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In the Space of Theory Postfoundational Geographies of the Nation-State

MATTHEW SPARKE

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Empire's Geography: War, Globalization, and American Imperialism

We think it is important to note that what used to be conflict or competition among several imperialist powers has in important respects been replaced by the idea of a single power that overdetermines them all, structures them in a unitary way, and treats them under one common notion of right that is decidedly postcolonial and postimperialist. This is really the point of departure for our study of Empire.

—MICHAEL HARDT AND ANTONIO NEGRI, *EMPIRE*

The decentered global system of Empire that Hardt and Negri named with the title of their acclaimed book is not now the empire that scholars, pundits, and commentators of all kinds are discussing several years later. Notwithstanding the stunning academic success of *Empire* as one of the most widely read political theories of globalization, notwithstanding its ongoing salience as a critique of neoliberal governmentality, and notwithstanding its popularity among critics of global capitalism in venues such as the World Social Forum, it and its postnational arguments about the decentered power networks of an emergent “postcolonial” and “postimperialist” capitalist system have since been eclipsed by the recentered and reterritorializing forces of American hegemony.¹ There is clearly an “idea of a single power that overdetermines them all” at work in this respect, but it is an idea better evoked by writers such as Robert Kagan and William Kristol: two neoconservatives close to the Bush administration. “Today’s international system,” they say,

is built not around a balance of power but around American hegemony. The international financial institutions were fashioned by Americans and serve American interests. The international security structures are chiefly a collection of American-led alliances. What Americans like to call international “norms” are really reflections of American and West European principles. Since today’s relatively benevolent international circumstances are the product of our hegemonic influence, any lessening of that influence will allow others to play a larger part in shaping the world to suit their needs. . . . American hegemony, then, must be actively maintained, just as it was actively obtained.²

As two ideological shock troops of American hegemony, then, Kagan and Kristol exemplify the very imperial arrogance that Hardt and Negri saw as transcended by the transnational entrenchment of neoliberal “biopolitics.” Their neoconservative idea of a single *American* power that overdetermines all others represents a complete inverse of Hardt and Negri’s view that “Empire is not American and the United States is not its center” (*Empire*, 384). Indeed, in some of the very networks of global governmentality that Hardt and Negri construed as the postnational “administrative machine”—global finance, multilateral alliances, and the norms of international politics—Kagan and Kristol saw the foundations of their Project for a New American Century. Their goal in pushing this boldly national “Project” in 2000 was not to dismantle “today’s international system” but rather to tilt U.S. foreign policy away from Clinton’s supposed multilateralism in order to maintain American dominance through more explicitly imperial policy measures. This geopolitical activism has since taken shape in the Bush administration’s unilateral imperial practice, practice that, perhaps more successfully than even Kagan and Kristol would have thought possible, has made American global intervention synonymous with “empire.” In the wake of two offensive wars, in the context of the ongoing occupation of Iraq, Afghanistan, and over a hundred military bases encircling the globe, and while also still maintaining all kinds of special privileges and authority in the institutions and agreements of global commerce and finance, it is now clearly this American empire that is the focus of debate and discontent around the world.

To be sure, the American influence over and in neoliberal globalization was often acknowledged before in terms such as “Coca-Colonization,” “McDonaldization,” and the “Washington Con-

sensus.” But with the Bush presidency, as the cultural colonization turned into unabashed occupation, as “ready to eat” military meals took over as the dominant American fast food across the Middle East, and as international consensus faltered, the dominative aspects of Washington’s hegemony over global relations became much harder to ignore. In the American media itself talk of empire and imperialism was no longer eschewed. Against the grain of all the postcolonial national narratives about America’s anti-imperial foundations, empire instead was suddenly all the rage. From lame liberal apologetas for the wars as civilizing imperial missions, to crass conservative commentary about how to do empire “less reluctantly” like the British, to political satire about the imperial culture of the newly unilateral Washington consensus, the “modernizing” euphemisms, world-making slogans, and ambient colonial arrogance of empire became normal and commonplace.³ “[W]hat word but ‘empire’ describes the awesome thing that America is becoming?” asked Michael Ignatieff, a Canadian liberal turned Harvard-based imperial apologist. Advocating the so-called rescue of Iraq, and claiming *contra* all the violent history of U.S. intervention in Latin America, South East Asia, and the Middle East that American imperialism brings “stability,” Ignatieff urged war.⁴ “Imperial powers,” he lectured his *New York Times* audience, “do not have the luxury of timidity.” Max Boot, a less contorted advocate of imperialism, made exactly the same point in plain prose. “We are going to be called an empire whatever we do,” he argued. “We might as well be a successful empire.”⁵ And taking on the role of explaining exactly how to be successful, the British historian Niall Ferguson also won fame (and another place at Harvard) advising Americans about how the British Empire supposedly rescued the world from premodernity.⁶

Perhaps more significant than all the announcements of empire was the unconcealed imperial attitude brought to Washington by the Bush administration itself. Maureen Dowd, a columnist for the *New York Times*, chronicled this imperial attitude more deftly than most. “Why,” she asked, during the buildup to the Iraq war,

should former C.E.O.’s Cheney and Rummy settle for mere Jack Welch-style perks when they can have the perks of empire? They can restore civilization to the cradle of civilization. Lemon fizzes, cribbage and cricket by the Tower of Babel. A 36-hole golf course on the banks of the Tigris and Euphrates. Arab-Disney in the hanging

gardens of Babylon. Oil on tap at the Baghdad Hilton. Huge contracts for buddies in the defense and oil industries. Halliburton's Brown and Root construction company building a six-lane highway from Baghdad to Tel Aviv. How long can it be before the Empire strikes back?⁷

Dowd's question was a suggestive one, and not just because of its basic concern about imperial blowback. Her acknowledgment of the corporate culture of the Bush team combined with her allusions to the *Star Wars* mindset that some of them brought from their years working with Ronald Reagan also effectively broached a larger question about the political-economic ties between war mongering and corporate globalization. Were Cheney, Rumsfeld, et al. just managerial activists attempting to intervene like Luke Skywalker to protect America and the global system, or did they instead represent empire run amok, managers of the force who, having turned to the dark side, threatened the long-term reproduction of global capitalism? As the United States moved into the occupation phase of the Iraq war in the summer of 2003, even the *Economist* magazine could not seem to make up its usually dogmatic mind. It editorialized Ignatieff-style that American empire should be done with serious investment and not as "empire lite."⁸ But in the very same issue, it presented a special report entitled "America and Empire" that argued that U.S. imperial practice in Iraq and Afghanistan would likely end up being nasty and brutish and "so it had better also be short." The play on Hobbes here effectively covered up an argumentative contradiction. "American empire passes the duck test," the report had noted; "it not only looks like a duck, it also walks like a duck and quacks like a duck"⁹ (the three "ducks" here consisting of America's military capabilities, its economic influence, and its readiness "to sally forth and act"). But the report concluded contrarily by arguing that in the end a formal empire was unaffordable for America, that the financial capability was not there, and that the United States would therefore ultimately have to go back to promoting its aims in a more multilateral fashion.

In contrast to the rhetorical contradictions of neoliberal commentary, leftist critics addressed the problem of American empire in a way that, like Lenin in his early twentieth-century essay on interimperial rivalries, attempted to locate the contradictions in the tensions of imperialism itself.¹⁰ These critiques therefore tended to underline the continuities with previous forms of American global hegemony,

describing the contemporary moment more as a transition, in Perry Anderson's savvy Gramscian terms, from a hegemony of consensus to a hegemony of force.¹¹ If imperialism was invoked in such arguments, it was not used to register the newness of American empire so much as its new nakedness and, in some of the more cautionary accounts, its new vulnerabilities too. Arundhati Roy, for example, while making the case that the Bush aggressions were imperial in style, scope, and organization, simultaneously underlined that they only made manifest an empire that had traditionally been more carefully concealed. "Despite the pall of gloom that hangs over us today," she argued,

I'd like to file a cautious plea for hope: in times of war, one wants one's weakest enemy as the helm of his forces. And President George W. Bush is certainly that. Any other even averagely intelligent US president would have probably done the very same things, but would have managed to smoke-up the glass and confuse the opposition. Perhaps even carry the UN with him. Bush's tactless imprudence and his brazen belief that he can run the world with his riot squad, has done the opposite. He has achieved what writers, activists and scholars have striven to achieve for decades. He has exposed the ducts. He has placed on full public view the working parts, the nuts and bolts of the American empire.¹²

Interpreting this moment of ideological demystification as a sign of weakness rather than strength, Roy also indirectly repeated a different caution made by others: namely, that critics needed to be careful about reproducing narcissistic narratives of national strength in their indictments of American imperialism. Such narratives were potent, suggested Thomas de Zengotita, because they functioned to construct a national "romance of empire." "Will we look back on these years," he asked in the mocking register of a love story,

and say I remember when it all began? American Empire? Not the more covert beginnings during the reign of Bill the Benign, back when imperial force could masquerade as a natural process, an evolutionary stage called "globalization"—something that was just happening, you know, nobody actually responsible, myriad interests served and serving. No, I'm talking about Empire properly so called, intoxicated with images of its own might—unabashed, raw. I'm talking about the reign of Bush the Bold. Will we look back and say, That was when it all began?¹³

These ironic questions usefully disrupt the treatment of American empire as some sort of fetishized national love (or hate) object. Like Anderson's analysis and Roy's criticisms, they also pose the problem of historical continuities, but in doing so, they also raise all kinds of difficult theoretical questions about what exactly changed from the period when American elites did not so openly sport the badge of an imperial nationalism on their business suits. Was all the talk about "globalization" in the era of "Bill the Benign" merely a masquerade? How have arguments about globalization been tied to Bush's wars? How do the American aggressions actually relate to intensifying global interdependency and the entrenchment of neoliberal governmentality? And how, then, can we make sense of both the overlaps and disconnects between American empire and what Hardt and Negri chose to call, with deceptive simplicity, just Empire?

In attempting to answer these questions in what follows I am again, as in the previous chapters, taking a critical geographical approach. In this case I seek to explore the interconnections and contradictions of two imagined geographies that appear to confuse much of the contemporary debate about globalization and imperialism.¹⁴ The first is the imagined geography of a decentered global space that underpins so many discussions of globalization and its deterritorializing imperatives.¹⁵ Hardt and Negri's account is no exception, and their claim that economic globalization has taken us from the territorialized national imperialisms of the nineteenth century to a new regime of borderless global Empire is a claim that fundamentally rests on this deterritorialized imagined geography. "The realization of the world market and the real subsumption of global society under capital," they argue, "smooths over the striae of national boundaries" (*Empire*, 332). Turning this "end of the nation-state" thesis into an argument about subjectivity formation too, they insist that "[with] boundaries and difference suppressed or set aside, the Empire is a kind of smooth space across which subjectivities glide without substantial resistance" (198). It remains nonetheless, they argue, a space of capital: "a smooth space defined by uncoded flows, flexibility, continual modulation, and tendential equalization" (327). Insofar as this imagined geography of smooth space is intimately related to enframings of capitalist space such as "the level playing field" discussed in chapter 3, I argue here that it can be usefully conceptualized as a kind of *geoeconomics*, a global-

ist geoeconomics that both builds on and buttresses the metanarrative of globalization's integrative inexorability.¹⁶

By contrast, the second imagined geography I want to address consists of a much rougher-edged national-imperial *geopolitics*, an imagined geography of uneven and occupied space associated with ideas of an assertive and unilateralist American empire. Kagan and Kristol's hardened nationalistic view of American hegemony is a typical example. In debates over empire this geopolitical view is frequently made to clash with the geo-economic one, and the contrasting imagined geographies often do a great deal of unexamined argumentative work. Imperialism is thus often only imagined in geopolitical terms as a system deliberately established by a metropolitan national power that holds and controls clearly demarcated foreign territories for a long period of time.¹⁷ The uneven and haphazard historical geographies of actual imperial practices, including those of the British and French in the nineteenth century (sometimes administering every inch of imperial life, sometimes just gunboating from the coast) are thereby ignored. More significantly for current debates, the stark discontinuity between geopolitical visions of American empire and the geo-economics of globalization elides the ways in which American hegemony has since at least the end of World War II comprised a form of *informal imperialism* operating in and through increasingly globalized networks. To describe the transnational hegemony of the United States in such terms is not to argue that American informal imperialism is unending, all-encompassing, and invulnerable to crisis and decline. American influence in the world will surely decline as has that of all other imperial systems of the past.¹⁸ Moreover the speed of the decline will likely only be accelerated by the recent turn to more militaristic and unabashedly forceful attempts at imperial crisis management. But to insist, as I do here, that the dominant and much more continuous character of American influence is that of informal imperialism (and to point, as I do in what follows, to some of the symptomatic parallels between the eras of "Bill the Benign" and "Bush the Bold") is to reject the economic view that American hegemony simply came to an abrupt end when the institutional arrangements of the post-World War II settlement—including the Bretton Woods dollar-gold peg and the dominance of the United States as the industrial workshop of the world—foundered in the early 1970s.¹⁹ Rejecting such economism, I want to suggest, also involves debunking

the geographic assumption that geoconomics has simply eclipsed geopolitics.

