



## Liberal empire

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This article traces the recent discussion of the United States (US) as a developing empire. Noting that both the pro and con sides of the argument assume that the US acts with benign intentions, it argues that the Liberal Empire has more coercive features than are generally acknowledged. The liberal virtues of toleration and pluralism are becoming imperial gestures that employ repressive tactics to achieve a consensus. The irony of this development is that the liberal empire must control and contain difference in order to preserve the forms of difference deemed acceptable. Difference may only be encountered amidst known conditions — conditions of recognized universal truth. However, post 11 September, 2001, the American liberal model has been deeply challenged as not being universal. Contrary to the expected model of moderation and the struggle for acceptance, the American liberal response to terrorism has been a reversion to a singular understanding of identity and truth. Terrorism has been essentialized, its context reduced to the American experience, and any attempt to historicize it has been categorically denounced as irrational. The Liberal Empire, unlike historic empires, assumes the morality and truth of its mission. It thus manifests itself in intolerant and narrow-minded ways.

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*Don't bluster, don't threaten, but quietly and severely punish bad behaviour.*  
Eliot Cohen, Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies

### Introduction

Discussions of Empire and the Imperial have made an astonishing comeback in the political discourse of both academic and policy circles.<sup>1</sup> These are not debates on the nature of post-colonialism, or on the relationships of hybridity and homelessness arising from the colonial experience; rather they arise in response to the unilateral, even domineering, actions of the proverbial *elephant* in the room of international politics, the military hyperpower of the United States (US). The eagerness of the present US government to use force 'with or



without' allies or institutional approval has prompted this noticeable shift in the terminology of post-Cold War discourses from exuberance about the liberation of the Security Council to hardened expressions of resolve about self-defence, weapons and terror. As of 2001, the US' focus on the pre-emption of terrorist threats and national security has generated a suspicion that the world's great power has exchanged alliances and global engagement for fig-leaf coalitions and expanded military deployment via bases in subservient client-states. Describing this as an Empire could be seen as over-sensitivity to the brusque unilateral style of the Bush Administration's response to international terrorism; it has been argued (Shaw 2002) that the manhandling of international institutions for national purposes should properly be considered a *post-imperial* example of a state dominating global power networks. Others reply that a US-centric world order is not necessarily an Empire — unless one defines Empire broadly as a system ordered around a single powerful hegemon (Ikenberry 2001). So, if Empire now means a new kind of global order that looks to the US like a network model, but is not coerced or aggressively dominated by it, then the US can be said to be the lynchpin of such a democratic-capitalist empire (Hardt and Negri 2000).

On the other hand, several commentators argue that Empire is here and is undoubtedly American. According to Daalder and Lindsay (2003), the real debate should be about whether the American Empire should choose a strategy of unilateralism or multilateralism given that it can afford to do either but they caution that there are serious effects associated with unilateral action in terms of generating resentment and possibly provoking power-balancing behaviour by other states. Even before 11 September, 2001, Johnson (2000) described American overseas military domination as an Empire and warned of the effects of 'blowback' from the resentment generated by power used without regard for local repercussions. In a different vein, Freedland (2002) notes that many do draw parallels between Washington and Rome given its global military presence, the dominance of its language and culture, and even its belief in a higher mission. However, he observes, Americans do not have an imperial self-image, 'they can't quite accept their current role as master' since their own myth of origin is based on rebellion against an imperial power and an emphasis on individual freedom. The belief in America's benign intentions stems from the indirect nature of US control, and, crucially, the fact that the US makes no territorial claims on other sovereign states (Lieven 2003). However, as Cox (2003) argues, the questions of lack of direct territorial control, the promotion of self-determination, and incomplete influence on world affairs do not mean that the term Empire cannot be usefully applied to the US for comparative purposes.

The common thread in the discourse about the American Empire, regardless of whether one sees a 21st century Rome or a model of economic and political



success exported throughout the globe, is a belief in the basic virtuousness of American motives. This is, after all, a liberal democracy — it cannot, by definition, re-create the violent territorial takeovers of Rome since it must be committed to tolerance and pluralism in principle. When a liberal democracy attains global military dominance, the argument goes, this is potentially a positive development for world order. This is the kind of Empire that people might even actively want to join, since along with its cultural freedoms and openness come access to great wealth and security — this is a ‘voluntary empire’ (Cooper 2002). Even Hardt and Negri’s (2000: 182) neo-Marxist call to action reserves a special category for American Empire, describing it as based on ‘imperial sovereignty’ rather than ‘imperialist sovereignty’. That is, the American version of Empire constitutes a radical break from European imperialism because it is *inclusive* rather than *exclusive*. This new form of Empire ‘can only be conceived as a universal republic, a network of powers and counterpowers structured in a boundless and inclusive architecture. This [...] has nothing to do with imperialism, nor with those state organisms designed for conquest, pillage, genocide, colonization, and slavery’ (Hardt and Negri 2000: 166–67). Although recognizing that there are imperialist episodes in American history (slavery, native people, and Vietnam), Hardt and Negri (2000: 182) insist that the US position in the new open Empire stems from its unique political institutions.

[T]his Constitution is imperial and not imperialist. It is imperial because (in contrast to imperialism’s project always to spread its power linearly in closed spaces and invade, destroy, and subsume subject countries within its sovereignty) the U.S. constitutional project is constructed on the model of rearticulating an open space and reinventing incessantly diverse and singular relations in networks across an unbounded terrain.

Thus, the American constitutional project does not destroy and subsume, it *reinvents*. An obvious critique would be that this seems like an artificial distinction. From the perspective of the reinvented, the so-called openness of this project may feel like subjugation. Or, to paraphrase the Borg, ‘Resistance is futile.’ Indeed, Hardt and Negri have provoked an avalanche of critical responses in a number of disciplines, including international relations (e.g. Barkawi and Laffey 2002; Callinicos *et al.* 2002).

Perhaps another way to interpret the *difference* of the American Empire that Hardt and Negri are getting at is to focus on the exceptionalism of American identity. Purdy (2003: 30) suggests that if such a thing as an American Empire exists, it is invisible to Americans themselves: ‘Inquiring into “American Empire” means exploring the distance and mutual incomprehension between how most Americans think of themselves and how people around the world see America.’ Americans see themselves as passively enjoying the fruits of a



globally desirable model of political freedom and capitalist production while the world hungrily seeks its own transformation into the network. However, it is partly the power of the network that engenders the resentment. In its most benign aspect, nations must sign on simply to survive. As Purdy points out, Americans could never imagine having to learn another language simply to have a chance of a decent job, nor could they imagine having the nation's economic and financial policy or corporate laws dictated by outsiders. Because Americans are the template for the network, the coercive effects of its spread are invisible to them. They imagine that the network spreads because it is naturally desirable and others freely choose it; thus, they cannot understand the power of the network effect and the resentment it breeds.

