. Its crucial targets were to be the Israel–Palestinian conflict and Iraq. The Bush administration backed the Sharon government in Israel, branded the Palestinian movement, from the Arafat leadership downwards, as a terrorist movement and branded Arab states supporting the intifada as supporters of terrorism. It simultaneously prepared to attack Iraq while also threatening Iran. Here was a policy evidently crafted to sharpen and deepen popular hostility towards the US across the Arab and Islamic world, thus in principle strengthening the threat of attacks on Western targets by Islamist groups. But such attacks could be expected to increase popular fears of, and hostility towards, Islam in the main capitalist centres. They would thus help to build the new global cleavage through which the US drive for primacy would be constructed.

And simultaneously, the US would aim to occupy Iraq in order to use it as a base both for reorganising the politics of the Arab world and for gaining military-political control over the Gulf, the crucial centre of world oil supplies. From there it could exert pressure on Iran from both Iraq and Afghanistan in preparation for regime change there and a drive for US ascendancy in the Caspian region. Through these bold moves, it could hope indirectly to make all the great powers dependent upon US services and support.³⁴

American victories in this drive would then provide the power political basis for rebuilding multilateralism on a new, unipolar basis. The other main powers would accept US dominance within all the international institutions like the UN agencies, NATO, the IMF and the World Bank. At the same time, American military victories in Iraq and elsewhere could have a powerful demonstration effect, enabling dominant classes throughout the world to teach their populations that breaking from US-led international regimes is not an option: Rumsfeld's concept of the US as the global disciplinary force would be asserted.

And finally, there is the characteristic American way of combining its external political thrust with its external economic thrust, classically outlined with great clarity by Samuel Huntington in 1973. The US approaches states and offers them a choice: either join a security alliance with the US or risk its hostility. And once the state has decided on balance that the safest course is to join, it has to open up its internal jurisdiction to all kinds of American public agencies and private business organisations and adopt internal regimes suitable to the American state and business class. And in this connection, the economic parts of the Bush National Security Strategy are illuminating. It directly addresses the worries of the US business class that this new form of international accumulation could collapse through resistance abroad. It considers the transformation of core capitalisms like Japan and Germany along American lines as national security issues. And it makes clear that wide open financial systems in other economies, allowing the free flow of hot money, is also a question of principle for US security interests.³⁵

The strategic concept of the Bush turn has thus been very bold and ambitious, but also quite coherent. When it met resistance from France and Germany, the administration very successfully organised a split in the Euro-Atlantic community, using the British and Spanish for that purpose: a substantial tactical gain for the primacy drive.³⁶

The question whether the strategic path to primacy will work is, of course, another matter. This hinges crucially on the struggle for control of Iraq, the pivotal stake in the entire strategy. The blunders of the Bush administration in its efforts to consolidate its control of Iraq have placed enormous strains on the American ruling class and have risked revolts from below within the American electorate. So far these strains have been contained, and the Kerry candidacy ensured the maintenance of bipartisan support for the strategy. At the same time, none of the other main powers have risked any moves to materially balance against the US in the region. And there have not been popular upheavals in the region, threatening a spiralling and chaotic military-political upheaval across the Middle East. But the future costs of the struggle to crush the evidently massive popular resistance to the US occupation may be more than the American state can bear. At the same time, defeat and retreat would constitute an enormous blow to the US efforts to rebuild its global primacy after the Cold War. The struggle is on, and its outcome remains uncertain.

Conclusion: primacy and the Bush turn in historical perspective

The great problem for capitalism is how to manage the contradiction between its necessary fragmentation into separate geopolitical units and its necessary tendency to construct deep transnational social linkages – political and economic and cultural – between these units. This is capitalism's world order problem. The trick is to manage it in a *developmental* way for the core capitalisms – *not* a developmental way for everyone or even for a majority: capitalism cannot be expected to

do that, now that it has largely turned the world capitalist and cannot legitimate itself as a civilising force in the face of pre-capitalist societies. But it has to produce a world order solution that doesn't blow up in its face or cause mounting or spreading chaos and conflict.³⁷ This means a model that strengthens capitalisms internally within the key units, politically and economically; and at the same time allows its international interpenetrations in politics and economics to develop as well. One type of solution might work well on the internal front for the main states, but ultimately blow up the external linkage part of the capitalist world order. Another type of solution might allow a dynamically developing transnational linkage system, but blow up on the internal fronts.³⁸ Historical experience is relevant to consideration of this question.

We have basically had two capitalist world order models so far in history. The first was the European one up to Munich in 1938 but destabilised from 1914. The second was the American model of primacy up to 1990. The European model was fairly primitive, especially because the European propertied classes had failed to find a secure way of integrating the working class effectively into their own states: liberal democracy seemed too risky. So they hit upon a domestic politics of imperialism, chauvinism and militarism. These proved powerful mechanisms of domestic political integration, and actual expansionist activities into the pre-capitalist periphery were also powerful safety-valves, as well as ways of enhancing the domestic authority of their states. This then formed the domestic basis upon which they established international cooperation between themselves. They set up fairly effective cooperative mechanisms such as the gold standard, the Concert of Europe and a range of other international institutions which worked reasonably well. But the whole system rested upon domestic class political domination arrangements centred on getting their populations to hate each other and want to fight each other!³⁹ So its Achilles' Heel was the risk of 'blow up' on the transnational *political* linkage front. And when the system hit the buffers in 1914 it proved to be irreparable. After 1918 labour emerged as a much more massive problem than before, and some European ruling classes emerged more determined than ever to crush labour through hyper-chauvinism and militarism (Fascism) while the others were incapable of finding a solution which both integrated labour and assured great power cooperation.

The American primacy model was more advanced. It offered new solutions on the internal front. Uniquely, American capitalists had found a way of incorporating the working class without it acquiring its own political identity and demanding a central place for its organisations within the state. And the Americans had hit upon a new mechanism for labour integration: mass democracy plus working class mass consumerism: workers had two places in the circuit, not just one. They were not only producers of goods for the upper classes of the world. They were producers of goods for their own mass consumption. And this was also a formula for political pacification. And after baiting and waging a kind of civil war against their working class's political organisations for decades, the European ruling classes, with US approval, flip-flopped and included labour organisations within the state – something unnecessary in the US. And where

that seemed too risky, the US order allowed capitalist dictatorships or a kind of façade liberal democracy as in Italy. Thus the internal front in the core capitalist states has been extraordinarily manageable in relative historical terms up to now: the internal upheavals of the inter-war period within the core state have not been repeated.

The external linkage solution of American primacy in the political field also worked surprisingly well during the Cold War period. But it was the product of rather uniquely favourable circumstances for such a model. The American leaders seized on the prostration of the other core capitalisms after the war to establish a unipolar order across the whole capitalist core, but a unipolar order with institutional arrangements enabling the other main capitalist powers to have their say and have distinctive national roles. The European capitalist classes bought the American unipolar deal.

But primacy has probably run its course as a capitalist *developmental* model for transnational political linkage. The other main capitalist centres chafe at it and want a new model of cooperative global political management (though of course they squabble about which powers should be the cooperators). In addition, the range of capitalisms is now far wider than in 1945, when they didn't really extend much beyond the two rimlands of Eurasia apart from the Western hemisphere. Yet the American state, economy and social formation as a whole is structured for primacy. Its elites therefore want it to continue.

But it seems too weak to carry it off as a stable developmental regime for international capitalism. Trying to do so requires it to use its military capacity more or less constantly to shape the environments of the other main powers. It also requires it to manoeuvre back and forth, this way and that, breaking all kinds of rules it established itself and stirring up conflicts and cleavages which disrupt or threaten to disrupt too many aspects of political stability and economic security. Most importantly, it risks having to extend its military capacities and moves insofar as other major powers remain recalcitrant. This could lead to another crunch for international capitalism of the sort that the European powers blundered into earlier.

There are also questions about the transnational socio-economic linkage system which the US state and business elite has driven forward since the 1980s. Is it a stable development path for capitalism? It doesn't seem so outside the core. But is it viable for the core itself? The American boom of the 1990s seemed to give a triumphant answer, 'Yes' to this question. The American theory was that it proved the linkage system and the problems of Western Europe, Japan and everywhere else was that they hadn't sufficiently adapted internally and externally to the new paradigm. But some capitalist strategists are still not convinced and have a feeling that the boom was more like an orgy between the cook (Greenspan), the thief (Wall Street), the wife (Rubin/Summers) and her lover (London and assorted other hangers on).

And if the transnational socio-economic linkage system does consolidate in the core, it seems likely to generate something almost entirely absent in the internal life of the core for a very long time: the prospect of political disorders

and deep crises of political representation within the core state themselves. It throws the bulk of the population into conditions of very insecure direct market dependency, it generates ever larger social inequalities and produces large destitute social groups. Simultaneously it greatly reduces and weakens the mechanisms for channelling and resolving social conflict within the internal political systems of states. And added to all this, it tends to make all states appear like quasi-colonies of the manoeuvring American state, thus undermining their domestic authority (as the Blair government is learning currently).

Such domestic blow-outs seem a remote possibility at present because the political institutions of the subordinate classes have been utterly disoriented by the Soviet bloc collapse and by the collapse of any social democratic programme. But the crisis of representation gathers apace. It is surely an evident trend in the United States today, not only in the reliance of the Bush leadership on semi-pathological fundamentalist currents or in the third-candidate movements but also in the very large claims on the US budget (and sub-federal budgets) from mainstream US social constituencies, claims that, it seems, can neither be met nor rejected by political leaders. And it lurks also in the effects down the road of the Anglo-American accumulation strategy of debt-driven growth.

Thus the primacy model is bursting at the seams in the international political field, and its coercive imposition by the US primacy coalition threatens to create the conditions for domestic blow-outs and institutional disintegration on the internal front of international capitalism. But there is no strong constituency for an alternative world order model within the American ruling class. A serious crisis of the Bush strategic path, combined with growing pressure from other capitalist centres, could produce new concepts for world order within the American elites. But it is difficult to imagine a real reorientation within a deep and sharp internal political crisis within the US. There could thus be a variant in which the US drives for primacy by generating an open split with other major powers, particularly in Europe, and tries to brigade a whole collection of other powers around it in an imperial coalition and then to force the recalcitrant centres into submission on threat of punishment. But most likely is a long period of fluidity and tensions, partly covered over, partly bursting out in public.

And in the meantime, if the transnational socio-economic linkage model (of 'neoliberalism') is triumphant politically within the capitalist world in the immediate future, it seems likely to generate internal political blow-outs further down the road even within the core states.

Notes

1By 'problematique' I mean the crucial problem definitions of the given group.

2The 'Bush team' denotes Cheney and his assistant Lewis Libby, Rumsfeld, Wolfowitz and Rice. These are the core group, with Cheney at its centre. Powell and the top military brass have not been in this core. Bush gave Powell a 'braking' role, but since

- 9/11 Bush has followed the core around Cheney on the programme and strategy, with Powell providing some tactical flexibility when Bush has wanted it.
- 3 D. Balz and B. Woodward, 'A Day of Anger and Grief', *Washington Post*, 30 January 2002, p. A1.
 - 4 B. and D. Balz, 'America's Chaotic Road to War', *Washington Post*, 27 January 2002, p. A01.
 - 5 B. Woodward, 'We Will Rally the World', *Washington Post*, 28 January 2002, p. A01.
 - 6 Ibid.
 - 7 Ibid.
 - 8 Quoted in *El Pais* (Madrid), 27 January 2003, p. 4.
 - 9 Nicholas Lemann, 'The Next World Order', *The New Yorker*, April 2002.
 - 10 The 1903 Platt Amendment, imposed on Cuba by the US, declared that the Cuban government must preserve Cuba's independence and that 'The Government of Cuba consents that the United States may exercise the right to intervene for the preservation of Cuban independence, the maintenance of a government adequate for the protection of life, property, and individual liberty'.
 - 11 Lemann, *op. cit.*
 - 12 We will examine the concept of primacy in more detail below.
 - 13 These issues are covered in more detail in Peter Gowan, '11th September, American Grand Strategy and World Politics', *Recherches Internationales*, No. 66 (Paris, 2002).
 - 14 Barry R. Posen and Andrew L. Ross, 'Competing Visions for US Grand Strategy', *International Security*, Vol. 21, No. 3 (Winter 1996–7) pp. 5–53.
 - 15 See A. Bacevich, *American Empire*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002.
 - 16 Anthony Lake, 'From Containment to Enlargement', School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University, Washington, DC, 21 September 1993.
 - 17 See, for example, Paul Wolfowitz, 'Remembering the Future', *National Interest*, 5 (Spring 2000).
 - 18 Ibid.
 - 19 W. Pfaff, 'The Question of Hegemony', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 80, No. 1 (January/February 2001) pp. 221–33.
 - 20 Such disagreements have, of course, been evident within the Bush administration itself, in the stances taken on a number of issues by both Colin Powell and the military brass.
 - 21 Scowcroft, a member of the President's Intelligence Advisory Committee and thus with access to all Bush administration intelligence, went public with a warning to Bush not to by-pass the UN in the summer of 2002. And when the administration appeared to be toying with a confrontation with Syria after its initial victory in Baghdad, Larry Eagleburger, another highly respected figure, warned that any such move should lead to the impeachment of Bush.
 - 22 Z. Brzezinski, *The Grand Chess-Board*, New York: Basic Books, 1997.
 - 23 See, for example, S. Hoffman, *Primacy or World Order. American Foreign Policy Since the Cold War*, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1978.
 - 24 The classic statement of the doctrine was the famous Sir Eyre Crowe Memorandum of January 1907.
 - 25 Though not Gabriel Kolko. See his 'The Perils of Pax Americana', *The Australian*, 13 January 2003.
 - 26 For more detailed treatment of these issues, see my 'The American Campaign for Global Sovereignty', in L. Panitch and C. Leys (eds) *Fighting Identities. Race, Religion and Ethno-Nationalism*, London: Merlin Press, 2002.
 - 27 What constitutes both, in capitalist societies, is capitalism as a social system, generating particular types of both politics and economics, quite different from both politics and economics in other historical types of society because of capitalism's different social organisation of production.

- 28 Joseph Quinlan, letter to *Financial Times*, 31 January 2003, p. 10.
- 29 See Michael Hudson's very important book, *Super-imperialism*, London: Pluto, 2003.
- 30 Though in the earlier phase, the US would support the most reactionary social and political regimes in, for example, much of Latin America simply to protect some US multinationals' investments.
- 31 I have sought to analyse this in more detail in *The Global Gamble*, London: Verso, 1990.
- 32 The US does, of course, have specific regional issues in the Middle East that it has had to tackle: the crisis in Saudi Arabia, the strategic swamp that the US has confronted (and helped cause) in the region prior to 9/11 with its economic blockade of Iraq being undermined, and the rising hostility to US troops in Saudi Arabia.
- 33 Joseph Nye, *Bound to Lead. The Changing Nature of American Power*, New York: Basic Books, 1990.
- 34 Control of Gulf oil does not only offer the US the possibility of using the oil weapon again as it did against Japan in 1941. It also assures the international dominance of the dollar as the world unit of account, given the enormous size of oil finance; and steering oil revenues through US financial operators is also a crucially important boost for US financial strength.
- 35 This is also a key plank of the Bush administration's drives for new 'Free Trade Agreements' with other states.
- 36 In the thinking of the Bush team, the key role of Britain in the Iraq campaign was not its military capacity nor its capacity to give the US some 'international cover'. It was for its effects on the EU – splitting it.
- 37 The distinction between a developmental world order and a non-developmental one is similar to the neo-Gramscian one between hegemonic and non-hegemonic world orders, as developed by Robert Cox. But the neo-Gramscian antinomy can be used too narrowly to refer to the ideological reception of world order projects in the sense of degrees of subjective consent in the order on the part of actors at any given time period.
- 38 Giovanni Arrighi and his co-authors have raised this issue in a very illuminating way. See G. Arrighi and B. Silver, *Chaos and Governance in the Modern World System*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999.
- 39 A further key stabilising factor was the fact that Britain was, uniquely, an empire state to its core, rather than one of the modern industrial capitalisms driving to dominate core capitalism's industrial markets. It was therefore able to accept the rise of Germany and the US, provided only that it could keep its empire base, its associated naval role and its clearing-house role in international economics.