The informality of American imperialism has not only allowed for exaggerated academic arguments about hegemonic decline. It has also traditionally enabled an exceptionalist American rhetoric of imperial denial. Notwithstanding the context of the post-9/11 war-mongering, it clearly remained enabling in this way for President Bush himself when he claimed at West Point in 2002 that “America has no empire to extend or utopia to establish.”²⁰ Even despite the occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan, it was also still a dominant argument in 2003: America has not been and can never be an empire, the story went, because it does not occupy and control foreign territory in the direct and sustained long-distance manner of formal late nineteenth-century empires.²¹ “America has no territorial ambitions,” Bush reaffirmed at the White House. “We don’t seek an empire.”²² In attempting to demystify such denials here I find Hardt and Negri’s thesis a useful counterpoint. My aim is not to compare and contrast the arguments over American empire and *Empire* only in the abstract, however, but rather, as in the previous chapters, to ground them (and thereby explore them more critically) in the geographies of worldly political struggle. In this case, the specific political ground in question is that of the recent American war in Iraq: a war that has been widely interpreted as aggressive American empire-building, but a war too that has thematized and thereby also compromised the much more enduring and informal form of market-mediated American hegemony. By focusing in particular on two phases of the war—the legitimization work that led up to the military attacks, and then their prosecution and aftermath—the goal is to go beyond the imperial denial of geoconomics without reconsolidating a simple geopolitical vision of American national empire-building. This means, I will seek to argue, paying particular attention to the complicity of geopolitical assertion and geoconomic assumption in elite American and business-class opinion.

The violent asymmetry of the military action, the ways in which it played out the unilateral fantasies of national American dominance dreamed up by the likes of Kagan and Kristol, and the disturbance it thereby brought to all manner of multilateral conventions and agreements would seem at first sight to have vindicated geopolitical visions of American empire. To liberal critics and neoconservative celebrants

alike, this was the moment of American empire unleashed. Here was the global hegemon casting aside the fuss of multilateral concord, throwing economic concerns about balanced budgets and the bond markets to the winds, and boldly sallying forth with unabashed military force. By contrast, the imagined geographies of geoconomics—of smooth global space, of carefully coordinated planetary “police” actions, of deterritorialized networks of neoliberal governmentality, of in short, a decentered global Empire—seemed rendered as redundant as the United Nations itself was in the buildup to the bombing. But while the unilateralism of the war certainly upset many multilateral circuits of cosmopolitan capitalist convention and while the resulting disruption of geoconomic visions was and remains clear, the offensive and occupation seem unlikely to prove geopolitical visions of American imperial dominance of lasting relevance. An understanding of the war as American empire unleashed may certainly have helped certain Bush administration officials to make their decisions, but analytically it misses the ways in which so many aspects of the war were predicated and dependent upon the assumptions, practices, technologies, and economic imperatives of neoliberal globalization, including, not least of all, the geoconomic vision of a global level playing field. With its globally networked coordination (and the globally networked opposition that resisted it), its ideological justification in the corporate media, its private military contractors in the field, its commodified patriotism at home, its CEO-style promotion, its ties to a vision of free trade across the Middle East, its anticipation in global derivative markets, and its mediated relationship with oil economics, U.S. recession, and global overcapacity, the war is thus also analyzable as a symptom of what Hardt and Negri refer to in their book as “the passage to Empire.” That, at least, is a key contention in the later part of this chapter.

It may seem strange to use the ideas of *Empire* to investigate the planning and prosecution of the Iraq war when Hardt and Negri themselves uncritically repeat so many of the geoeconomic assumptions that, as I seek to show, elide American dominance. But in putting their text to work in relation to a war that has made American hegemony synonymous with empire, it is possible to highlight the political-economic mediation of the militarism while also reading Hardt and Negri’s own narrative against the grain. In other words, the theoretical aim here is to graph and thereby problematize *Empire*’s

geoeconomic “geo” by using it to unpack the simple geopolitical vision of the war as American empire unleashed.²³ What ultimately makes this parallel debunking of geopolitics and geopolitics possible is the one-sided approach that each vision creates of the peculiar hyphen-nation-state of American global hegemony. Neither vision can conceive of this hegemony as at once productive of, embedded in, and vulnerable to global interdependencies; and thus neither can adequately come to terms with the informal and deeply contradictory imperialism of U.S. hegemony *in* globalization. This mediated informal imperialism has effectively deterritorialized and reterritorialized the hyphen in the American nation-state, stretching American state authority in informal ways across national boundaries to create a hybrid and transnational hyphen-nation-state of market- as well as military-mediated dominance. It is the problems involved in describing this transnationally mediated informal imperialism in terms of empire that comprise the basic questions that drive the whole of this chapter. Rather than attempt to resolve them at the start, though, the goal is to use the geographical challenges they present as material tools with which to unpack the complicity of the simplified geopolitical and geoconomic visions.

Set against the hyphen-nation-state of transnationally mediated American hegemony, the geopolitical visionaries produce a still territorialized form of nation-talk. They tend to anthropomorphize or at least overinvest in and overexaggerate the nation’s “power,” and thereby create a narrative of enduring, exceptional, and sometimes even absolute American national dominance on the global stage. Leftist critics sometimes replicate this geopolitical master narrative in their arguments against American foreign policy. But it is the agents of this foreign policy themselves, including most especially neoconservatives such as Kagan and Kristol, who are foundationally nationalistic as they return relentlessly to the fetish of “National Security.” The muscular “realism” they propound is, I want to suggest, really better understood as a form of affected idealism, indeed an affect-loaded idealism of the nation as a coherent and anthropomorphic geopolitical agent.

In contrast to the neoconservatives, the predominant register of *Empire*’s argument is state-talk. One of Hardt and Negri’s major accomplishments in their book is to outline the entrenchment of neoliberal capitalist practices and policies as a type of *transnational*

state-making. Indeed, it is, I think, their sensitivity to the ways in which “state functions have effectively been displaced” from the national level and “integrated into the system of transnational command” that accounts for the book’s appeal to so many scholars as an innovative political theory of globalization.²⁴ But in highlighting these emerging forms of transnational governmentality, and in describing their combined state effects in the terms of Empire, Hardt and Negri diminish two still significantly *national* forms of state power. First, they deny flat out the imperial hegemony of the United States. “*The United States does not*,” they emphasize in italics, “*form the center of an imperialist project*” (xiv).²⁵ Second, they fail to address the ways in which the extension and entrenchment of neoliberal practices has systematically depended not just on U.S. force, but also on the willing acceptance of free-market reforms by the national ruling classes of states outside of the United States. Ironically, however, Hardt and Negri compensate for this double denial of national-state power by arguing that specifically American national traditions of government provide the basic model for the new global regime of network-mediated governmentality. In a formulation that is emphasized even on the book’s back cover, they argue thus that “today’s Empire draws on elements of U.S. constitutionalism, with its traditions of hybrid identities and expanding frontiers.” In other words, they inscribe American privilege right into the heart of their account of a postimperialist Empire even as their overarching “end of the nation-state” metanarrative makes it impossible to track the hyphen-nation-state of American hegemony. Moreover, they do so in a way that ultimately argues that this U.S.-based constitutional model will underwrite the long-term peace of Empire. These complicating claims (which, as we shall see, uncannily parallel the neoconservatives’ nostrums about a new *Pax Americana*) seem especially absurd in light of the Iraq war and the spiral of hideous violence it has set in motion. But they also help highlight how geoconomic visions of smooth global space encode assumptions about American influence even as they elide it. This means that before unpacking the geopolitical and geoeconomic visions of the war it is worth exploring the ways in which Hardt and Negri’s own arguments elide American dominance while nevertheless encrypting America as a dominant model into their account. The next section takes up this challenge by way of simultaneously

exploring what exactly the geo-economic vision of deterritorialized global space entails and how it relates to American business-class *views* of globalization.

AMERICAN VISION IN *EMPIRE*

The underlying argument of *Empire* is a relatively simple retelling of the modern European story of modernity. Following the classic Marxist critique that capitalism digs its own grave, the core claim of the book is that the development of an ever more globalized capitalist system (including the late twentieth-century increase in global migration by workers) has created a “single supranational figure of power” (*Empire*, 9). Calling this power Empire, and depicting it in Foucauldian terms as a “biopolitical” administrative machine, Hardt and Negri argue that it carries within itself the immanent possibility of a global revolution by its subject population, the so-called multitude. This global multitude is supposed to be a heterogeneous category that takes us beyond the economism and singularity of having the global working class serve as the agent of history (as in *The Communist Manifesto*). It therefore supposedly encompasses rebellious subjects as diverse as women workers in the service sector, migrants, the International Workers of the World, the Chiapas rebels, and participants in the Palestinian Intifada (53–54). But the multitude is more commonly invoked by Hardt and Negri in an abstract, almost mystical way, and as such remains a singular category in what is ultimately a teleological narrative where its assigned role, following the supposedly protocommunist example of Saint Francis of Assisi, is to “push through Empire and come out the other side” (218).²⁶

The notion of the multitude’s push to “the other side” is not only symptomatic of the mystifying religious aura that overshadows *Empire*, it is also a strangely contradictory formulation of global revolution when one considers the totalizing spatial *vision* of the book. Empire, we are elsewhere repeatedly told, has no inside or outside, and no boundaries (*Empire*, xiv). It purportedly scrambles the regionalization of the First, Second, and Third worlds (xiii), it keeps centers and margins always on the move (39), and “its space is always open” (167). “In this smooth space of Empire, there is no place of power—it is both everywhere and nowhere. Empire is an *ou-topia*, or really a *non-place*” (190). From a critical geographical perspective, it is hard to see how this deterritorialization metanar-

rative can be reconciled with the appeal to a multitude that will push through to “the other side.” It is true that *Empire* is attuned to David Harvey’s argument that capitalist processes produce new spatial relations by constantly working to minimize the frictions of distance, but as Stuart Corbridge has underlined, the book’s emphasis on the spatial equalization imperatives of time-space compression “neglects Harvey’s more important point about the limits to capital that are imposed by the necessity of production and reproduction at fixed sites.”²⁷ For Hardt and Negri, who seem more inspired by Deleuze and Guattari’s totalizing nomadism in this respect, there are not even any temporarily fixed insides and outsides. Instead, in their all-encompassing “smooth world” vision even the outside is already somehow inside Empire. “Empire posits a regime that effectively encompasses the spatial totality,” they assert, and because of this, and because it thereby takes us beyond older forms of imperialism with their rivalries over territory, it ultimately promises to bring peace (xv). This peace will be lasting, Hardt and Negri argue, when the creative forces of the multitude subvert Empire, creating a “real alternative” from the inside out. But yet this will only “take place on the imperial terrain itself” and is made possible by the ways in which Empire, while “continually bathed in blood,” remains as a concept “always dedicated to peace—a perpetual and universal peace outside of history” (xv).