This is the nature of network power. It operates through free and perfectly rational choices that at the same time are hardly choices at all. Not learning English means giving up certain kinds of ambition. Not adopting liberal trade rules means missing entire streams of the global economy. All options except one come to seem perverse. People experience this Hobson's choice as coercive even as they move toward the American-born network under their own eager power. Emulation and resentment are the paired fruits of imperial power, and the stronger the compulsion to emulate, the more intense the resentment is likely to be (Purdy 2003: 36–37).

All of these writers (Hardt, Negri and Purdy) indicate that, although American global dominance can sometimes look or feel like the classical empires of history, it is a different sort of empire because it is based on a non-coercive model and does not have territorial control as a goal. The American Empire, if one must use the term, is a liberal one undertaken for the sake of a greater good — that makes it different in a positive sense.

There are many signs, however, that liberalism and imperialist coercion do in fact coexist — even in the name of toleration of difference and the spread of freedom. This article examines two central elements of liberalism — toleration and pluralism — manifesting as imperial gestures in the contemporary American version of liberalism. Authors supporting the spread of liberal values, even through force, employ the imperial gesture of dismissing alternative viewpoints as not only unacceptable but deranged. In doing so, they depart from the classic liberal value of self-scepticism and veer towards a dangerously heady merger of liberal moralism and realist method — a muscular politics of morality in which the ends (and the actors) are so obviously good that they justify any means. In this form of liberalism, which has taken root particularly in America, might does not *make* right, might *is* right (because it is in the hands of the good). Further, many have now openly embraced the idea of the American Empire on the basis of America as a model



of liberal benevolence. Even Cox (2003: 21–22), who is critical of the starry-eyed view, expresses hope that the American model may provide significant global benefits if only out of practical self-preservation.

A society that rests on the principles of toleration and pluralism ought to be a globally beneficial and acceptable model. But, as I will show, the model is not as tolerant or plural as it seems. Policing must occur to marginalize dissent that departs from the moral core that is obvious to all rational people. This tactic recalls the universalist tendencies which underpin, and undermine Liberalism's claims to knowledge of moral goods. Although most liberals would reject the faintest whiff of an Empire (as coercion) in their policies, a closer reading of the liberal discourse in America reveals imperious techniques of disapproval, exclusion and control that are part of the dark underside of liberal claims to toleration and respect for pluralism — both in domestic politics and in America's foreign policy. Hence, the Liberal Empire rests on a supreme irony — American liberalism must attack difference in order to preserve its universal liberal identity. American liberalism in particular resolves the inherent tension between liberalism's emphasis on the individual and its need to define the 'we' by seeing the rest of the world as potential Americans. This resolution results in a bizarre contradiction — universal nationalism — the driving force behind the American liberal empire (see also Greenberg 2003: 1815–16). Although contemporary American liberalism has manifested itself through conservative ideologies into a foreign policy that is distasteful to many liberal intellectuals (Hoffmann 2003a, 2003b) it does so based on an inherent flaw in Liberal theory that can all too easily give rise to the close-minded conviction of rational certainty.

### **The American Liberal**

The term 'Liberal' here refers to the political theoretical perspective that emphasizes the rights and equality of the individual and a reluctance to see the use of force as anything but a moral last resort. As one scholar put it: 'Central to liberalism, whether conceived as a tradition, an ideology, or as ethical doctrine, is concern for individual liberty' (Smith 1992: 201). In America, liberalism has become associated with a type of aggressive moral commitment that is counterintuitive to the traditional association of liberalism with openness and secularism.<sup>2</sup> From its founding documents onward, the US has staked a moral claim for its basis in clear distinction (idealist) from the cynical continental (realist) politics it broke away from. Especially now, having triumphed after the Cold War, the American system of government is seen as not just a good one, which keeps the peace in an equitable fashion, but the *best* one — clearly superior from both a moral and an economic standpoint, and



only awaiting the passing of preordained historical phases before taking its rightful place as the proven champion (e.g. Fukuyama 1992; Mandelbaum 2002). It is important to point out that contemporary American liberalism is a particularly exaggerated post-Cold War strain, and that it has lost a key characteristic along the way. Traditionally, liberalism included a healthy scepticism in one's own judgment. As Purdy (2003: 67) words it, 'There are so many ways to do wrong as well as right, and humanity is such a flawed vessel, that we should not trust our judgments too confidently. If moral clarity is necessary for liberty, it always risks becoming moral arrogance, which courts violence.' But American liberalism has begun to illustrate a dangerous lurking tendency that plagues liberal theory in general. As self-criticism has been eroded by insecurity, commitment to the universalism of certain moral values has become ascendant. A utopian ideal, Liberalism 'is thus inspired by the dream of political principles that rule without oppressiveness, because they have the universality, transparency, power, and modesty of logic' (Kalb 2002: 111). Claims to universality have a long history in Western political thought, but a belief in the universality of moral values must be tempered by the acknowledgement that other viewpoints may validly challenge them or it will lose the very quality (doubt) that indicated a free, liberal, mind in the first place. This is the internal contradiction of liberalism — it must fight against domination while it must inevitably become controlling (2002: 113). The paradox is based on the necessity of treating equality and freedom as fundamentally rational; otherwise they are simply preferences without any compelling authority (2002: 112). However, embedding its commitments into universal rationality leads to the problem of illiberal liberalism since 'those who object to its ever-ramifying implications, which have come to include the continuing transformation of all social relations, must be treated as lunatic or criminal' (Kalb 2002: 112).

In the aftermath of the 11 September, 2001 terror attacks the desire to take refuge in universal perspectives was particularly strong in the US. America's liberal commitments were challenged by calls for military commissions and the curtailment of civil liberties to aid the 'war' on terrorism. The particularity of the attacks — *they hate us because of who we are* — was felt so intensely that it became commonplace to universalize the horror of the experience. Terror suddenly became ahistorical and universally recognizable. Repressive states with problematic human rights records such as Russia, China and Pakistan, became fellow victims and ready allies in the struggle against terror. Prominent liberal theorist, Michael Walzer (2002: 5), belittled the idea that terrorism might be contextual:

It's not hard to recognize; we can safely avoid postmodernist arguments about knowledge and truth. Terrorism is the deliberate killing of innocent



people, at random, in order to spread fear through a whole population and force the hand of its political leaders.

