

## **CHAPTER EIGHT: ESCAPE**

### **Introduction**

Now we turn to the second strand of the triple helix shaping globalization's hidden agenda: the way people *respond* to the degradations imposed by the global generators of humiliation. We are going to look at three responses, beginning with escape.

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### **Riding into the sunset**

The approach in this book is sensitive to feedback mechanisms operating within the triple helix. The escape response to humiliation provides an example because it has affected globalization in a profound way. It has shaped a whole category of 'new' societies: the settler society. The most powerful of these is the United States.

America is an unusual and fascinating phenomenon. It is a settler society that has also acquired a global empire; or, as I have labelled it, a global nation-state-empire.

Almost all commentators accept there is an American empire. The main disagreement among them is whether the existence of such an empire is a good thing or a bad thing; and whether it is inclined to strength or weakness.

Ask Andrew Bacevich, a former soldier turned academic, and we hear that the US government has gladly seized the opportunity to use its military power 'to expand an American imperium' where it served US interests to do so. Its 'ultimate objective is the creation of an open and integrated international order' (Bacevich 2002, 3) based on American-style democratic capitalism. This has been going on for at least a century, he says.

Turn to Thomas Barnett from the US Naval War College and you hear basically the same story, only this time projected into the future as an expanding mission to ‘export security’ into disorderly regions relevant to maintaining the smoothing working of the world’s ‘functioning core’ (Barnett 2004, 125). The same historical and future landscape surveyed by Noam Chomsky is portrayed as a bid for global dominance at the expense of human rights, pushed forward through the use of force and fraud (Chomsky 2003).

Table One  
The state of the American Empire

	STRONG AND/OR GETTING STRONGER	WEAK AND/OR GETTING WEAKER	
GOOD	<i>Bacevich, Kissinger Brezinski Ikenberry Bobbitt Nye</i>	<i>Ferguson</i>	GOOD
	<i>Ignatieff</i>	<i>Kupchan</i>	
BAD	<i>Todd Mann Chomsky</i>	<i>Wallerstein</i>	BAD
	STRONG AND/OR GETTING STRONGER	WEAK AND/OR GETTING WEAKER	

Michael Ignatieff takes a third position on the global deployment of military power by the United States and its allies in battle. Wars sometimes have to be fought on behalf of human rights. These days such interventions are generally intended to put matters right quickly so those intervening can leave quickly: this is 'empire lite.' (Ignatieff 2003). Such interventions are usually relatively cost-free in terms of casualties for the US. They are also subject to diminished democratic control by a relatively uninvolved public back home. This entails much moral jeopardy and the need for careful reflection.<sup>i</sup>

Charles Kupchan (Kupchan 2002) thinks the end of the era of American hegemony is in sight. The European Union is gaining power, and China will not be far behind. American voters in the increasingly influential South and West are not internationalist in spirit and do not want to pay the costs of American global hegemony. Taking a different tack, Henry Kissinger wants the US government to 'recognize its own pre-eminence but to conduct its policy as if it were still living in a world of many centers of power' (Kissinger 2002, 288).<sup>ii</sup>

Zbigniew Brezinski, one-time National Security Adviser, has a slightly different approach. In deliberately provocative language, he says that 'the three grand imperatives of imperial geo-strategy are to prevent collusion and maintain security dependence among the vassals, to keep tributaries pliant and protected, and to keep the barbarians from coming together' (Brezinski 1997, 40). However, in the longer term it needs to take the lead in creating 'a global community of shared interest' (Brezinski 2004).

John Ikenberry sees this process as already underway due to the 'open and penetrated character of the United States and the other advanced democracies.' He describes a 'sort of layer cake of intergovernmental institutions [that] extends outward from the United States across the Atlantic and Pacific' (Ikenberry 2001).<sup>iii</sup> Joseph Nye (Nye 2002). stresses the need to share responsibility with other states whenever the action shifts from the military sphere, where America is pre-eminent, to the multi-polar economic sphere and to the complex transnational realm occupied by terrorists and others.

Philip Bobbitt (Bobbitt 2002) pitches the scale of the challenge facing America at a still more daunting level. He gives the United States the role of taking the lead in helping the world adjust to the transformation from a system of nation states, focused on providing welfare for citizens, to a system of market-states which will help global markets to work more efficiently. Different kinds of market states will emerge. They need rules for peaceful cooperation but armed conflict is also likely. However, war should be recognised as 'a creative act of civilized man' (xxxix).

There are plenty of critics who do not think America is able to cope with these challenges, irrespective of whether or not they are worthy ones. Niall Ferguson, who is 'fundamentally in favour of empire' (Ferguson 2004, 24), believes that although there is no danger of 'economic overstretch' there is a serious problem:

'Americans...lack the imperial cast of mind' They have no 'will to power' (28-9).

Michael Mann (Mann 2003), sees more profound structural problems. America's power capacities are very uneven, leading to fatal incoherence in its strategic

behaviour. It is a 'military giant' (18) but an 'economic backseat driver' (49) with very few powers over other major economies, a 'political schizophrenic' (80) caught between multi- and unilateralism, and an 'ideological phantom' (100) operating in a world where imperialism has no moral credibility.<sup>iv</sup>

Immanuel Wallerstein also sees structural factors that lead towards decline, inevitably in his view. Western Europe and Japan/East Asia are already competing economically on equal terms with the United States. US military expenditure is diverting capital and innovation from productive enterprise. The widespread use of the term 'imperial' to describe the United States, however satisfying it is to elements within the American leadership, is actually a profoundly 'delegitimising term' (Wallerstein 2003, 308).<sup>v</sup>

Finally, Emmanuel Todd, in a subversive and witty book, notices that 'at the very moment when the world is discovering democracy and learning to get along politically without the United States, the United States is beginning to lose its democratic characteristics and is discovering that it cannot get along without the rest of the world' (Todd 2003, 20). The US, he says, is reduced to pushing around 'minor league powers such as Iraq, Iran, North Korea, Cuba, etc' (21) and developing showy items of military technology which do not, in practice, increase its capacity to tell Russia, Europe or Japan what to do.

In Todd's view, 'the declining economic, military, and ideological power of the United States does not allow the country to master effectively a world that has become too vast, too populous, too literate and too democratic.' The world's task is to find a way of 'managing, in everybody's best interests, America's losses' (22).

However, to gain understanding of America and ourselves we must expand the frame of reference. We must return to the theme of escape, and go back half a millennium.

### **The curse of responsibility**

If we want to understand ourselves, and if we are European, North American, or heavily influenced by their culture, a good place to start is the Reformation. Go back to 1517 when Martin Luther took the immense personal risk of posting his ninety-five theses on the door of the church in Wittenburg. Luther was seriously worried about his soul. He was not prepared to leave its fate in the hands of an authority he did not respect.

The Reformation was ultimately about people taking responsibility for their own fate, in life and after death. It made them value the right, and fear the need, to choose for themselves. It made them hate anything that stopped them choosing freely.

The Reformation burned into Western consciousness two impulses: the impulse to *escape*, to liberate oneself from potentially constricting circumstances, and the equally strong impulse to *dominate* and, if necessary, destroy those who might stand in your way.

Each impulse came with a partner. The desire to escape was partnered with deep feelings of *resentment* against the oppressive conditions that made escape necessary or highly desirable. The wish to dominate bred a strong feeling of *virtuousness* that enable one to justify the imposition of one's own wishes, needs and agenda on others, often violently and destructively (see table 1).