This compressed geographical summary of the argument does not do justice to Hardt and Negri’s critical arguments about transnational governmentality and the disembedded force of market and informational networks (to which we will return). However, it does begin to explain how, in the year 2000 on the eve of George Bush’s ascent to the presidency, they could be so sanguine about globalization bringing postimperial peace. In this respect *Empire*’s announcement of a new kind of postnational neoimperial order replays quite strikingly Karl Kautsky’s similar argument about the emergence of a new “ultra-imperialism” in 1914. Kautsky’s error was to argue on the eve of the most horrific nationalist war in history that a new transnational imperial system would somehow bring together all the world’s imperialist powers in a singular and peaceful global concert of power, “a holy alliance of the imperialists.”²⁸ As was pointed out by Lenin in his famously polemical critique, Kautsky’s idealism may have allowed him to coin a clever new catchphrase in “ultra-imperialism,”

but it also blinded him to the deep contradictions between different factions of capital in different imperial spheres. One does not need to adopt Lenin's theory of financialization, nor his overly politicized approach to Kautsky (who, after all, was only arguing that socialists should prepare to struggle against the ultraimperialist concert of power as the new "enemy"), to learn from this critique.²⁹ *Empire*, it seems, also obscures the contradictions of the contemporary imperial order. But the problem today is not a disregard for the ways in which the convolutions of finance capital and global trade and production relations are intensifying interimperial rivalries. Instead, today's contradictions relate to how such tensions are mediated on a global scale by the unrivalled hegemony of the United States. As Leo Panitch and Sam Gindin argue in their sympathetic but rigorous Marxist review, it is the practical ways in which this hegemony works *through* globalization that are elided in *Empire*. "The distinction Hardt and Negri want to draw between today's new empire (and its 'imperial interest') and the old imperialism ('imperialist interest') is indeed very important," they say.

But it can only be captured by an approach to contemporary capitalism which goes much further than Hardt and Negri are able to do in revealing those processes of economic, political and military globalization through which the American state specifically, and not the disembodied concept of "empire," . . . "casts its widely inclusive net to try to envelop all power relations within its world order."³⁰

Rather than address the contradictory ways in which the American state has been implicated in varying forms of transnational hegemony, Hardt and Negri prefer to posit a simple and absolute historic break between U.S. "imperialist adventurism" and Empire. This break they date back with dubious precision to the Tet offensive of 1968 and the political defeat of the Johnson administration's policy in Vietnam (179). As Tarak Barkawi and Mark Laffey note in another useful critique of the resulting elisions, "it is hard to see how 1968 marks the 'irreversible' defeat of US imperialism. Not only is the inadequate nature of Hardt and Negri's historical analysis much in evidence here, it also becomes very difficult to locate the break at which US imperialism transforms into Empire." Barkawi and Laffey go on to argue that Hardt and Negri thereby miss the many ways in which the United States has continued to intervene

globally since 1968, developing all kinds of complex patron-client relations as well as making diverse military interventions and setting up regional bases across the planet. "In our view," they sum up, "globalisation and many of the phenomena Hardt and Negri describe are better understood by reference to an international state dominated by the US."³¹

Even if they obscure and deny American dominance, Hardt and Negri do still acknowledge the "privileged position" of the United States within Empire. The problem is that, in line with the resolutely antiempirical approach of the whole text, they only address this privilege as an abstract effect of the U.S. Constitution and what they see, following Thomas Jefferson no less, as its innate appropriateness "for extensive empire and self-government" (160). The United States, they concede,

does indeed occupy a privileged position in Empire, but this privilege derives not from its similarities to the old European imperialist powers, but from its differences. These differences can be recognized most clearly by focusing on the properly imperial (not imperialist) foundations of the United States constitution . . . [and the belief of the founders that] they were creating on the other side of the Atlantic a new Empire with open, expanding frontiers, where power would be effectively distributed in networks. This imperial idea has survived and matured throughout the history of the United States constitution and has emerged now on a global scale in its fully realized form. (xiv)³²

It is out of this unfortunately "idea"-driven, neo-Hegelian argument that Hardt and Negri come to simultaneously deny ongoing American imperialism while encrypting American influence in the center of their account.³³ To do this all the complexity of American constitutional history has to be crammed into a four-stage narrative about the evolution of America's "constituent spirit": a process marked first by the development of the frontier, second by the closing of the frontier and the expansion of militarism overseas, third by the development of the cold war state and the struggle for civil rights, and fourth by the end of the cold war and the emergence of Empire as "a global project of network power" (179–80). For a moment they describe this fourth phase as "a new type of hegemonic initiative" (179), but the possibility that this may be an imperial initiative of the U.S. state is completely superceded by the postimperial

zeitgeist metanarrative that we “are experiencing a first phase of the transformation of the global frontier into an open space of imperial sovereignty” (182). Thus, while the “idea of Empire” is said to be “born through the global expansion of the internal U.S. constitutional project” (182), the connection of that project to ongoing forms of specifically American state-making is ultimately severed. “It might appear as if the United States were the new Rome,” they say, “or a cluster of new Romes: Washington (the bomb), New York (money), and Los Angeles (ether).” But having thereby made a list of useful starting points for any serious investigation of the scope and varied modalities of informal American imperialism, they proceed again to denial. “Any such territorial conception of imperial space, however, is continually destabilized by the fundamental flexibility, mobility, and deterritorialization at the core of the imperial apparatus” (347). This is an example of how the background binary opposition of geo-economics to geopolitics becomes complicit in *Empire* with imperial denial.

While Hardt and Negri’s own geo-economic assumptions lead them to ignore the asymmetries and uneven development associated with American imperialism, and while their resulting vision of “smooth space” appears thus as a striking example of what I am calling globalist geo-economics, their arguments about “biopolitical production” go some way to explaining the force of geo-economics in actually shaping political and economic life. By biopolitical production they mean at base the production and reproduction of life under the conditions of market-mediated globalization. The category implies more than just this, though, because borrowed from Michel Foucault it comes with both a built-in theory of power and a historical narrative of change. The theory is underpinned by Foucault’s emphasis on studying how power circulates, producing social subjects and objects that only retroactively appear as the powerful and powerless. The narrative of change that Hardt and Negri find, following Deleuze, in Foucault involves an account of another abrupt temporal break: in this case, from a “disciplinary society” (which they associate with the modern Fordist world of nation-states and the nationalized concept of “the people”) to a so-called society of control (which they associate with the supranational relations of Empire and the emergence of the denationalized “multitude”). In an early chapter near the start of the book they thereby pose biopolitical production as a useful focus

through which to track “the material constitution of the new planetary order, the consolidation of its administrative machine, and the production of new hierarchies of command over global space” (19). By hereby combining arguments from Foucault, Marx, and Deleuze and Guattari in a single argument that addresses the production of global space, Hardt and Negri also provide a way of theorizing the ways in which geo-economics is consolidated and reproduced. The vision of smooth, decentered, and deterritorialized space can thus be understood in their own theoretical terms as a panoptic “diagram” of the capillary “biopolitics” defining the globalized free market’s “anti-architecture.”

Interpreting the power of geo-economics through the critical theory of biopolitics means understanding it as more than just an anti-geography that obfuscates uneven geographical development. It means examining how it simultaneously works as a profoundly *productive and enabling* graphing of the geo that enframes a basic horizon of planning and self-understanding among a certain set of global actors. It would be obscenely ethnocentric to assume that such actors include the whole of Hardt and Negri’s supposed multitude. The arrogance of geo-economics and its dependency on an assumptive economicistic view of the world indicate that it only makes sense as a vision for a very privileged community of biopolitical reproduction. For the majority of the world’s poor struggling to survive in peripheral communities they cannot escape, and even for the majority of transnational migrants who are poor, “gliding” across the “striae” of national borders is only ever something that happens to the commodities that they labor to make. It is not part of their own subjective experience. But elsewhere, however, there is a much narrower community for whom such subjective feelings of smoothness and gliding come easily. Following the sociologist Leslie Sklair again, this community can be usefully called the “transnational capitalist class.”³⁴ Sklair’s own empirical analysis of the transnational capitalist class in fact provides some corroboration of the idea that geo-economics may in this way play a central role in the training and subject formation of a new global elite. His survey of Global Fortune 500 annual reports, for example, shows that businesses from around the world repeatedly use the smooth spatial imagery of an abstract globe alongside rhetoric about global prospects to highlight their strategic visions and strengths to shareholders. For such TNCs, it seems, the smooth space of the globe really does

enframe a level plain of boundless opportunity. The notion that there is easy mobility across the global plain also seems to be accepted as common sense by many of the global political elites with whom these TNCs deal as they play one locale off against another negotiating for tax holidays, regulatory relaxation, wage repression, and infrastructural support. It is true that the geo-economic picture of boundaryless TNC behavior does not match the much more complex and uneven geographies of real world commodity chains, financing, corporate information exchange, and accounting systems.³⁵ And yet, even as he documents such complexities, the economic geographer Peter Dicken notes that corporate strategists themselves return repeatedly to the vision “that technological and regulatory developments in the world economy have created a ‘global surface’ on which a dominant organizational form [the global corporation] will develop and inexorably wipe out less efficient competitors who are no longer protected by national or local barriers.”³⁶ What, then, explains the endurance and widespread influence of this geo-economic vision?

Part of the reason for the hegemony of the vision is undoubtedly the intensity of the biopolitical training through which it is instilled. Hardt and Negri’s theorization of biopolitics is again instructive. They make clear that they want to combine a traditional Marxist focus on production with a more open-ended attention to all the diversity of power relations in informational, cultural, and corporeal reproduction. They invoke in this way Deleuze and Guattari’s antiessentialist activation of the notion of “social machines.” They applaud how certain Italian Marxists have moved via biopolitics beyond a workerist analysis of capitalism. And, although it is in a footnote and although it is followed by what Lisa Rofel critiques as a masculinist recuperation of feminist theories of affective labor, they invoke Spivak’s inspirational reworking of value theory to claim that “from a methodological point of view, we would say that the most profound and solid problematic complex that has yet been elaborated for the critique of biopolitics is found in feminist theory, particularly Marxist and socialist feminist theories that focus on women’s work, affective labor and the production of biopower” (*Empire*, 423).³⁷ With regard to the biopolitical production of geo-economics such an argument is borne out by the work of economic geographers such as Sue Roberts and Nigel Thrift.³⁸ They have shown that management-training programs create consequential combinations of governmen-

tality and spatiality by training affectively in order to be effective. The programs thus create biopolitical regulation by linking lessons in the techniques of business efficiency with the cultivation of deeply personal and spatialized senses of self, including, as Roberts emphasizes, the masculinist sense of being able to stand over, see, and control sweeping vistas of global coordination.³⁹ Even if these globalist concepts of decontextualized sight are reworked (as much of the research shows they are) in their site-specific enactment, they would equally appear to be buttressed by the daily onslaught of globalist advertising and imagery (about friction-free networks, global villages, and so on) to which managerial trainees, along with the politicians and lawyers they proceed to work with, are also routinely exposed.⁴⁰ As a result, they are extremely entrenched and continue to circulate and reproduce in global networks of both corporate training and work. Geo-economics therefore—as both by-product and coproducer of corporate governmentality among global elites—might well seem to exemplify Hardt and Negri’s notion of biopolitical control extending “well outside the structured sites of social institutions through flexible and fluctuating networks” (23).

Another part of the reason for the persistence of geo-economics, however, relates back to the capitalist organization of global space itself. As they do on many other key points of theoretical description, Hardt and Negri vacillate on whether to call this space an “architecture” or “anti-architecture.” This vacillation fudges the problem of how they might reconcile their underlying assumption of a geo-economic worldview with the uneven political, cultural, and economic geographies that make up the lived spatial architecture of life across the planet. Chief among these forms of uneven development is the asymmetry presented by the United States and the dominance it exercises in a vast array of global relations. One of the most unfortunate ironies of all in *Empire* is that, having explored how the American constitutional capacity for rule over flexible frontiers anticipates a newly global constitution, Hardt and Negri proceed to reproduce a geo-economic discourse that elides ongoing and specifically American control over flexible frontiers *on a global scale*. It is still possible to draw on *Empire* in order to theorize the force of geo-economics as a form of biopolitical worlding of the world in the context of heightened global interdependency. Moreover, it is possible to join this with Hardt and Negri’s other argument about the specifically

American constitutional roots of the new global biopolitics. But a key reason for doing so involves going in the direction that *Empire* avoids: namely, examining how the geo-economic vision of smoothed global space at once obscures and enables the privileges that accrue to the United States as the major structuring and steering influence of contemporary global capitalism.