Walzer's words here indicate a reliance on a fixed single perspective from which to judge the truth of the situation. All reasonable people agree on the definition of terrorism; postmodernists (by implication) are not reasonable. This same logic determines the reasonableness of wanting Western-style democracy (including free trade, secular government and gender equality). Of course, the Iraqi people should be liberated by force — it is, ironically, a 'radically liberal war' launched by a 'radically conservative' president (Friedman 2003). This combination of moral certainty and the conviction that it can and should be universally applied is what tempts the liberal state down the path to Empire. The politics of fear quickly overcame the sceptical component of American political discourse. The saying about one man's freedom fighter being another man's terrorist was shouted down in disbelief. Walzer (2002: 5) asserted that, although the term terrorist is 'contested', many such contested terms can still have a definite meaning: 'the use of "democracy" is contested, but we still have, I think, a pretty good idea of what democracy is.' This interpretation of a 'contested term' assumes that all who encounter it can be rationally persuaded to agree — democracies may vary, but they are recognizable as a type. Postmodernists, goes the subtext, are engaging in an irrational deception when they point out that truth is contextual.

Terrorists, despite their different causes, are universally recognizable and — most importantly — universally condemnable. However, the whole point of contested concepts is that they have histories and so resist definition. Law Professor, David Cole (2001), points out that under new guidelines for combating terrorism, an immigrant could have been deported for supporting the African National Congress against South Africa's apartheid regime. This example demonstrates that a change in circumstances may amount to a change in definition for a group with political aspirations. Indeed, terrorism and the state have a long and mutually constitutive relationship — it is worth recalling that a majority of the current members of the United Nations (UN) used terror tactics at some point as they struggled for independence (Polat 1999: 67). Polat (1999: 66) explained further:

Not only does a radical distinction of the state and terrorism seem therefore to be vulnerable to a deconstructive probing, but the state may also require terrorism as an indispensable 'other' in order to define, distinguish, and justify itself. And for this ontological need on the part of the state for terrorism to be met, the state must leave terrorism ever present, and yet elusive and undefined, maintaining for itself the exclusive right to define terrorism in specific instances.



It is no accident that, despite decades of trying, the UN has been unable to sponsor a concrete binding definition of terrorism among its members. Too many of them have relied on methods which would be read as terrorist if placed in a universalized context.

## The Liberal State

In the ideal liberal state, loyalty to the polity is strong enough to produce a civic national identity which binds its citizens together regardless of their ethno-cultural claims to difference (Kymlicka 1995: 23). This ideal civic identity should make political participation less problematic since all those included in the process are 'insiders' and should thus find their interests satisfied by the representation of their fellows. While immigration may be allowed within this model, the driving impulse is for integration rather than maintained multiples of difference. Kymlicka (1995: 24) distinguishes between civic and ethnic nationalism by noting that it is 'not the absence of any cultural component to national identity, but rather the fact that anyone can integrate into the common culture, regardless of race or colour.' It is civic nationalism that provides the model for the liberal state, but fitting liberal theory into the boundaries of a modern sovereign state forces liberals to draw on illiberal tools to determine the boundaries. Carens (1995: 331) describes the frightening aspect of liberal states' encounters with *outsiders*:

Borders have guards and the guards have guns. This is an obvious fact of political life but one that is easily hidden from view — at least from the view of those of us who are citizens of affluent Western democracies. To Haitians in small, leaky boats confronted by armed Coast Guard cutters, to Salvadorans dying from heat and lack of air after being smuggled into the Arizona desert, to Guatemalans crawling through rat-infested sewer pipes from Mexico to California — to these people the borders, guards and guns are all too apparent.

The need for sovereign states to patrol the borders, to contain the *inside* and exclude the *outside* sets the stage for the supreme irony of the American liberal state in particular. America is, in the eyes of Americans, the universal nation. Americans suspect, as Purdy (2003: 43) puts it, that 'being French is an affectation, being Russian a perversion, being from the world's poor regions a deprivation; but being American is just being human.' It is the apparent ability of America to absorb all other nationalities into itself without losing its identity that perpetuates this conclusion. Every person in the world is regarded as a potential American.<sup>3</sup> To be American, one simply has to live as an American. However, it is precisely the infinite possibility of universalism that provides the internal



contradiction of America and the liberal Empire: every person *may* be an American, but the select few who actually *are* American must be shielded from the threat of the potential hoard that has yet to make this inevitable transition. The irony of this stance is that it assumes a fixed, and therefore protectable, aspect to a nationality proud of its openness. So, when the Liberal state discusses protecting pluralism and multi-culturalism internally, it must make two very strong assumptions about identity relations: first, that they can be protected; second, that such protection is a good and necessary thing. Both of these assumptions are wrong. Identities are not prior, or given — in fact they cannot even be formed in the absence of relational encounters with the other. The discourse of protection also contains a strong hint of fear. Plural identities must be protected (tolerated) to ensure that the duties of a Liberal state in upholding the rights of the individual are carried out; but the majority itself fears an open and unguarded encounter with various ‘outsiders’ within its midst. They are ‘protected’, identified, as minorities (or lately as potential terrorists) so that the majority may encounter them under controlled known conditions. This politics of fear results in the closure of the state. It is the fear of the loss of identity.

This kind of fear partly explains the existential nature of the American response to 11 September, 2001. The ‘war on terrorism’, declared as a fight to the end in which ‘we will prevail’, was couched as a duel to the death. This may seem odd as a reaction from the world’s mightiest nation to the loss of a tiny fraction of its population. Even the worst case scenario of a successful weapons of mass destruction attack is unlikely to cause more casualties than the US has experienced in its numerous conventional military encounters. The risk that a series of terrorist attacks could actually destroy the state seems incalculably small and is certainly less than the Cold War nuclear risks that were so calmly accepted. Why the depth of fear? Why gratify the terrorists with terror? For one thing, the targets are clearly civilian, and civilians did not — as it were — sign up for this kind of risk. However, other countries have experienced constant threats and attacks on civilian populations without calling for a global response and without hyperbolic references to the threat to their future existence. The American response stems from a kind of disbelief that the liberal model of proven universal value could have come under such violent attack. Suddenly, the liberal model of pluralism could not be consistently maintained as totally universal — a potentially large group had expressed its violent disagreement. The response, predictably enough, was to exclude any possibility of reason behind the attacks due to their criminal nature. That is – terrorism was deemed to be *evil* and *irrational*, thereby eliminating the need for the liberal state to acknowledge any validity for the motivation behind it. Liberals closed ranks around America and loudly proclaimed those who pondered the implications of US policy to be ‘appeasers’ and ‘sympathizers’. The choice was stark: either one believed the terrorist attacks to be bizarre, insane and evil (i.e. ahistorical and with no



provocation) or one was anti-American and even sympathetic to the attackers. Extraordinarily, the logic went something like this: because terrorist attacks can never be excused, the context that gave rise to them should never be closely examined (Walzer 2002: 7). Further, the ‘apologists’ were accused of putting the rest of the country at risk by questioning the need for expanded governmental powers over civilians. In his haste to affirm citizens’ obligations to the state, Walzer (2002: 8) — a liberal theorist who has specialized in writing on toleration and justice — ends up echoing the traditional realist platform of state survival:

[W]e have to be ready to consider modifying the constraints [on police work]. It isn’t a betrayal of liberal or American values to do that; it is in fact the right thing to do, because the first obligation of the state is to protect the lives of its citizens (that’s what states are for), and American lives are now visibly and certainly at risk... Think of what will happen to our civil liberties if there are more successful terrorist attacks.

The logic of this argument is perverse and indicates the strange imbalance in contemporary American liberalism. We must curtail civil liberties in order to avoid having to curtail civil liberties. There are several unquestioned assumptions baked into this assertion. The first is that there is a higher priority in the liberal state on the lives of citizens than on their liberty. But if that were true then why did Americans design so many protections into their justice system in the first place? The ‘innocent until proven guilty’ requirement alone proclaims the opposite, as it allows suspected criminals to go free if the evidence against them is not convincing enough. The second hidden assumption is that the state will actually be able to secure the lives of its citizens more effectively with greater police powers and can be trusted to do so. Many embarrassing incidents in American history such as the Palmer raids, Japanese internment camps, and the McCarthy era of McCarran-Walter Act provide adequate reason for doubt about this sort of trust (Cole 2001: 2). However, this is a liberal state that has banished doubt from its repertoire. Since Americans are good, they can say: ‘Our hearts are pure, and purity expresses itself in our actions. When we follow our feelings, whether of compassion or of outrage, we are staying close to the truth. The danger is not that we will be wrong, but that we will fail to trust ourselves’ (Purdy 2003: 46–47). It is this loss of scepticism, the unwillingness to question, that has produced what should be a contradiction in terms: an imperial liberal state.

### **Walzer’s ‘Toleration’ and the Liberal State**

As an important and visible voice in American political discourse, Walzer is used in this section as emblematic of the type of American liberalism and its



response to terrorism here under critique. Walzer (1997: 2) has made an extended case for the liberal virtue of toleration, or 'the peaceful coexistence of groups of people with different histories, cultures, and identities, which is what toleration makes possible.' This means that toleration is necessary from a practical perspective, because the peace it produces is always desirable, and that it does not necessarily require respect for difference. Walzer's analytic framework displays all the positive elements of self-doubting traditional liberalism. He conceded (1997: 5–7) that 'Philosophy has to be historically informed and sociologically competent if it is to avoid bad utopianism and acknowledge the hard choices that must often be made in political life,' and also that our experiences are 'always, necessarily, culturally mediated.' However, he ultimately advocates a thin brand of relativism and allows the blinders of moral certainty to creep back into the debate — because, he says, 'We choose within limits, and I suspect that the real disagreement among philosophers is not whether such limits exist — no one seriously believes that they don't — but how wide they are' (Walzer 1997: 5–6).

Although Walzer compares five different 'regimes of toleration' (empires, nation-states, immigrant societies, consociations and international society), it is his discussion of states which is primarily relevant here and which will serve as the basis to illustrate his theory of toleration. In analyzing the state model of toleration, Walzer finds it useful to divide the territorial state into two separate examples: nation-states and immigrant societies. Both involve a sovereign state with control over a strictly defined territory, but nation-states are dominated by a single national majority which controls public life while immigrant societies involve multiple groups with no clear capturing of the state apparatus by any one group. Within Walzer's description, nation-states may be liberal-democratic states and therefore tolerant of minorities as citizens. However, since the majority nationality continues to organize public life in ways that reproduce its own traditions, there is constant pressure on minority group members to assimilate. Immigrant societies, by contrast, exhibit toleration in a decentralized fashion. As no single group is in control, everyone must be tolerant of everyone else. This political model does not allow for the possibility of territorial clustering or autonomy by various groups. Individuals in these groups have arrived separately, making a choice to leave a territorial base in the 'mother country'. Walzer considers this model to be in a process of formation, forging new forms of difference and toleration which are still unclear. There are several flaws in his methodology that preclude him from making important conclusions about identity and difference, and the nature of the liberal (tolerant) state.

The first problem with the structure of Walzer's argument is the fact that it is ahistorical. He compares empires, nation-states, immigrant societies, consociations and international society as if they may have existed concurrently at any



point in history. This implication, whether intended or not, gives rise to a very problematic treatment of states in their several forms. By not referring to the nature of statehood and its place as a product of modernity, Walzer overlooks the profound changes in the nature of identity which created the conditions of possibility for the state. Omitting the rise of statehood and nationalism makes his discussions of the five regimes problematic. For example, the labelling of empires as ‘multinational’ is completely anachronistic unless he wishes to restrict his discussion to the late 19th and 20th centuries. Our contemporary understanding of the term ‘nation’ did not settle until the French Revolution and even later (Hobsbawm 1990: 121). The great empires of history (Roman, Ottoman, Persian) were not multinational — they could not have been because nations did not exist as such. Identities (to the extent that there were any beyond the most local of areas) stemmed from religious and autocratic hierarchies, often overlapping, but the concept of nation requires a belief in the equality of men which even today has not succeeded in completely shrugging off the yoke of class. This careless definition also leads Walzer to imply that empires operated within strict boundaries, which they clearly did not. The Roman Empire, for example, existed on the basis of exercise of power, even if this carried its significance beyond the formal encampments and walls (Doyle 1986: 30). Not only were empires inherently expansive, eager to spread influence, and thus in contradiction with the need for borders, but territoriality as we have come to know it did not exist until the state began to take shape in the Westphalian era. In fact, it is arguable that territoriality could only settle into its current crucial meaning after the age of exploration was over and frontiers had ceased to exist. Walzer’s assumption about the territoriality of empires, then, is not only anachronistic, but ironically it deprives the imperial model of one of its primary advantages in terms of toleration. From the perspective of inclusiveness, Empire, with a weak conception of ‘outside’ vs ‘inside’, was automatically more tolerant of all the peoples with which it came into contact.