So, the escape response to humiliation typically comes with other baggage: the desire to dominate, deep feelings of resentment, and an obsessive need to feel virtuous. This broader constellation of which escape is a part will help us understand some aspects of the behaviour of Western ruling establishments, especially in settler societies, in other words, societies whose leading members had escaped from an old world in order to be able to dominate a new one.

Table Two  
The Escape Constellation

Desire to escape	Feelings of resentment
Desire to dominate	Need to feel virtuous

Within this category, it will be especially useful for probing some aspects of the most powerful settler society of all, the United States. In particular, this analysis will help to make sense of some of the twists and turns of the US government's behaviour in the world since Vietnam, including the global strategy implemented by the neo-conservative interest that gained increased influence after 2001.

## **The disappearance of God**

But first, let us return to the dreadful shattering of the medieval understanding that God was not only the maker of the world to which people belonged but also an inhabitant of that world along with them. The Reformation finally destroyed the medieval idea that the world was a place in which men and women could look around them and do two things: believe what they saw and see what they believed.

People lost their previous confidence that a readily explicable divine purpose existed and they and their world were expressions of it. From that point on, the self and its relationship to the world became deeply problematic. The problems were not confined to signed-up members of Protestant creeds. The Catholicism of the Counter-reformation had a distinctly 'protestant' anxiety about the soul's health and salvation.

Every thinking person now confronted directly questions that had previously been 'sorted out' by priestly authority, like "who am 'I'?", "what do I 'know'?", and "how should 'I' treat 'the other,'" that is, other people, other things, other ways of being and knowing? These problems faced all human beings trying to find their way through the shattered universe. That journey became much more dangerous to the soul and the body. What could be done? Luther found a princely protector. Calvin became master of a fortified city. The fate of Galileo (imprisoned by the Inquisition) and Bruno (burnt at the stake) was a warning about what happened to those who were bold but unprotected.<sup>vi</sup>



Matters became urgent, since souls were at risk, when different selves resolved their confusions and uncertainties in different ways that could not be reconciled with each other. Broadly speaking, there were four ways to cope with this situation (see table 2).

One way to escape from the self was to dissolve it within a greater whole. John Donne expressed this beautifully when he wrote: ‘No man is an island entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main; if a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as well as any manner of thy friends or of thine own were; any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind. And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.’<sup>vii</sup>

Table Three  
Escape and Domination

	Management of the self	Dealing with others
Escape	Dissolve the self within a greater whole (for example, a crowd or a congregation)	Remove the self from ‘corrupting’ influences (for example, by migration,)
Domination	Strengthen the self’s capacity to resist and overcome ‘alien’ intrusions and sinful thoughts, for example, by prayerful self-discipline.	Eliminate all possible external threats to the integrity of the self by attacking rival creeds and destroying all sources of ungodly temptation.

A second approach was to improve the self’s capacity to resist ‘alien’ intrusions, to strengthen the self through self-discipline. Ignatius Loyola, author of *Spiritual*

*Exercises* (Loyola 1950), written in 1548, made this a basic strategy of the Society of Jesus (or Jesuits) whose guiding principle was loyalty to the Church.

John Donne was educated by the Jesuits but later became an Anglican. He wrote his 'meditation' about no man being an island in 1624. Five years earlier, René Descartes, yet another product of a Jesuit education, had also been meditating. One night, while on a military posting in Bavaria, Descartes had three disturbing dreams. He imagined whirlwinds, ghosts, thunderclaps, sparks and a mysterious stranger. All this set him thinking, carefully and systematically.

Ironically, Descartes used his Jesuit training in mental discipline not to strengthen loyalty to an existing belief, the intention of Ignatius, but rather to make a new discovery, to find the indissoluble core of existence. At the end of his lonely search, using the medium of thought, Descartes discovered that indissoluble core: it was the thinking self.

These dreams led Descartes on a different pathway from Donne. They convinced him that his own consciousness was not 'part of the main' but isolated. His mind tried to penetrate the surrounding fog with beams of rational thought but it systematically doubted all reports of 'continents' in the vicinity. For Descartes, every man was, indeed, an island.

Cosmopolitans like Donne and Descartes were deeply involved through their personal lives in the intense battles going on between Catholics and Protestants.<sup>viii</sup> For some people, these issues were psychologically intolerable. Hamlet was not the only

character to contemplate suicide. Donne wrote a learned treatise on that theme.<sup>ix</sup>

However, there were other forms of escape also.

One way of saying goodbye to a frustrating, oppressive and humiliating situation was by going into the uncivilised and uncultivated wilderness to establish a colony there.

This involved two approaches to the task of coping with uncertainty, confusion and threat. These were: to remove the self physically from the danger of corruption in the old world one used to inhabit; and to destroy all potential threats to the new world being constructed.<sup>x</sup>

### **The unsettled settler**

Settlers wanted to start afresh. Some envisaged making a new and better society in an unspoilt Eden. That is the theme placed in the foreground by the American myth of the Pilgrim Fathers. But 'the city on the hill' had some very nasty suburbs.

Establishing a new colony meant using a heavy sword with two sharp edges: escape and domination. The first was a means to achieve liberation for the self. The second led to destruction for others. During the seventeenth century, and after, settlers in Ireland, South Africa and the American colonies used both edges of their sword.

They wanted to be liberated from the evils of the old world they had left behind. They wanted to transform the new world they had found into their own empire. They

wanted to turn it into the kind of land they had promised themselves in their dreams.<sup>xi</sup>

That meant being brutal to those that got in their way.

Early in the seventeenth century, the English crown encouraged lowland Scots to emigrate to Ulster in the northern part of Ireland. Many of the settlers came from humiliating circumstances of poverty and marginality, scratching a living on the borderlands between Scotland and England. In Ireland they were caught between the Anglo-Irish upper class that despised them, and the indigenous catholic population whom they despised in their turn. As a consequence, the relations between protestants and catholics were violent and full of resentment from the very beginning.<sup>xii</sup>

This tone was set at the very top during the 1650s by Oliver Cromwell's systematic and ruthless policy of slaughtering, enslaving or, at least, corralling the locals. He set about establishing a 'reservation' in Connaught where the dangerous 'wild Irish' who had opposed the English (as opposed to the 'civilised' ones who had not) could be physically segregated, safe beyond the Shannon River.<sup>xiii</sup> This plan was an administrative failure but it anticipated later exercises such as 'Indian reservations' in the United States and 'native reserves' in South Africa.

Meanwhile, the descendants of Dutch settlers in South Africa were imposing slavery upon the local tribes. The doctrines of the Dutch Reformed Church confirmed their own superiority as a chosen people with no obligation to labour, just as centuries later they justified *apartheid*. The Boers felt very little obligation to their slaves, felt no peasant bond to the soil and were distinctly unsociable. Each man, it was said, 'fled the tyranny of his neighbour's smoke,'<sup>xiv</sup> preferring isolation to neighbourliness.

Rather like the descendants of the lowland Scots who emigrated to Ulster, the children of the original Dutch settlers lived a poverty-stricken existence, little better

than the 'inferior natives' they exploited and abused. Treated in a humiliating way both by those who ruled the old 'home country,' and by the British, the Boers responded by glorifying their own mission while humiliating the group below them in the absolutist hierarchy.