Looking back on the early years of American constitutional history, Gindin and Panitch argue that

Hardt and Negri were right to trace the pre-figuration of what they call “Empire” today back to the American constitution’s incorporation of Madisonian “network power.” . . . Yet far from anticipating the sort of decentred and amorphous power that Hardt and Negri imagine characterized the US historically (and characterizes “Empire” today), the constitutional framework of the new American state gave great powers to the central government to expand trade and make war.⁴¹

Coming forward to the present, it seems that the Madisonian model of network power has continued to give great powers to the central government to expand trade and make war. Now, though, the U.S. government lies at the center of a much more global and informal system, a system over which it has generally held hegemony through consensus. Today’s war-making, argue Gindin and Panitch, is not necessarily indicative of a decline in this U.S. hegemony. Nor does it signal some return to interimperial rivalries. Instead, they suggest that the recent wars represent the heightened challenges of organizing an informal imperial system through the intermediaries of other national states. More specifically, the project of finding willing governments schooled in the vision of neoliberal globalization has, they argue, run up against the difficult challenge of incorporating the periphery—including so-called rogue states—into the system. This is a critical argument for the subsequent sections of this chapter because it explains why the smooth and decentered world visions of geo-economics might be related to the development of the Iraq war. It opens the possibility, in other words, of investigating how geo-economics not only obscures American imperialism, but also serves as a basic groundwork on which its contemporary builders have been (free)trading and making war. The resulting complicity of globalist geo-economics with unilateralist geopolitics has been highly contradictory and unstable, and it is in an effort to unpack the resulting contradictions and instabilities that I

turn now to examine the period of the buildup to war. This period, as we shall see, appears at first sight to have been shaped almost entirely by geopolitical assertion. However, after reviewing these geopolitical imperatives, I show how they were in turn underpinned and enframed by an array of geo-economic assumptions. The resulting complicity of geopolitics with geo-economics was extraordinarily influential, but as the war went on to show and as we shall explore in the later part of the chapter, it was also a contradictory complicity that was to prove extremely unstable in action.

PREPARING FOR WAR: THE INTERVENTION OF GEOPOLITICS

For many business commentators the “smooth space” geo-economic worldview of the global village simply shattered on 9/11 when the planes crashed into the World Trade Center. Globalization gurus such as the *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman, for example, saw the events as nothing less than the start of World War III.⁴² Indeed, in Friedman’s case the attacks of 9/11 led to his clear shift in the months and years that followed from a transnational business-class neoliberal outlook toward a steadily more neoconservative and unilateralist prowar chauvinism. However, for the neo-conservative masterminds behind the Project for a New American Century (PNAC), 9/11 was not so much a day of infamy as a geopolitical opportunity: a Pearl Harbor, perhaps, but a Pearl Harbor for which they had been waiting. In 2000 PNAC had published a report entitled *Rebuilding America’s Defenses: Strategies, Forces and Resources for a New Century*, in which the authors noted that the expansion of America’s military dominance that they were demanding would only happen slowly “absent some catastrophic and catalyzing event—like a new Pearl Harbor.”⁴³ September 11 provided just such an event, and as such it gave the well-placed neo-conservatives associated with PNAC much more leverage to force through their vision of a newly assertive American unilateralism, a geopolitical vision that they had effectively been airing ever since the fall of the Berlin Wall. Too often this geopolitical intervention by PNAC and its associates has been reported in scandalized tones as something of a secret conspiracy. The Scottish *Sunday Herald*, for example, thus described the reporter’s discovery of the *Rebuilding America’s Defenses* report in the language of a grand exposé. “A secret blueprint for US global domination,” began the news article,

reveals that President Bush and his cabinet were planning a premeditated attack on Iraq to secure “regime change” even before he took power in January 2001. The blueprint, uncovered by the *Sunday Herald*, for the creation of a “global Pax Americana” was drawn up for Dick Cheney (now vice-president), Donald Rumsfeld (defense secretary), Paul Wolfowitz (Rumsfeld’s deputy), George W. Bush’s younger brother Jeb and Lewis Libby (Cheney’s chief of staff).⁴⁴

Yet while the *Rebuilding America’s Defenses* report was certainly audacious, and while it did indeed describe “the unresolved conflict with Iraq” as “the immediate justification” for increasing America’s “force presence” in the Gulf,⁴⁵ the neoconservative luminaries that contributed to it were hardly a clandestine cabal. Moreover, their intervention was no sudden coup either. Many of them, for instance, had cosigned an open letter to President Clinton back in 1998 directly demanding “regime change” in Iraq. “Dear Mr. President,” the letter began,

We are writing you because we are convinced that current American policy toward Iraq is not succeeding, and that we may soon face a threat in the Middle East more serious than any we have known since the end of the Cold War. In your upcoming State of the Union Address, you have an opportunity to chart a clear and determined course for meeting this threat. We urge you to seize that opportunity, and to enunciate a new strategy that would secure the interests of the U.S. and our friends and allies around the world. That strategy should aim, above all, at the removal of Saddam Hussein’s regime from power. We stand ready to offer our full support in this difficult but necessary endeavor. . . .

Sincerely,

Elliott Abrams, Richard L. Armitage, William J. Bennett, Jeffrey Bergner, John Bolton, Paula Dobriansky, Francis Fukuyama, Robert Kagan, Zalmay Khalilzad, William Kristol, Richard Perle, Peter W. Rodman, Donald Rumsfeld, William Schneider, Jr., Vin Weber, Paul Wolfowitz, R. James Woolsey, Robert B. Zoellick⁴⁶

Putting their names to this public letter, the signatories may have been adopting Trotskyist tactics, but they were hardly acting like secretive conspirators. Moreover, the letter and the *Rebuilding America’s Defenses* report have since remained well publicized on PNAC’s Web site. They can easily be found there alongside the Project’s 1997

founding call “to embrace the cause of American leadership.” That founding call itself was far from a private PNAC pact. Hearkening back to the Reagan years as well as to Henry Luce’s 1950s declaration of an American Century, it articulated as boldly as possible the neoconservatives’ call for geopolitical activism with direct appeals to American principles and interests.

As the 20th century draws to a close, the United States stands as the world’s most preeminent power. Having led the West to victory in the Cold War, America faces an opportunity and a challenge: Does the United States have the vision to build upon the achievement of past decades? Does the United States have the resolve to shape a new century favorable to American principles and interests?⁴⁷

Explaining in turn what such vision and resolve should entail, the PNAC founders declared in the name of the nation that

[What we require is] a military that is strong and ready to meet both present and future challenges; a foreign policy that boldly and purposefully promotes American principles abroad; and national leadership that accepts the United States’ global responsibilities.

Such views were widely shared beyond the circles of PNAC.⁴⁸ Other neoconservative organizations such as the American Enterprise Institute and the Center for Strategic and International Studies were just as involved in disseminating similar calls for geopolitical activism during the Clinton years, as too, it needs noting, were a number of “Bill the Benign’s” own cabinet. Madeleine Albright, his second term secretary of state, famously extolled the virtues of America as the “indispensable nation,”⁴⁹ and Anthony Lake, Clinton’s first national security advisor, had claimed that the fundamental feature of the post-cold war era was that “we are its dominant power. Those who say otherwise sell America short. . . . Around the world, America’s power, authority and example provide unparalleled opportunities to lead.”⁵⁰ Going back further in time, the narrower ideological roots of the new neoconservative geopolitics—at least its combined vision of militant American democracy and strategic independence—can be traced back via the cultural critic Allan Bloom, the Washington State senator Henry Jackson, and the older generation neoconservatives Irving Kristol and Norman Podhoretz, to the antimodern philosophy of Leo Strauss and the antiestablishment nuclear doctrines of Albert Wohlstetter.⁵¹ PNAC’s geopolitical intervention, then, was

by no means an overnight development, and notable signatories to its public statements such as Paul Wolfowitz, Richard Perle, and William Kristol (who all worked under Jackson's tutelage and took courses with Bloom at Chicago) had rehearsed their geopolitical outlook for years. Wolfowitz is especially notable in this regard because his public promotion of a unilateralist American geopolitics itself went back to the first Bush administration. Then, as undersecretary of Defense for Policy when Dick Cheney was Defense secretary, he supervised the drafting of a much discussed 1992 "Defense Planning Guidance" document advising that the United States should "prevent any hostile power from dominating a region whose resources would, under consolidated control, be sufficient to generate global power."⁵² Obsessed, it seems, with the idea of deterring potential geopolitical rivals from developing a global role, the document had also noted with neoimperial candor that "the United States should be postured to act independently when collective action cannot be orchestrated." At the time, Wolfowitz's directness was questioned after leaks of the draft reached Congress, and Cheney had to supervise revisions to the text that downplayed the abandonment of multilateralism. But after ten years of public advocacy and after the forcing event of 9/11, Wolfowitz was to see basically the same censored vision (including its attention to maintaining U.S. access to key global resources in the Persian Gulf) articulated openly as official public policy in the buildup to the Iraq war. The key question in this regard concerns how. How did the geopolitical vision of unabashed U.S. imperialism that Senator Robert Byrd had once castigated as "myopic, shallow and disappointing" become the new Washington consensus and, as such, the basis for war?⁵³ Timing and ideology played a particular role, but so too, I will subsequently argue, did geoeconomic assumptions.

In the context of George W. Bush's presidency, 9/11 really did create a forcing event. Much is made in this regard of the opportunism of the PNAC geopoliticians. Most remarkable of all, Rumsfeld appears to have begun planning to use 9/11 as an excuse for attacking Saddam Hussein within hours of the attack on the Pentagon. CBS News reported that after returning from helping the injured on the outside of the Pentagon and hearing of the possible ties to Osama bin Laden, Rumsfeld noted at 2:40 p.m.: "best info fast. Judge whether good enough hit S.H. [Saddam Hussein] at the same time. Not only UBL [Osama bin Laden]. Go massive. Sweep it all up. Things related

and not."⁵⁴ The staggering notion of sweeping "it all up" also illustrates the ideological work involved in promoting the Iraq war. Again and again the attacks of 9/11 were linked to Saddam Hussein, and from Bush's "Axis of Evil" State of the Union address to endless insinuations about Iraq's weapons of mass destruction and supposed links to Al Qaeda, the ideological legitimization for so-called regime change in Iraq did indeed "go massive." Such was the success of this campaign that long after the intelligence agencies had dismissed the stories of an Al Qaeda link, and even after the failure to find weapons of mass destruction after the war, nearly 70 percent of Americans still believed that Hussein had been personally involved in the 9/11 attacks.⁵⁵ As bumper stickers and front porch signs emphasized across America in 2003, the Iraq war was thus legitimized as a form of national retribution—"Remember 9/11: Support Our Troops." It was a geopolitical campaign that worked, argues Gerard Toal, "by the channeling of the public affect unleashed by 9/11."⁵⁶

There are well-known dangers in trying to psychoanalyze a whole nation en masse, but Toal's own exploration of the instrumentalization of public affect in the buildup to the Iraq war avoids homogenizing a singular national psyche by focusing on the particular national narratives and symbols that the campaign for war deployed.⁵⁷ He notes in this respect how President Bush enacted an updated Jacksonian tradition of American geopolitical common sense, an affective as well as effective enactment that transformed the populist ideologies of individualism and self-reliance shared among Christian and gun-owning communities in America into a colonizing Manichaean geopolitics of "good versus evil" on the global stage. Other scholars of geopolitical scripting such as Michael Shapiro linked the initial "Wanted, Dead or Alive" approach Bush took to hunting down bin Laden to colonial collective imaginaries of the United States as a gunfighter nation.⁵⁸ And clearly the masculinism and white supremacism of a certain cowboy nationalism continued to animate much of the prowar lobbying throughout 2002 and 2003. But as Bush's hankering for a Wild West solution failed to turn up bin Laden either alive or dead, the affective resonance of 9/11 was recentered in 2002 amid wider foreign policy initiatives that went beyond the gunfighter nation set provided by Afghanistan's mountains and deserts. As a somatic marker, Toal argues, 9/11 thus became a more generalized

domain of resentment and desire, the desire to avenge the symbolic castrating of America's power and profile on September 11, the desire to affirm that America "still stands tall," the desire to appear powerful, resolute and dominant amidst swirling questions of legitimacy (from Florida in 2000 to the Security Council in 2003), economic weakness (from the dot.com crash to corporate scandals and rising unemployment) and risk society (from airline safety to anthrax and nuclear proliferation).⁵⁹

All of the complex anxieties surrounding such questions could thereby, Toal argues, be channeled through 9/11 into arguments supporting a war on Iraq. A week after the fall of Baghdad the popular country-and-western singer Darryl Worley was invited to sing a song to Pentagon personnel that said it all: "Some say this country's just out looking for a fight. After 9/11 man I'd have to say that's right." The words still seemed to speak powerfully to the assembled company, and, as Toal notes, the song even made Donald Rumsfeld cry.