However, the primary difficulty in Walzer’s argument occurs in the assumption of identities as given. This argument is much more important since it strikes at the very heart of the meaning of toleration, and it imports intellectual certainty into the realm of questioning and curiosity. It is clear that for Walzer identities are prior to politics and difference is something which must be tolerated. He wrote (1997: xii): ‘A defense of toleration doesn’t have to be a defense of difference. It can be, and often is, nothing more than an argument from necessity.’ Thus, one may actually be opposed to certain forms of difference and yet make a choice to tolerate them. Toleration, Walzer (1997: xii) asserted, ‘makes difference possible.’ From a committed post-modernist perspective (the term that liberals often use as a slur), it is obvious that Walzer has got it exactly backwards: it is difference that makes toleration possible. He



operates — without question — on the assumption that identities are pre-formed, prior to any encounters with difference. So toleration is a decision which we make in order to maintain the social good of peaceful coexistence. Nowhere in his text does Walzer imply that knowledge of the self might be problematic, or dependent on the other. In fact, so deep is his assumption of priority of the self embedded that Walzer ventures far into discussions of toleration and difference without referring to the nature or constitution of the self at all. But how can a theory which does not take the formation of identity into account explain the ways in which societies and individuals change and interact?

If our identities were truly fixed, and we were simply born into pre-formed selves, then not only our lives but our politics would be radically different. We would be little open to the political values of others and learning or negotiating would scarcely be possible. Responsible diplomacy, as Sárváry (2001: 381) argues, cannot ‘be restricted to gradually bringing our representation into line with an objective reality through gradual expansion of the boundaries of the Self, but means an endless enterprise/challenge for actors to gradually reinterpret their identities and their knowledge about the reality surrounding them in order to ensure peaceful change.’ Politics, in other words, is about the never-ending negotiation of identity.

Our selves — our identities — are constructed constantly by our own accounts of all the circumstances through which we exist. An empirical illustration of this occurs in the clinical studies of neurology and psychology where doctors have observed the desperately manic story-telling behaviour of people who have lost their short-term memories. These individuals are incapable of forming bonds with other human beings because they never remember having met them, even in the very recent past. Instead of helping them form a concept of themselves, the presence of other people causes these patients unease and distress. For these unfortunate victims of brain injury, ‘[t]he world keeps disappearing, losing meaning, vanishing — and [they] must seek meaning, *make* meaning, in a desperate way, continually inventing, throwing bridges of meaning over abysses of meaninglessness, the chaos that yawns continually beneath [them]’ (Sacks 1986: 106, original italics). It is when we see how people who have lost their memories try to make meaning that we realize how naturally and quietly the process of making meaning occurs — on a constant personal basis through our memories. As Sacks concluded (1986: 105, original italics) after seeing such patients:

If we wish to know about a man, we ask ‘what is his story — his real inmost story?’ — for each of us is a biography, a story. Each of us is a singular narrative, which is constructed, continually, unconsciously, by, through, and in us — through our perceptions, our feelings, our thoughts, our



actions; and, not least, our discourse, our spoken narrations. Biologically, physiologically, we are not so different from each other; historically, as narratives — we are each of us unique.

So while we are each uniquely a result of circumstance, we are also profoundly dependent on establishing ongoing ties with others in order to maintain a sense of ourselves. The contingency, the chance, of our circumstances does not mean that we must be rootless. As these patients illustrate, our identities are grounded in the memories through which we can establish our identity narratives. Group identities occur through discourses, thoughts and perceptions which are shared. But given this self-historicizing process through which identities are created, there is no fundamental reason for prioritizing one type of group identity over another. Different associations necessarily serve different purposes. Politics itself is one of the identity-formative decisions of association. In fact, the identity of the 'who' is the question which must be answered before politics can occur (Schmitt 1932/1996). But who we are depends as much on whom we perceive ourselves *not* to be as it does upon any shared perceptions, and it remains an ongoing process. As William Connolly (1991: 64) put it, 'An identity is established in relation to a series of differences that have become socially recognized. These differences are essential to its being. If they did not coexist as differences, it would not exist in its distinctness and solidity.' Difference, then, is not a result of toleration. Difference simply *is* in a deep, ontological way which Walzer refuses to recognize or take into account. Rather, he seems to want to sit on both sides of the theoretical fence. He wants the security of a true and pure identity while allowing difference to exist through toleration. But this is the paradox already described by Connolly — the paradox that pure identities cannot coexist in the presence of difference if indeed they can exist at all.

[W]e cannot dispense with personal and collective identities, but the multiple drives to stamp truth upon those identities function to convert differences into otherness and otherness into scapegoats created and maintained to secure the appearance of a true identity. To possess a true identity is to be false to difference, while to be true to difference is to sacrifice the promise of a true identity (Connolly 1991: 67).

In other words, there is no choice to be made about whether or not to tolerate difference. We cannot reject difference any more than we can reject ourselves for we exist through difference. We are, in fact, all examples of each other's 'other'. Thus, to advocate 'toleration' as the only practical choice is to establish a relationship among the many possible identities which is based on a severe misunderstanding of the necessity, the inevitability, of difference.



Toleration must also presume that certain identities are ‘true’ ones and that others are to be allowed to continue unrepressed for the sake of liberal theory. Toleration is authoritatively defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary* as ‘The action of sustaining or enduring; endurance (of evil, suffering etc.).’ Priorities between good and evil are thus baked into the very meaning of the word. The *tolerator* is patient, good, praiseworthy, while the *tolerated* causes pain and suffering and must therefore be bad. Walzer (1997: 52) himself acknowledges that toleration has a problematic meaning — that it is about power: ‘To tolerate someone else is an act of power; to be tolerated is an acceptance of weakness.’ But he argues that clearly marked power relations are actually more likely to create stable peace, thus toleration is still a net social good. This is an interesting point but it neglects a crucial element. The relationship between power and stability is not so simple. ‘Power’, as Arendt wrote (1969: 52), ‘needs no justification as it is inherent in the very existence of political communities; what, however, it does need is legitimacy... Power springs up whenever people get together and act in concert, but it derives its legitimacy from the initial getting together rather than from any action that then may follow.’ Power alone cannot create stable peaceful relationships, it must be accepted, recognized, as legitimate. Power which loses its legitimacy, Arendt suggested, tends to give way to violence in order to maintain control. There is no recognition of legitimacy in Walzer’s toleration. It is based rather on fear that the other might threaten the sanctity of the settled identity, the knowledge one has of one’s place in a group. Walzer (1997: 87) wrote:

In immigrant societies (and also now in nation-states under immigrant pressure), people have begun to experience what we might think of as a life without clear boundaries and without secure or singular identities. Difference is, as it were, dispersed, so that it is encountered everywhere, every day... The result is a constant commingling of ambiguously identified individuals, intermarriage among them, and hence a highly intensive multiculturalism that is instantiated not only in the society as a whole but also in a growing number of families, even in a growing number of individuals.