When the British arrived in the nineteenth century, the Boers switched from domination mode to escape mode. They left behind farms they had been cultivating for many generations and trekked hundreds of miles into the wilderness to recover their isolation.<sup>xv</sup>

Like the Boers and lowland Scots who moved to Ulster, the American colonists were Protestants with a strong sense of mission and a powerful feeling of superiority over the indigenous population. But there was a major difference in the American case. The settlers in Ulster were dominated by, and highly dependent upon, the British establishment from the seventeenth century onward. The Boers (or Afrikaners) were under constant pressure from the British in South Africa from the early nineteenth century until the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910.<sup>xvi</sup>

By contrast, the American colonists broke free of the British Empire well before the end of the eighteenth century, and they stayed free of the British despite the War of 1812. As a result, the Americans have had over two centuries during which the dialectic between domination/destruction and escape/liberation has been able to work itself out with little in the way of check or hindrance.

### **Regeneration through violence**

America's chosen 'Founders' (an institution or society usually decides these things long after the event) were a group of 'separatist' puritans. These men and women could not practise their particular religion in Europe without being treated as criminals. So they took a chance and crossed the Atlantic. What kind of culture did they create? Richard Slotkin looked at the literature they produced in the first two and a half centuries leading up to the Civil War and gave us an answer to that question. <sup>xvii</sup>

One important element in American settler culture was anxiety and fear: anxiety in the form of guilt, and perhaps a vague expectation of punishment, for having abandoned the old world in Europe; fear of the loneliness and danger facing them in their new world. Would they be caught and chastised for abandoning those that nurtured them? Would they be swallowed up by the wilderness? Would they be turned into savages?

Another element was hope, hope of spiritual and material profit won through strenuous experience and divine help. American settler society narrated its own experience in various ways but two of them are especially interesting.

There were many stories of settlers being captured wild natives then escaping through the fortunate intervention of divine providence. A typical example is Cotton Mather's tale published in 1697 about the captivity of Hannah Dustin. Here are the title and subtitle: *Humiliations follow'd with Deliverances. A Brief Discourse On the Matter and Method, Of that HUMILIATION which would be an Hopeful Symptom of our Deliverance from Calamity. Accompanied and Accommodated with a NARRATIVE Of*

*a Notable Deliverance lately received by some English Captives From the Hands of the Cruel Indians and some Improvement of that Narrative*'.<sup>xviii</sup>

Mather's narrative transforms degradation at the hands of 'Cruel Indians' into hope of deliverance at the hands of God. In this case, God is introduced as an 'involved third party' who monitors and evaluates how the 'English Captives' respond to forced abasement. The lesson is that if God recognises signs of Christian humility amongst the captives, he may be inclined to intervene on their behalf, enabling them to escape from their unfortunate entanglement.<sup>xix</sup> This captivity myth reinforced the original 'founding' experience of humiliation-followed-by-escape embodied in the story of the Pilgrim Fathers' journey from Europe.

Another form of strenuous experience was hunting down and killing animals and human beings. The hunter and the fighter merge into a single mythical figure, the 'frontier hero.' Intriguingly, one of the most famous exemplars, Davy Crockett, who died at the Alamo in 1836, was the son of a Scotch-Irish man who emigrated from Londonderry in Ulster during the eighteenth century.<sup>xx</sup>

As Vernon Parrington recorded in his study of American thought, published in 1930, 'The real Davy [Crockett] was pretty much of a sloven....[His] autobiography reveals the backwoods Anglo-Irishman as uncivilized animal...yet with a certain rough vigor of character. Wastefulness was in the frontier blood, and Davy was a true frontier wastrel. In the course of several removals he traversed the length of Tennessee, drinking, hunting, talking, speculating, begetting children, scratching a few acres of land to "make his crap," yet living for the most part off the country...He was a hunter

rather than a farmer, and the lust for killing was in his blood. With his pack of hounds he slaughtered with amazing efficiency...His hundred and five bears in a single season, his six deer shot in one day while pursuing other game serve to explain why the rich hunting grounds of the Indians were swept so quickly bare of game by the white invaders. Davy was but one of the thousands who were wasting the resources of the Indian Empire, destroying forests, skinning the land, slaughtering the deer and bear, the swarms of pigeons, the vast buffalo herds' (Parrington 1930, 2:178-9).<sup>xxi</sup>

The American hunter myth tells a different story. According to this myth, the hunter-fighter frontier hero is a highly disciplined and careful expert who has imbibed the responsible, caring values of the farming families who cultivate the American soil.

Somehow, the act of slaughter comes to symbolise the whole package: the caring heart, the spirit of self-improvement, and the disciplined pursuit of betterment for everybody's ultimate benefit. Paradoxically and contrary to reason, by killing animals and people, and by despoiling nature, the hero is creating and sustaining civilised life.<sup>xxii</sup>

What are the consequences of this peculiar logic, one inherited by modern America? Slotkin's answer is as follows: 'The myth of the hunter...is one of self-renewal or self-creation through acts of violence...Believing in the myth of regeneration through the violence of the hunt, the American hunters eventually destroyed the natural conditions that made possible their economic and social freedom, their democracy of social mobility. Yet the mythology and the value system it supported remained... We have, I think, continued to associate democracy and progress with perpetual social mobility (both horizontal and vertical) and with the continual expansion of our power into new fields or new levels of exploitation...The archetypal enemy of the American



hero is the red Indian, and to some degree all groups or nations that threaten us are seen in terms derived from our early myths' (Slotkin 1973, 557-8).

The strange logic of the regenerative hunt, reinforced by the captivity myth, permits Americans to undertake repeated acts of violence against any convenient target in revenge for the historical past. In other words, when they strike out violently, they are getting their own back and feel they have a right to do it.

The past they are avenging is a time when forces in the world around them trapped, constrained, humiliated and victimised the American's ancestors. The American urge to dominate and destroy is a consequence of the way the original escape across the Atlantic occurred. It is fuelled by 'the emigrant's sense of guilt for having broken the family circle by his departure' (563). It also gives vent to a desperate feeling of vulnerability. This was strongest in the earliest days of the American Republic but it has left a strong residue of anxiety in the culture.

When Slotkin, writing in the early 1970s, tell us that the Americans' deep-ingrained sense of their own history permits them to undertake repeated acts of violence against any convenient target in revenge for the historical past, he is describing a psyche that is quite similar to that expressed in Bin Laden's broadcasts justifying 9/11.

### **Resentment and virtue**

So far we have investigated the dialectic between escape and domination within the settler syndrome. Interwoven with this dialectic is another: between the stimulus of resentment and the pursuit of virtue.

We have already touched upon feelings of resentment. These feelings can lead to destructive violence. How is this related to virtue? The route is indirect and needs explaining.

Virtue is an ambiguous word. It can mean 'proper' behaviour. For example, someone who respects another's human rights may 'feel virtuous,' especially if they had the chance to ignore those rights and get away with it. The virtuousness consists of exercising the will to give proper respect to the rules of correct behaviour. However, someone who defends another's rights when those are under serious attack is being more than merely virtuous in that sense. He or she is also being noble or honourable. They are using their strength and making a potentially risky personal commitment. They are displaying virtue in terms of the honour code.

Virtue's ancient meaning refers to qualities of strength, courage, skill and intelligence that raise up a human being or, more specifically a man, given that *vir* is Latin both for man and for strength. A man with virtue is able to assert himself, maintain and advance his position in society, and look after his own practical interests, or the interests of those he chooses to protect, in an effective way. In this sense, when a person with 'honourable' virtue asks himself what he 'should' do, the question refers to matters of political or military prudence rather than ethical rightness. The key question is 'how can he look after his practical interests?' rather than 'how can he obey the appropriate ethical rule?'