7 The war on terrorism and American empire

Emerging development agendas

Susanne Soederberg

Introduction

In March 2002, President George W. Bush established what his administration referred to as the ‘new global development compact’, which took the form of the Millennium Challenge Account (hereafter MCA). By increasing its core development assistance, this global development compact aims to replace existing loans to the poorest seventy-nine countries with grants, so as to help governments ‘who rule justly, invest in their people, and encourage economic freedom’.¹ Eligibility for grants will be contingent on sixteen broadly defined criteria – ranging from civil liberties to trade policy – that the recipient countries must meet as a precondition to receiving aid. According to President Bush, the MCA

will be based on a distinctly American internationalism that reflects the union of our values and our national interests. The aim of this strategy is to help make the world not just safer but better. Our goals on the path to progress are clear: political and economic freedom, peaceful relations with other states, and respect for human dignity.²

The MCA reflects the ongoing transformation of American imperialism, which has become more explicit after 9/11. For instance, the fervour with which the US has sought to promote its values and norms abroad is clearly articulated in the 2002 American National Security Strategy (NSS). The NSS signals at least two important changes concerning the relations between the American government and the target of the MCA: seventy-nine of the world’s poorest countries, in which it is alleged that ‘failed states’ thrive. First, there is no room for moderates or non-alignment in America’s war on terrorism, only those either for or against the United States. This stance suggests that the US should maintain military strength beyond challenge and use it to prevent acts of terrorism.³ Second, it is believed that the route to achieving a more just and peaceful international environment in the post-9/11 world is to codify American values and rules in the South.⁴

Despite its significance vis-à-vis the world’s poorest regions, and its ability to shed more light on the emerging nature of American empire in the post-9/11 world, there have been no systematic attempts to assess critically this new

development strategy. Why was the MCA created? What has motivated the world's stingiest donor (in relation to the size of its economy) in providing new forms of foreign aid for the world's poorest countries?⁵ Whose interests does the MCA serve? Who is involved in the creation of the criteria used to measure what President Bush refers to as 'greater responsibility from developing nations'?⁶

I tackle these questions by attempting to understand historically the MCA as a moment of American imperialism and global capitalism. Seen from this angle, the poorest Third World countries seem to pose a grave threat to the recreation of American imperialism, or as Leo Panitch and Sam Gindin observe, the most serious problems for US-led imperialism today are to be found in the so-called 'excluded states'⁷ or the 'non-integrating Gap',⁸ which refer to those countries not within the orbit of the global capitalism, so that neither penetrating external economic forces nor international institutions can effectively restructure them. While the events of 9/11 have brought the importance of the 'non-integrating Gap' to the forefront of American foreign policy-making, the terrorist attacks should be understood as neither the starting point of our analysis nor the cause of the MCA.

I suggest that while the *form* of the MCA appears novel, its *content* continues to share the same objectives of preceding development agendas, most notably the neoliberal-led Washington consensus. It is helpful to unpack briefly this argument. The changing *form* of the MCA is best described by what I call 'pre-emptive development'. This term describes a set of coercive capitalist strategies aimed at seizing upon assets to the exclusion of others. Unlike the traditional strategy of imposing conditionality, in which recipient countries were required to meet after loans were dispensed by the IMF and World Bank, pre-emptive development entails the reverse: by using grants, as opposed to loans, creditor countries can withhold funds until all demands made by the donor country are met, largely through quantitative forms of measurement. A good example of this is found in the MCA's rankings based on three broad categories: (1) ruling justly; (2) investing in people; and (3) economic freedom.⁹ Despite the presence of pre-emptive forms of development, the *content* of the MCA reflects the same goals and interests that have been propagated by the Washington consensus over the past two decades: that the path to increased growth and prosperity lies in countries' willingness and ability to adopt policies that promote economic freedom and the rule of bourgeois law, such as private property, the commodification and privatisation of land, and so forth.

To develop this argument the first part of the essay is concerned with establishing the underlying power relations and contradictions from which the MCA emerged. It is necessary to historicise and contextualise the MCA as it helps us move beyond the common sense assumption that its emergence and subsequent *raison d'être* are exclusively tied to the tragic events of 9/11. The latter position not only legitimises increased coercion vis-à-vis select countries in the South, which includes, *inter alia*, a trend towards the privatisation and militarisation of development, but also serves to obfuscate the underlying reasons for the creation of, and particular interests served by, the MCA. Drawing on this discussion, the

second part of the essay moves to a critical elaboration of the MCA by exploring what this agenda sets out to accomplish, how it is to achieve its aims, and which organisations are involved.

American empire and official development agendas

American imperialism and accumulation by dispossession

American imperialism refers to a historically specific expression of domination and exploitation of the US vis-à-vis other countries. Since it is a moment of global capitalism, American imperialism is both highly dynamic and contradictory in nature.¹⁰ On the one hand, the American imperial state¹¹ must constantly recreate the conditions of its power by ensuring, *inter alia*, that all states, particularly subordinate or poorer states, adhere to the international rules and laws in order to facilitate the reproduction of capitalist social relations. This legal regime has been largely formulated by the US, along with other powerful industrial countries (G-7), and embedded in the global trade architecture, represented by the World Trade Organisation, the global development architecture, represented by the World Bank and IMF, and the New International Financial Architecture, represented, *inter alia*, by the Financial Stability Forum and the G-20.¹² In this way the American imperial state takes charge of recreating the conditions of its power through ideological and coercive means.¹³ On the other hand, since capitalism is inherently prone to crisis,¹⁴ there is a need to deepen and expand continually various strategies of exploitation. Since the early 1980s, these global restructuring strategies may be described by the term 'neoliberalism'. We discuss this term in more detail below. For now it is useful to grasp that neoliberal strategies of global restructuring have been captured by David Harvey's notion of 'accumulation by dispossession'.¹⁵ According to Harvey, 'accumulation by dispossession' represents the crux of what he deems 'new imperialism'. Present forms of accumulation by dispossession

include the commodification and privatization of land and the forceful expulsion of peasant populations; the conversion of various forms of property rights (common, collective, state, etc.) into exclusive private property rights; the suppression of rights to the commons; the commodification of labour power and the suppression of alternative (indigenous) forms of production and consumption; colonial, neocolonial, and imperial processes of appropriation of assets (including natural resources); the monetization of exchange and taxation, particularly of land; the slave trade; and usury, the national debt, and ultimately the credit system, as radical means of primitive accumulation.¹⁶

The US plays a key role in facilitating, and is also the main benefactor of, 'accumulation by dispossession'. Drawing on this term, I suggest that American

imperialism shapes, and is shaped by, the tensions inherent in reproducing the conditions of its own power in the world market by imposing new forms of domination over subordinate states, while at the same time overcoming inherent barriers to capital accumulation by physically expanding and deepening strategies of dispossession. In the next section we look more closely at the inherent contradictions of a dominant strategy of accumulation by dispossession in the Third World, namely the Washington consensus.

Accumulation by dispossession strategies as a ‘golden straitjacket’: the Washington consensus

From the outset of the debt crises in the early 1980s to the late 1990s, the form of the official development agenda has been marked by the Washington consensus. The latter was premised on the steadfast belief that political and social problems should be solved primarily through market-based mechanisms and the rule of law as opposed to state intervention. The principles of neoliberalism, which underpin the consensus, quickly became the guiding principle policy of the international financial institutions (IFIs) and the largest bilateral aid agency, United States Agency for International Development (USAID).¹⁷ Working under the assumption that states should relinquish all power, except for guaranteeing and enforcing the rule of law to the rational forces of the marketplace over states, the prescriptions of the Washington consensus sought to implement sound economic policy and market-friendly reforms (i.e. privatisation, liberalisation and deregulation) in the South, so as to help these countries achieve economic growth and stability.

The outspoken proponent of neoliberalism, New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman’s notion of the ‘golden straitjacket’ of globalisation seems to capture the rationale of the Washington consensus.¹⁸ According to Friedman, the straitjacket will act to ‘force contentious publics to understand the logic of globalization is that of peace (since war would interrupt globalization and therefore progress) and democracy (because new technologies increase individual autonomy and encourage initiative)’.¹⁹ What Friedman, as well as other neoliberals, fails to realise, however, is that the contradictions inherent in global capital accumulation inevitably create human insecurity. Neoliberal globalisation describes the prioritisation of

economic growth and market logics over all other goals and institutions of governance and enforces on all national polities, with varying degrees of coercion, privatization, trade liberalization, the deregulation of capital, and the erosion of the public sector and of democratic control.²⁰

The reproduction of neoliberal globalisation is not a friction-free process, but fraught with contradictions. As Elmar Altvater reminds us, global capital accumulation is an historical system defined by the fact that it makes structurally central and primary the endless accumulation of capital. This implies that the

international institutions (the IFIs, credit-rating agencies) and capitals that constitute its framework reward those who pursue the endless accumulation of capital and penalise those who don't. Moreover, these processes of profit-making, accumulation and institutional regulation, which give a degree of security to the system, simultaneously produce insecurity on all levels of social and individual life.²¹ The latter may be regarded as the security/insecurity paradox of neoliberal globalisation.

Since neoliberalism is a moment of global capitalism, it too is infused with the security/insecurity paradox, which the powerful social forces (e.g. transnational capital classes, capitalist states, trade unions, not-for-profit non-governmental organisations) within *and* outside the American state must strive to overcome. In the post-Bretton Woods era (1944–71), American-led imperialism has attempted to straddle the security/insecurity paradox vis-à-vis the South largely through economic and physical (military) coercion, such as structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) of the IMF, and militarised post-war reconstruction efforts in, for example, Afghanistan, Bosnia and Iraq, otherwise known as the 'non-integrating gap'. It is the attempts to deal with the security/insecurity paradox that drive the changing form of American empire in relation to excluded states. Said differently, as the US seeks to respond to perceived threats to its imperial dominance, we see a shift in the *form* of official development agenda – or, which is the same thing, the reproduction of its *content* in an increasingly coercive manner.

As the next section demonstrates, neoliberal globalisation in the form of SAPs has allowed many capitals to reap the benefits of privatised state firms, easier access to labour, consumer and credit markets. However, the same modes of export-oriented accumulation and market-oriented forms institutional regulation have led to increasing levels of insecurity, albeit in varying levels, in the South.

Constraining excluded states within the bounds of global neoliberal restructuring

Crisis of confidence in the Washington development agenda

While the well-documented poverty rates and income polarisation have created much discontent in the South regarding the neoliberal prescription of the IFIs, by the mid-1990s, the growing levels of insecurity began to pose serious problems for the reproduction of neoliberal globalisation.²² The dangerous combination of the dwindling levels of public support for market-led restructuring and austerity packages, on the one hand, and shrinking room for manoeuvre regarding national economic and social policy formation, on the other, has led to a crisis of neoliberal governance in the South. As evidence of the latter, in 2003 a full two-thirds of people world-wide disagree with the statement that their country is 'governed by the will of the people'.²³ In other words, the commonsense assumption that unleashing the market will enhance the economic prosperity of the majority has not only proven to be incorrect but also

has led to the lack of popular support for neoliberal principles. The discontent in Argentina of the middle and working classes brought about by the largest sovereign default in history, or the peasant uprising in Cochabamba, Bolivia, against the privatisation of water, or the peasant struggles of Cuzco, Peru, against the privatisation of electricity are cases in point. Up to now the traditional response of the official development agenda to the deterioration of material conditions and legitimacy crisis in the South was to insist that developing countries further implement market-led restructuring: the more governments allow themselves to be disciplined by inherently rational economic actors, the more prosperity they will achieve. At least three factors complicated this strategy, however, and, in turn, have led to the reinvention of the Washington consensus in the mid-1990s – also known as the ‘post-Washington consensus’.

The first factor is the growth-obsessed and one-size-fits-all nature of the SAPs, which was heavily criticised not only by the anti-globalisation movements during high-profile gatherings of the IFIs and WTO in Seattle, Genoa, Prague, Washington, and so forth, but also from both the Keynesian and conservative pundits and think tanks in Washington.²⁴ The latter debates became even more heightened with the litany of financial crises, and subsequent IMF-led bailouts, in the so-called ‘emerging markets’ – most of which were once showcases for the Fund.²⁵ The second factor relates to the fact that the coffers for public aid were quickly diminishing. As Jose Antonio Ocampo elucidates,

bilateral aid fell in real terms throughout the decade, and in 1998 it was estimated to have reached 0.22 per cent of the GDP of industrialised countries, a significant fall with respect to the 0.35 per cent of GDP reached in the mid-1980s.²⁶

Generally speaking, the spending levels of the world’s largest bilateral donor have been slowly decreasing since the 1960s. In fact, during the Clinton administration alone, discretionary spending of development aid (loosely defined as development, humanitarian or economic aid) declined by \$370 million to \$10.7 billion in 2001.²⁷

The third factor relates to a shift in the security threat during the post-Cold War era. There has been a swing in the preoccupation of the US from the containment of communism in the Third World, which marked most of the Cold War, to the destabilisation of ‘emerging democracies and capitalist societies’ through internal threats, or what has been come to be known as human security issues.²⁸ For the Clinton administration (1993–2001), the best way to combat these ‘new wars’ was through multilateral tactics, largely in the form of global governance.²⁹ Clinton’s brand of global governance, also known as the strategy of ‘engagement and enlargement’, involved the (forced) transformation of all Third World countries (e.g. rogue states, failed states and emerging markets) into states that were deemed democratic and pursued free market economics.³⁰ In a speech delivered to the 1998 IMF and World Bank Annual

Meeting, and drawing on his overarching 'engagement and enlargement' strategy, President Clinton summed up both the concerns of the consequences of the crises and the solution on how this may be averted:

[u]nless they feel [Third World countries] empowered with the tools to master economic change, they will feel the strong temptation to turn inward, to close off their economies to the world. Now, more than ever, that would be a grave mistake. At a moment of financial crisis, a natural inclination is to close borders and retreat behind walls of protectionism. But it is precisely at moments like this we need to increase trade to spur greater growth.³¹

Post-Washington consensus: straddling the security/insecurity paradox

In response to the above contradictions, a new *form* of the official development agenda arose, armed with new buzzwords such as 'ownership' and 'social inclusion', to complement, not diminish, market discipline. According to the World Bank, 'inclusion' 'treats poor people as co-producers, with authority and control over decisions and resources devolved to the lowest appropriate level',³² whereas 'ownership' describes the process whereby the recipient country selects the policy mix and takes responsibility for its implementation and outcome.³³ At base, this new agenda – also referred to as the post-Washington consensus – reduces the problems of 'development' to those dealing with market imperfections, most notably economic instability and the resulting effects of contagion from the financial crises of the 1990s, by extending economic to non-economic analysis and policy-making through the newfound ability to comprehend the social and the political.³⁴

The World Bank underwent an overhaul not only in terms of its top-down, predominately economic focus to an allegedly more human-oriented stance (or 'empowering development'), but also balancing its stress on increasing productivity with fighting poverty. Since mid-1995, the World Bank has shifted its focus from financing infrastructure projects in the South to poverty alleviation programmes. The IMF also plays an important role in the fight against poverty. A concrete manifestation of this new focus has been the creation of a joint programme entitled the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP).³⁵ It should be noted that the PRSP are not about doing away with conditionality, but instead should be seen as a direct response to the above-mentioned threats to neoliberal-led globalisation, which in turn, targeted at reconfiguring and deepening domination of capitalist relations and American-led imperialism over the growing number of poor in the South. Indeed, these recent transformations have not replaced the stress on market-led growth, but instead seek to legitimise by softening the impact of neoliberal rule, and also reproduce the coercive power of transnational capital in these countries.³⁶ These poverty alleviation programmes pursued by the Bank are accompanied by increased powers of surveillance and control over both public and private spheres in the South.

A case in point is the Poverty Reduction Growth Facility (PRGF). Keeping in line with these aims and the wider PRSP, the Fund has replaced its Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility (ESAF) with the PRGF. According to the IMF, the latter differs from the former in the following manner. First, through the PRGF, the IMF aims to integrate the objectives of poverty reduction and growth more fully into its operations in the poorest countries, or, more specifically, the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC). Indeed, the PRGF was designed to give the IMF a more central and legitimate role in the 1996 'HIPC initiative'.³⁷ To reach its goal of achieving sustainable debt, the PRGF places more emphasis on 'good governance' than its predecessor, which, as mentioned earlier, refers to the 'proper management' of liberalisation policy along with public goods, achieving greater transparency, active public scrutiny, and so forth³⁸ – all of which is prescribed in the IFIs international standards and codes (the Reports on the Observances of Standards and Codes), governing facets of a country's economy, such as corporate governance, transparency and securities regulation.³⁹ This move not only gives the Bank's policies some financial teeth, but also allows for a more comprehensive and coherent surveillance programme by allowing the IFIs to more effectively monitor, in greater detail, the countries' policy actions, the frequency of programme reviews and the role of prior actions.⁴⁰ At base, empowering development was an attempt to 'embed' the values and norms of neoliberalism in the rapidly deteriorating social, political and economic life in the 'non-integrating' Gap.