Walzer describes the absence of secure identities as a fearsome event. He labels this kind of bewildering array ‘the postmodern project’ and it is clear that his comfort threshold has been passed. Marriage between ‘ambiguously defined’ individuals could cause us to lose sight of our common identity. For Walzer, this ambiguity is something frightening, something to be endured, tolerated, but not approved of. He assumed (1997: 88), without evidence, that ‘[t]he associations that these self-made and self-making individuals form are likely to be little more than temporary alliances that can be easily broken off when something more promising presents itself.’ But no one is ‘self-made’. We have many choices as individuals, but we are also highly contextual beings, of



course. Walzer, here, conflates ambiguity (and postmodernity) with instability and chaos and assumes that it cannot be for the social good. ‘The postmodern project,’ he asserted (1997: 88–89), ‘undercuts every sort of common identity and standard behavior: it makes for a society in which the plural pronouns “us” and “them” [...] have no fixed reference.’ This conclusion relies on the assumption that stable identities are good and produce stable social and political relations. But just possibly the reverse is true. Stable identities are ones that presume they are the standard of normalcy and thus all others are deviant. They are, in other words, recipes for oppression and, ironically, *intolerance*. However, if one realizes the contingency of the self then one is much more likely to accept and respect difference in others. Realizing contingency does not mean one is rootless or finds no meaning in life. If anything, the evidence from America itself reveals a growing contentedness with ‘post-ethnic’ identities.

The current generation of young Americans is the most multi-racial group ever — with increasing rates of intermarriage and a mix ’n match approach to culture. Perhaps this is Walzer’s worst fear realized: ‘in the highly fluid youth marketplace, cultural identities are adopted, exchanged and shed as simply and efficiently as if they were eBay transactions’ (Kotkin and Tseng 2003). This has not meant the breakdown of communities and group identities. It only portends a shift in the basis of group feeling from race and ethnicity to a number of other possibilities (such as local communities or age groups). The contingent self does not become Dr. Sacks’ amnesiac patient, with a desperate inability to form an identity. Contingency does not obliterate social memory. As if directly addressing Walzer’s concerns, Connolly wrote (1991: 172): ‘Many contemporary theorists proceed as if identity were fractured today and we must find some way to solidify it... But at the most fundamental level these interpretations do not make sense to me. The standards of unity and harmony they presuppose seem closer to death than to life.’ In other words, to rely on stability and predictability, to fear the unknown and contingent is, in some profound sense, to refuse to live life itself. The *reductio ad absurdum* of this argument is an identity which is fixed and stable, but it is the stability of death, the identity of a robot. Ironically, then, while he starts his essay in a promising way, in search of a theory which will ease strife among human beings, Walzer proves unable to formulate a response to difference which accounts for the variety of possible identities and relations among them. His model of toleration proves in the end to be strikingly intolerant of difference.

## Liberal Empire

Walzer’s tolerant liberal state and the reaction of American liberalism to the 11 September, 2001 terror attacks come together to give us a developing picture of



Liberal Empire. Post 11 September US foreign policy has begun to demonstrate the consequences of removing liberalism's in-built contradictions in favour of certainty. Imperialism (based on expansionist universalism) is always a possibility in liberalism, if the balance between scepticism and certainty shifts in favour of certainty. If, as Walzer asserted, toleration is a pragmatic consideration, then there are circumstances where it might not make sense — where difference, in fact, must not be tolerated. While few would argue that open-mindedness requires submission to terrorism, it is not ridiculous to suggest that a wise path to finding ways to deal with violence of this nature would include understanding how these ideas were formed. An acceptance of the idea of mutual reliance of the self upon others tells us that the 'hatred' and 'evil' of those willing to commit terrorist acts did not develop in a vacuum. Just as importantly, for this is not about justification, this idea acknowledges that our selves are being affected by this unforeseen relationship. There is no way to have an encounter with difference and remain untouched. We are not protected from this — even if no terrorist attack ever succeeds again, being American will have changed its meaning because of the encounter and the continuing response to it. But insistence on the *status quo* has become the liberal American mantra. We were victims, we were innocent, we were good. The inherent goodness of victimhood has become a constant refrain and has served to justify an increasingly aggressive stance towards the rest of the world.

Although it is an exaggeration to say that US foreign policy was co-operative and multilateral before the current Bush Administration, the emphatic change of style has amounted to a serious shift in content. The National Security Strategy (NSS) of 2002 has been much applauded and maligned. As noted at the time, it is an overtly imperial statement of the new Bush doctrine for approaching world politics. What was not noted is that the NSS is an obvious outcome of the American style of imperial liberal thinking. Purdy (2003: 54) succinctly delivers the argument as follows:

First, there is one set of principles binding all countries in the world, whether their governments acknowledge or ignore them. These are democracy, free markets, human rights, and peaceful behaviour toward other countries. Second, we embody these principles, and we have the last word as to what they mean and where they have been grievously violated. Third, we will enforce these principles with our unparalleled military strength and will not permit competitors to arise and challenge our supreme position. In us, and only in us, power and righteousness coincide.

America the liberal state becomes America the Liberal Empire in a remarkably smooth transition. Here is a statement of breathtaking moral clarity — America is THE liberal state embodied and therefore is the arbitrator of what shall pass as liberal and also of what shall be deemed illiberal. Making



such an explicit statement transcends being the template for a global network model. America has become the enforcer for the Liberal Empire — it will decide what is true and what is false, and more importantly, who is good and who is evil, who is to be tolerated and whom excluded. As Rhodes (2003: 137) suggests, ‘the Bush administration’s grand strategy may be imperial, but it aims at creating liberal rather than autocratic or totalitarian, governance wherever the American military *pax* reaches.’ This is the universalist impulse of liberal moralism run wild. The trouble is that practicality has a nasty way of making moralists look hypocritical. Obviously, there are many instances where a consistent application of the Bush doctrine would require an intervention (North Korea, Syria, Iran — but also Russia, China, Israel/Palestine). This observation has inconveniently led some to question the validity of the principles that divide the tolerable from the intolerable in the first place.