Rumsfeld's tears give some indication of the ways in which a PNAC insider was himself swept up by the affective ties that came to link 9/11, the Iraq war, and a heroic vision of America's geopolitical mission. Things related and not, it seems, had gone massive for him too in September 2001, and it was perhaps not surprising that a year later, when Senator Mark Dayton of Minnesota asked Rumsfeld about what new developments necessitated the decision to attack Iraq, he sputtered, "What's different? What's different is 3,000 people were killed."⁶⁰ Against this "casuistry bellum," as she called it, Maureen Dowd articulated the main liberal complaint: "The administration isn't targeting Iraq because of 9/11. It's exploiting 9/11 to target Iraq." To this, though, she added a critical nuance. "This new fight isn't logical—it's cultural. It is the latest chapter in the cultural wars, the conservative dream of restoring America's sense of Manifest Destiny."⁶¹ These observations captured the cultural politics of the warmongering well, connecting them back to what, with Allan Bloom and Irving Kristol, had been the initial preoccupations of the neoconservative movement in the 1960s and 1970s. Her sensitivity to the masculinist self-imaging and posturing of the geopolitics also seemed right on the mark: "Bush is like a guy who reserves a hotel room and *then* asks you to the prom," she suggested.⁶² But the warmongering was much more than cowboy cultural politics. It was, after all, not just their ideological outlook that the neconservatives brought to office, but the political capacity to

make it the new Washington consensus. In other words, the hegemony of their geopolitical outlook not only rested on their war of maneuver that linked an attack on Iraq with national desires for post 9/11 revenge, it also related to a war of position in D.C. that took the form of placing neoconservatives in key offices of authority.

Rumsfeld's position as Defense secretary was itself a good example of the new neoconservative influence. But because Cheney, another PNAC associate, worked as incoming vice president to control the Bush administration's transition into office, he was able to ensure that many other PNAC associates reached high-ranking jobs.⁶³ In addition to Rumsfeld, Wolfowitz and Douglas Feith were respectively given the number two and number three positions in the Pentagon, Elliot Abrams was put in charge of Middle-East policy at the National Security Council, James Woolsey and Richard Perle found influential positions on the Defense Policy Board, Lewis Libby became Cheney's chief of staff, and John Bolton became under-secretary of state.⁶⁴ To many mainstream critics such as Michael Lind, Cheney's success had produced a "weird" foreign policy executive and thus a weird geopolitics.⁶⁵ Explaining it to a U.K. audience as a "bizarre" outcome owing much to "happenstance and personality" he struggled to think of a suitable geopolitical parallel.

For a British equivalent, one would have to imagine a Tory government, with Downing Street and Whitehall controlled by followers of Reverend Ian Paisley, extreme Eurosceptic, empire loyalists and Blimpish military types—all determined, for a variety of strategic reasons, to invade Egypt. Their aim would be to regain the Suez canal as the first step in a campaign to restore the British empire. Yes, it really is that weird.⁶⁶

The problem with this view was that, like the conspiratorial picture of PNAC, it overstated the weirdness and underplayed the hegemonic achievement. To make his argument, Lind rightly highlighted the links of many of the PNAC associates to the viciously colonial outlook of the Likud Party in Israel. Yet while the strategic vision of creating a Hashemite kingdom stretching from Jordan to Iraq has hardly been a historic mainstay of American Middle East policy, and while two PNAC associates, Perle and Feith, were instrumental in developing this vision, the more basic overlaps between PNAC's geopolitics and Israeli colonialism are by no means unprecedented in

American foreign policy making.⁶⁷ As Melanie McAlister has documented with telling cultural nuance, the example of Israeli colonial militarism (including the preemptive strike of the so-called Six Days War) has long informed American informal imperialism both in the Middle East and domestically.⁶⁸ Moreover, as McAlister also shows, the other Israeli influence on the Bush White House—that of evangelical, often anti-Semitic, Christian Zionism—comprises a growing and far from Paisley-ite movement, weird though their “dispensationalist” visions of Jewish conversion to Christianity might make them as Israeli settlers’ main American allies.⁶⁹ In other words, just as PNAC’s call for an unabashed imperial approach by the United States to Iraq built upon much wider national narratives about militant self-defense and retribution, so too did the group’s geopolitical affinities with Israeli colonialism resonate with more long-standing and more widely advocated objectives for American policy in the Middle East. The overall geopolitical vision that PNAC associates helped foster was thus to prove hegemonic, not weird.

Loaded with the affect of post-9/11 retribution and organized through orientalist scripts about Arabs only understanding force, the geopolitical arguments for unilateralism fashioned an anthropomorphic spectacle of the nation standing tall. War critics too became consumed with the fantasy of the United States being anthropomorphic-ally assertive. “These are the days of empire,” ran one typical tirade.

Unrivalled and untrammeled, the United States strides the globe like a colossus. The President of the United States endowed with more power than Alexander the Great and Napoleon combined, can now wreak havoc at his whim and leisure. President Bush sits upon Zeus’s throne and treats Congress, the United Nations and U.S. allies as mere vassals.⁷⁰

When the critics joined the argument on this level, PNAC had already won the hegemonic struggle to script the Iraq intervention as assertive geopolitics. Combined with the dissemination capabilities afforded by Rupert Murdoch’s media empire—including the *Weekly Standard* edited by PNAC cofounder Bill Kristol and the Fox cable channel that gave neoconservatives a mass-media bullhorn—the overall ideological hegemony of the neoconservative geopolitical vision therefore became unstoppable. All that was needed now for the war plans to proceed was an amendment of official American policy, and this is

what happened in September 2002 with the release of a new *National Security Strategy*.

By this time, a year on from 9/11, more reluctant Republicans such as Colin Powell, Bush’s secretary of state, and Richard Haas, Director of Policy and Planning at the State Department, were falling into unilateralist line, and Bush’s national security advisor, Condoleezza Rice, spoke only of the United States needing “a coalition of the willing”: a euphemism for Wolfowitz’s older idea of “orchestrated” international consensus. When Rice finalized the *National Security Strategy*, it was clear that the geopolitical activism demanded for over a decade by Wolfowitz and PNAC’s other associates had fully become the new Washington consensus. And while the plan for a unilateral, “pre-emptive” war on Iraq was not mentioned directly, its justification was now asserted as at once a national response to 9/11 and a new national policy. The text began by noting that

The United States possesses unprecedented—and unequaled—strength and influence in the world. Sustained by faith in the principles of liberty, and the value of a free society, this position comes with unparalleled responsibilities, obligations, and opportunity.⁷¹

Here the echoes with PNAC’s primacy “principles” were clear. Virtually cribbing from the *Rebuilding America’s Defenses* report, moreover, the *National Security Strategy* proceeded to argue the case for preemption too:

The gravest danger our Nation faces lies at the cross-roads of radicalism and technology. Our enemies have openly declared that they are seeking weapons of mass destruction, and evidence indicates that they are doing so with determination. The United States will not allow these efforts to succeed. . . . America will act against such emerging threats before they are fully formed.⁷²

The connections drawn here went in three directions. They linked 9/11 (radicalism and technology) with weapons of mass destruction with a call for national preemptive action. Only later on in the text was Iraq placed in the center of the triangle. First came a supposed statement of fact:

At the time of the Gulf War, we acquired irrefutable proof that Iraq’s designs were not limited to the chemical weapons it had used against Iran and its own people, but also extended to the acquisition of nuclear weapons and biological agents.⁷³

Next followed the statement of policy:

Our comprehensive strategy to combat WMD includes: Proactive counterproliferation efforts. . . . We cannot let our enemies strike first. . . . The United States has long maintained the option of pre-emptive actions to counter a sufficient threat to our national security. The greater the threat, the greater is the risk of inaction.⁷⁴

It only remained for the concocted evidence of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction to be presented to Congress and the "preemptive" war that PNAC had been proposing ever since the letter to Clinton could finally be declared on Iraq. The empire could now, in Dowd's punchy poetics, "strike first."⁷⁵ The United Nations became "irrelevant," french fries became freedom fries, stars and stripes fluttered like swastikas at the Berlin Olympics, protesters were deported, arrested, and ignored, and the president, who had long swept everything up in the affect of national retribution, declared that the war would "not be one of half-measures."⁷⁶

Critics of the war plans argued that they were indeed unprecedented, but also unjust and, thus, ultimately, un-American. Joseph Cirincione, the director of the Non-Proliferation Project at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace summed up this prevailing critical national sentiment when he described the assertive U.S. geopolitical unilateralism as a new colonialism.

[W]hat they're planning is unprecedented in U.S. history. This will not just be our first pre-emptive war, but it will be followed by a massive, indefinite occupation. President Bush intends to send more than 200,000 American men and women to invade and occupy a large, complex nation of 24 million people half a world away. The last time ~~any~~ Western power did anything similar was before World War II. The last time any nation did this was the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. As retired Gen. Wesley Clark, the former head of NATO forces, says, this war will "put us in a colonial position in the Middle East following Britain, following the Ottomans. It's a huge change for the American people and for what this country stands for." To the rest of the world it will indeed look like colonialism. With the best of intentions, and with surprisingly little public discussion, we are about to overthrow a government, appoint a U.S. military ruler, and, after several years of transition, install our hand-picked alternatives.⁷⁷

These were criticisms that were echoed again and again by both liberals and leftists, Americans and non-Americans alike, all of them

articulating in one way or another nostalgia for "Bill the Benign" and still older eras of American multilateralism. "Typically, in this perspective," noted Balakrishnan, in a critical review of the mainstream response, "Clinton's rule is looked back at longingly, as the halcyon days of a humane and responsible *Pax Americana*, whose abandonment since has been a brutal disappointment."⁷⁸ The limits of such nostalgic critiques—beyond the obvious denial of previous acts of aggressive American unilateralism in Panama, Grenada, Nicaragua, and, though much more arguably, Kosovo—were two-fold. As Perry Anderson argued, they ignored the advances of American informal imperialism in the Clinton years themselves.⁷⁹ These included, in Anderson's assessment, the ways in which "[t]he USSR had been knocked out of the ring, Europe and Japan kept in check, China drawn into increasingly close trade relations, [and] the UN reduced to little more than a permissions office." Anderson himself adds that all this was accomplished in the Clinton era "to the tune of the most emollient of ideologies, whose every second word was international understanding and democratic good will."⁸⁰ It seems that it was precisely this emollient ideology that was abandoned by the Bush administration in its impatience with the fictions of "international community" and "multilateralism." And yet, as Anderson also notes, this was primarily a shift in style rather than in fundamental outlook, and to see it as the emergence or unleashing of a novel American imperialism was, I want to argue, another larger limitation of the nostalgic mode of critique. Neglecting the continuities from "Bill the Benign" to "Bush the Bold," critics rarely came to terms with how the war plans were predicated on a profoundly similar worlding of the world as an expanding level plain mediated through globalized networks. They ignored, in other words, the ways in which it was understood and articulated even by the war planners themselves in profoundly neoliberal ways. Here I return to the connections of the geopolitics with an underlying and enduring geopolitics.