New security and economic threats to neoliberal restructuring before and after 9/11

The bursting of the American bubble economy and the emergence of pre-emptive security policies

After experiencing what was considered by many to be the deepest recessionary period in the post-war era during the early 1990s, the US economy began, once again, to serve as the main engine of growth to the world in the second half of the decade. During the period between 1995 and 2000 GDP growth accelerated, rising from 3.1 per cent to 4.1 per cent.⁴¹ The main impetus creating and sustaining American expansion was not, as officials claimed, neoliberal restructuring and the 'new economy', but rather a speculative bubble in the stock market.⁴² The latter not only began growing at 4.9 per cent per year from 1997 to 2000, but also 'became the chief force propelling GDP growth, since it represented about two-thirds of GDP and it was then growing substantially faster than the GDP'.⁴³

When the speculatively based expansion came to a screeching halt at the end of August 2000, it not only revealed the fragility of the economy's largely jobless growth, but also, given the growing dependency of the Third World on the US economy, the sudden economic downturn in the US served to accentuate the

Table 7.1 Net Capital Flows to Developing Countries 1997-2003 (billions of US\$)

	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002e	2003f
Current account	-91.4	-113.6	-10.7	61.9	27.6	48.3	26.2
Balance as % of GDP	-1.5	-2.0	-2.0	1.0	0.5	0.8	0.4
Financed by:							
Net equity flows	196.4	181.9	194.3	186.7	177.6	152.3	158.0
Net FDI inflows	169.3	174.5	179.3	160.6	171.7	143.0	145.0
Net portfolio equity inflows	26.7	7.4	15.0	26.0	6.0	9.4	13.0
Net debt flows	102.1	57.4	13.9	-1.0	3.2	7.2	5.0
Official creditors	13.0	34.1	13.5	-6.2	28.0	16.2	0.0
World Bank	9.2	8.7	8.8	7.8	7.5	1.5	-
IMF	3.4	14.1	-2.2	-10.6	19.5	14.5	-
Others	0.5	11.2	6.9	-3.4	1.0	0.2	-
Private Creditors	89.1	23.3	0.5	5.1	-24.8	-9.0	5.0
Net medium-long-term debt flows	84.0	87.4	21.9	14.5	-8.6	2.9	-
Bonds	38.4	39.7	29.6	17.4	10.1	18.6	-
Banks	43.1	51.4	-5.9	2.6	-11.8	-16.0	-
Others	2.5	-3.6	-1.8	-5.5	-7.0	-5.5	-
Net short-term debt flows	5.3	-64.2	-21.4	-9.4	-16.2	-6.1	-
Bilateral aid grants	26.7	28.2	29.4	29.6	29.5	32.9	32.0

Note

e = estimate; f = forecast

Source: World Bank Global Development Finance, Washington, DC: World Bank, 2003, p. 8.

already high levels of insecurity in the South. Soaring levels of consumer and government debt have not helped the situation. According to the Economic Policy Institute, a Washington-based think tank,

[b]y 2001, total household debt exceeded total household disposable income by an all-time high of nearly 10 percent. Much of the run-up in debt occurred over the economic boom, as the ratio of debt to personal disposable income rose from 87.7 percent in 1992 up to 109.0 percent in 2001.⁴⁴

The current 'housing bubble', which has bolstered the economy since the plunge in stock market prices, is intimately tied to this rise in debt. Towards the end of March 2002, federal borrowing not only approached its legal ceiling of \$5.95 trillion, but also surpassed it on 1 April 2002.

The inability of the US to live within its own means⁴⁵ whilst imposing this same fiscal discipline on excluded states creates a crisis of confidence regarding prudent fiscal management. The lacklustre economy not only served to aggravate the security/insecurity paradox in the US but also for the South. Despite the rhetoric of empowering development, private flows, which make up the bulk of capital streaming to developing countries, have also been affected by the global economic slowdown.⁴⁶ This decline of foreign investment to the South is demonstrated in the World Bank's *Global Development Finance 2003* (see Table 7.1). According to the World Bank, the

decline since 1997 has occurred primarily in net capital flows from the private sector, particularly in the debt component (banks loans and bonds). From the peak years of 1995–96, when net debt inflows from the private sector were about \$135 billion per year, they have dropped steadily, becoming net outflows in 2001 and 2002.⁴⁷

The US recessionary environment proved to be even bleaker for the poorest countries in the South, which, at the best of times, have been experiencing decreasing public aid levels from the world's largest source of bilateral assistance.

The American economy in the immediate post-bubble era posed two important hurdles for the reproduction of neoliberal globalisation. On the one hand, for the American ruling class, the immediate problem was how to continue to legitimise neoliberal globalisation in the face of deteriorating economic and social conditions in the US and in the South. As David Kotz puts it: '[o]ne hindrance to the US ruling class agenda of creating a neoliberal world system has been the glaring absence of convincing evidence that neoliberal restructuring produces the benefits claimed by its promoters'.⁴⁸ In the week prior to 9/11, for example, President Bush's standing in opinion polls was, relatively speaking, at its lowest point ever, with only 50 per cent of respondents giving him a positive rating.⁴⁹ On the other hand, given the economic slump at home, the US needs to expand production and financial

activities beyond its domestic market. To do so it requires cooperative governments in the South, who are willing to devise and implement policies that support and protect the interests of transnational capitals, such as a well-disciplined labour market, lack of environmental and taxation standards, and so forth.⁵⁰ Given the poor health of the American economy, it has become more vital that official development agendas achieve economic freedom and the rule of law in excluded states.

Whilst the events of 9/11 are commonly seen as the main impetus for renewed US unilateralism, I suggest that it was the combination of mounting legitimacy problems, both within the US and in the Third World, associated with the tumultuous American empire and global capitalism, the presence of a hawkish neoconservative administration, and the inability of the White House to clearly refine a strategy to tackle the economy that led to the creation of a more intensified form of imperialism. Neoconservative pundits, for instance, like Robert Kagan, have argued that America's return to *machtspolitik* in important geopolitical areas – for instance, economic and military concerns such as pursuing 'go it alone' policies, most notably vis-à-vis Europe, occurred well before the attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon.⁵¹ We should bear in mind that before 11 September, the Bush administration had moved towards a more overt and unabashed unilateralist course. Some examples are the withdrawal from the Kyoto Protocol on global warming, pushing National Missile Defence in violation of the ABM treaty with Russia, and replacing the enforcement measures in the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention with unilateral US enforcement.⁵²

For the incoming Bush administration, the solution to the above problems was to tighten further the belts of the 'golden straitjacket'. Interestingly, this was to be achieved with increasing forms of economic and military coercion and with little consensus-formation or compromises. The next section explores the domestic reasons underpinning the transformation of American foreign policy towards excluded states.

The intensification and justification of repression by the empire: reformulating US foreign policy vis-à-vis failed states after 9/11

*America's cause is the cause of all mankind*⁵³

The catastrophic events of 11 September not only served to justify military expansion and American imperialism under the gamut of the 'war on terrorism', but also to legitimate more direct and repressive forms of intervention into 'strategic' areas of the South. On the surface, America's 'war on terrorism' – both inside and outside national boundaries – was justified by the construction of a favourite American myth: the equation that the universal good coincided with American values. Kagan captures this logic in the following quote:

[w]hen Americans sought legitimacy for their actions abroad, they sought it not from supranational institutions but from their own principles. That is why it was always so easy for so many Americans to believe, as so many still believe today, that by advancing their own interests they advance the interests of humanity.⁵⁴

This sentiment is directly reflected in Bush's National Security Strategy (NSS), which was drafted in the aftermath of 9/11.

The United States possesses unprecedented – and unequalled – strength and influence in the world. Sustained by faith in the principles of liberty, and the value of a free society, this position comes with unparalleled responsibilities, obligations, and opportunity. The great strength of this nation must be used to promote a balance of power that favours freedom.⁵⁵

This discourse had the effect of temporarily boosting the president's approval ratings to an astounding 82 per cent, as well as stimulating US consumerism for 'homemade' products through an overriding 'keep America strong' theme. Moreover, the constructed myth surrounding American internationalism and 'the other' assisted in legitimating increased forms of coercion both at home and in what the government considered to be 'strategic' areas of the South, namely failed states. This myth was forged in part by the Patriot Act and in part by US media sources, particularly by right-leaning stations such as Fox News. With blatant and reckless disregard for the country's already high levels of indebtedness, President Bush's proposed 2004 budget is a case in point: the 'inescapable conclusion' the budget reaches is that 'the federal government must restrain the growth in any spending not directly associated with the physical security of the nation'.⁵⁶ To this end, half of the \$28 billion increase over 2003 discretionary spending will go to defence. Specifically,

[t]he administration of President George W. Bush is requesting \$399.1 billion for the military in fiscal year 2004 (\$379.9 billion for the Defense Department and \$19.3 billion for the nuclear weapons functions of the Department of Energy). This is \$16.9 billion above current levels, an increase of 4.4 percent. In all, the administration plans to spend \$2.7 trillion on the military over the next six years – and this as both the Office of Management and Budget and the Congressional Budget Office project a federal deficit as high as \$200 billion to \$300 billion next year [2004].⁵⁷

It is interesting to note that the focus of the federal budget was more concerned with addressing the military dimensions of insecurity than with social and economic insecurity. The federal government has shifted more of the financial burden of social service provisions to the states, leaving state and local governments with an aggregate budget deficit of almost \$100 billion during FY

2003.⁵⁸ This move has served to embed further what many consider to be not only the most regressive welfare system for poor people among developed countries, but also the most punitive in terms of subjecting welfare recipients to personal intrusions and continuous surveillance.⁵⁹

The other dimension of the NSS involved the deepening and widening of internal forms of state coercion in the US through the rollback of civil liberties. The latter are not only reflective of the government's attempt to straddle the security/insecurity paradox internally, but also have important implications for the way in which the US deals with this paradox vis-à-vis the South. A good example of the linkages between internal and external forms (foreign policy) of coercion may be located in the USA Patriot Act and specific indicators of the MCA, such as civil liberties and political rights. In view of heightening domestic restrictions on the latter, what are we to understand by the United States' mandate to extend these abroad? While we discuss the MCA in more detail below, it is instructive to look briefly at the Patriot Act as it throws light on who exactly is to benefit from the MCA's attempt to construct and police civil liberties and political rights in the South. The justification for the Patriot Act, which was passed by Congress in October 2001, was to unite and strengthen America by providing appropriate tools required to intercept and obstruct terrorism. The means of achieving this end was to authorise unprecedented leeway in the surveillance and incarceration of both citizens and non-citizens. The Act includes provisions that explicitly target people simply for engaging in classes of political speech that are expressly protected by the US constitution. Likewise, the Patriot Act,

expand[s] the ability of police to spy on telephone and Internet correspondence in anti-terrorism investigations and in routine criminal investigations. It authorized secret government searches, enabling the FBI and other government agencies to conduct searches without warrants and without notifying individuals that their property has been searched. It created a broad new definition of 'domestic terrorism' under which political protesters can be charged as terrorists if they engage in conduct that 'involves acts dangerous to human life'. It also put the CIA back in the business of spying on US citizens and allowed the government to detain non-citizens for indefinite periods of time without trial. The Patriot Act was followed in November 2001 by a new executive order from Bush, authorizing himself to order a trial in a military court for any non-citizen he designates, without a right of appeal or the protection of the Bill of Rights.⁶⁰

It is from this context that a new form of official agenda emerges: preemptive development and its ultimate aim of ensuring that the poorest countries are firmly fitted into the 'golden straitjacket'. As we will see below, despite its novelty the basic premise of this new form of the official development agenda is strikingly similar to that of its predecessors: namely, that the path to increased

growth and prosperity lies in countries' willingness and ability to adopt policies that promote economic freedom and the rule of law.

The millennium challenge account: managing the security/insecurity paradox

Excluded states, poverty and the National Security Strategy

According to the 2002 National Security Strategy (NSS), failed states pose a direct threat to US national security. Before continuing it is helpful to elaborate briefly on this term. While there is far from a consensus on the meaning of the term, 'failed states', such as Nigeria, Afghanistan, Sierra Leone, Iran, Bosnia, Somalia, are defined by the US government as 'countries in which the central government does not exert effective control over, nor is it able to deliver vital services to, significant parts of its own territory due to conflict, ineffective governance [read: adherence to the tenets of neoliberalism], or state collapse'.⁶¹ Following this logic, failed states are believed not only to provide convenient operational bases and safe havens for international terrorists, but also the lack of 'development' (i.e. economic freedom for capitals and rule of law) inherent in failed states could spawn discontent and violence that would spill over to other countries.⁶² The justification to treat these countries with increased coercion and surveillance stems from the position that other countries have the right to act against failed states in order to prevent the terrorism that could otherwise harm the other countries.⁶³ To understand the nature of the MCA, it is instructive to explore briefly what the American government sees as the main cause of excluded states.

Although cautious not to draw a simple correlation between poverty and terrorism, the US government strongly suggests that the higher the poverty rates the higher the potential for that environment to breed terrorism. As the National Security Strategy makes clear,

the events of September 11, 2001, taught us that weak states, like Afghanistan, can pose as great a danger to our national interests as strong states. Poverty does not make poor people into terrorists and murderers. Yet poverty, weak institutions, and corruption can make weak states vulnerable to terrorist networks and drug cartels within their borders.⁶⁴

From the above perspective, then, in order to deter future terrorist aggression against America, the government has to gain more control over what occurs within these countries so as to reproduce and protect US dominance in the global political economy by ensuring that failed states adopt market-led policies and embrace globalisation in order that they may overcome poverty. To date, there have been two main ways the poorest regions of the world are being forced to slip on the golden straitjacket: one is by attempting to discipline failed states by shifting loans into measurable grants through the World

Bank's International Development Association (or, IDA); the other is the MCA.

Intensifying discipline through aid? Transforming IDA lending practices

According to the Bush administration, a more efficient way of ensuring that the poorest countries adopt neoliberal principles is through unilateral-inspired solutions administered by a multilateral lending institution, such as the IDA. The latter, which forms a key component of the World Bank Group, was created in 1960 to assist the world's poorest countries reduce poverty by providing 'credits', which are loans at zero interest with a ten-year grace period and maturities of thirty-five to forty years. To achieve maximum control over the development process, the US government has insisted that the IDA should convert its loans to grants. US Treasury Under Secretary John Taylor sums up the logic behind this proposal in the following manner:

[A] novel proposal we have suggested to the World Bank – to have shareholders' contributions tied to measurable results. *Grants can be tied more effectively to performance in a way that longer-term loans simply cannot. You have to keep delivering the service or you don't get the grant.* Every three years, the United States and other shareholders in the World Bank contribute a certain amount to this IDA program. The United States has reduced its contributions to IDA in the 1990s. We intend to reverse this trend. We want to increase our contributions to IDA, but we think it is essential to do so in a way that gears the contribution to results.⁶⁵

While far from a novel idea, the concept of performance-based grants instead of traditional loans was enthusiastically supported by the neoconservative sectors of prestigious and highly influential American think tanks such as the Heritage Foundation, as well as the International Financial Institution Advisory Commission, also known as the Meltzer Commission.⁶⁶ According to long-time advocates of grants Adam Lerrick and Allan H. Meltzer, performance-based grants are a more effective form of control and surveillance over states and markets of the South than traditional loans. On the one hand, grants can be project-linked and executed under competitive bids (which includes foreign market participants) with payments shared by both the World Bank and the beneficiary. On the other, the grant scheme would allow for an independent audit and payments based on clearly quantifiable basic needs aimed at improving the quality of life and, relatedly, economic growth: primary education, health, sanitation and water, as well as the numbers of babies vaccinated, improvement of literacy rates, and so forth.⁶⁷ It should be underlined that the imposition of performance-based grants via the Bank's IDA is not based on an inter-state consensus, as many G-7 countries stand in

opposition to this proposal.⁶⁸ The US seeks to implement policy in highly coercive and unilateral terms.