Much has been said already about the Iraq intervention so I propose a consideration of the Liberal Empire through another source. A recent article by Robert Kaplan (2003) boldly illustrates the kind of thinking that can proceed from the liberal assumption of universal goodness and rightness. Kaplan is at the logical extreme of the assumptions made by Walzer. While Walzer may disagree with Kaplan’s aggressive tactics, they are ethically reconcilable with Walzer’s own version of liberalism in which toleration has its limits and the liberal society is justified in curtailing freedoms to protect itself.

It may be problematic to classify Kaplan as a Liberal, but I do so on the basis that he repeatedly refers to the morality of US action and to the aim of spreading the classic liberal values of liberty, property and economic freedom. He himself refers to the US as a liberal empire (Kaplan 2003: 68). Kaplan — who calls the observation that the US has become a global empire an ‘obvious cliché’ — writes as a self-appointed advisor to the Prince, offering ten rules America should follow as it manages the world. What is striking about his observations is the path he takes through faith in the rightness of American action to arrive at the broad scope of acceptable means that may be necessary to arrive at good ends. Kaplan is, in essence, advocating realist means to achieve liberal ends. That is, he believes that American power is what is best for global freedom and stability. Force is the ethical choice and the US will not only secure its own position in the world (realist ends) but make the world a more free and richer place (liberal ends). He begins by noting (2003: 68) that, because America is promoting the spread of democracy, its grip on previously cooperative countries will weaken, so ‘if we are to get our way, and at the same time to promote our democratic principles, we will have to operate nimbly, in the shadows and behind closed doors, using means far less obvious than the august array of power displayed in the air and ground war against Iraq.’ Kaplan’s first rule (*Produce More Joppolos*) is based on a fictional World War II officer who demonstrated independence and ingenuity in the face of



unpredictable circumstances that went beyond his training. Quoting the novel's author, Kaplan states (2003: 69): 'no four freedoms or fourteen points, no dreamer's diagram so symmetrical and so faultless on paper, no plan, no hope, no treaty — none of these things can guarantee anything. Only men can guarantee, only the behaviour of men under pressure.' Clearly, the Liberal Empire need not participate in the vain and weak endeavours of international institutions which are the preserve of weak diplomats. These paper promises are useless. Men get things done — strong men who know that 'in a world of tribes and thugs manliness still goes a long way' (Kaplan 2003: 69). In his disdain of global institutions and the UN in particular, Kaplan joins a growing chorus of new sovereigntists who argue that the US should not curtail its sovereignty by allowing new international agreements to change its behaviour in any way (Spiro 2000). These neo-conservative American liberals continue to insist on moral arguments promoting capitalism and democracy and they never assert that international law is irrelevant — only that it applies differently to the US.

Rule number 2: *Stay on the Move* urges the US not to get bogged down in too many extended military entanglements. Flexibility and rapid response are the keywords for patrolling and controlling a global empire. Americans, according to Kaplan, have a special advantage that makes them less likely than the British to set up former colonies — they are provincial. A retired colonel tells him (2003: 72): 'Even our Special Ops people are insular. Sure, we like the adventure with other cultures, learning the history and language. But at the heart many of us are farm boys who can't wait to get home ... Our insularity protects us from becoming colonials.' Under the Liberal Empire, the imperial forces do not become too deeply involved in the lives of those they are policing. The military is proud of the ability of its members to function in foreign places without 'going native', because ultimately there is an *inside* to which these imperial outposts will never belong. The idea that US forces disdain formal colonialism should be comforting — except for the fact that it hints at the kind of short attention span that left places like Somalia, Haiti, and Afghanistan without the tools for political order. In Rule 4, *Use the Military to Promote Democracy*, Kaplan suggests making use of wide American military deployment to strengthen pro-democracy policies. He advocates this on pragmatic grounds (2003: 76) because 'the fact is that Third World military men are more likely to listen to American officers who brief them about human rights as a tool of counterinsurgency than to civilians who talk about universal principles of justice.' In fact, Kaplan is delighted that the line between the military and civilian tasks is fading (2003: 76): 'The US military will increasingly churn out such chameleons: operatives who combine the traits of soldier, intelligence agent, diplomat, civilian aid worker, and academic. At the same time that our uniformed officers are acting more like diplomats, our diplomats, particularly



our ambassadors, are acting more like generals.’ How comforting to know that the increasingly militarized politics of the Liberal Empire are being implemented by a multi-talented corps of soldier-diplomats.

One of Kaplan’s more bewildering guidelines comes in Rule number 5, *Be Light and Lethal*. Here, he urges the US military to follow the model of American policy in Latin America. Although the results were ‘not always pretty and, frankly, not always moral’ the unconventional warfare approach, involving aggressive intelligence and training local units to do the bulk of the work, allowed the US to defeat communist influence ‘for a relatively small investment of money and manpower’ (2003: 77). Kaplan rejects the claims of ‘journalists and intellectuals [who] have regarded this policy as something to be ashamed of,’ because ‘the far more significant operational truth is that it exemplifies how we should act worldwide in the foreseeable future’ (2003: 77). Further, the beauty of US Latin American policy was that it did not require the inconvenient ‘quagmire’ of UN Security Council Approval, ‘which in any case represents an antiquated power arrangement unreflective of the latest wave of US military modernization in both tactics and weaponry’ (2003: 79). Kaplan recommends that future US policy should simply be to avoid the UN by increasing the use of a more militarized Central Intelligence Agency and a more intelligence-oriented corps of military Special Forces. As the article goes on, Kaplan demonstrates increasing impatience for the demands of world approval of the process of controlling the Liberal Empire. A moral outcome, he asserts, requires some morally questionable methods. In particular,

the war on terrorism will not be successful if every aspect of its execution must be disclosed and justified — in terms of universal principles — to the satisfaction of the world media and world public opinion. The old rules are good rules because, as the ancient Chinese philosophers well knew, deception and occasional dirty work are morally preferable to launching a war (2003: 80).

Kaplan’s muscular go-team view of how American Empire should proceed illustrates how easily liberalism can slip from its moorings when it disdains the possibility of other avenues to truth. Kaplan has become an eerie hybrid of liberalism and realism — the pragmatic liberal, espousing ‘the language of convenience trumpeted as the language of morality’ (Williams 2001). He is on the right side — so all that matters is that this side wins. The possibility, as a traditional International Relations realist might caution, that aggressive tactics will produce undesirable blowback effects such as global resentment and lost legitimacy does not appear anywhere on his horizon. So certain of rightness is he that even the old liberal commitment to universal principles (which would at least nod in the direction of multilateral agreement) is dismissed (Kaplan 2003: 83) as ‘the traditional weapon of the weak seeking to restrain the strong.’