My suggestion in the next section is that the relationship between the geopolitical warmongering and the underlying geoconomic assumptions was not of difference, distinction, or opposition, but rather one of complicity. While Bush enacted the role of virile national commander in chief, and while war critics and war fans inveighed against and invested in the image of an American geopolitical colossus reterritorializing the Middle East, the war planning remained

paradoxically *dependent* on the deterritorialized worldview of geo-economics. As I suggested at the start of this section, a signal geopolitical consequence of the martial mood was the enlistment of patriotic neoliberals such as Thomas Friedman to the hegemonic project of neoconservatives. But as I now want to argue in more detail, the reason why this enlistment lasted, the reason why it brought reluctant Republicans into line, and a key reason that it even worked abroad among transnational business-class opinion organs such as the *Economist* was due to the fact that the war planning was thoroughly underpinned by the smoothing force of geo-economics. It was possible to orchestrate (to use the Wolfowitz word) such a willing geopolitical coalition, I want to argue, because of the biopolitical force of the ideals of planar planetary space. America's geopolitical intervention could thus make sense to someone such as Richard Haas (author of *The Reluctant Sheriff* and Wolfowitz's onetime contender as the Republicans' leading strategic thinker) because, as he explained to Nicholas Lemann in a distinction familiar to readers of *Empire*, there was "a big difference between being imperial and imperialist."⁸¹

THE GEOECONOMIC GROUNDWORK

The very same *Strategy* that triangulated the geopolitical legitimization for the attack on Iraq and that hued so closely to PNAC's principles was also a text that was thoroughly underpinned by assumptions about globalization. "[T]he United States will use this moment of opportunity," it declared, "to extend the benefits of freedom across the globe. We will actively work to bring the hope of democracy, development, free markets and free trade to every corner of the world."⁸² Whole sections of the *Strategy* were thus devoted to the supposed security benefits of free markets, free trade, and global capitalist integration, and the preface signed by President Bush began by claiming that there was now only one single sustainable model for national success: "freedom, democracy and free enterprise." To many observers such as Robert Wright, the result was a completely contradictory strategic vision: global interdependency and American military supremacy could not be so easily made to coincide.⁸³ But such critics only read the *Strategy* through the traditional international relations opposition of idealism versus realism: global conventions versus national power politics. They therefore overlooked the successful com-

plexity of geopolitical assertion and geoeconomic assumption in the document: the way, to use Anderson's phrase, it sought to conjugate a specifically American form of dominance with a general task of coordinating global capitalism. "The U.S. national security strategy will be based on a distinctly American internationalism that reflects the union of our values and our national interests," the text asserted, before proceeding directly to describe those values and interests in the predictable terms of "political and economic freedom."⁸⁴ These prescriptions for a global *Pax Americana* were certainly explicit about the geopolitical importance of the U.S. in world affairs. Notwithstanding a nod to Wolfowitz's critics in the preface—"we do not use our strength to push for unilateral advantage"—the overall implication of the *Strategy* document was indeed an enunciation, in the geopolitical terms of U.S. primacy and preemption rights, of unilateral advantage. And yet this advantage was imagined as underpinned and as best maintained through free markets and free trade.

The complex combination of geopolitical assertion and geoeconomic assumption that organized the *Strategy* was to prove an elusive target of critique. A few critics noticed the geo-economics.⁸⁵ But much more commonly, it was the geopolitical interpretations that dominated. From this perspective the vision of extending freedom through free markets was not an empire of decentered space but rather just an ideological cover for instrumental and specifically American-centered imperialism. Peter Gowan, for example, argued in this way against the hollowness of the U.S. rhetoric (as well as its continuities from Bush senior to Clinton to Bush junior). "For all the American ideological stress on free market capitalism and 'economic globalization,'" he concluded, "we find that the American state, backed by its business class elites, has been engaged . . . in increasingly feverish and increasingly militaristic geopolitical manoeuvres to reconstruct the inter-state system as a means to anchor the dominance of US capitalism in the twenty-first century."⁸⁶ From the neo-conservative advocates of unilateralism themselves also came dismissals of the ideas propounded by capitalist cosmopolitans. Robert Kagan thus opined around the time of the *Strategy*'s release about "the unilateralist iron fist inside the multilateralist velvet glove."⁸⁷ However, this arrogant metaphor would seem to have belied a deeper dependency on a geo-economic worldview that, as we shall see, even Kagan and his PNAC associates occasionally articulated themselves.

More than just an ideological cover or velvet glove, then, the bio-political force of geo-economic discourse appears to have enframed the basic ground on which the plans for American intervention were developed. A review of some of the neoconservatives' engagements with a geo-economic outlook (including Kagan's own) in the buildup to the Iraq war makes this clearer. Here the point is not to argue that they were actually engaged in a project of expanding a deterritorialized empire, but rather the more doubled-edged suggestion that they were conjugating their vision of American unilateralism using a geo-economic grammar predicated on the sweeping MBA-style visions of deterritorialized global networks.

Rumsfeld, to pick perhaps the most extreme condensation point of prewar geopolitical affect, actually commissioned a private study after arriving at the Pentagon charged with investigating what the United States could learn as a global power from such ancient empires as those of Rome, the Mongols, the Chinese, and the Macedonians. At first blush this was an extraordinarily arrogant imperialist idea. But on closer inspection, the study was symptomatic of something closer to what Hardt and Negri call imperial biopolitics. Besides revealing the historical hubris of the Pentagon, the results of the supposed "research" also indicated the degree to which Rumsfeld and those he respected were profoundly engaged with the question of sustaining American dominance amid global networks. The authors of the study (including ex-Speaker Newt Gingrich and emeritus orientalist Bernard Lewis) noted: "Without strong political and economic institutions, the Mongols, and the Macedonians could not maintain extensive empires. What made the Roman Empire great was not just its military power but its 'franchise of empire.' What made the Chinese Empire great was not just its military power but the immense power and might of its culture."⁸⁸ For readers of *Empire*, it might not be hard to notice a certain symptomatic acknowledgment in this miserably reductionist and interested history of the decentering of power in global networks. However, while Hardt and Negri argue that their postmodern Empire has no Rome,⁸⁹ Rumsfeld's research squad came to a more instrumental and unsurprisingly American-centric conclusion. "If we can take any lesson from history it is this: For the United States to sustain predominance it must remain militarily dominant, but it must also maintain its pre-eminence across other pillars of power."⁹⁰

Perhaps more significant than the study's conclusions about the limits of military imperialism was the fact that they were presented by the Office of Net Assessment and that the anti-Arab historical fantasist Lewis was partnered in the project with the antigovernment high-tech fantasist Gingrich.⁹¹ Gingrich was a keen fan of the Tofflers (whose own 1990s arguments about a "third-wave" information war leading ultimately to "anti-war" bear a striking resemblance to some of Hardt and Negri's claims about Empire constituting the antiarchitecture of global peace).⁹² Such enthusiasms made the ex-Speaker a good fit with the wider so-called revolution in military affairs that had already led to diverse revisionings of geopolitics at the Pentagon, and that Rumsfeld had sought to accelerate with plans to build a more flexible military alongside a continental missile shield.⁹³ Not surprisingly—given their long roots in neoconservative strategic thinking—it was these very same sorts of futurological ideas that also ran through much of PNAC's planning. The *Rebuilding America's Defenses* text itself is a good example, and the sections on future wars over outer space and the Internet are especially revealing of the market logics in which their own arguments for American primacy were being envisioned.

The PNAC report argues that

space has become a new "international commons" where commercial and security interests are intertwined. 95 percent of current U.S. military communications are carried over commercial circuits, including commercial communications satellites. . . . [Consequently] national military forces, paramilitary units, terrorists, and any other potential adversaries will share the high ground of space with the United States and its allies.⁹⁴

Here the geo-economic conclusion is especially clear. "The space 'playing field' is leveling rapidly, so U.S. forces will be increasingly vulnerable." To the accompaniment of this reiteration of level playing field discourse, the report argued that more investment was necessary to sustain the United States as the protector and manager of the system. The very same argument was then applied to cyberspace.

The Internet is also playing an increasingly important role in warfare and human political conflict. From the early use of the Internet by Zapatista insurgents in Mexico to the war in Kosovo, communication by computer has added a new dimension to warfare. Moreover,

the use of the Internet to spread computer viruses reveals how easy it can be to disrupt the normal functioning of commercial and even military computer networks. . . . An America incapable of protecting its interests or that of its allies in space or the “infosphere” will find it difficult to exert global political leadership.⁹⁵

In these arguments and others like them a form of geostrategic three-step was articulated that later went on to become a dominant feature of attempts to legitimate the Iraq war. First came the geo-economic assumption about a level plain being created by globalization; second came the threat assessment concerning unmanaged enemies estranged from the emergent global system; and third came the geopolitical assertion about the need for the United States to play the role of systems manager. Following this logic, the geo-economic starting place could still lead to a geopolitical argument about the need for American national action, but the starting point also effectively pre-scripted what that action was about: namely, the stately work of systemic oversight, protection, and incorporation. Even so ardent a unilateralist as Kagan ultimately followed this three-step at a basic level in his book *Of Paradise and Power*.⁹⁶

On the surface of it Kagan’s book was all about trumpeting the integrity and realism of geopolitical unilateralism (embodied for Kagan in American policy) over the idealism of multilateralism (embodied in E.U. policy).⁹⁷ But, as he battled on about these banal binaries, Kagan ultimately gave the game away when he cited with approval the advocacy of a new liberal imperialism by the senior British diplomat Robert Cooper. An advisor to Tony Blair, Cooper had earlier argued in the Spring of 2002 that the time was right for a postmodern liberal imperialism that would work just like traditional liberal imperialism by fostering a deliberate double standard.⁹⁸ “The postmodern world has to start to get used to double standards,” Cooper said.

Among ourselves, we operate on the basis of laws and open cooperative security. But, when dealing with old-fashioned states outside the postmodern continent of Europe, we need to revert to the rougher methods of an earlier era—force, pre-emptive attack, deception, whatever is necessary to deal with those who still live in the nineteenth century world of every state for itself.⁹⁹

Such a view not only helps explain Blair’s own subsequent support for the preemptive Iraqi campaign, but also gives a clue as to how

an avowed unilateralist such as Kagan was drawing on assumptions about globalization.¹⁰⁰ Kagan basically accepted Cooper’s global vision, quibbling only that it described America’s present rather than Europe’s future. “The United States,” he claimed, “is already operating according to Cooper’s double standard. . . . American leaders too believe that global security and a liberal order—as well as Europe’s postmodern paradise—cannot long survive unless the United States uses its power in the dangerous Hobbesian world that still flourishes outside Europe.”¹⁰¹ Kagan’s assertion was that the United States was the guardian of the global system, struggling manfully to protect the postmodern paradise of pooled sovereignty and expand a global liberal order without ever fully capitulating to its multilateral rules. America, he thus concluded, “mans the walls but cannot walk through the gate. The United States, with all its vast power, remains stuck in history, left to deal with the Saddams and the ayatollahs, the Kim Jong IIs and the Jiang Zemins, leaving most of the benefits to the others.”¹⁰²

Kagan’s vision of manning the walls was ultimately not so different from that of the Clinton-era geostrategicians that he and his PNAC associates occupationally railed against. There was certainly what Perry Anderson called “a sharp contrast in atmospherics”: the nationalist stridency of the Bush primacy and preemption doctrines versus the “wonderful opportunity” rhetoric of “Bill the Benign.”¹⁰³ But both approaches to American foreign policy basically shared notions of the United States acting alone on the outskirts of the level playing field to deal with its misfits. Perhaps more aggressive about engagement with these unmanaged outskirts, and veering still further from the cold war geopolitics of containment and exclusion, Kagan’s vision still looked a lot like that of Clinton’s first term national security advisor. As Lake had himself once put it: “The successor doctrine of containment must be a strategy of enlargement—enlargement of the world’s free community of market democracies.”¹⁰⁴ Moreover, as Madeleine Albright emphasized in her “indispensable nation” arguments, the reason the United States could be construed as the systems manager of the global process of enlargement lay in a kind of guard-on-the-wall perspective. “We stand tall. We *see* further into the future,” she said.¹⁰⁵ Indispensability, in these terms, would seem to have been simultaneously enabled and legitimized by a geo-economic worldview that not only envisioned an expanding global plain but envisioned it from commanding and specifically American heights.

The similarity with Kagan's image of the United States manning the walls is clear.