The MCA: sketches of the new compact for global development

As noted in the introductory section of this essay, in September 2000 heads of state committed themselves to reducing poverty in the world by 2015. To meet this objective of the Millennium Declaration, the UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, called for a Financing for Development (FfD) conference to take place in Monterrey, Mexico, in March 2002.⁶⁹ It was during this meeting that President Bush proposed a dramatic increase in US foreign assistance for poor countries to meet the Millennium Development Goals. This momentous offer calls for an additional increase in official development assistance (ODA) by \$5 billion a year, phased in over a three-year period: \$1.7 billion in FY 2004, \$3.3 billion in FY 2005 and \$5 billion in fiscal year (FY) 2006 and each year thereafter.⁷⁰ While Congress has reduced Bush's proposed budget by 1.8 billion, it was 6 per cent higher than the amount approved for foreign operations for the current fiscal year.⁷¹ What is more, the budgetary limitations of the MCA do not lessen the impact of the MCA to act as a trend-setting mode of managing aid. On the one hand, the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), as opposed to USAID, will govern the MCA's funds, although USAID is to be a 'key partner' of the MCA in the sense that it is to act as the implementing agency for many MCA programmes. The White House is trying to establish the MCC as an independent corporation, whose head will be chosen by the President of the United States.⁷² The following four principles will guide the 'unique mission' of the MCC: (1) encourage policy reform and reward performance; (2) target growth; (3) operate in partnership; and (4) focus on results.⁷³

On the other hand, unlike traditional forms of development assistance, the programme, in the manner of IDA performance-based grants, seeks to reward performance and measure results so as to create an operational action plan aimed at ensuring that the goals set by the NSS are reached. In the words of President George W. Bush:

Countries that live by these three broad standards – ruling justly, investing in their people, and encouraging economic freedom – will receive more aid from America. And, more importantly, over time, they will really no longer need it, because nations with sound laws and policies will attract more foreign investment. They will earn more trade revenues. And they will find that all these sources of capital will be invested more effectively and productively to create more jobs for their people ... I challenge other nations, and the development banks, to adopt this approach as well.⁷⁴

The MCA is to provide aid to those countries which have successfully demonstrated, largely through quantifiable scores, that they meet *all* sixteen indicators

spanning three broad eligibility criteria: (1) ruling justly; (2) investing in people; and (3) economic freedom (see Table 7.2). While these conditions reflect the concerns of the official development discourse, i.e. reproducing the imperative of economic growth, open current and capital accounts, sound macroeconomic fundamentals, good governance and democratic values; the ‘empowering features’ seem to be overshadowed by the pre-emptive nature of the MCA, not to mention the complementary scheme of pre-emptive conditionality imposed by the IDA. Although the MCA is wrapped in the same discourse of empowering development found in the post-Washington consensus (e.g. ownership and social inclusion), the Bush administration’s ‘new global compact’ is aimed at increasing control by the American state over failed states. Indeed, the concern for empowering individuals is limited to ensuring that the reform, along lines of the above sixteen criteria, is home-grown. Drawing its lessons from the ineffectiveness of IMF and World Bank conditionalities, the architects of the MCA stress the need for strong domestic movement for change. Yet, as the following lengthy quote reveals, the manner in which this reform is to be achieved was a classical ‘top-down’ manner with intensified forms of US surveillance. In the words of the US State Department, partnership between the MCA and recipient countries is to be established in the following manner:

Table 7.2 Eligibility criteria for the MCA

INDICATOR	SOURCE
I. Ruling justly	
1. Control of corruption	World Bank Institute 1
2. Rule of law	World Bank Institute
3. Voice and accountability	World Bank Institute
4. Government effectiveness	World Bank Institute
5. Civil liberties	Freedom House ²
6. Political rights	Freedom House
II. Investing in people	
7. Immunisation rate: DPT and measles	WHO/World Bank
8. Primary education completion rate	World Bank
9. Public primary education spending/GDP	World Bank
10. Public expenditure on health/GDP	World Bank
III. Economic freedom	
11. Country credit rating	Institutional Investor
12. Inflation	IMF
13. Regulatory quality	World Bank Institute
14. Budget deficit/GDP	IMF/World Bank
15. Trade policy	Heritage Foundation
16. Days to start a business	World Bank

Source: ‘Fact Sheet: Millennium Challenge Account’, distributed by the administration on 25 November 2002, available at www.cgdev.org. Quoted in Steve Radelet, ‘Will the Millennium Challenge Account be Different?’ *The Washington Quarterly*, Spring 2003, Vol. 26 (2), p. 175. For more information on rankings, see <http://www.mca.gov/countries/rankings/index.shtml>

the MCA will use time-limited, business-like contracts that represent a commitment between the United States and the developing country to meet agreed performance benchmarks. Developing countries will set their own priorities and identify their own greatest hurdles to development. They will do so by engaging their citizens, businesses and government in an open debate, which will result in a proposal for MCA funding. This proposal will include objectives, a plan and timetable for achieving them, benchmarks for assessing progress and how results will be sustained at the end of the contract, delineation of the responsibilities of the MCA and the MCA country, the role of civil society, business and other donors, and a plan for ensuring financial accountability for funds used. The MCA will review the proposal, consulting with the MCA country. The Board will approve all contracts.⁷⁵

In stark contrast with the spirit of multilateralism demonstrated by Clinton's 'engagement and enlargement' strategy, as well as empowering development, all the institutions actually performing assessment on these sixteen criteria are undertaken by either largely neoconservative American organisations, such as the Heritage Foundation and the Freedom House, or US-dominated IFIs. The definition of excluded state takes on a new meaning under the MCA as more and more states are disqualified from aid from the most powerful country. In May 2004, the Board of Directors of the MCC determined that only sixteen countries were eligible for MCA assistance and were invited to submit proposals: Armenia, Benin, Bolivia, Cape Verde, Georgia, Ghana, Honduras, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mali, Mongolia, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Senegal, Sri Lanka and Vanuatu.⁷⁶ Thus, the power to pass judgement on the above-mentioned criteria would be based from a uniquely American perspective of what constitutes, for example, political rights and civil liberties. It should be emphasised that neither the NSS nor the MCA are clear on what is meant by these criteria, which in turn leads for much discretionary power by these institutions. As such, prejudicial, Western-based, Christian values predominate alongside a highly discretionary means of arriving at the definitions of each criterion. Moreover, given the increasingly repressive environment in the US itself, witnessed by the USA Patriot Act, it is questionable what is understood under the definition of 'civil liberties'. The effect of this rather subjective process is the construction of terms that appear to be an inert fact of nature.⁷⁷ The following quote provides greater insight into the linkages between the Heritage Foundation, an authoritative voice on financial matters, and the *Wall Street Journal*. This connection serves not only to reproduce commonsense assumptions of the importance of economic freedom and rule of law in the South, but also acts as a disciplinary strategy for capital interests:

The *Index of Economic Freedom* grades 10 factors for 161 countries with 1 being the best score and 5 being the worst score. These factors are: trade policy, fiscal burden of government, government intervention in the

economy, monetary policy, capital flows and foreign investment, banking and finance, wages and prices, property rights, regulation, and black market activity. Those 10 scores for these factors are then averaged to give an overall score for economic freedom. Countries are designated 'free', 'mostly free' and 'mostly unfree', and 'repressed' based on these overall scores. As shown in the *Index*, free countries on average have a per capita income twice that of mostly free countries, mostly free countries have a per capita income more than three times that of mostly unfree and repressed countries. This relationship exists because countries maintaining policies that promote economic freedom provide an environment that facilitates trade and encourages entrepreneurial activity, which in turn generates economic growth.⁷⁸

Seen from the above perspective, it becomes clear not only how the MCA will operate, but also, and more importantly, that the golden straitjacket is far from a market-driven phenomenon; but rather a political strategy designed to serve particular interests. A failing grade on the Heritage Foundation's *Index of Economic Freedom*, published annually by the *Wall Street Journal*, signals a higher risk for capitalists. The latter, in turn, punish countries by either capital flight or investment strikes. The assumptions inherent in these scores are also highly subjective. To be sure, the correlation between economic freedom, growth and democracy has not been substantiated by history. Authoritarian Chile under the Pinochet regime produced the so-called neoliberal model in the South during the 1980s, while the 'developmental states' in East Asia helped produce the miracle economies. Likewise, the assumption that economic freedom will quell civil wars that are rooted in deep historically led political economic and cultural conflict, oppression and human suffering in many of the failed states is not only based on flawed Eurocentric ideals, but also justifies the increasingly physical and economic coercion undertaken through withholding private investment and now public aid from these states.

The MCA is infused with cultural and ideological dimensions. The recreation of the 'us-and-them' divide along the lines of the 'coalition of the willing' and the 'axis of evil', have acted to fill the vacuum of the Cold War rhetoric (the frequent association of Western governments and media of communist regimes as unjust, backward and diabolic) and distort and blur the growing contradictions of neoliberal globalisation and American imperialism over the past several decades. As we will see, the MCA has appropriated the altruistic goals set out in the Millennium Development Goals and twisted the means to serve the ends of the American empire. While this new global development compact operates primarily through coercive means, it is legitimised to the American people and international system through the construction and reproduction of a discourse that views 'the other' as a passive and silent homogenous unit that is unwilling to embrace neoliberal modernisation and thus remains a potential threat to the 'West'. Rather, such discourse found in the MCA renders the people of the colonised culture as powerless objects. Following Edward Said, the culture of powerlessness is enforced by a definition that anything written by those

individuals located in the excluded states are deemed by the wider media, international financial institutions, bilateral donors, and private creditors and investors as illegitimate, non-knowledge, and nonsense.⁷⁹ The result of the culture of the ‘powerless other’ in official development discourse, particularly the MCA, has been the commonsense assumption that there is only one way to ‘develop’: by embracing the tenets of neoliberal globalisation and Western democracy.

All told, the underlying logic of pre-emptive development evolves around the security/insecurity paradox: to safeguard neoliberal globalisation and American imperial dominance it is vital to ensure that those states, who have suffered the most under market-led growth, embrace the same neoliberal discipline and accumulation by dispossession strategies that have led to high levels of insecurity in the first place.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I examined a significant moment of American imperialism in the post-Cold War era: the emergence of pre-emptive development embodied by the MCA. I argued that while the MCA represents a new departure in terms of a more intrusive, coercive and overtly American-led form of development, its content resembles that of the preceding official development agendas. By exploring historically and concretely the origins of the MCA, we were able to understand this strategy as a contradictory attempt by the US state to deal with the insecurity/security paradox inherent in neoliberal global restructuring and the underlying notion of accumulation by dispossession. In attempting to deconstruct the MCA, I sought to go beyond the commonsense assumption that the MCA was a direct result of the tragic events of 9/11 in order to reveal the content of the MCA as well as to shed more light on the increasingly coercive and intrusive expressions of American empire vis-à-vis the South. I demonstrated that Bush’s pre-emptive development agenda emerged from a combination of at least three factors – all of which were augmented, not caused, by the events of 9/11. First, there is a perceived crisis of confidence not only regarding neoliberal governance in the US, particularly in the post-speculative bubble era, but also a crisis of confidence regarding neoliberal governance in excluded states. Income levels have plunged in most parts of the developing world, poverty rates are on the rise, and income gaps between rich and poor countries have widened. Second, excluded states continue to receive very little private capital flows and bilateral aid. And, third, the US economy, which has acted as the growth engine for the world, has been experiencing a deep economic slowdown since the bursting of its bubble-led expansion after August 2000. Increased levels of unemployment not seen since 1994, spiralling budget and trade deficits, unsustainable consumer and corporate debt levels indicate a weak as opposed to a strong and robust economy, which can no longer serve as the engine of growth for the rest of the world.

While imperialism may take on different expressions under a Democrat or a Republican administration, one thing remains constant: the compulsion for the

United States to hold on to its power in global capitalism, so that capitalists, who are tied to the empire, may continue to influence the shape and direction of neoliberal restructuring strategies (accumulation by dispossession) to ensure that they reap the highest material rewards, particularly in the face of general stagnation. Whether the MCA, combined with the good governance principles of empowering development, will be able to stave off further aggression towards the American empire remains to be seen, and, of course, will be contingent on struggles. What is clear at present, however, is, and in contrast to the rhetoric surrounding America's 'war on terrorism', the increasing security concern of the US government lies more in its need to intervene constantly in an increasingly coercive manner into Third World countries in order to protect its interests, as opposed to its much-touted attempts of spreading democracy, economic growth, and freedom in the poorest regions of the world.

Notes

- 1 I. H. Daalder, J. M. Lindsay and J. B. Steinberg, 'The Bush National Security Strategy: An Evaluation', *The Brookings Institution Policy Brief*, Policy Brief No. 109, Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 2002, p. 5.
- 2 See the 'National Security Strategy of the United States of America', Washington, DC: The White House, September 2002. Available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss1.html>
- 3 As Peter Willetts notes, the term 'terrorist' 'might be more appropriately applied to those, including governments, who use indiscriminate violence for the purpose of political intimidation'; Peter Willetts, 'Actors in Global Politics', in J. Baylis and S. Smith (eds) *The Globalization of World Politics: An Introduction to International Relations*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 297.
- 4 See 'Iraq and the Bush Doctrine', *Observer*, 24 March 2002; J. Newhouse, *Imperial America: The Bush Assault on the World Order*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003.
- 5 In proportion to its size, the US spends the least of all the wealthy countries. In 2002 the United States, for example, spent only 0.12 per cent of its GDP. To put this in perspective, Denmark donated almost 1 per cent of GDP in bilateral aid; quoted in 'The Solidarité Summit', *The Economist*, 30 May 2003.
- 6 www.mca.gov
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- 23 These results were reported at the 2003 meeting of the World Economic Forum. The poll conducted by Gallup International and Environics included 34,000 people from forty-six countries (see www.weforum.org). Quoted in Brodie, *op. cit.*
- 24 Aside from the more liberal voices of Joseph Stiglitz and Ravi Kanbur, conservative dissenters in Washington, who have long argued for the abolition of the IMF and World Bank, were not only becoming louder but also had a growing and sympathetic audience. The Heritage Foundation (now a key player in the MCA) and the Cato Institute, for example, have charged the IMF with eliminating the discipline of risk in private markets (moral hazard) by interfering in the 'natural rationality' of markets through bailouts and aid packages. See, for example, Alan Reynolds of the CATO Institute, 'The IMF's Suffocating Embrace', available at: http://www.world-trademag.com/CDA/ArticleInformation/features/BNP__Features__Item/0,3483,91669,00.html; cf. Edwin J. Feulner Jr, 'The IMF Needs Real Reforms, Not More Money', Heritage Foundation *Backgrounder*, No. 1175 (9 May 1998); B. T. Johnson and B. D. Schaefer, 'No New Funding for the IMF', Heritage Foundation *Backgrounder*, Update No. 287 (23 September 1997).
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share of U.S. resources devoted to development, humanitarian or economic aid for other countries has generally fallen since the mid-1960s. The overall decline has been substantial, reducing such spending to exceptionally low levels for the United States. The share of national resources the United States contributes in aid to the world's poorest nations is now far lower than the share that any other

industrialized country contributes, and is at one of the lowest levels in the post-World War II era.

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[t]he budget includes \$2.5 billion for this [MCA] initiative, \$1.5 billion more than the funding provided for 2004. Funds from the MCA are made available on a competitive basis to countries with low and moderate per capita incomes. The

Administration has indicated its intention to request MCA levels adequate to provide \$5 billion in annual assistance by 2006. Meeting this level in next year's budget would require an additional \$2.5 billion beyond the levels in the 2005 budget.

(Accessed on 5 September 2004; available at http://www.house.gov/budget_democrats/pres_budgets/fy2004/fy04update/fy2005/150.htm)

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8 Scenarios of power¹

Jan Nederveen Pieterse

We are the indispensable nation. We stand tall. We see farther into the future.
(Madeleine Albright, 1998)

Power is multidimensional, and according to the usual template of global politics, it unfolds on multiple chessboards – political, economic and military. Different ways of combining these dimensions yield various scenarios of power and options in interpreting them. How to interpret the American regime change from neoliberal globalisation to military globalism? Does it follow from triumph in the Cold War or also from the failure of the neoliberal project? Hyperpower status and economic reshuffling may both hold true, for different actors. Another obvious question is whether the policies of the Bush II administration are a blip or a trend; do they represent an extension of the ‘unipolar moment’ that came in the wake of Cold War victory, or are they part of a long-term imperial episode? Focusing on politics of the moment risks ignoring strategic continuities, while highlighting continuities may risk essentialising American politics.

Unipolar moment or imperial episode?

The end of the Cold War bestowed hyperpower status on the United States, inspiring triumphalism and a stepping up of unilateralism. As soon as the ‘unipolar moment’ materialised, so did the desire to ‘preserve the unipolar moment’ and turn it into enduring American primacy.