The word virtue acquired a less ancient ethical dimension under the influence of, for example, Judaism and Christianity. Now it means behaving ‘properly’ by following rules of behaviour that embody accepted ethical norms. Of course, the two meanings of virtue are not mutually exclusive. You can be strong and ethically correct at the same time. In fact, the political culture that has evolved in American society has found a way of specific way of combining both meanings. It treats strength, when exhibited by Americans, as a sign of moral virtue.

At the centre of what might be called ‘the American ideology’ is the idea that political, economic and military strength are proof of virtue in the sense of moral goodness. This logic runs parallel to the hunter myth. Recall that the structure of the hunter myth is as follows: destructive violence produces a regeneration of social justice and Christian grace and love. Let us turn more directly to the American ideology, both the official myth and to the rules of the game that this myth sanctions.

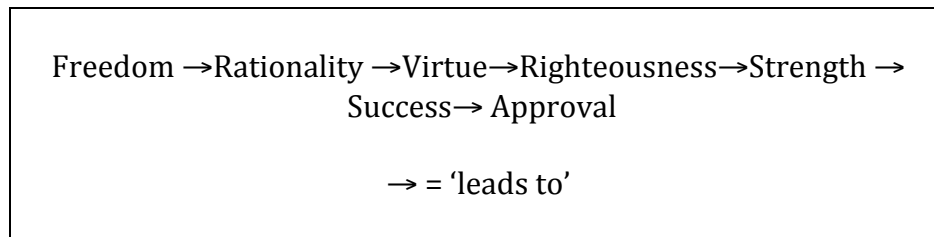
### **American ideology**

By the ‘official myth’ I mean the mechanisms supposedly at work shaping Americans and American society. By the ‘rules of the game’ I mean the way elements of this myth may be drawn upon to explain and justify particular events in real life, history and politics (see figures 2 and 3). In the following account, the word ‘virtue’ carries its modern meaning of ‘moral goodness.’

The American ‘official myth’ states that if a society is free it will create institutions and laws that are rational which ensures that those institutions and laws will be virtuous (‘good’) and the actions of the people guided by them will have

righteousness. This righteousness will make them strong which will, in turn, bring them success. As a result, they will win approval from those who observe what happens. So, freedom brings rationality, which brings virtue, which brings righteousness, which brings strength, which brings success, which brings approval.<sup>xxiii</sup>

Figure One  
The Official Myth



There is an unspoken proviso that strength displayed by an enemy will be described as 'tyranny' or 'oppression' to distinguish it from American or democratic 'strength' which in terms of this ideology always carries the connotation of moral rectitude as well as the capacity to act forcefully.

The official myth has a circularity built into it. 'Success,' which is achieved through 'strength,' is believed to create new 'freedom' and set the sequence in motion once again. This has many expressions, ranging from philanthropy by powerful plutocrats, classically expressed in the educational institutions for the poor set up by Andrew Carnegie,<sup>xxiv</sup> to the idea that a strong and successful democratic state can 'bring freedom' to other societies by economic and military means. This circularity again recalls the hunter myth: violence successfully carried through has a cleansing effect on the perpetrator, renewing their virtue, rightness and strength.

Figure Two  
The Rules of the Game

Approval → Success → Strength → Righteousness → Virtue →  
Rationality → Freedom

→ = 'is proof of'

The basis of 'the rules of the game' is that as long as the chain of causation just described is accepted as a set of hard truths, particular effects may be taken as proof of the specific factors that are believed to cause them. For example, success may be taken as a demonstration of one's strength, righteousness and virtue.<sup>xxv</sup> Similarly, a country, group or person's strength may be seen as being a result of its freedom; and so on, subject to that strength not being 'tyrannical,' ie anti-American or, even, un-American.

On the other hand, negative criticism (lack of approval) may be taken to indicate failure (lack of success), which may be interpreted as a sign of weakness (lack of strength) and so on. For the more strong-minded, failure may be interpreted as a moral test that may engender humility (as in the captivity myth) and strengthen virtue with all the positive things that follow.

### **Vietnam and after**

The rules of the game and the official myth just analysed help make sense of the pattern of American political life, especially its foreign relations, since 1968. This period falls into three phases of roughly equal length. Each phase has a dominant character: respectively, humiliation (1968-79), partial recovery (1979-91) and renewed assertiveness (1991- ?).

*1968-79: humiliation.* Beginning in 1968, the United States experienced twelve years of failure, international criticism and internal division.<sup>xxvi</sup> The spectacular Tet offensive in Vietnam in January 1968 was a major humiliation for the US government.<sup>xxvii</sup> North Vietnamese attacks throughout South Vietnam, in conjunction with the Viet Cong, caught the Americans by surprise. Twenty Vietcong commandos even captured the American embassy in Saigon for a short while. The Tet offensive was eventually contained but the American political establishment lost its appetite for the war.<sup>xxviii</sup>

In the same year as the Tet offensive, American troops committed the My Lai massacre of villagers, Lyndon Johnson dropped out of the presidential race, there were massive demonstrations against the US government throughout the world, and peace talks began. Finally, in 1975, nine months after Richard Nixon resigned over the Watergate scandal, US officials made an undignified escape from Saigon by helicopter.

That was not all. Nixon had been forced to devalue the US dollar twice, in 1971 and 1973. By the end of the 1970s Japan was challenging America's business dominance; and in 1979 a militant Islamic regime in Iran deposed the existing ruler, the Shah, took over the American embassy, and held sixty people hostage for many months.

In other words, between 1968 and 1979 Americans experienced a period of deepening humiliation during which approval was withdrawn from them, and they were denied

success in key respects; as a result, they began to doubt their strength and, perhaps, even their virtuousness.

*1979-91: partial recovery.* During the next twelve years, the Japanese economic challenge continued and unemployment was high in the mid-1980s. However, for most of that decade American business enjoyed uninterrupted boom conditions. Ronald Reagan gave Americans renewed self-confidence, telling them they deserved approval. He strengthened their sense of virtue as occupants of 'the city on the hill' confronting an 'evil empire'. The Soviet Union was drawn into a long war in Afghanistan (its 'Vietnam'), ending in failure and withdrawal; and between 1989 and 1991 the Soviet Union collapsed. To summarise, during this second period American society was 'in recovery,' and had its self-approval and sense of being virtuous restored.

*1991-: renewed assertiveness.* During the next period, the United States rediscovered its identity as a 'strong' nation that wanted to be even stronger. The central political question was no longer 'how virtuous can we be?' but 'how strong can we be?'<sup>xxix</sup> By the early 1990s, America's two main rivals, Russia and Japan, had both become very much weaker. The United States was left as the only major player in the global arena. During the 1990s, Americans felt 'secure' and unthreatened within their borders. The main political drivers, at home and abroad, were opportunism, profit taking and score settling.<sup>xxx</sup>

So, to summarise, during the first twelve years, up to 1979, the United States experienced disastrous failures in terms of strength, success and approval (see tables 1 and 2) and this reduced the credibility of the establishment's claim to be champions and exemplars of freedom, virtue and righteousness.

During the second period, from 1979 to 1991, a key part was played by Reagan's prolonged campaign of renewing Americans' belief in their virtue. Luckily for the United States, this was accompanied by the fortuitous weakening of major rivals, Russia and Japan, which the United States wanted to happen although it has not yet been convincingly shown that its leaders brought these things about.

During the third period, since 1991, the first George Bush and Bill Clinton both played down 'the vision thing'<sup>xxxii</sup> where Reagan had excelled. Instead, they 'played' the last three elements within the rules of the game. In other words, they tried to use America's strength in a pragmatic way to achieve successes and win approval, both at home and abroad.