His argument ultimately reduces to the assertion that the US is a Liberal Empire, that it should dominate the world, and that its best chance for doing so is to rely on a globally deployed, diversified, innovative and stealthy military which craftily avoids the involvement of global institutions by getting the job done quickly and quietly under cover of persuasive media relations. By the end of the article, it would appear that Kaplan has firmly joined the ranks of the Athenians on their approach to Melos, advocating that the strong can do what they like. But he commits himself firmly to the liberal ranks when he asserts (Kaplan 2003: 83) the ultimate liberal utility of American Empire: 'By sustaining ourselves first, we will be able to do the world the most good. Some 200 countries, plus thousands of nongovernmental organizations, represent a chaos of interests. Without the organizing force of a great and self-interested liberal power, they are unable to advance the interests of humanity as a whole.' Thus, Walzer's feared postmodern project and ambiguous identities merge into Kaplan's 'chaos of interests' that must be tamed by the liberal truth. These different interests obscure the truth, according to Kaplan. His logic is as follows: we all know that the American Empire will represent the best interests of us all. The American Empire is the moral choice because it is based on toleration. Pragmatically, we should pare down the plurality of voices and support this reluctant empire. This is the imperial gesture of toleration.

### **Network Pluralism**

Lest this article descend into gloomy warnings against the imperial power of a righteous hegemon, let me suggest by way of conclusion that there is an alternative conceptualization of pluralism. This is William Connolly's network pluralism. The liberal model of pluralism and toleration can be likened to a tree trunk (arboreal) in which many branches are encouraged to grow but they must all stem from a central trunk (moral clarity). Connolly (2001: 351) calls this tree trunk the national model of pluralism, it 'extends tolerance to minorities ranged around a majority centre. The centre might be provided by ethnicity, language, religion, family structure, economic practice, or some combination thereof.'

In contrast to this is the network model of pluralism, also called the plural matrix of cosmopolitanism; this model is represented by the network or rhizome metaphor: a series of sprouting shoots and multiple roots in which no central trunk is discernible and yet all stems are both rooted and interconnected with connections that extend across the globe without stopping at states' borders. Connolly asserts that this model does not amount to the social fragmentation which concerns so many liberal theorists. To translate the metaphor into politics, he suggests (2001: 352) that this form of pluralism is



one 'in which citizens cultivate presumptive receptivity to new drives to pluralization, coming to terms self-critically with how old patterns of diversity often encourage them to exclude or marginalize emerging constituencies to whom they could otherwise connect positively.' As a starting point, citizens must learn how to deliberately unsettle the comfortable and the familiar. It is exactly when we have the urge to shun people and ideas that we should think again about the possibility of connection. Connolly acknowledges that it is not easy. Further, it depends upon a growing number of individuals who can sustain the pattern broadly enough to allow a network style of pluralism to take hold: 'The effort depends upon numerous parties relinquishing the provincial demand that all others subscribe to faith in the transcendental, universal, immanent, deliberative, revealed or rational source they themselves confess' (2001: 353). Connolly does not propose an alternative to the model of the liberal state; rather he urges an additional understanding of the possibilities of identification beyond and across the limitations of the national. His point is not to eliminate more traditional layers of identity, layers he calls 'concentric identifications', because these are a necessary part of ordered life. Instead, Connolly (2000: 603) sees the potential for pluralism in a process of seeing 'how concentric circles of political culture are complicated and compromised by numerous crosscutting allegiances, connections, and modes of collaboration.'

Indeed, such connections already exist — it is only a matter of recognizing their validity and forgetting the insistence on the universal. This kind of pluralism is a radical challenge to the Liberal Empire. It is the decentralization of truth, and it requires the willing participation of myriads of people in order to have significant political effects. Nonetheless, there are signs that such a model is at work changing one person at a time, challenging the willingness of some to embrace the unthinkable.

I conclude with selections from an essay by Richard Rodriguez (2003) that suggest an unfamiliar and perhaps uncomfortable way of seeing the present military mission in Iraq, which reflects Connolly's urging towards a plural rather than concentric matrix of identification. The deployments of the Liberal Empire do not only extend outward from the centre. There are always opportunities for networks of difference to take root and work their awesome magic even on the good and the powerful.

*Contrary to the scenarios of military strategists and indeed historians, it is not always useful to distinguish the victor from the vanquished. Often the victor and the vanquished form a third.*

*President Bush addressed Iraqi Americans in Arab Detroit, promising them a Democratic Iraq. One could easily foresee the Arabization of America. In the aftermath of war come new civil relationships, curricula, bureaucracies, even*



*hatreds, even dependencies. Occupying armies become bilingual or the defeated learn the victor's language and learn the foreigners' ways until those ways seem no longer so foreign.*

*Even as Washington plans to reconfigure the desert, the Middle East draws ever closer to the average American. Islam is now so much a part of the American imagination and the American landscape, it will be impossible hence forward for participants at a congressional prayer meeting not to name Islam along with Christianity or Judaism, for Islam is now a major faith of the American people.*

*Somewhere on the desert tonight, I am certain of it, a young American soldier is momentarily entranced by some aspect of the world he has entered to convert. The music or the spices, the colors, the voices, the eyes. He will return home himself converted, because he has experienced an intimacy by which I mean he has eaten, he has looked, he has breathed.*

## Notes

- 1 The first version of this article was presented at the International Studies Association/Central and East European International Studies Association Meeting, 26–28 June, 2003, in Budapest, Hungary. I thank the panel participants, the editors, the anonymous reviewers and Andreas Behnke for their invaluable comments.
- 2 I am asserting here that contemporary American conservatism, as manifested in the Republican Party of George W. Bush, owes its origins in fact to liberalism rather than realism. For an excellent description of the origins of American neo-conservatism, see Afsah (2003). It has even been called 'muscular Wilsonianism' (Elliott 2002). Although counter-intuitive, this view is beginning to take hold, not least among the disconcerted traditional (realist) conservative wing of the party; see Mearsheimer and Walt (2003); and Talbott (2003).
- 3 I have experienced this firsthand on a number of occasions when my foreign husband (a resident alien) has been asked matter-of-factly when he was going to become a citizen. This is the default setting for American identity. The thought that a foreigner would not wish to become American is nearly incomprehensible.

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