In the 1980s, the United States reorganised its armed forces; to curb inter-service rivalries, regional commands were set up each with their commanders-in-chief (CinCs) (the Defence Department Reorganisation Bill, 1986). Over time, the four, and later five, regional commands grew into formidable powerhouses with considerable resources at their command and the authority to negotiate bases, weapons deliveries and training. The CinCs became far more powerful than US ambassadors or CIA heads of station and came to be seen as ‘proconsuls of empire’. Foreign policy is supposed to be conducted by the State Department, but the CinCs and the Pentagon have far greater resources at their disposal. The Clinton administration’s National Security Strategy directed the CinCs to ‘shape, prepare, respond all over the globe’, an open-ended mission that reinforced military role expansion;

the military became responsible for 'peace-time engagement' and at times 'foreign internal defence'. This story is told in, for instance, Dana Priest's book *The Mission*. The title refers to the twilight status of the military: undergoing vast expansion yet uncertain of its mission.²

Thus, as the Soviet threat diminished, the US experienced a creeping militarisation of foreign policy. Joseph Nye, a former undersecretary of defence, notes:

While Congress has been willing to spend 16 percent of the national budget on defense, the percentage devoted to international affairs has shrunk from 4 percent in the 1960s to just 1 percent today. Our military strength is important, but it is not sixteen times more important than our diplomacy.³

The Clinton administration made greater use of force than previous administrations but drew a line between the use of force and war. It combined the liberal interventionism of nation-building with liberalising international trade via NAFTA, APEC and the WTO in a policy that was termed 'enlargement'. In trade, 'aggressive unilateralism' and aggressive demands for market access had become central to US policy since the mid-1980s.⁴

A Defence Policy Guidance that leaked in 1992 (under Dick Cheney as defence secretary and drafted by Paul Wolfowitz as undersecretary of defence) revealed a grand strategy of American primacy: 'our strategy must now refocus on precluding the emergence of any future global competitor'.⁵ This principle has since become part of security strategy. In other words, several policies that appear striking under the Bush II administration – the politics of primacy, the militarisation of foreign policy, aggressive trade policies – were in place long before. A major difference is that previous administrations combined unilateralism with multilateralism.

The desire to 'preserve the unipolar moment' and remain the premier global power was countered by centrists in the Senate and by a growing aversion to bearing the cost of this position. So the practical outcome was unilateralism with a multilateral face. Samuel Huntington characterised international politics at the time as a combination of unipolarity and multipolarity:

a strange hybrid, a *uni-multipolar* system with one superpower and several major powers. The settlement of key international issues requires action by the single superpower but always with some combination of other major states; the single superpower can, however, veto action on key issues by combinations of other states.⁶

An in-between diagnosis is American 'go-it-alone power' with modular coalitions, a formula that matches Operation Desert Storm and NATO operations in Kosovo.⁷

But the calculus continues to change. A 2002 article on ‘American Primacy in Perspective’ takes a different perspective on the unipolar moment: ‘If today’s American primacy does not constitute unipolarity, then nothing ever will.’⁸ Pick any measure and, according to the authors, the United States is dominant: ‘In the military arena the US spends more than the next 15–20 biggest spenders combined.’ The US enjoys ‘overwhelming nuclear superiority’, it is ‘the world’s dominant air force’ and ‘the only truly blue-water navy’. In addition, ‘America’s economic dominance ... surpasses that of any great power in modern history.’ ‘The United States is the country in the best position to take advantage of globalization’, ‘the world’s leading technological power’ and ‘the most popular destination for foreign firms’. Thus ‘the United States has no rival in any critical dimension of power’. There are ‘no balancing rival coalitions’. Therefore ‘A slide back toward multipolarity would actually be the worst of all worlds for the United States.’ ‘Now and for the foreseeable future, the United States will have immense power resources it can bring to bear to force or entice others to do its bidding on a case-by-case basis.’⁹

In sum, the authors suggest that multilateralism is not in the American interest nor required. In closing, they take a different turn. ‘But just because the United States is strong enough to act heedlessly does not mean it should do so.’¹⁰ In a brief conclusion the authors note that influence matters more than power and that the world’s overwhelming problems – poverty, environment – require international cooperation. Yet the infrastructure of hubris and the brief for unilateralism has been given. And this unprecedented power and capability refers to a window in time that will not last.

This gung-ho assessment doesn’t mention downsides, not even obvious American frailties; it seems an exercise in marketing America rather than merely describing it, as if salesmanship would improve the product. The diagnosis is biased or outdated in several respects: it ignores the Enron episode and its ripple effects; it ignores the growing external deficit and trade deficit; it ignores the structural vulnerability of the American economy (deindustrialisation, unemployment, failure of the new economy) and makes no mention of growing social inequality. Is a consumption-driven economy capable of handling contraction at a time when deregulation and tax cuts have undercut government tools of intervention? The economy hinges on consumer confidence, but what if consumers and businesses are faced with uncertainty (recession, job insecurity, war)?

The policies of the Bush II administration can be viewed either as the unipolar moment extended (or amplified to an imperial moment), or as an imperial episode. The first argument runs as follows. This administration undertakes an open-ended war on terror, attacks Afghanistan and Iraq and projects its military presence world-wide. It undertakes a monumental expansion of the military budget.¹¹ It is not just pro-business but particularly close to energy companies, which are the most territorial and geopolitical of all corporations. With the embrace of energy concerns, then, comes a turn to empire. And just as the administration leapfrogs over ecological concerns and civil liberties in the United States, it has little patience with the niceties of sovereignty, international law and

multilateralism. All this could be scaled back or turned around by a different administration. A different administration could return to multilateralism, renounce preventive strikes and trim the military budget.

The alternative case, that this is a long-term project, an imperial episode, runs as follows. American unilateralism dates back at least to the end of the Cold War. Unilateral demarches such as non-ratification of the nuclear proliferation treaty, annulling the anti-ballistic missile treaty and opting for a missile defence system are the purview of the legislature and predate the Bush II administration. The congressional committees are bipartisan. American geopolitics implies a long-term horizon; stationing a million soldiers in 350 bases and 130 countries across the world requires the backing of foreign relations, armed services, intelligence, and ways and means committees. Structural parameters of American primacy as perceived by American elites pertain regardless of a change of the party in government. Past administrations combined multilateralism and the pursuit of primacy. A different administration can make tactical adjustments without giving up strategic objectives. American exceptionalism is of long standing. A common view is that 'Whoever is in power in Washington, unilateralism – or put another way, America first-ism – is here to stay'.¹²

The case for an imperial episode may be more plausible than an imperial moment, but still it raises the question of continuity and discontinuity. While the case for strategic continuity is plain, there is no point in essentialising American policy and ignoring its Wilsonian strands. Besides, unilateralism is not necessarily imperial, it can also be isolationist. One interpretation is that until 1941 American foreign policy was stubbornly extremist and Roosevelt brought the United States into the centre of liberal internationalism, where it remained through the Cold War. With the Cold War over, extremist factions again take hold of foreign policy.

The long-term pattern of American expansion and imperialism dates from nineteenth-century Manifest Destiny through post-war US hegemony, but the end of the Bretton Woods system in 1971 initiated an era of multipolarity. Neoliberal globalisation, shaped by the Wall Street–Treasury–IMF complex and convergence with the WTO, was unilateralism with a multilateral face.

The two hypotheses, unipolar moment and imperial episode, may combine in that the Bush II administration may view the present constellation (US as hyper-power, no significant domestic opposition due to 9/11, no major international encumbrances, vast military superiority, no ready rivals or rival coalitions) as a unique window to secure American primacy for the coming decades or more. This is an imperial episode, then, in view of the long-term American *disposition* towards primacy, and an imperial moment in view of the recent perceived *capability* to implement this aim.

Another American century

(T)he dominant groups in this Administration have now openly abandoned the underlying strategy and philosophy of the Clinton Administration, which was to

integrate the other major states of the world in a rule-based liberal capitalist order, thereby reducing the threat of rivalry between them.

(Anatol Lieven, 2002)

Neoconservative circles such as the Project for the New American Century (PNAC) and the American Enterprise Institute, and their lineage in the conservative thought of Leo Strauss have been extensively investigated,¹³ so this discussion deals only with essentials. The PNAC, founded in 1997, builds on circles in the Reagan administration such as the Committee on the Present Danger. The PNAC's Statement of Principles of 1997 notes:

We seem to have forgotten the essential elements of the Reagan Administration's success: a military that is strong and ready to meet both present and future challenges; a foreign policy that boldly and purposefully promotes American principles abroad; and national leadership that accepts the United States' global responsibilities.

The objective is 'to shape a new century favorable to American principles and interests'. On its home page the PNAC describes itself as dedicated to these propositions: 'that American leadership is good both for America and for the world; that such leadership requires military strength, diplomatic energy and commitment to moral principle; and that too few political leaders today are making the case for global leadership'.

The Bush II administration is in many ways a Reagan replay. The Reagan administration was a medley of forces and aims.¹⁴ Voodoo economics sank the federal surplus while scrapping the rules of business; less government, more market and evangelical patriotism – good morning America, flashback to the American Dream of the 1950s starring America as liberator and beacon of the world; and aggressive foreign policy in Nicaragua, Central America, Grenada, Afghanistan, Angola and Libya. Forget Vietnam!

The centrepiece of the Reagan programme was a tax cut presented as an economic stimulus (the Economic Recovery Tax Act of 1981); the major economic agenda of the Bush II administration – tax cuts for the wealthy – is likewise presented as a jobs programme. As David Stockman, the head of Reagan's office of management and budget, conceded afterwards, the administration's agenda was to jack up the deficit so high that cutbacks in social spending would be inevitable: a strategy that ultimately failed for electoral reasons ('the GOP politicians of the Congress will not take on the 36 million who get the social insurance checks').¹⁵ The Bush II tax cuts are probably best understood as a political agenda to redesign government and complete the Reagan counter-revolution by eventually eliminating social government altogether.¹⁶ Rather than tax cuts, they are a tax shift from federal to state taxes, which as an economic stimulus is not just ineffective but counterproductive. The affluent don't need the extra dollars; the intent is to redirect it away from government and from welfare recipients who are to fend for themselves. Making tax

cuts permanent may permanently attract the (wannabe) wealthy to the Republicans, structurally undermine the Democrats and achieve a realignment of American politics. As states and cities are in financial crisis they cut social spending and raise taxes, resulting in a double negative outcome for ordinary taxpayers who both lose services and face higher taxes.¹⁷ This hard conservative turn institutionalises a regressive tax system and further concentrates wealth and power.

The Bush II government came to power courtesy of Reagan-era Supreme Court appointees. It builds on the Reagan administration's judicial appointments and its conservative turn in politics and civil life. With an unprecedented concentration of Washington insiders of the Reagan and first Bush administrations, it builds on accumulated political capital. The Reagan period was an era of the 'shadow government' and episodes such as Iran-Contra.¹⁸ Tucked within the Bush II administration is a shadow government centred in the Pentagon with its own intelligence capability independent of the CIA.¹⁹ In the build-up to the Iraq War it provided intelligence that later turned out to be false.

As with Reagan, the support base of the Bush II administration is the Christian right, the white South, plus a portion of Jewish votes, wedded through Christian Zionism and the fundamentalist Christian rendezvous with Israel.²⁰ As in the Reagan years, this administration combines reliance on military strength with moralist language – the cartoon language of Evil Empire and Axis of Evil: narcissistic and Manichean provincialism elevated to globalism.

The National Security Strategy of 2002 parallels the PNAC agenda.²¹ Recourse to military force recalls the Reagan policy of rollback (rather than just containment) and its foreign policy of war on terrorism, and continues the Clinton policy of liberal interventionism. The neoconservatives seek to provide a new narrative of America's role in the world that could serve as the successor to the Cold War narrative. American global leadership is to create an 'empire of liberty'. This is a restatement of Clinton's liberal interventionism, but now conducted unilaterally. Unilateralism's two components – confidence in one's own strength and lack of confidence in allies – involves two moves. First, power is redefined as military strength rather than as legitimacy or multilateral leadership; second, allies are disparaged. Thus in Robert Kagan's view of power and weakness, 'Americans are from Mars, Europeans from Venus';²² never mind that this celestial classification doesn't suggest historical finesse. Europeans are sissies and multilateralism is a sign of weakness. Power is force and diplomacy is but a tool of deception, a philosophy that is appropriate to the German military staff under Kaiser Wilhelm and the Nazis. These views reckon that success brings might and might makes right: a utopian *Machtpolitik*.

In the process, the neoconservatives perform as intellectual spokesmen who legitimate the role expansion of the military class, which dates back to the 1980s, and as armchair strategists who legitimate the interests of the arms industry (Richard Perle's business connections are instructive).

A neoconservative reaction to 9/11 was that 'We are all Israelis now' and the subsequent change in US policy has been described as the 'Israelisation of

American foreign policy'. There are close parallels between current US policies and those of Israel in style, methods and objectives. In both countries the 'war party' leads, the military and intelligence are the leading state agencies, and economics takes a back seat; offence counts as the best defence; diplomacy and multilateralism take a back seat to the garrison state; politics of fear is institutionalised and stark stereotypes guide domestic and international policy. In 1996 Richard Perle and other neoconservatives wrote a policy review for Israel's Likud government that advocated abandoning the Oslo peace process for a neorealist balance of power politics in the region.²³

The Reagan era drew on nostalgia for America's unchallenged power of the 1950s and the PNAC draws on the Reagan legacy. This produces a double nostalgia that evokes a new American century while looking back to a 1980s era that looked back to the 1950s.

Scenarios and analyses

The domestic policies of the Bush II administration are consistent with the seventy-year conservative campaign to end New Deal economics, but what about its international policies? How do the various foreign policy designs fit together – political-military strategies, designs such as 'redrawing the map of the Middle East', and policies with regard to trade and the world economy?

Foreign policy reflects long-term designs and develops in response to reactions overseas. The two extremes of interpretation are a jam session and a master plan. The most consistent public voices, the neoconservatives, focus mainly on the Middle East and make only sketchy reference to economics (end welfare, privatisation and free market). Long-term planning on the part of the Pentagon and the commanders-in-chief of the regional commands is typically classified.

The Bush II administration seems more preoccupied with the domestic economy than the world economy. Unlike during the Clinton years, the Treasury and commerce are no longer the centre of gravity, and the IMF, World Bank and WTO play second fiddle. Policy towards the WTO is opportunistic and inconsistent, and zigzagging towards the IMF and World Bank.²⁴ On the other hand, the state-corporate, weapon-petrodollar nexus is stronger than before.

Table 8.1 Scenarios of power

Scenarios	Priority	Theories
Made in Texas	Domestic politics	Poststructuralist
Cold War II	Geopolitics	Neo-realism
Neoconservative ideology	Domestic and international	Gramscian
Offensive neoliberalism	Economics and geopolitics	Marxist, Leninist

Are the policies of the Bush II administration an ideologically driven project of conservatives and neoconservatives; a resumption of Cold War geopolitics; a mutation of neoliberalism; or a combination of all of these? These scenarios are not mutually exclusive; they overlap while appealing to different political factions and audiences. Scenarios that may fit current US policies imply theories that might explain them (Table 8.1).

In *Made in Texas*, Michael Lind's account of the Southern takeover of American politics, an extreme right-wing cabal has taken over the government of the world's most powerful country and 9/11 has given it carte blanche. *Made in Texas* is a Karl Rove scenario. In a coalition of parochialisms Southern Republicans outflank Democrats and the Christian right tackles secular cosmopolitanism. As a meticulously calibrated agenda of domestic hegemony-building, biased policies are methodically staged as serving the common interest (tax giveaways for the wealthy as a jobs programme, curtailment of civil liberties for security).

Arguably, a poststructuralist interpretation would be appropriate for unpacking this scenario: the Southern takeover of politics is happenstance, does not follow a compelling logic or yield a causally predictable outcome. Dialectics of disaster: without 9/11 this government would be lost.²⁵ But limitations of this line of interpretation are that, by focusing on contingency (and there is contingency, for instance in the way the administration came to power), this ignores the long-term rise of Southern political power. While capturing contingency, this interpretation misses structure, offers presentist description rather than explanation, and does not account for the lack of political opposition.

In the Cold War plus scenario, the war party leads and the military and intelligence are back in prime time. During the Cold War, the character of power was geopolitical–military–ideological–economic; during neoliberal globalisation it was ideological–economic with a strong military; and now by this reckoning, it is again geopolitical–military. From this point of view the neoliberal episode has been an interruption and the real game is power on a global battlefield. This scenario seems to match neorealist thinking and might be close to practice since this is the theory taught at military academies. Rather than a theory, should it be considered a self-fulfilling prophecy?