When George W Bush came to office in 2000 he switched emphasis again.<sup>xxxiii</sup> His mantra was freedom as the key to keeping America strong.<sup>xxxiii</sup> Bush played upon the domestic causes of strength rather than the international rewards of strength. Here is a typical passage (with italics added): 'This nation is prosperous and *strong*, yet we need to remember the sources of America's greatness. We're strong because we love *freedom*. America has a special charge to keep, because we are *freedom's* home and defender. We believe that *freedom* is the deepest need and hope of every human heart. We believe that *freedom* is the future of every nation, and we know that *freedom* is not America's gift to the world, it is the Almighty God's gift to every man and woman in this world. We also know that the greatest *strength* of this country lies in the hearts and souls



of our citizens. We're *strong* because of the values we try to live by -- courage and compassion, reverence and integrity. We're *strong* because of the institutions that help to give us direction and purpose -- families, and schools, and religious congregations. These values and institutions are fundamental to our lives, and they deserve the respect of our government.'<sup>xxxiv</sup>

This is the rhetoric of a born-again fundamentalist Christian with no clear foreign policy agenda and strong corporate links. From his perspective, the best way to keep the links of the chain between freedom and strength well polished was to do two things: create a regulatory framework for American business that allowed the virtue and righteousness of corporate entrepreneurs to produce success; and encourage an American political climate that favoured causes supported by fundamentalist religious groups.

### **Neo-conservatives**

But within nine months of taking office, and as a direct result of 9/11, Bush was in the hands of the neo-conservatives.<sup>xxxv</sup> They had a different ideological agenda, one that began at the point where Bush concluded. Bush trumpeted American freedom as the source of American strength. Freedom was his watchword. The neo-cons began and ended with American strength, its renewal, expansion and protection. Strength was their watchword.

A recent study identified three common themes around which neo-conservatism unite.

1. A belief that human affairs are a struggle between good and evil.
2. A willingness to use military power since this is assumed to be the main factor determining how states relate to each other.
3. A preoccupation with Islam and the Middle East.

The neo-cons persuaded Bush that American strength abroad was necessary to protect American freedom at home. Their mission was to use that strength as an engine of success for corporate America and for themselves: they wanted to be ‘the angel (that) rides in the whirlwind and directs (the) storm.’<sup>xxxvi</sup>

American neo-conservatives have a similar spirit to Cecil Rhodes who wrote in 1877: ‘I contend that we are the finest race in the world and that the more of the world we inhabit the better it is for the human race.’<sup>xxxvii</sup> Rhodes meant the British. The neo-conservatives have a similar ambition for the Americans. They have the advantage of being supported by a leading global figure in the mass media, Rupert Murdoch.<sup>xxxviii</sup>

Modern neo-conservatism stems from the defection of a number of Democrats following the victory of Jimmy Carter in the 1976 primary campaign. They were disillusioned with Carter’s ‘weak’ foreign policy. By the mid-1980s they were disenchanted with Reagan also, especially over his administration’s reliance on Saudi Arabia in the Middle East rather than having a major military presence of its own there.<sup>xxxix</sup> During the 1990s, the American interventions in Bosnia and Kosovo convinced them that working with the Europeans through multilateral institutions such as NATO wasted everybody’s time and was a drag on the efficiency of the US military machine.<sup>xl</sup> By September 2002 they had got their point of view enshrined in official policy.

The new National Security Strategy inaugurated what Halper and Clarke have called ‘a kind of global Monroe Doctrine’ (Halper and Clarke 2004, 142). The US assumed

a global responsibility to defend, preserve and extend a peace that was, it was claimed, under constant threat from terrorism. The policy document made it clear that America was willing and prepared to act both unilaterally and pre-emptively.

The alliance between Bush and the neo-cons brings together an extreme form of Jacksonianism with an extreme form of Wilsonianism.<sup>xli</sup> The Jacksonian approach, adopted by Bush, is to steer clear of foreign entanglements unless someone else bothers you. At that point the strategy is go after them without mercy, destroy or disable them as quickly and thoroughly as possible, then get back home as soon as possible.<sup>xlii</sup> By contrast, the Wilsonian approach is to give the American democratic model to the rest of the world, good and hard, whether they like it or not. The idea is: do it through multilateral institutions if that is easy and convenient; otherwise go it alone, using force as necessary.<sup>xliii</sup>

Neo-conservatism rests on a contradiction. On the one hand, it is claimed that the United States exemplifies the ‘one true way,’ that America is exceptional, the land *par excellence* of freedom and justice, that it is different and better. On the other hand, America’s claim to have its own way is based upon the fact that it has superior military capacity and the assertion that any power with such strength would use it to dominate others irrespective of what the others wanted. In other words, on the one hand ‘we are different and better than you.’ On the other hand, ‘you are the same as us and would act in the same way if you got the chance.’

Neo-conservatism’s central thesis – ‘we should dominate’ – is treated as non-negotiable. Bush’s impassioned Jacksonianism with its claims for freedom, virtue and

rightness, provides good political cover, especially in dealing with the domestic audience. However, even more interesting than the arguments presented by neo-conservatives to justify their position is the style in which they are presented. There is a constant tone of tense resentment, of being unfairly held back, of wanting to humiliate others and avoid being humiliated by them. For example, Robert Kagan's *Paradise and Power* (Kagan 2003), adopts a teasing tone, fundamentally accusing Europe of 'unmanliness.'<sup>xliv</sup>

Here are Robert Kagan and William Kristol writing in the *Weekly Standard* just three month's into Bush's first term. Bush was faced with his first major crisis following a collision between a Chinese fighter plane and an American surveillance aircraft in the South China Sea. They write: 'The profound national humiliation that President Bush has brought upon the United States may be forgotten temporarily when the American aircrew...return home. But when we finish celebrating, it will be time to assess the damage done, and the dangers invited, by the administration's behavior.... It is hardly surprising that the Chinese government boarded the plane and searched it... What was a good deal more surprising was the Chinese government's announcement of the conditions for the crew's release: The American government would have to make a formal apology. The broader purpose of the Chinese demand was to inflict upon the United States a public international humiliation.'

Kagan and Kristol argued that 'By demanding a public apology from the United States, therefore, the Chinese government was not only saving its own face, it was consciously and deliberately forcing the United States to lose face, and thereby to admit its weakness.' There was a 'partial capitulation' by Colin Powell who expressed

‘regret’ for the incident. However, ‘Having brought the United States to one knee, the Chinese government kept up the pressure. Now it was time for the United States to go all the way, to "adopt a cooperative attitude, admit its mistakes and make a formal apology." As Lenin used to say, when your spear hits iron withdraw it, when it hits flesh press forward.’

They concluded: ‘The United States is on the path to humiliation, and for a great power - not to mention the world's "sole superpower" - humiliation is not a matter to be taken lightly...As the Chinese understand better than American leaders, President Bush has revealed weakness. And he has revealed fear: fear of the political, strategic, and economic consequences of meeting a Chinese challenge. Having exposed this weakness and fear, the Chinese will try to exploit it again and again, most likely in a future confrontation over Taiwan.’<sup>xlv</sup>

Here we have an expression of the psychological dynamics that were at work, a few months later, in the US government’s response to 9/11. In that case, fear of the degrading consequences of humiliation overcame fear of the unforeseeable costs of military engagement with the outside world. The outcome was the proclamation of a war on terror.