It might be protested that the wider PNAC optic was more narrowly nationalistic and not really as geoeconomic as that of the Clinton-era visionaries. Certainly, that was the insinuation in much of the muscular posturing about American traditions of "leadership" by the neoconservatives themselves. For example, in recalling Theodore Roosevelt's call for "warlike intervention by the civilized powers," and remembering Franklin Roosevelt's Atlantic charter, Kagan and Kristol sought to distinguish their vision in precisely this way in 2000 when they set about criticizing what they saw as the overly economic concerns of Clinton's foreign policy. They complained that "[i]n recent years, many American foreign policy thinkers, and some politicians, have come to define the 'national interest' as consisting of plots of ground, sea lanes, industrial centers, strategic chokepoints and the like."¹⁰⁶ Against this definition, they argued that "Americans should once again embrace a broad understanding of the 'national interest,' one in keeping with Roosevelt's vision."¹⁰⁷ However, the very same historical period can equally be reviewed—just like the *Strategy*, PNAC's reports, and Kagan's vision—in terms of the underlying geoeconomic premises that the great historical heroes of the national interest themselves once shared. Indeed, without ever using the term, this is exactly what two of the most recent and most successful historical surveys of American empire have done.

In his much-acclaimed *American Empire*, the retired U.S. military officer Andrew Bacevich argues against the simplistic binary oppositions of multilateralism versus unilateralism to suggest that a much more continuous worldview has shaped American foreign policy. Long before the Clinton era, and reaching back to the leadership of those lionized by Kagan and Kristol, he maintains that American internationalism has been underpinned at a fundamental level by concerns with coordinating and expanding free-market capitalism.¹⁰⁸ Republican and Democrat administrations alike, Bacevich argues, have effectively held to this common global purpose throughout most of the twentieth century.

That purpose is to preserve and, where both feasible and conducive to US interests, to expand an American imperium. Central to this strategy is a commitment to global openness—removing barriers that inhibit the movement of goods, capital, ideas and people. Its ultimate

objective is the creation of an open and integrated international order based on the principles of democratic capitalism, with the United States as the ultimate guarantor of order and enforcer of norms.¹⁰⁹

Although much more critical and historically sophisticated, this is also an argument elaborated by the Marxist geographer Neil Smith in another *American Empire* text published amid the buildup to the Iraq war. Examining the period between the Roosevelts in detail, Smith shows how American leaders repeatedly imagined their postcolonial imperium as "a quintessentially liberal victory over geography."¹¹⁰ This "deracination of geography in the liberal globalist vision," argues Smith, "abetted a broad ideological self justification for the American Empire." Moreover it did so, Smith says, because of its economically smoothed worldview. "[This] flattened geography," he concludes, "enabled a politics flattened to the lowest common denominator of American globalism."¹¹¹ What Smith calls a "flattened geography" is what I have been calling here geoeconomics, the smooth-world vision that elides the very American dominance that it helps biopolitically to reproduce. And just like Bacevich, Smith sees powerful historical continuities in the American ordering of this open and deterritorialized global space from the early part of the twentieth century right through to today.

Beyond noting the symptoms of geoeconomic vision in the neoconservatives' prowar geopolitical assertions, and beyond charting historical precedents of geoeconomic discourse in moments of American history that they prefer to script geopolitically, it is also possible to point to some more immediate ways in which geoeconomic assumption also played a direct role in making the war make sense to those who planned and executed it. In this regard I am drawing on another essay I coauthored with Sue Roberts and Anna Secor in which we argued that a key legitimization of the Iraq war rested on a form of "neoliberal geopolitics."¹¹² Here my additional suggestion is that what made the geopolitical legitimations of preemptive war and American primacy "neoliberal" was the whole way in which they were enframed by an underlying geoeconomic worldview. They reserved a special place for America the systems manager, but the basic system that America was scripted as upholding and the basic system to which the war promoters remained themselves unquestioningly committed was that of globalized free-market capitalism. Again Rumsfeld's regime at the Pentagon provides an example, this

time in the shape of an aspiring Department of Defense assistant for "strategic futures," Thomas Barnett.

In March 2003, just as the official war was beginning, Barnett published an article in *Esquire* magazine entitled "The Pentagon's New Map." A primary goal of the article, it seems, was that of legitimization. "Let me tell you why military engagement with Saddam Hussein's regime in Baghdad is not only necessary and inevitable, but good," Barnett enthused.¹¹³ His explanation commenced in the form of a new global cartography that, much like Albright's indispensability axiom and Kagan's picture of America manning the gates of free-market paradise, was premised on the masculinist assumption of a god's eye view. From this perspective, Barnett surveyed the whole world charting the progress (supposedly) of globalization. Those parts of the world seen as fully integrated into the networked world he labeled "the Functioning Core"; those parts deemed disconnected from the global system he described as "the Non-integrating Gap." Asked later in an interview in 2003 about what the "Gap" was, Barnett elaborated as follows:

The Non-integrating Gap began as a simple set of observations. First, you plot out on a map all the places where we've sent U.S. military forces since the end of the Cold War. Through 2002 that was 132 cases. Then you simply draw a line around roughly 95 percent of them, which, outliers aside, is basically the Caribbean Rim, the Andes portion of South America, most of Africa, the Balkans, the Caucasus, the Middle East, much of Southeast Asia, and interior China. The question I was looking to answer was, "what is it about these countries that continues to demand attention from U.S. military forces?" Basically, these are the countries that are having trouble with globalization.¹¹⁴

With this neat retroactive explanation of U.S. intervention, Barnett proceeded to propose a post-cold war security axiom: namely that "*disconnection defines danger*."¹¹⁵ Only by forcibly reconnecting the countries of the Gap into the globalized system, Barnett argued, could the dangers of terrorism and instability threatening the Core be defused. As he explained to Wolf Blitzer on CNN,

We've got to shrink these parts of the world that are not integrating with the global economy, and the way you integrate a Middle East in a broadband fashion . . . is to remove the security impediments that create such a security deficit in that part of the world.¹¹⁶

It scarcely needs noting that Barnett's "we" here is a distinctly American one. Practically parroting Thomas Friedman, who insists that "America truly is the ultimate benign hegemon and reluctant enforcer,"¹¹⁷ Barnett's picture of his country evinces innocent pride. On America falls the task of "integrating in broadband fashion"; on the U.S. military falls the responsibility of removing "security impediments"; and only America can in these terms presume to play the role—as Barnett likes to put it—of "Systems Administrator." Moreover, following the same dualistic logic about double standards that Kagan articulated in his vision of America guarding the gates of the liberal global order, Barnett suggests it is entirely appropriate for America to employ other, less liberal, rule sets when acting in the Gap.¹¹⁸

To accomplish this task we must be explicit with both friends and foes alike about how we will necessarily differentiate between our security role within the Core's burgeoning security community and the one we assume whenever we intervene militarily in the Gap. Seeking two sets of rules for these different security roles is not being hypocritical but honest and realistic.¹¹⁹

In other words, America can act multilaterally vis-à-vis the Core and unilaterally vis-à-vis the Gap without fundamentally contradicting the overall global system. America can have its illiberal outposts and aggressions on the global plain, but these, everyone must understand, are only about securing and expanding the functioning Core: doing so, moreover, not by containing and excluding the Gap, but by forcibly integrating it into the Core. Here we see the biopolitical force of geoeconomics in embodied geopolitical action. The business school vocabulary and arrogant global vision all combined with the nationalist affect of an up-and-coming officer's assumption that it is the manifest destiny of his country alone to be the systems administrator of the globe. Underneath it all, the deterritorializing dynamics of globalization are assumed to be rendering older geopolitical boundaries irrelevant, but America coded as systems manager can persist in integrating "in a broadband fashion," imposing with force what the "Bush doctrine" asserts is the single, sustainable model for national success: "freedom, democracy and free enterprise."

As an assistant in Rumsfeld's Office for Force Transformation as well as a professor at the Naval War College, Barnett no doubt

remains an influential voice. But his ideas are more interesting here as symptoms of a much wider complicity between geopolitics and geoconomics in the discourses shaping the justification, acceptance, and prosecution of the war.¹²⁰ As such, it is worthwhile reflecting on his own assessment of the unique American place in globalization. "We live a very good life under globalization," Barnett told one interviewer, summing up the American situation. "In effect, it allows us to live beyond our means. We export sovereign debt and we import far more than we normally would."¹²¹ This very candid portrait of global financial asymmetry is followed by one more military finesse from Barnett, for he concludes in turn that America effectively pays back to the global system through its work as systems manager. "One of the reasons why countries put up with th[is] arrangement is because we export security," he argued.¹²² Thus, even as the mapping of Core and Gap enframes a globalizing world in which American geopolitical aggression is cartographically obscured (by being used to outline the Gap that is then blamed on poor integration with globalization), Barnett nevertheless makes explicit much more widely shared assumptions about American intervention serving at once as premise and protector of the global system.

It should now be clear that to argue that geoconomic assumptions underpin arguments such as Barnett's is not to deny the coercive force of national geopolitical imperatives. The Iraq war was undoubtedly about American national retribution, and it was also—albeit in a more attenuated way—about reordering the geopolitical matrix of the Middle East along lines long outlined by Israeli right-wingers and their American allies. Moreover, as we shall examine in the next section, the war was also fundamentally about America's access to oil. All of these concerns meant that the "challenge of Iraq" was indeed, as Henry Kissinger himself put it, "geopolitical."¹²³ But equally all of these concerns could also still be made to coincide with the reproduction of an underlying geoconomic worldview. As Bush told reporters even in the first flush of his post-9/11 chauvinism: "The terrorists attacked the World Trade Center, and we will defeat them by expanding and encouraging world trade."¹²⁴ And, as the war plans took shape in 2003, the same vision remained of American force making free trade and democracy flower in Iraq, precipitating a wider leveling of the Middle Eastern playing field and a geoeconomic domino effect of cascading capitalist opportunity. This admittedly precarious ideological articulation worked, I think, because it was more

than just an ideology about the globalizing world that was in play. It worked and remained stable through the prosecution of the war because of the ways in which the geoconomic assumptions were interlinked into the wider biopolitical organization of American informal imperialism at home.

In the early months of 2003 as the military buildup proceeded apace, Americans were barraged with news about economic anticipations of war. Futures markets had already hedged a spring spike in oil prices; stock and bond markets were factoring in a war "bounce"; television producers were agreeing contracts to fill overseas staffing requirements; reporters were being embedded with the military; the protocols of news censorship were being finalized with media legal departments; satellite time was being purchased in advance; children's war games were being stockpiled in toy shops; flags were selling fast and furious; and large advertising billboards announced in corporate style but without any corporate insignia that "United We Stand." The list went on and on, but considered in its overall mind-numbing banality it appeared as an effective and affective administrative machine: a machine that, like Hardt and Negri's, was intimately tied to the production (and destruction) of political-economic subjects globally, but a machine too that, through the banalities of consumerism, sutured the paradoxical and distinctly American business-class subjectivity of the patriot-globalist. These banalities of the machine at home often belied its uncanny global interdependency: Stars and Stripes regalia with "Made in China" small print, high fashion nationalist clothing colors from French designers, and so on. However, it was the passing comments in the business pages that best illustrated how the whole overarching network of ideas and interdependencies was being reproduced in the core of the core. Here, the geoconomic arrogance of seeing the whole world as one could be seen to be working on a daily basis to reframe the risks of the geopolitical adventurism in the quotidian vernacular of corporate risk management.

Extreme Times, Extreme Portfolios: In an era of war and oil shocks, an unconventional mix of risky stocks and cold hard cash may be the prudent strategy.¹²⁵

The dollar was flat against the euro after some traders speculated a message from Osama bin Laden would make an attack on Iraq more likely.¹²⁶

To some, resolution in Iraq—assuming a swift U.S. military victory and peace within the country—could lead to more uncertainty elsewhere. “If you get Iraq past you, do you think about reprisals, Iran, North Korea?” asks David Cooley, a portfolio manager at J & W Seligman & Co in New York. He worries about the high level of consumer debt in the U.S. and how these unresolved geopolitical issues might weigh on Americans’ willingness to keep spending.¹²⁷

The dollar dropped against the euro after Secretary of State Colin L. Powell said the possibility of an attack on Iraq was increasing. In New York, the euro settled at 1.1045.¹²⁸

It’s the waiting that makes you nuts, isn’t it? The waiting for the war we know is going to happen. . . . It’ll start on T.V., and we all know the drill: One reporter in Kuwait City, those bulbous towers glowing in the night sky behind him. Perhaps another in Baghdad with some night-vision tape of anti-aircraft fire leaping into the green sky. Then the speech from the Oval Office we know by heart: U.N. resolutions, defiance, failure to disarm, liberation.¹²⁹

Such a list of news bites from the business pages not only illustrates the normalization of the war, but also captures something of the aura of inevitability that thereby seemed to pass from the usual business-page master-narrative about globalization to the geopolitical master-narratives of American primacy and preemptive strikes. Clearly this was hardly the fashioning of the global multitude, and yet, borrowing from Hardt and Negri, it can still be argued that a certain military-capitalist administrative machine biopolitically secured in such ways the willing geopolitical coalition for war, and it did so, moreover, on fundamentally geoeconomic grounds. This argument is in effect a bigger claim about biopolitics and war than Hardt and Negri themselves tried to make in *Empire*. There they reinterpreted the first Gulf War as a global imperial police action rather than an imperialist American aggression. They acknowledged that the earlier war was led by the United States. However, they claimed that this was “*not as a function of its own national motives but in the name of global right*” (*Empire*, 180; italics in the original). This distinction is what allowed them to suggest in a signature gesture of imperial denial that “[t]he United States is the peace police, but only in the final instance, when the supranational organizations of peace call for an organizational activity and an articulated complex of juridical and organizational initiatives” (181).