This account overlooks, however, that neorealists had developed alliances with authoritarian regimes in the Middle East, such as that of Saddam Hussein, for the sake of stability and the flow of oil, and because democracy would bring radical Islamic groups to power.²⁶ To avoid imperial overstretch, neorealists and many in the Pentagon prefer a rule-based international order and restraint in the use of military force. (Hence the criticisms of Brent Scowcroft, Lawrence Eagleburger, James Baker and others of war on Iraq without UN sanction.) The neoconservatives break with neorealism, disparage the international order, advocate taking the offensive and have greater confidence in the use of military force and, presumably, greater hopes for democracy in the Middle East, inspired by the likes of Bernard Lewis. By capitalising on 9/11 and targeting the Middle East, they seek to mobilise patriotism, Jewish votes and liberal hawks

(mesmerised by ‘clash of civilisations’ talk). They follow a Gramscian strategy of building domestic hegemony and rely on the support of the white and Christian South and the ideological appeal of the target of war. According to Michael Lind, ‘The strategic brains for George W. Bush’s foreign policy were provided by neoconservatives like Paul Wolfowitz, but the Deep South provided the political muscle.’²⁷ However, the alliance of conservatives and neoconservatives is not seamless. Many conservatives and certainly East Coast Republicans prefer a neorealist policy of multilateral cooperation.²⁸

Gramscian international relations theory does not apply either, for this is a case of hegemony-in-reverse. Never has so much soft power been squandered in so short a time. An administration that in its first year in office scraps five international treaties does not seek international legitimacy. Its recourse to war has prompted the largest demonstration in human history on 15 February 2003 and, for the sake of the ‘most unwanted war in history’, unleashed world public opinion as a ‘second superpower’. This is a crash course in how to lose friends and squander influence. Immanuel Wallerstein notes: ‘Over the last 200 years, the United States acquired a considerable amount of ideological credit. But these days, the United States is running through its credit even faster than it ran through its gold surplus in the 1960s.’²⁹

The neoconservative approach is a provincialising globalism that reads global trends in line with American prejudices. Accordingly, its military and intelligence estimates tend to be wrong (as in Afghanistan and Iraq). American economic supremacy is taken for granted rather than examined. The speciality of the armchair strategists is threat inflation. The American military class inflated the threat of the USSR and now inflates the threat of rogue states and terrorism.

In the scenario of offensive neoliberalism, corporations are centre-stage, in particular energy, military industry and Sunbelt corporations (including software). In this account, neoliberalism phase IV – following the phases of proto-neoliberalism, rollback and roll-out neoliberalism – recombines with the military-industrial complex. According to neoliberalism, ‘the market rules OK’; and in this dispensation, the market would rule OK by force. Thus one interpretation of the new wars suggests that they are wars of conquest for the sake of ‘primitive accumulation’.³⁰

What pleads against this scenario is that the Bush II administration’s economic base is narrow and comprises mainly energy and military sectors. Its economic policies are biased and contradictory, and tax cuts and deficit spending are opposed by CEOs, blue-ribbon business councils and to some extent even the Federal Reserve, so it is not a typical policy of the ‘capitalist class’. Politics trumps economics in that the fundamental calculus appears to be political (in the sense of party- and state-driven) and ideological rather than economic. Unlike neoliberal globalisation, policy is not driven by the Treasury, Wall Street and international institutions.³¹ Corporate partners seem to be co-pilots, and economic agendas, which are sketchy in the first place, seem to play a supporting rather than a leading role. The military’s overwhelming role outflanks other sectors. The risks entailed in a strategy of offensive war are so momentous that

they outstrip corporate capabilities and horizons. Corporations cannot afford to be risk-takers on this scale. If we would further try to read this as a 'military adjustment of structural adjustment', the obvious hurdles are that structural adjustment has not been faring well and its logic does not lend itself to military adjustment.

Leaf through a courtside report such as Bob Woodward's *Bush at War* and economic decision-makers do not even figure among the cast of characters. The problem with viewing war as accumulation is that it takes propaganda at face value (such as the neoconservative claim that the occupation of Iraq could be paid for by Iraqi oil) and that the cost of conquest and reconstruction is far ahead of and outstrips conceivable material gains. Conventional materialist accounts may overrate the determining role of capital interests – beneficiaries are not necessarily decision-makers; ignore the specificity of political processes – the Southern takeover of American politics; and lose sight of cultural overdetermination – 9/11 patriotism and the Middle East as target of war. There is no particular 'capitalist necessity' to preventive war.

The Leninist theory according to which 'imperialism is the highest stage of capitalism' fails to explain when imperialism does *not* occur and therefore fails to explain when it *does*. It declares imperialism a general disposition of advanced capitalism, which doesn't match general experience or the experience of neoliberal globalisation. There are no compelling reasons why in the era of deterritorialised hi-tech capitalism and remote control by means of financial discipline (and in the case of Iraq a regime of containment and sanctions), offensive territorial war would suddenly be a bright idea.

If none of these interpretations are adequate by themselves, then what? The most plausible option to understand the new wars is to combine the scenarios of geopolitical, state-corporate, regional and domestic designs.

Bichler and Nitzan distinguish between the tech/merger and weapon/petrol constellations in the American economy. The years 2000 and 2001 brought several shocks: the collapse of the new economy, Enron and 9/11. In their argument, the first two signalled that the tech-merger wave of expansion had run its course. The main worry of the Federal Reserve and Wall Street now became deflation, not inflation. The administration's shift to expanding the military budget and war (fuelling replacement demand for military equipment) served as avenues of reflation. Iraq as the target, in their reasoning, would serve reflation through the implicit agenda of gaining leverage in controlling oil prices, and keeping prices high if necessary. The events of 9/11 provided a political opportunity to merge these agendas. Bichler and Nitzan recognise that no single motive explains the new wars. But their reasoning offers some ground for a convergence of interests between geopolitics and Wall Street; if it doesn't explain the cause for war, it might explain why Wall Street didn't complain more loudly about the turn of affairs.³²

This theatre of mixed signals has something to go on for different actors and audiences. All that is required is sufficient coherence for concerted action, while the meanings of action differ for different players. Different actors

perform in different dramas, which audiences take to be a single performance. The scenarios converge provisionally. As in Luigi Pirandello's play *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, the characters may take over the script in the course of the performance. The scenarios play in multiple theatres – for insider, domestic, regional and global audiences. Because of the sound-bite nature of American political discourse, the domestic audience is conditioned to expect instant results; geared to short-term outcomes, it is unaccustomed to dealing with long-term projects. Creating a long-term narrative, like the Cold War, takes more than British intelligence reports culled from magazines and student essays. Regional and global audiences tick according to different clocks than American audiences.

Capabilities are related to weaknesses. Over time, the US has created increasingly Pentagon-heavy governments; military assessments lead foreign policy – and do so in the language of control and dominance – and diplomacy trails behind. In the build-up to war in Iraq, the United States addressed the international community in afterthoughts that were zigzagging, sounded insincere and were continually interrupted by muscular Pentagon statements. The US disparages UN authority and then claims it must attack Iraq to uphold UN resolutions; it must attack Iraq because of WMD, or because of its nuclear threat; or to remove tyranny, effect regime change and democratise the Middle East. 'Disastrous diplomacy' is no incident but a function of the long-term creeping militarisation of American government.³³ In the Bush II administration, former war leaders are in charge of diplomacy and warmongers in charge of the Pentagon.

In interpreting the new wars, a matter of balance is neither to attribute too much rationality and coherence nor to dismiss them as right-wing absurdity; there is a limit to 'making sense'. Rationality of method can go together with irrationality of values and objectives, and the madness is likely to lie in the project itself, in the values and vision driving it. The core problem is the project: who on earth needs another American century? In a speech in Beijing in 1995, Prime Minister Mahathir of Malaysia declared that in his view the coming century would not be an Asian century but a global century. This kind of recognition of interconnectedness is in keeping with the twenty-first century and this wide spirit of diplomacy and magnanimity is glaringly absent from the American cult of power.

Who is the author of these scenarios of power? The usual reading is that 9/11 has been taken as an opportunity by the American war party. But what if 9/11 was a trap and going to war is taking the bait? In the 1960s, the Brazilian guerrilla leader Carlos Marighella formulated the aims of revolutionary armed struggle as follows:

It is necessary to turn political crisis into armed conflict by performing violent actions that will force those in power to transform the political situation of the country into a military situation. That will alienate the masses, who, from then on, will revolt against the army and the police and blame them for the state of things.

Chalmers Johnson quotes this and draws a parallel with the Second Intifada of 2000 and 2001, which militarised Israeli policy, and the American reactions to 9/11.³⁴ In this reasoning, 9/11 has succeeded in unleashing American militarism and leading the United States on the war path, producing the effect that Marighella anticipated domestically on a world scale. The United States has taken the bait.

In the words of Jürgen Habermas: ‘the normative authority of the United States lies in ruins’.³⁵ In this reading, the United States has gained itself another Vietnam and walked into a West Bank all of its own. Whose scenario of power are we actually in?

Parochial hegemony and transnational hegemony are difficult to reconcile. Domestic selling points may be international non-starters; domestic strengths, international hurdles. The insular, inward-looking and provincial character of American political debate, culture and education make it difficult to resonate with transnational trends. Most American politics takes place in a ‘cultural cocoon’³⁶ and Southern conservatism is a cocoon within a cocoon. The Bush II administration builds on learning curves that are mostly of a domestic nature. Unlike the New Democrats, this administration speaks to domestic rather than international audiences. It presents war as liberation and occupation as democracy in a way that might satisfy domestic audiences and compliant media but troubles the rest of the world. Since the American idea of going it alone is a fantasy, international cooperation is needed, but American diplomacy has alienated public opinion and international forums. The policy crafted to produce domestic hegemony is economically unaffordable, internationally polarising, destabilises the Middle East and is unacceptable in the Muslim world, Asia and Europe.

Notes

- 1 This is a rewrite and update of Chapter 2 in my book *Globalization or Empire?* London: Routledge, 2004.
- 2 D. Priest, *The Mission: Waging War and Keeping Peace with America’s Military*, New York: Norton, 2004; A. Bacevich, *American Empire: The Realities and Consequences of US Diplomacy*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002. The influence of the military, of course, goes way back; in the 1960s Juan Bosch in the Dominican Republic introduced the term ‘Pentagonism’.
- 3 J. Nye, *The Paradox of American Power*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003, p. 143.
- 4 J. Bhagwati and H. T. Patrick (eds) *Aggressive Unilateralism: America’s 301 Trade Policy and the World Trading System*, London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991.
- 5 M. Mastanduno, ‘Preserving the Unipolar Moment: Realist Theories and US Grand Strategy After the Cold War’, *International Security*, Vol. 21, No. 4 (Spring 1997), p. 66.
- 6 S. Huntington, ‘The Lonely Superpower’, *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 72, No. 2 (March–April 1999), p. 36.
- 7 L. Gruber, *Ruling the World: Power Politics and the Rise of Supranational Institutions*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000.
- 8 S. Brooks and W. Wohlforth, ‘American Primacy in Perspective’, *Foreign Affairs* (July–August 2002), p. 21.

- 9 *Ibid.*, pp. 30–1.
- 10 *Ibid.*, p. 31.
- 11 The increase of \$48 billion for FY 2003 equals the entire military budget of Japan. It brings military spending for 2003 to a total of \$380 billion, which exceeds the combined military spending of the next nineteen largest military spenders. The US intelligence community's roughly \$30 billion budget is greater than the national defence budgets of all but six countries in the world. This budget exceeds Cold War military spending by more than 15 per cent. Defence spending would rise to \$405 billion in 2005.
- 12 R. Ratnesar, 'In Defense of Hegemony', *Time*, 18 June 2001.
- 13 See S. Drury, *Leo Strauss and the American Right*, New York: St Martin's Press, 1997; E. Drew, 'The Neocons in Power', *New York Review of Books*, 12 June 2003; S. Hersh, 'Selective Intelligence', *The New Yorker*, 12 May 2003; P. Escobar, 'This War is Brought to You by ...' *Asia Times Online*, 20 March 2003.
- 14 According to Reagan, "Government is the problem, not the solution". Government involvement in the economy was to be restricted. But Reagan was perfectly happy to get the government involved in social issues such as abortion and school prayer. Reagan also wanted the government expanded when it came to national defense, which he wanted to increase ... The Reagan administration was staffed by a variety of people, including supply-siders, monetarists, neoconservative intellectuals and front men for the concentration of corporate economic power.
(S. D. Cummings, *The Dixiefication of America: The American Odyssey into the Conservative Economic Trap*, Westport, CT: Praeger, 1998, p. 79)
- 15 D. A. Stockman, *Triumph of Politics: How the Reagan Revolution Failed*, New York: Harper and Row, 1986, p. 402.
- 16 'Extensive tax cuts will require Congress to limit the growth of social programs and public investment and undermine other programs altogether ... Rising deficits will inevitably force Congress to starve those "wasteful" social programs. The prospective high deficits may even make it imperative to privatize Social Security and Medicare eventually' (J. Madrick, 'The Iraqi Time Bomb', *New York Times Magazine*, 6 April 2003).
- 17 Even without new tax cuts, the Committee for Economic Development, an organisation of leading CEOs, predicts a decade of 'annual deficits of \$300 billion to \$400 billion, increasing as far as the eye can see', and opposes new tax cuts; D. Broder, 'CEOs Fear Projected Budget Deficits', *News Gazette* (Champaign, IL), 6 March 2003.
- 18 L. Cockburn, *Out of Control*, New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1987.
- 19 Hersh, *op. cit.*
- 20 Cf. Anatol Lieven, 'The Push for War', *London Review of Books*, Vol. 24, No. 19 (3 October 2002). On Christian Zionism see J. Nederveen Pieterse, 'The History of a Metaphor: Christian Zionism and the Politics of Apocalypse', in *Christianity and Hegemony: Religion and Politics on the Frontiers of Social Change*, Oxford: Berg, 1992.
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- 22 R. Kagan, *Paradise and Power: America and Europe in the New World Order*, New York: Knopf, 2003.
- 23 J. Beinin, 'Pro-Israel Hawks and the Second Gulf War', *Middle East Report*, 6 April 2003; M. Lind, 'The Israel Lobby', *Prospect*, April 2002.
- 24 See 'America and the IMF/World Bank: What Leadership?' *The Economist*, 20 April 2002.
- 25 N. Denzin and S. Lincoln (eds), *9/11 in American Culture*, Oxford: Oxford Publicity Partnership, 2003.

- 26 Y. Halabi, 'Orientalism and US Democratization Policy in the Middle East', *International Studies*, Vol. 36, No. 4 (1999).
- 27 'While neoconservative intellectuals provided the rationalizations, Southern fundamentalists provided the agenda for George W. Bush in social policy' (this refers to 'faith-based institutions'); M. Lind, *Made in Texas: George W. Bush and the Southern Takeover of American Politics*, New York: Basic Books, 2003, pp. 118, 141–2.
- 28 A critique of American unilateralism from a conservative viewpoint is C. Prestowitz, *Rogue Nation*, New York: Basic Books, 2003.
- 29 I. Wallerstein, *The Decline of American Power*, New York: New Press, 2003, p. 26.
- 30 D. Harvey, *The 'New' Imperialism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- 31 '[U]nder the Bush administration the Treasury takes its marching orders from White House political operatives. As the New Republic reports, when John Snow meets with Karl Rove, the meetings take place in Mr Rove's office'; P. Krugman, 'Everything is Political', *New York Times*, 5 August 2003.
- 32 S. Bichler and J. Nitzan, 'Dominant Capital and the New Wars', 2004. Available <http://www.bnarchives.net>
- 33 J. Rubin, 'Stumbling into War', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 82, No. 5 (2003).
- 34 C. Johnson, 'American Militarism and Blowback', *New Political Science*, Vol. 24, No. 1 (2002), p. 22.
- 35 J. Habermas, 'The Fall of the Monument', *The Hindu*, 5 June 2003.
- 36 Z. Sardar and M. W. Davis, *Why Do People Hate America?*, New York: Disinformation, 2002.