### **Paradise and power**

One of the most lucid testaments seeking to justify the war on terror and the way it is being conducted is *Paradise and Power* (Kagan 2003), discussed earlier.<sup>xlvi</sup> Robert Kagan’s central argument is that the United States refuses to be bound by international laws and treaties because it has the power to ignore them. It has the

military capacity to look after its own interests and in so doing it provides a framework of order, which benefits those who are not America's enemies, especially those, like Europe, who are its friends.

According to Kagan, America lives in a Hobbesian world, one where force prevails. Europeans, who enjoy this protected environment, have the luxury of making high-minded laws for themselves in a Kantian spirit and would like, if they could, to impose them on the rest of the world, especially America. For a while this disparity of purpose and attitude was hidden by the Cold War, which kept Europe in the front line and 'involved.' Since 1989, Europe has had the luxury of criticising the United States while making very little contribution to its own protection.

This argument has been met by both American and European responses. Robert Cooper (Cooper 2003), a senior British diplomat,<sup>xlvii</sup> suggests that when one state is able to enforce its will in pursuit of its own interests, it is difficult for it to acquire legitimacy in the eyes of others. Furthermore, when it is in constant fear of attack it is liable to act in ways that diminish its practical commitment to democratic practices. Multilateralism and international law are intrinsically valuable, asserts Cooper, rather than simply being a means to reduce risk and uncertainty. He expresses, in measured tones, Europe's real sense of shock at the way the US government has reduced its commitment to, and dependence on, NATO. His recommendation is that Europe should continue to build up and coordinate its military capacity so that it can give practical support to multilateralism.<sup>xlviii</sup>

Benjamin Barber, who lives in New York City, homes in on the fear cycle that is activated in Kagan's 'Hobbesian' world when the fear of terrorism motivates and sanctions American military violence against others. As Barber puts it, 'The logic of preventive war is meant to deter adversaries from hostility. Instead it provokes them to it. America uses harsh moralizing words justifying preemptive interdiction to subdue adversaries and is surprised to find that they are aroused' (Barber 2003, 140).

This situation has arisen because the 'eagles' (neo-conservatives) say that 'If America can not longer insulate itself from the planet...then it must, in effect, rule the planet' (67). This, Barber comments, is the product of misguided 'romantic enthusiasm' (43). For his part, Barber is with the 'owls' such as Colin Powell who recognise the realities of global interdependence, the value of international law, and the fact that you cannot expect to deter religious fanatics sure of paradise after death by making them frightened of military force being used against them.<sup>xlix</sup> Here, in fact, is a quest for paradise that power cannot dismiss with contempt.

Barber is right to draw attention to the role of fear in American foreign policy. It expresses itself in the wagon-train circle mentality mentioned at the end of the chapter on the cosmopolitan condition. Remember also Slotkin's analysis of the dynamics of resentment. Fear and resentment are a potent mixture, which often leads those who experience them to strike out against their supposed enemies.

Striking out may take two forms:

- *striking first* out of fear in order to pre-empt trouble; and
- *striking back* out of resentment to pay back those who have hurt you.

The first response, the pre-emptive strike, is liable to recur whenever new potential threats are perceived. This pattern of repetition may be described as a fear cycle.

The second response, striking back, is liable to fuel a revenge cycle. When this happens, the perpetrators of humiliation later become victims at the hands of those they have damaged, and then become perpetrators themselves once more.

Each episode within a fear cycle is liable to trigger a revenge cycle if the victim has the capacity to strike back.

Revenge cycles will be discussed in a later chapter. For the moment, let us concentrate on fear cycles.

### **Fear cycles**

The fear cycle is a repeating sequence of actions and reactions stimulated by the escape response to humiliation. It has the following elements (see table 2):

- (i) those who have escaped humiliation, carrying the wounds that made them want to escape, withdraw from the wider world, where more humiliation threatens, into a treasured special place where they may be 'reborn' and achieve success and happiness;<sup>1</sup>
- (ii) in this situation they are acutely sensitive to criticism and intolerant of others, fearing real or imagined threats that seem likely to violate, undermine or throw doubt upon the viability or worthiness of their project;
- (iii) this anxiety leads them to strike against targets that activate this sense of threat, with the intention of dominating or destroying them, and this causes



feelings of humiliation, outrage and resentment among those targeted and their friends and allies;

- (iv) as a result, the escapees get drawn into complex, lengthy, embarrassing and often humiliating dealings with those affected by their attacks and look for an opportunity to escape from this situation, thus returning to (i)

Fear cycles are liable to merge into revenge cycles. However, it may be possible to achieve a more successfully 'escape,' one which acknowledges continuing interdependence with, others. In this case, the wounded but reborn victims of humiliation, having made their escape to a protected special place of their own, work to build trust within the relationships upon which they depend for a secure, peaceful, non-humiliated and non-humiliating existence.

Fear cycles are certainly not an American monopoly. Nor are they exclusive to settler societies. They are likely to be triggered whenever a powerful group fears it will be successfully challenged in a way that would undermine its identity, authority and rationale. Such was the case of the British in India by the end of World War I. The British massacre of peaceful demonstrators at Amritsar in 1919 was the product of fear that British rule would be effectively challenged. According to the general responsible, it was intended 'to strike terror into the whole of the Punjab.' During the following two decades and again, after the Second World War, such offences were frequently repeated.<sup>li</sup>

Table Four  
The Fear Cycle

(i)	(iv)
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<p>hurt withdrawal into treasured home/homeland</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">←</p> <p>embarrassing entanglements with outraged victims</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">(ii) anxiety about threat of violation →</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">↑</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(iv) attack upon supposed source of real or imagined threat</p>

According to Hannah Arendt, the culture of ex-patriate communities within the European empires reflected the following fact. Much of the daily dirty work of empire-building was carried out by the rejects of Europe, those who could not make it back home and got out. Who would willingly risk the dangers of colonial life? Of course, there were practical idealists who wished to take their part in bringing civilization to the rest of the world.<sup>liii</sup> However, in many cases, the answer was: escapees from the metropolitan society searching for something less humiliating.

These ‘rejects’ left their own degradations behind, settled in the colonies, and looked around for groups even weaker than themselves to dominate and oppress. Arendt remarks that many such people ‘had not stepped out of society but had been spat out by it...[T]he more gifted were walking incarnations of resentment like the German Carl Peters...who openly admitted that he “was fed up with being counted among the pariahs and wanted to belong to a master race” (Arendt 1976, 189). Carl Peters used cruel but effective methods to build up German colonial power in East Africa.<sup>liii</sup>

Such facts as these put in historical context the long-running American fear cycle which includes massacres of Native Americans, lynchings of Southern Blacks, the Mai Lai massacre in Vietnam and the brutal mass killing of Iraqi conscripts in battle

during the first Gulf War. Such happenings are not in themselves more shocking than anything the Europeans have done. But they stem from a promised land that presents itself as better than the corrupt old world.

### **The bitter fruits of victory**

Dean Acheson once said, famously, that Britain had lost an empire and failed to find a new role.<sup>liv</sup> The United States in the early twenty-first century is in a different situation. It has gained a new empire, or at least a quasi-imperial position, but it has lost its old role.<sup>lv</sup>

America is struggling to come to terms with the consequences for itself of the geopolitical victories it achieved during the twentieth century. The United States prevented the European empires from re-establishing themselves when they fragmented as a result of the two world wars. It also scored decisive victories over German nazism and Russian communism.