Index

- absolute antagonism 58
accumulation by dispossession 157–9, 175
Achcar, Gilbert 58
Acheson, Dean 120, 134, 140
Adelman, Kenneth 101
AEI *see* American Enterprise Institute
Afghanistan 19, 57–9, 71, 78, 79–80, 82, 132–3
Africa 15, 65
aid *see* development agenda
Albright, Madeleine 136
Allen, Richard V. 101
al-Qaeda 57–8, 59, 69, 79
Altvater, Elmar 158–9
American Enterprise Institute 97, 100, 102, 184
American exceptionalism 10–11, 108, 124, 183
American imperialism *see* US imperialism
'Americanism' 54, 55, 62–3
Americans for Tax Reform 100–1
Anderson, Perry 25, 26, 50–1, 52
Annan, Kofi 170
anti-Americanism: Europe 126; Iran 78
anti-communism: conservatism in US 92, 94–5, 98, 99–100, 101; in Indonesia 80; and primacy strategy 139–41; reactionary politics 15, 65, 73–4, 79–80, 85
anti-imperialist movements 20–1, 72
anti-Semitism and US politics 99
anti-universalism 67–8, 77, 102
Arab nationalism 74–5, 76, 77
Arab Socialist Union (Egypt) 75
Arab–Israeli conflict 74–5, 76
'arc of crisis' 14, 15, 16, 72
arms control policy 99, 100
Aron, Raymond 29
Asia: financial crisis 37, 81; and unipolarity of US 61–2; *see also* Central Asia; China; East Asia; Japan; South-East Asia
asymmetrical conflict: war on terror 57–61
Augustus, Roman emperor 6
'axis of evil' 91–2, 105–6, 185
Al-Azmeh, Aziz 68
Bacevich, Andrew J. 118
bait and switch tactics of Bush turn 148–9
Baker, James 105, 187
Balz, Dan 132–3
Bank for International Settlements 34, 35
Bell, Daniel 94, 98
Bhutto, Zulfikar Ali 77–8
Bichler, S. 189
bin Laden, Osama 57
Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention 165
BIS 34, 35
Blair, Tony 104
'blowback' 66, 74, 79, 81, 83, 122
Bobbitt, Philip 136
Bolton, John 106
Bosnia 101–2, 103, 104
Bretton Woods conference 15, 28, 31, 32
British Empire 6–7, 120, 121–2, 154*n*
Bromley, Simon 2, 3, 8
Brookings Institution 98
Brzezinski, Zbigniew 47, 57, 89*n*, 99, 136, 137; 'arc of crisis' 14, 72
Buchanan, Pat 100, 136
Buckley, William F., Jr 94
Bukharin, Nikolai Ivanovich 54
Burnham, James 94
Bush, George H.W. 99, 101–3, 135, 136
Bush II administration: assessment of 180, 183–91; conservatism and foreign policy 104–8; development agendas

- 155–79; intellectual antecedents 4–5, 91–113; militarisation 189–90; military aggression 125; pre-emption doctrine 8, 60–1, 63, 156, 162–5, 167–8, 171, 174; primacy strategy 9–10, 11–12, 17–18, 131–7, 143–52, 181, 183; rise of imperialism 1, 39–41, 114–30; *see also* 9/11 attacks; Iraq war; war on terror
- ‘Bush turn’ 9–10, 131–54
- business class and primacy 131, 135–7, 145, 149, 152, 183
- Byrd, Robert 103
- Callinicos, Alex 48
- Canadian integration model 27, 29
- capitalism: accumulation by dispossession 157–9, 175; historical development of US imperialism 25–30; nature of British Empire 6–7; offensive neoliberalism scenario 188–9; US as coordinator of 7–8, 9, 12–13; US and international capitalist order 44–64, 131, 132, 149–50; and US primacy 137–9, 141–6, 147, 149–52
- capitalist imperialism 6, 7–8, 24–5, 45
- Carter administration 56, 57, 89*n*, 99–100
- Casey, William 101
- Cato Institute 97, 176*n*
- Central America and US imperialism 119
- Central Asia: and Bush turn 147–8; and Clinton administration 137; Pakistani support for Islamist movements 88*n*; and reactionary politics 65, 70, 77–80, 86*n*; US interventions 15, 16, 56
- Cheney, Dick 91, 106, 126–7, 133, 134, 136, 152–3, 181
- China: Bush II’s foreign policy 104, 105, 108; and capitalist core 54–5, 56; as economic rival 37, 104, 137; and primacy strategy 146, 147–8
- Chomsky, Noam 44
- Christian evangelical conservatism in US 100
- CIA 79, 99, 167
- civil liberties and development 167–8, 172
- Clark Amendment (1976)(US) 14
- Clarke, Jonathan 63, 100, 104, 106, 108
- Clinton, Bill 102
- Clinton administration: defence policy 180–1; development agenda 160–1; foreign policy and conservatism 103–4, 185; and primacy strategy 16, 135–6, 137, 144, 145–6, 183–4; unilateralism 147
- Coalition for a Democratic Majority 99
- coercive power 2–3, 49, 126, 159; and ‘failed states’ rhetoric 166, 168–9, 170, 173, 175
- Cold War 1, 2, 6, 12–17, 102; analogy with 9/11 134; end of Cold War disorders US foreign policy 101–2; end of Cold War and reactionary politics 15–16, 65–90; end of and international capitalist order 49–52, 139–41; impact of Islam 16, 74–80; as model for primacy strategy 139–43, 147, 151; programmatic problems for primacy after 144–6
- Cold War plus scenario of power 186, 187–8
- collective power 8, 49, 54, 56, 61–2
- collegial structure and primacy 144, 145
- commanders-in-chief (CinCs)(US) 180–1
- Committee on the Present Danger 99, 101, 184
- communism 12–13; eradication in Indonesia 80; US penetration of former communist states 37–8; US securing world during Cold War 49–50, 114–15; *see also* Cold War
- community of states 138–9, 140, 144
- competitiveness: ‘inter-imperial rivalry’ 35–6, 37, 51, 55, 56, 62; regional competition 47, 48; and US economy 32, 33
- conservatism in US 91–113, 184–6, 188, 191; *see also* neoconservatism; reactionary politics
- containment strategy 59, 60, 74, 133, 160
- Cooley, John 87*n*
- cooperation and coordination strategy 49, 50–2, 54, 55, 56, 60–1, 62–3
- cooperative security doctrine 137, 139, 144
- counterintelligence of US conservatives 97–8
- Cox, Michael 3, 10–11
- Crockett, Andrew 35
- Cuba: Platt Amendment (1903) 134
- culture of powerlessness 173–4
- Daalder, I. 100
- DDII (Indonesia) 82
- defence *see* military hegemony of US; US Defense Department
- Defense Department Reorganisation Bill (1986) 180
- Defense Planning Guidance* 56, 102, 107, 181

- democratic imperialism 102–3, 104, 105–6, 108–9
- Democratic Leadership Council (US) 102, 107
- Democratic National Committee (US) 110*n*
- Democratic Party 96–8, 99–100, 106–7, 108, 135–6
- dependency structure for primacy 146–9
- détente: conservative opposition 99, 101
- deterrence and US foreign policy 58, 59, 60
- development agendas 16–17, 155–79
- Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia 80
- Dewey, John 96
- direct investment by US 29, 30, 31, 53
- disciplinary power 133, 142, 168–74, 175
- dispossession, accumulation by 157–9, 175
- distributive power 8, 49, 52, 53, 55, 56, 62
- Dole, Robert 103, 135
- dollar 28, 32, 142, 154*n*
- domestic hegemony 188, 191
- domestic terrorism and Patriot Act 167
- Eagleburger, Lawrence 153*n*, 187
- East Asia 36–7, 144
- Economic Policy Institute 164
- economics: and development agenda 162–5, 174; liberal capitalism and international order 51–2; multi-polarity tendency 52–4; neoliberalism and economic crises 36–7; offensive neoliberalism scenario 188–9; and primacy strategy 141–2, 143–4; and reactionary politics 69, 72–3; *see also* globalisation; neoliberalism; US economy
- Egypt: reactionary Islam 70, 74–5, 87*n*
- elite support in US 131, 135–7, 145, 149, 152
- ‘emerging markets’ 160
- empire: as contested term 118–24; revival of concept 1–2; types of 6–7; use of term 24; *see also* US imperialism
- ‘empire by invitation’ 12, 30, 122
- ‘empire in denial’ 10–11, 118
- empowerment and development 162, 171
- ‘engagement and enlargement strategy’ 160, 161, 181
- Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility 162
- Europe: dependency on US military power 36, 61, 144; Eurocentrism of end of Cold War 15, 16; as post-war US protectorate 12, 29, 144–5; and preemptive strategy 9; primacy model 150–1; and primacy strategy 140, 141, 142–3, 146, 147, 149; reactionary politics 69; and unipolarity of US 61–2, 104, 145, 147, 185
- European Union: ‘inter-imperial rivalry’ 35–6
- exceptionalism 10–11, 108, 124, 183
- ‘excluded/failed states’ 155, 156, 159–74; definition 168, 172
- Federalist Society (US) 111*n*
- Feith, Douglas 106
- Ferguson, Niall 46, 118, 127
- finance: liberalisation in US 32–3, 34, 36, 143; and scenarios of power 189
- Financial Stability Forum 35, 157
- Financing for Development conference 170
- Fischer, Joschka 36
- Ford administration 98
- foreign direct investment (FDI) 29, 30, 53
- former Yugoslavia 86*n*, 101–2, 103, 104, 145; *see also* Bosnia; Kosovo
- Fortune* magazine 27–8, 94
- free market economics *see* neoliberalism
- free trade: US postwar aim 27–8
- Freedom House 172
- Friedman, Thomas 158
- Front National (France) 67
- Fukuyama, Francis 65, 91, 102, 108–9
- G-7 34, 39, 157, 169–70
- G-20 157
- Gaddis, John Lewis 101
- Galbraith, J.K. 98
- Gallagher, John 120
- geopolitics of US 146, 183, 189
- Gindin, Sam 3, 6, 8–9, 13, 156
- global capitalism and US imperialism 25–30, 33–41; development agenda 155–6, 158–9
- global governance and development 160
- global order: 9/11 and new world order 132–5; and primacy strategy 137–41, 144–9, 149–50; *see also* international capitalist order
- globalisation: distinct from imperialism 24–5; internationalisation of the state 30; neoliberalist development 16–17, 32–4, 66, 158–65, 173–4, 175, 183;

- and reactionary politics 67–70, 72–3, 81, 84–5
 ‘golden straitjacket’ 17, 158–9, 165, 167, 168–9
 Goldwater, Barry 95
 Goldwin, R. 98
 Gorbachev, Mikhail 72, 80, 101
 Gore, Al 136, 137
 Gowan, Peter 3, 9–10, 15, 16, 29, 48, 50–1, 52, 54
 Grahl, John 36
 Gramsci, Antonio 49, 54, 188
 grand strategy 131–2, 133, 135, 137–8; *see also* primacy strategy
 grants: disciplinary effect 169–70; *see also* Millennium Challenge Account
 Great Society programmes 97, 108
 Gulf War (1990–1) 38, 106
- Habermas, Jürgen 191
 Halberstam, D. 103
 Halliday, Fred 16, 57–8, 60
 Halper, Stefan 63, 100, 104, 106, 108
 Hardt, Michael 24, 25–6, 44
 Harvey, David 46–7, 48, 157
 Hayek, Friedrich von 92–3, 94
 hegemony of US 3, 12–13, 114–18; and economic effects 28–9, 46–7, 50, 52–3, 122–3, 127, 141–2, 143–4, 182; re-establishing primacy 131–54; ultra-imperialism 50–1; *see also* development agenda; military hegemony of US; US imperialism
 Helms, Jesse 99
 Heritage Foundation 97, 98, 169, 176*n*;
Index of Economic Freedom 172–3
 Heymatyar, Gulbuddin 78
 Hezb-e-Islami (Islamic Party)(Afghanistan) 78
 high technology warfare 100, 103
 Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) 162
 Himmelfarb, Gertrude 98
 Hirschman, A.O. 97
 historical materialism 24–5
 Hodgson, G. 96
 Hofstadter, Richard 98
 Holbrooke, Richard 103
 human security issues 160
 Huntington, Samuel 102–3, 107, 108–9, 111*n*, 149, 181
- IDA 169–70, 171
 identity politics 68–9, 73
 ideology: behind Bush II administration 4–5, 91–113; framework for war on terror 3–5, 104–8; of reactionary Islam 69–70; scenarios of power 186–91; US and international capitalist order 44–64
 Ignatieff, Michael 10–11, 118
 Ikenberry, John 62
 Ikle, Fred 101
 IMF 28–9, 34, 69, 123, 142, 186; and development agenda 157, 160, 161–2, 176*n*
 ‘imperial overstretch’ 115
 imperialism *see* empire; US imperialism
 ‘imperialist episode’ 17, 19–20, 180, 182–3
 inclusion and development 161, 171
 individualism and conservatism in US 95–6
 Indonesia: reactionary politics 80–2
 Indonesian Democratic Party 89*n*
 informal imperialism of US 26–30, 36–8, 40–1, 45, 118–24
 insecurity *see* security/insecurity paradox
 inter-imperialism 46–7, 48, 49; ‘inter-imperial rivalry’ 35–6, 37, 51, 55, 56, 62
 Inter-Service Intelligence (ISI)(Pakistan) 78, 88*n*
 Intermediate Nuclear Force Treaty (1987) 101
 international capitalist order: and primacy strategy 137–9, 141–6, 147, 149–52; and US power 44–64, 131, 132
 International Development Association 169–70, 171
 International Financial Institution Advisory Commission 169
 international institutions 147, 148, 157, 158–9, 161–2, 172; *see also* IMF; World Bank
 internationalism 77, 107, 116, 183
 internationalization of the state 30
 Iran 59, 60, 78–9, 106, 137, 148
 Iranian Revolution (1979) 59, 78
 Iraq: and Clinton administration 137; and end of Cold War 101; left-wing support for reactionary insurgents 85*n*; non-nuclear capacity facilitates regime change 59–60, 106; and primacy strategy 132–3, 147, 149; unsuitability for US imperialism 19–20; US foreign policy pre-9/11 59, 101, 104, 105; and

- US imperialism 40, 41, 118, 123, 126–7
- Iraq war (2003) 9, 19, 125, 190; and 9/11 105–8, 133–4; as pre-emption 59–61; and primacy strategy 132–3, 147
- Islam: Bush II's primacy strategy 146–7
- Islamicisation in Pakistan 78
- Islamicism: Bush turn and cleavage in mass politics 146–7, 148; opposition to secular modernisation 86*n*; and reactionary politics 15–16, 65, 69, 70, 75–82, 83; US support for militantism 79–80, 82; *see also* Taliban
- isolationism of US 104–5, 137, 183
- Israel: Arab–Israeli conflict 74–5, 76; Palestinian–Israeli conflict 60, 148; and US 99, 185–6
- Jackson, Henry ‘Scoop’ 18, 99, 100
- Jamaat-e-Islami (Islamic Party)(Pakistan) 78
- James, William 96
- Japan 35–6, 36–7, 37, 54
- Jeemah Islamiyah (Indonesia) 82
- Jefferson, Thomas 25, 26
- Johnson, Chalmers 85*n*, 191
- Johnson, Lyndon 96–7, 108
- Kagan, Robert 99, 103, 104, 165–6, 185
- Kautsky, Karl Johann 3, 54, 55
- Kennedy, Paul 115, 116
- Kennedy administration 96
- Kerry, John 103, 149
- Keynes, John Maynard 27
- Kingdon, John 4, 105
- Kirk, Russell 93, 94
- Kirkpatrick, Jeanne 18, 91, 100, 101, 102
- KISDI (Indonesia) 82
- Kissinger, Henry 99, 105
- knowledge networks in US 97–9, 99–100
- Kosovo 36, 39, 104, 145
- Kotz, David 164
- Krauthammer, Charles 91, 102
- Kristol, Irving 91, 98, 99, 102, 108, 111*n*
- Kristol, William 103–4, 106, 108, 112*n*
- Lake, Anthony 103, 135
- land rights and development 156, 157
- Laskar Jihad (Indonesia) 82
- Latin America and US imperialism 119
- Lebanon: Iranian backing for Shi'ites 78–9
- Lemann, Nicholas 133–4
- Lenin, Vladimir Ilyich 54, 55
- Lerrick, Adam 169
- Lewis, Bernard 187
- Libby, Lewis 136, 152*n*
- liberal capitalism 51–2; expanding capitalist core 54–6; *see also* international capitalist order
- liberalisation of US finance 32–3, 34, 36, 143
- liberalism: conservative antipathy 92; split in Democrats 96–8
- libertarian conservatism 92–3, 94–5, 98, 100–1
- Lieberman, Joe 103
- Lieven, Anatol 183–4
- Lieven, Dominic 120
- Life* (magazine) 27, 94
- Life of Brian, The* (film) 124
- Lind, Michael 187, 188
- Lindsay, J. 100
- Lipset, Seymour Martin 98
- Luce, Henry 94
- Luttwak, Edward N. 22–3*n*
- McCain, John 103
- McCarthy, Joseph 94
- McGirr, L. 96
- McGovern–Fraser Commission 110*n*
- McMichael, Philip 25
- Macmillan, Harold 115
- Made in Texas* scenario of power 186, 187
- madrassas* in Pakistan 78
- Mahathir bin Mohammad 190
- Mamdani, Mahmood 85–6*n*, 87*n*
- Mann, Michael 45, 118
- Marighella, Carlos 190, 191
- Marshall, Will 107
- Marx, Karl 47
- Marxist theory 2, 3, 24; *see also* capitalism; international capitalist order
- mass politics and primacy strategy 141, 146–7
- Meltzer, Allan H. 169
- mercantile empire 6, 7
- Meyer, Frank 94–5
- Middle East: Cold War plus scenario 187–8; oil and international capitalist order 47, 56, 60; and primacy strategy 146–7, 148, 149; reactionary politics 63, 70, 74–7; US foreign policy 15, 16, 58, 59–61, 126–7
- military hegemony of US 13, 14; budget increases 166–7, 181; Cold War plus scenario 187–8; European dependency on 36, 61, 144; high technology warfare 100, 103; and international capitalist