Furthermore, America has shown the rest of the world how to make capitalism generate wealth for national societies. Over the past half-century the rest of the world has responded to this lesson, some more eagerly than others, although it is not clear yet how many countries can also pull off America's other trick of turning itself into a relatively peaceful democracy.<sup>lvi</sup>

America must now watch Europe, China, and, sooner or later, a resurgent Japan and Russia become wealthier, more politically powerful and better equipped with technologically advanced military systems. Its own military bases and surveillance systems covering Eurasia will meet stronger objections from local populations and their leaders.<sup>lvii</sup>

The risk of humiliation for the US leadership increases year by year. 9/11 dramatised this situation. The United States has yet to find a way of responding to this plight that does not

- intensify the climate of humiliation through the generation of fear and revenge cycles,
- weaken its legitimacy by asserting imperial privileges that conflict with its own democratic tradition, or
- undermine political freedom by reducing the rights of its own inhabitants through measures such as the Patriot Act.<sup>lviii</sup>

If the United States becomes a potential threat to world order and peace, it will be because it is becoming weaker and finds this prospect 'unacceptable.' The difficulties it faces are intensified by the fact that its political culture has been shaped by its history as a settler society that escaped the 'old' world with the intention of dominating the 'new' world coming into being.

Americans thought the 'old' world they left behind would disappear below the horizon. Instead it has turned into a global 'new' world surrounding the United States. The 'Indians' are whooping round the wagon-train circle. This is a dangerous

situation. Unable either to escape or dominate this global new world, will the United States try and destroy it?

Faced with this prospect, the task of global diplomacy, especially by Europeans, is to persuade the United States to join the new globalised world it did do so much to create. To join it as a sibling, not a tyrannical father prepared, like Saturn, to eat his children.

### **Summary**

In this chapter we have: surveyed the disagreements concerning the strength, viability and moral worth of the American empire; argued that as a settler society which has acquired a global empire, the United States is prey to the contradiction between the desire to escape and the desire to dominate the world; traced the origins of this conflict to the European Reformation; compared other settler societies in Ireland and South Africa; examined the psycho-cultural responses of Americans to their settler condition, especially in the themes of resentment and virtue; seen their expression in American political ideology and the dynamics of American foreign policy since Vietnam; analysed the neo-conservative approach; linked it to fear cycles; and noted American fear of renewed humiliation.

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<sup>i</sup> See Ignatieff 2000, especially 179-211.

<sup>ii</sup> Kissinger takes this thought from Coral Bell. For Bell on Kissinger, see Bell 1977.

<sup>iii</sup> See also Ikenberry 2002. See also Odum and Dujarric 2004

<sup>iv</sup> See, for example, Mann 2003, 81, 120

<sup>v</sup> For an attempt to deal with this, see Kagan 2004.

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<sup>vi</sup> As is well known, Galileo was asked to choose between his scientific theories and continuing membership of the Church. Giordano Bruno was jailed for eight years and then burnt at the stake in 1600 for refusing to abandon his freethinking denial of Church doctrine. On Bruno, see White 2002. On Galileo, see Drake 2001.

<sup>vii</sup> These words are taken from *Nunc lento sonitu dicunt, Morieris*, Meditation XVII of Donne's Donne's private meditations, entitled *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions*, written while he was convalescing from a serious illness, and published in 1624. The text of the entire meditation may be found at, for example, <http://www.global-language.com/devotion.html> (May 22nd 2005).

<sup>viii</sup> Donne was born into a Catholic family but ended his life as the Anglican Dean of St Paul's. Descartes was brought up a Catholic in the Huguenot (protestant) stronghold of Poitou. He later served briefly in the army of Maurice, prince of Orange, a protestant ruler. Like Descartes, Donne was educated by Jesuits. On Donne see Edwards 2002. On Descartes see Gaukroger 1995.

<sup>ix</sup> *Biathanatos* was published posthumously in 1644, but written in 1607-8. Willam Shakespeare's *Hamlet* was written 1600-01.

<sup>x</sup> Of course, if one accepted uncertainty, there was another way, which was to relax, enjoy the cosmopolitan variety offered by the world, continually learn from it, and keep your mind open. See Toulmin 1990, 65-6. This approach influenced writers such as Montaigne and Pascal.

<sup>xi</sup> Apart from the American colonies, Ireland and South Africa, a fourth case is Israel.

<sup>xii</sup> Many of the 'Scotch-Irish' migrated to the American colonies during the eighteenth century. At least three American presidents – Andrew Jackson, James Polk and Andrew Johnson – came from this stock. So did Davy Crockett. See <http://www.scotch-irishsociety.org/about.html> (13 March 2005).

<sup>xiii</sup> See Prendergast.1997.

<sup>xiv</sup> De Kiewiet 1941, 19, cited in Arendt 1976, 193.

<sup>xv</sup> Arendt's fascinating take on the Boers may be found in Arendt 1976, 191-207.

<sup>xvi</sup> See Thompson 2001.

<sup>xvii</sup> See, especially, Slotkin 1973, 146-7, 179, 555-65. See also Wilkinson 1984.

<sup>xviii</sup> Slotkin adds that the book 'begins with a "Lecture" delivered at Boston on "2 Chron. XII.7. They have HUMBLLED themselves, I will not destroy them but I will grant them some Deliverance."' In the lecture... [Mather] sketches the steps towards that necessary humiliation before God, beginning with a confession revealing our consciousness of sin. There follows a list of the social vices of New England,

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including drinking, swearing, foreign fashions, and the overzealous persecution of dissenters.’ (Slotkin 1973, 113).

<sup>xix</sup> This is an example of the ‘old’ use of the word humiliation to mean the process through which we are taught through experience to cast off our pride and be humble before God and our fellow human beings. Through humiliation, in this sense, an individual or society may become worthy to be saved.

<sup>xx</sup> <http://www.ulsternation.org.uk/ulster's%20contribution%20to%20america.htm> (20<sup>th</sup> March 2005).

<sup>xxi</sup> Quoted in Slotkin 1973, 555.

<sup>xxii</sup> For a contrasting argument about the Western taste for systematic slaughter, one going back to Greeks, see Hanson 2001

<sup>xxiii</sup> Here is Gil Troy, a Canadian historian specialising in presidential politics, discussing the Lewinsky affair with Janice Castro, an editor of Time. Troy comments: ‘While citizens in other countries might mock Americans for being so concerned with their presidents' personal lives, as an historian I see this as another chapter in America's search for virtue, going back to the founding of the Republic....

Americans have always believed that a virtuous nation, a virtuous citizenry requires virtuous leaders.’

Janice Castro added: ‘And that doesn't make us weak. It makes us strong.’ Troy summed up: ‘And even as the news gets more and more depressing, let's hope that we still hold to some ideals and continue our quest for virtue.’ Taken from transcript of interview 28 January 1998. See

<http://www.time.com/time/community/transcripts/chatr012298.html> (March 21st 2005).

<sup>xxiv</sup> On Carnegie see Smith 1991, 37-57.

<sup>xxv</sup> Many political ideologies work in a similar way in the real world. They use evidence of an ‘effect to claim that a supposed ‘cause’ is at work.

<sup>xxvi</sup> An earlier humiliation, the disastrous attempted invasion of Cuba at the Bay of Pigs in 1961, was quickly overtaken by the Cuban missile crisis (1962), presented as a victory for the US government, and the assassination of President Kennedy in 1963, which evoked worldwide sympathy. The urban riots in Watts (1965) and in Newark and Detroit (1967) were less easy to shrug off although they could be thought of as ‘internal’ matters which did not impinge directly on relations between the United States and other societies.

<sup>xxvii</sup> For the politics that led up to this uncomfortable situation, see Halberstam 1992.