- order 44, 45–6, 48, 49, 50–1, 52, 53–4, 62; as international police force 37–9; and Iraq war 60, 125; primacy and collegial structure 144, 145; superiority of US capacity 55–6, 60, 61, 62; and unilateralism 185–6; and unipolar moment 180–3
- Millennium Challenge Account (MCA) 16–17, 155–7, 167, 168–75; eligibility criteria 170–2; historical context 157–9
- Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) 170
- Millennium Development Goals 170, 173
- Milosevic, Slobodan 104
- Mises, Ludwig von 92
- Mitchell, John 95
- modernisation and reactionary politics 67–8
- moralist movement conservatives in US 99, 100
- movement conservatism 91, 95–108
- Moynihan, D.P. 18, 97
- Muhammadiyah (Indonesia) 89*n*
- mujahidin in Afghanistan 57, 78, 79, 80
- multilateralism 160, 181, 182–3, 185
- Muravchik, Joshua 102
- muscular internationalism of US 107, 116
- Nahalatul Ulama (Indonesia) 82, 89*n*
- Nasserism 75, 76
- nation-building: US as empire in denial 121; US foreign policy and war on terror 59, 60–1, 104–5
- ‘national greatness’ 108, 112*n*
- National Missile Defense programme 55, 165
- National Review* 94–5
- National Security Council: NSC-68 (1950) 30, 38; and primacy strategy 132–3
- National Security Strategy (2002) 38, 91–2, 106, 107–8, 185; and failed states 166, 168–9, 172; and Millennium Challenge Account 16–17, 155; and primacy strategy 134, 147, 149
- National Security Strategy (Clinton) 180–1
- nationalism in Middle East 74–5, 76, 77
- NATO 29, 36, 39, 104, 141, 145
- Negri, Antonio 24, 25–6, 44
- Negroponte, John 21*n*
- neoconservatism 18, 99; Bush II administration 106, 108, 184–6, 187–8; and Democratic Party 96–7, 100; ideological split 102; and ‘imperial turn’ 117; and international capitalist order 62, 63; Reagan administration 100–1; and scenarios of power 186, 187–8
- neoliberalism: and development agenda 16, 17, 32–4, 66, 157, 158–65, 173–4, 175; and globalisation 16–17, 32–4, 66, 67–70, 173–4, 183; problems of US imperialism 34–41; reactionary political movements 67–70; reconstitution of empire 14–15, 25, 31–4; and scenarios of power 186, 188–9
- neorealism 187–8
- New Alternatives Workshop 100
- ‘new global development compact’ 155, 171; *see also* Millennium Challenge Account
- ‘new imperialism’ 157
- New International Financial Architecture 157
- 9/11 attacks 4; and Bush II’s foreign policy 105–8, 132–5, 185–6; and development agenda 165–8; and neoconservative ascendancy 18–19; and primacy strategy 10, 131–2, 133–4, 136; as revolutionary provocation 190–1; Taliban and al-Qaeda 58–9; and US unilateralism 165
- Nitzan, J. 189
- Nitze, Paul 99, 101
- Nixon administration 32, 96, 97
- ‘non-integrating Gap’ 156, 159, 162
- Norquist, Grover 100–1
- North Africa 15, 65
- North Korea 104, 105, 106, 137
- nuclear weapons and regime change 59–60, 106
- Nye, Joseph 45, 45–6, 126, 146, 181
- Ocampo, Jose Antonio 160
- offensive neoliberalism 186, 188–9
- oil: and international capitalist order 47, 56, 60; and primacy strategy 154*n*; Saudi Arabia and reactionary politics 76, 77
- O’Loughlin, Ben 4, 18–19
- ownership and development 161, 162, 171
- Pakistan 57, 77–8, 79, 88*n*
- Palestinian–Israeli conflict 60, 148
- pan-Arabism 75, 76
- Pancasila* 81
- Panitch, Leo 3, 6, 8–9, 13, 156
- Paris Peace Conference (1919–20) 27

- parochialism of US 191
 Partai Komunis Indonesia (PKI) 80
 'Pashtun belt' 78
 Patriot Act (2002) 21*n*, 166, 167–8, 172
 People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) 57, 89*n*
 performance-based development grants 169–70
 Perle, Richard 100, 101, 185, 186
 Pfaff, William 136
 Phillips, Kevin 95–6
 Pieterse, Jan Nederveen 3, 17–18
 Pinkerton, Jim 101
 Platt Amendment (1903) 134
 PNAC *see* Project for a New American Century
 Podhoretz, Norman 91, 99, 101
 Polanyi, Karl 26
 political rights and development 167–8, 172
 Posen, Barry R. 9, 135, 136, 137
 post-Washington consensus 160, 161–2, 171
 Poulantzas, Nicos 29, 32
 poverty 161–2, 168–9; *see also* development agendas
 Poverty Reduction Growth Facility 162
 Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers 161, 162
 Powell, Colin 103, 105, 106, 133, 152–3*n*
 power 180–93; liberal capitalist
 international order 49, 61–2; optimism at end of Cold War 71; primacy strategy 131–54; reproduction of power and development agenda 157–8; scenarios of power 186–91; and US imperialism 114–18, 125–6; *see also* coercive power; collective power; distributive power
 powerlessness, culture of 173–4
 pragmatism in US conservatism 96, 99
 'pre-emptive development' 156, 167–8, 171
 pre-emptive strategy 8, 63; and absolute hostility 58; and development agenda 16–17, 156, 162–5, 167–8, 171, 174; Iraq 59–61; and neoconservatism 102, 103
 Priest, Dana 181
 primacy strategy 3, 9–10, 11–12, 17–18, 131–54, 181–2, 183; *see also* unipolarity
 Project for a New American Century (PNAC) 4, 91, 103–4, 107, 184, 185
 property rights and development 156, 157
 'Protectorate System' 12, 29, 61, 62, 123–4, 140–1, 144–5, 149
 public opinion: and neoliberalism in South 159–60; and US exit strategies 126–7; and US primacy strategy 134–5, 145–6
 Putin, Vladimir 105
 Quayle, Dan 112*n*
 Qutb, Sayyid 87*n*
 Raab, Earl 98
 Rais, Amien 89*n*
 Rand, Ayn 92, 94
 Rand Corporation 19
 reactionary politics 15–16, 65–90; *see also* conservatism
 Reagan administration: and Afghan civil war 57, 79–80; anti-Soviet agenda 15, 18, 73–4, 79–80, 99, 101; and Bush II's neoconservatism 184–6; foreign policy and conservatism 100–1; knowledge networks 98; neoliberal restructuring programme 14–15
 'regime change' strategy 9, 59, 106; Clinton administration 16, 137; and nuclear capacity 59–60, 106
 regional commands (US military) 180–1
 regional competition 47, 48
 Republican Party: history of conservatism 91–113
 Revolution in Military Affairs 55
 revolutionary and reactionary politics 70
 Rice, Condoleeza 105, 106, 133–4, 152*n*
 right wing politics *see* reactionary politics
 Robinson, Ronald 120
 'rogue states' 16, 37–8, 137; *see also* 'excluded/failed' states
 Roman empire 6, 121
 Roosevelt, Theodore 27, 183
 Ross, Andrew L. 9, 135, 136, 137
 Rostow, Eugene 99, 101
 Rove, Karl 187
 Rumsfeld, Donald 106, 132–3, 135, 148, 152*n*
 Rusher, William 95
 Russia 54–5, 56, 105, 145, 146, 147–8; *see also* Cold War; USSR
 Sadat, Anwar el- 75
 Said, Edward 173–4
 Sassoon, Donald 34
 Saudi Arabia 57, 59, 60, 74, 76–7, 77–8, 79, 88*n*
 Saull, Richard 3, 15–16

- Schelling, Thomas 58
 Schlamm, Willi 94
 Schultz, George 101
 Scowcroft, Brent 105, 153*n*, 187
 secularisation 67–8, 74–7
 security/insecurity paradox 158–9, 161–2, 166–7, 168–74
 selective engagement doctrine 137, 139
 self-determination of states 121, 122
 self-interest and US foreign policy 61–3
 September 11 *see* 9/11 attacks
 Shaw, Martin 29
 Shi'ite Muslims 78–9, 88*n*
 Siegel, Fred 97
 Simon, William 111*n*
 Six-Day War (1967) 74–5
 social inclusion and development 161, 171
 social services provision in US 166–7
 social spending restructuring in US 184–5
 socialism: libertarian conservatism 92–3; in Middle East 74, 77–8
 Soederberg, Susanne 3, 16–17
 Somalia 103
 South Korea: economic crisis 37
 South-East Asia 65, 70, 80–2, 144
 Southern Agrarians 93
 Southern Democrats in US 97
 Soviet Union *see* USSR
 state: American constitution 25–6; and capitalist imperialism 24–5, 34; evolution and empire 7; libertarian conservative view of 92–3; *see also* collective power; nation-building
 states: internationalisation of 30
 Stockman, David 184
 Strange, Susan 115
 'strategic threat environments' 40
 Strauss, Leo 93, 98, 100, 103, 108, 112*n*, 184
 'strong alliances' 138
 structural adjustment: US economic crisis 32–3
 structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) 159, 160
 Subianto, Prabowo 82
 Suharto regime in Indonesia 80–2
 Sukarno, Ahmed 80
 Sun Belt conservatism 91, 95–6, 99
 Sunni Muslims 88*n*
 super-imperialism of US 45, 46, 49, 50, 54
 surveillance and security 167
 symbolic politics and Bush turn 147–8
 Takfir wal Hijra (Egypt) 67
 Taliban and al-Qaeda 57, 58
 tax cuts as economic stimulus 184–5
 Taylor, John 169
 territory: US as empire in denial 119–20
 terrorism: and 'failed states' 168–9; *see also* asymmetrical conflict; war on terror
 think tanks 18, 96, 97–9, 169
 Third World: informal US imperialism 29–30; *see also* development agendas
 threat inflation 188
Time (magazine) 27
 Todd, Emmanuel 44, 45, 46
 trade: US as empire in denial 120–1; US manipulation of 27–9
 traditionalist conservatism in US 93–5, 98
 tributary empires 6
 Tucker, Robert 102
 ultra-imperialism 49, 50–1
 UNDP: *Human Development Report* 176*n*
 unilateralism 103, 104, 108, 117, 118, 123, 141; of Clinton administration 147; and development agenda 169–70; domestic impetus 165; multilateral approach 181; and unipolarity of US 181–2, 183–6
 unipolarity 37, 48; neoconservative view 102, 103, 104, 109; and primacy strategy 133, 136, 141, 145, 148; 'unipolar moment' 17, 50, 54–5, 61, 180–3; *see also* primacy strategy
 United Development Party (Indonesia) 89*n*
 United Nations: and Iraq 59; new global order and US primacy 144–5; US relations with 38–9, 104, 138, 147
 United States: Constitution 25–6; and end of Cold War 12–17; overseas perceptions of 126; *see also* hegemony of US; military hegemony of US; US...
 universal free trade 27–8
 universalism: anti-universalism 67–8, 77, 102; of Bush II administration 107
 US Agency for International Development (USAID) 158, 170
 US Defense Department 180–1, 185; budget increases 166–7, 181; *see also* military hegemony of US
 US Department of Homeland Security 21*n*
 US economy: and Cold War 13–14, 143–4; crisis and neoliberal reconstitution 31–4; decline and international capitalist order 46–7, 50,

- 52–3; and development agenda 17, 162–5, 174; effect on hegemony of US 28–9, 52–3, 122–3, 127, 141–2, 143–4, 182; and primacy strategy 141–2, 143–4; and US imperialism 122–3, 127, 182
- US Federal Reserve 33–4, 35
- US foreign policy 3, 17–18; Afghan civil war 57, 79–80; and al-Qaeda hostility 58; analysis of Bush II administration 186–91; coercive foreign relations 2–3, 45, 48, 126; and communist threat 12–13, 73–4, 79–80, 83–5, 114–15; consensual mechanisms 2, 3, 51; and conservatism in US politics 99–108, 186–91; and defence spending 181; and domestic opinion 126–7, 134–5; end of Cold War and reactionary politics 73–85; and international capitalist order 46–7; ‘Israelisation’ after 9/11 185–6; Middle East and Iraq war 59–60; nation-building and war on terror 59, 60–1, 104–5; as reaction to diversity of modern world 46, 48; support for Islamicism 76–7, 78–80; *see also* development agendas; primacy strategy; US imperialism; war on terror
- US imperialism 1–23, 114–130; accumulation by dispossession 157–9, 175; Bush II’s rejection of 104–5; and Cold War 6, 12–17; and conservative ideology 102–3; current problems 34–41; development agendas 16–17, 155–79; empire in denial 10–11, 118–24; exception to rule of decline 115–16; future prospects 124–7; historical development of informal empire 25–30, 40–1; ‘imperial overstretch’ 115; ‘imperialist episode’ 17, 19–20, 180, 182–3; informal imperialism 26–30, 36–8, 40–1, 45, 118–24; in international capitalist order 44–64; nature of 5–12; and neoconservatism 102; as protectorate system 12, 29, 61, 62, 123–4, 140–1, 144–5, 149; socio-economic factors 13–14, 122–3, 127; and war on terror 17–21, 105–8, 116
- US State Department 171–2, 180–1
- US Treasury 35, 39
- USAID 158, 170
- USSR: Afghan war 57, 79–80; communist threat and US foreign policy 12–13, 79–80, 99–100; and end of Cold War 71–2, 74–5, 76; expansionism in 1970s 14; and primacy strategy 139–41; Reagan’s anti-Soviet agenda 15, 18, 73–4, 79–80, 99, 101; *see also* Russia
- Vance, Cyrus 99
- Vidal, Gore 44
- Vietnam War: domestic impact in US 14
- violence: and Western superiority 102; *see also* reactionary politics
- ‘Volcker Shock’ 32–3
- Wade, Robert 123
- Wahhabism 74, 76, 77–8, 82
- Wahid, Abdullah 89*n*
- Wall Street Journal* 172–3
- Wallerstein, Immanuel 188
- Walt, Stephen 62
- War Powers resolution (1973)(US) 14
- war on terror: as asymmetrical conflict 57–61; and development agenda 155, 165–8, 175; difficulties of defining 57; ideological framework 3–5, 44; and primacy strategy 132–3, 147–9; rhetoric of 105–6, 106–8, 188, 191; as slogan 4, 91–2, 105; and US imperialism 17–21, 105–8, 116; *see also* 9/11 attacks
- Warner, John 103
- Washington consensus 158–61, 175
- weapons of mass destruction 59–60
- Weaver, Richard 93, 94
- ‘west Asian crisis’ 60
- White, Cliff 95
- Willetts, Peter 175*n*
- Williams, William Appleman 121
- Wilson, James Q. 97
- Wilson, Woodrow 27
- Wohlstetter, Alfred 100, 103
- Wolfowitz, Paul 91, 99, 100, 106, 133, 136, 152*n*, 188; ‘Defense Planning Guidance’ 56, 102, 107, 181
- Wood, Ellen Meiksins 19, 23*n*, 44, 48, 61
- Woodward, Bob 132–3, 189
- World Bank 28–9, 34, 69, 157, 176*n*, 186; International Development Association 169–70; poverty alleviation programmes 161, 162; and US economic decline 163, 164
- World Islamic League 88*n*
- world order *see* global order; international capitalist order

World Trade Organisation 33, 55, 157,
186
Wright, Ronald 117
Yom Kippur War (1973) 75
Young Americans for Freedom 95

Yugoslavia *see* former Yugoslavia
Zakheim, Dov 106
Zia ul-Haq, Mohammed 78
Zionism 99, 185

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