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<sup>xxviii</sup> For a discussion of the military significance of the Tet offensive, see Hanson 2001.

<sup>xxix</sup> It was a central theme of the 2004 presidential election: one of John Kerry's slogans was 'Together we can build a stronger America.'

<sup>xxx</sup> Inter-party conflict once more became as bitter as in Nixon's day, and there was an attempt to impeach Bill Clinton, a delayed Republican revenge for Watergate. While US diplomats, especially under Clinton (1992-2000), promoted multilateral institutions such as the WTO to regulate global trade and politics, American business leaders and politicians were reluctant to submit themselves to the judgement of other nations. This arrogance was, in part, an 'answer' to the humiliation they had endured between 1968 and 1979.

<sup>xxxi</sup> Elisabeth Bumiller, writing in the *New York Times* (Jan. 12, 2004) recalled that 'It was in a moment of irritation during the 1988 campaign that the Republican presidential candidate, Vice President George Bush, first derided "the vision thing," as he called it, thus employing an ungainly piece of Bush-speak to describe a leader's ability to set forth inspiring national goals. Mr. Bush, who may have been one of the most self-effacing presidents in recent American history, went on to become a one-term incrementalist with little taste for big schemes.'

<sup>xxxii</sup> On Bush see, for example, Frum Lind 2003:2003; Hatfield 2002

<sup>xxxiii</sup> In the State of the Union addresses of 2002-4, Bush used the word 'freedom' three times as often as did Clinton in his State of the Union addresses of 1989-2000. Clinton mentioned 'freedom' once every 1,722 words, while Bush mentioned it once every 566 words (author's own research).

<sup>xxxiv</sup> 'President Bush frames the clear choice Americans face in the 2004 election,' February 23<sup>rd</sup> 2004 on the George W Bush campaign website

<http://www.georgewbush.com/News/Read.aspx?ID=2261> (19<sup>th</sup> June 2004)

<sup>xxxv</sup> Stefan Halper and Jonathan Clarke (Halper and Clarke 2004) include the following in a list of prominent neo-conservatives, indicating, where appropriate, their positions in or around the first administration of George W Bush: I. Lewis Libby (Vice-President's Chief of Staff), Elliott Abrams (Special Advisor to the President), Paul D Wolfowitz (Deputy Secretary of Defense), John R Bolton and David Wurmser (State Department), Richard Perle and Elliott A Cohen (Defense Policy Board), Donald Kagan (at Yale), Bernard Lewis and Aaron Friedberg (at Princeton), James Q Wilson (at



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Pepperdine), William Kristol (at the *Weekly Standard*), Charles Krauthammer (*Washington Post*).

They also add 'most foreign policy editorialists on the Wall Street Journal editorial pages and the Fox New Channel; in business former CIA Director James Woolsey among others; and in research institutes Max Boot at the Council on Foreign Relations, Norman Podhoretz and Meyrav Wurmser at the Hudson Institute, any member of the Project for the New American Century, and most foreign or defense studies scholars at the American Enterprise Institute' (14). The movement became prominent in association with the views of national security taken by the late Senator Henry M ('Scoop') Jackson and gained strength in alliance with evangelical Protestants and social conservatives. For an example of the neo-conservative analysis, see, for example, Frum and Perle 2003.

<sup>xxxvi</sup> This phrase is taken from Bush's first inaugural. The context is as follows: 'After the Declaration of Independence was signed, Virginia statesman John Page wrote to Thomas Jefferson: "We know the race is not to the swift nor the battle to the strong. Do you not think an angel rides in the whirlwind and directs this storm?" Much time has passed since Jefferson arrived for his inauguration. The years and changes accumulate. But the themes of this day he would know: our nation's grand story of courage and its simple dream of dignity. We are not this story's author, who fills time and eternity with his purpose. Yet his purpose is achieved in our duty, and our duty is fulfilled in service to one another. Never tiring, never yielding, never finishing, we renew that purpose today, to make our country more just and generous, to affirm the dignity of our lives and every life. This work continues. This story goes on. And an angel still rides in the whirlwind and directs this storm. God bless you all, and God bless America. See <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/inaugural-address.html>

<sup>xxxvii</sup> From Rhodes's, *Confession of Faith*, 1877. This may be found at [http://husky1.stmarys.ca/~wmills/rhodes\\_confession.html](http://husky1.stmarys.ca/~wmills/rhodes_confession.html) (22nd March 2005). For Arendt on Rhodes see Arendt 1976, 207-21.

<sup>xxxviii</sup> Halper and Clarke 2004, 184-90

<sup>xxxix</sup> Halper and Clarke 2004, ch 2 and 164-7

<sup>xl</sup> Halper 90-8.

<sup>xli</sup> See Kissinger 2002, 242-51.

<sup>xlii</sup> See, for example, Halpern and Clarke 2004, 121-31.

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<sup>xliii</sup> See also Mead 2001; Mead 2004; <http://globetrotter.berkeley.edu/people3/Mead/mead-con3.html> (21st March 2005).

<sup>xliv</sup> ‘Americans are from Mars and Europeans are from Venus’ Kagan 2003, 3. cf Gray 1992.

<sup>xlv</sup> ‘National Humiliation,’ *Weekly Standard*, April 9, 2001

<sup>xlvi</sup> See the beginning of chapter 6.

<sup>xlvii</sup> Robert Cooper is a foreign policy specialist who has served as an adviser to Tony Blair and who was, at the time of writing, Director-General of External and Military Affairs for the Council of the European Union.

<sup>xlviii</sup> See, especially, Cooper 2003, 163-70

<sup>xlix</sup> See Barber 2003, 41-6.

<sup>l</sup> On escape, see Cohen and Taylor 1992; Phillips 2001.

<sup>li</sup> Add to this the bombing and gassing of villages in Palestine, Sudan, and Iraq by the British during the 1920 and 1930s and various other very serious offenses ‘The brutal suppression of the Mau Mau and the detention of thousands of Kenyan peasants in concentration camps are still dimly remembered, as are the Aden killings of the 1960s. But the massacre of communist insurgents by the Scots Guard in Malaya in the 1950s, the decapitation of so-called bandits by the Royal Marine Commandos in Perak and the secret bombing of Malayan villages during the Emergency remain uninvestigated.’ Maria Misra, ‘The heart of smugness,’ *Guardian* July 23<sup>rd</sup> 2002.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/comment/story/0,3604,761626,00.html> (August 15<sup>th</sup>, 2005).

<sup>lii</sup> See Arendt 1976, 209-10.

<sup>liii</sup> See Perras 2004.

<sup>liv</sup> Acheson, former US Secretary of State, was speaking to a student conference at West Point in 1962.

<sup>lv</sup> Compare Robert Harvey: ‘With the Soviet Union’s disappearance, the United States no longer appeared to be a crusader for good: it simply seemed to stand for its own interest, but on a much larger scale than any other country. It appeared to have lost its moral purpose beyond the making of money. It had lost a role, and found an empire. The crusade against terrorism may be an attempt to rediscover such a role, but as so few outsiders view the problem in such alarmist tones, perhaps because they have long experienced terrorism and wars on their own territories, it seems unlikely to work’ (Harvey 2003, 33).

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<sup>lvi</sup> Many of them are, so to speak, in the '1850s,' trying to avoid the bloody civil war through which the United States had to pass in the early 1960s before becoming a capitalist democracy. Some are experiencing the civil war without any clear prospect of becoming decent democracies.

<sup>lvii</sup> For examples, see Johnson 2000; Johnson 2004.

<sup>lviii</sup> See Ewing 2002.