More unfortunate than its resonances with Barnett’s vision of the United States as systems manager, the weakness of this whole argument was that it ultimately rested on a reading of only the *rhetoric* attending the first Gulf War. It is “the name of global right” on which Hardt and Negri based their case that the war was a police action. By contrast, my suggestion is that more than rhetoric was involved in the promotion of the Iraq war as an act of global management. The war plans were also partly developed, processed, and legitimated through the political-economic practices and neoliberal risk management ideas—including the geoeconomic worldviews—that have emerged in concert with the development of neoliberal globalization. Not only was this more than rhetoric, it was also obviously quite often *different* from the dominant prowar rhetoric (at least in the United States). None of the globalist assumptions and mediations I have been discussing precluded the simultaneous representation of the war in the most jingoistic of geopolitical and nationalist ideological formats. The Murdoch media empire and Fox News were certainly part of the administrative military-capitalist complex, but the last thing it was broadcasting were pastoral views of America as the peace police. The politics were more contradictory than this. If we instead see the war planning and resulting talk as a complicit mix of geopolitical affect and geoeconomic assumption, such contradictions become comprehensible as the contradictions of an informal American imperialism being pushed in the direction of formality and force amid globalized capitalist interdependency. In the next section, I consider in turn how—understood ~~as~~ such—the contradictions became more explicit during the war and yet further strained in its aftermath.

THE CONTRADICTIONS OF WAR: GEOPOLITICAL AFFECT AND GEOECONOMIC ASSUMPTION IN ACTION

It was scripted as “Shock and Awe”: the bombing of Baghdad told as a simple orientalist story of an angry America metaphorized by its military hitting back at an evil Arab despot in the only way oriental terrorist types understand.¹³⁰ The resulting spectacle involved satellite-guided volleys of thousands of the most expensive armaments in the world, most of them directed from across the planet using global positioning systems to multiple targets the length and breadth of Iraq. But all the dependency on globe-spanning (and

often commercially developed) technology aside, and all the benefits to the corporate suppliers of the U.S. military noted, the war remained a mediated enactment of the old American Western sheriff story. The nation was riding into town again, and though it was doing so by proxy on cruise missiles and drones, it still had the singular shotgun purpose of removing a bad guy who was messing up the expansion of capitalist order in the desert. These affect-freighted geopolitics, shocking and awful and nationally narrated as they were, were also underpinned by less belligerent geo-economic assumptions. These, like the globe-girdling technologies that enabled them, appeared to do the important background work of legitimating the war for the American and (though, as we shall see, much less successfully) foreign business-class elites who, like Tony Blair, supported the war even though they did not really believe the tall tales about Iraq's weapons of mass destruction.¹³¹ The colonialist romance of executing a degenerate tyrant was twinned in this way with the more comforting globalist idea that the intervention was all about bringing freedom, private property, democracy, and free markets to the middle of the Middle East; that it was therefore ultimately about establishing a beachhead in an olive tree world that would soon thereafter be incorporated into the expanding level plain of globalization. The complicity and combined ideological articulation of these geopolitical and geo-economic visions only worked, of course, on the assumption that American interests coincided with the good of global capitalism: that the seizure and privatization of Iraqi oil production would defang OPEC and cheapen the price of oil for the engines of business everywhere; and that the anticipated boost to the American economy from the military Keynesianism would create a Ronald Reagan-style recovery and thus the necessary consumptive demand in America to lift other economies out of recession too. This was what business magazines referred to as the "benign war" scenario: not very convincing for the thousands upon thousands of dead Iraqis, to be sure, but comforting all the same for the transnational capitalist class.¹³² However, as the war and its aftermath hit more and more obstacles, the contradictions that had been obvious to foreign critics from the beginning started to also become more obvious to the business classes, first abroad and then increasingly in America too.

The problem for the long-term endurance of the geopolitics-

geo-economics articulation was that the war and its economic affects were real events with material consequences. Beneath the "bullets are bullish" shock and awe people were dying and learning to resist, and not just in Iraq. The war catalyzed global resistance, and while much of it was fleeting and, in the case of German and French leadership, minimized by being neoliberalized, wider arguments against the war allowed more and more critics to see the links between neoliberalism and American imperialism. The war effectively concretized the contradictions of a global system purporting to be level while remaining fundamentally asymmetric and American-dominated. In this sense what happened in Iraq represented a performative destabilization of the globalization metanarrative. If, as Pierre Bourdieu and Loïc Wacquant argue, one effect of the big neoliberal globalization story "is to dress up the effects of American imperialism in the trappings of cultural oecumenicism [and] economic fatalism,"¹³³ the war became a sustained dressing down. And it did so in part, I want to suggest here, because of the impossibility of containing the contradictions of geopolitics and geo-economics in the context of the American assault and occupation. These contradictions became especially evident in the three main ways through which economic dynamics mediated the violence: namely, the commodity economics, the oil economics, and the financial economics. In all three arenas the intertwining of geopolitics and geo-economics in the vision of benign war began to unravel.

Were the Bullets Bullish?

In an immediate sense the bullets were indeed bullish. The stocks and bombs story was a happy one, and not just for defense contractors. Despite some early dips as the northern advance of American forces slowed, equity markets ultimately tended upward. The calculus on Wall Street, it seemed, was that the death and destruction in Iraq was preempting deflation and a double-dip recession whether or not there was a terrorist threat from Saddam Hussein to be preempted too. "With United States troops closing on Baghdad," ran one typical report, "investors bid up stocks yesterday, sending markets worldwide strongly higher. More than any economic or corporate profit news, the war is driving stock, bond and oil prices investors and Wall Street analysts said."¹³⁴ Though they did not use Harvey's term, and though more superficial commentary focused

merely on rising U.S. consumer confidence, Iraq was thus treated as one more spatial fix for the lingering overcapacity problems of the late 1990s bubble economy.¹³⁵ In America itself, the business pages were full of hopeful predictions that the war spending combined with the tax cuts would stimulate a recovery like the one engineered by Reagan's administration in the late 1980s.¹³⁶

As well as boosting equity prices, the war was itself fully commodified. It was produced, packaged, and sold through diverse market mediations, and like a big Hollywood movie, it had all kinds of commercial spin-offs too. Having boasted that it would "be a campaign unlike any other in history," the American general in charge of the attack, Tommy Franks, proceeded to give his press announcements of the war's progress from a \$250,000 stage set in Qatar that was designed by the same designer that builds sets for Disney, MGM, and the *Good Morning America* show.¹³⁷ The embedded-with-the-military reporting likewise built on the unreal television genre of so-called reality shows, and the war show, in this sense, reached its season finale when President Bush touched down onto a giant "Mission Accomplished" stage set on a real aircraft carrier (moored safely just off the U.S. coast) with the president fully wardrobed for the role of commander and fighter in chief. American viewers should have known all this was coming, though, given that the White House had earlier explained its approach to the planning of the war in crassly commercial terms. In August 2002, before the pantomime in the United Nations, before the vote in Congress, and even before the release of the *National Security Strategy*, Andrew Card, the White House chief of staff, had let slip to reporters asking about Iraq that "From a marketing point of view, you don't introduce new products in August."¹³⁸ A critical Frank Rich writing later in the *New York Times* suggested this was a refreshing moment of honesty in the war. "Mr. Card has taken some heat for talking about the war as if it were the roll-out of a new S.U.V," wrote Rich. "But he wasn't lying, and history has already proved him right. This campaign has been so well timed and executed that the new product already owns the market."¹³⁹

Part of the product's success, it seems, was branding. The Bush administration had learned from the fiasco over the Operation Infinite Justice name for the Afghanistan war (which had apparently alienated Muslim believers in the idea that only Allah can promise infinite jus-

tice). That war had been rebranded as Operation Enduring Freedom, and the Iraq campaign simply built on the resulting brand recognition with the new name Operation Iraqi Freedom. But it wasn't just the branding that sold the war, it was also the fashioning of the war's appeal to consumers through tried and tested commercial tactics: human interest stories (Jessica Lynch), glossy logos (Showdown with Iraq), sports-style commentating ("kicked-off with cruise missiles," "special forces scored a touchdown," "infantry stepping up to the plate"), and as had also been the case with the first Gulf War, the inevitable appeals to the god-tricks of boyish war games ("the map shows American advances in bold"). Thomas de Zengotita described the allure of the latter well.

What about those graphics in the papers—the beige-and-gray foldout maps of Iraq, crisscrossed with thrusting arrows showing the progress of columns and with cool symbols for various deployments and engagements? A powerful aura emanated from those pages; it was as if the field commanders were consulting maps just like this one. It was horrifying, if you thought about what was represented—a crushing application of tremendous force against a virtually helpless enemy—but weirdly innocent too, evocative somehow of hobbies.¹⁴⁰

De Zengotita's point in highlighting this aura was to suggest that it contributed to the romance of American empire, and it clearly did have this sort of geopolitical affect. But again this was consolidated by the convenient convergence of the hobbyist interest in the instruments of intervention with wider and more *prosaic* capitalist commodity chains, including the production and marketing of war games themselves. Indeed, as a telling example of the wider pattern, toy manufacturers would seem to have at once profited from and contributed to the Iraq war both materially and ideologically.

"The United States' \$US20.3 billion toy industry is closely watching the Iraq war with an eye towards new products for Christmas," noted one report.¹⁴¹ The reporter proceeded to note the mutually enabling and market-mediated relationship between the industry and the military. All kinds of new action figures were brought out to coincide with the appearance of particular military units in the media coverage of the war. As special forces were being sent in Hasbro produced a desert Tactical Adviser figure, modeled after the army's Delta Forces, and later, a large toy retailer called Small Blu

Planet promoted a lineup of "Special Forces: Showdown with Iraq" figures. "We started work when the 'Showdown' buzzword hit the airwaves," the company's president explained. "There's fierce competition among manufacturers to get the new things out first."¹⁴² At the other end of the war, Blue Box Toys of Hong Kong rushed in the same way to produce a model of Bush in the aviator gear he wore when landing on the USS *Abraham Lincoln* to declare the war over.¹⁴³ Meanwhile, a Pentagon spokesman explained that, far from being just commercial emulators of the military, the toy makers were also innovators who made important contributions to the war machine. "The M-16 rifle is based on something Mattel did," he said, before describing the more recent ways in which the Pentagon was researching ideas in little boys' toys. "Inspiration has come from model aircraft (reconnaissance drones), 'supersoaker' water guns (quick loading assault weapons), cheap cellular phones for teenagers (video capable walkie-talkies) and gaming control panels (for unmanned robotic vehicles)."¹⁴⁴ Many other indications of the two-way ties emerged, but perhaps the most remarkable and obscene indication of the interdependency was the Sony corporation's patenting of the term "Shock and Awe" for a new computing game.¹⁴⁵

The kinds of commercial ties illustrated by the toy business between the war and commodity production were just a small sample of the much bigger networks constituting the industrial-military complex of the war making. Another notable feature of this complex that also underlined the complicity of neoliberal ideology was the role Private Military Companies (PMCs) played in the war. The trend toward outsourcing and thereby privatizing military "work" to such corporatized mercenaries had already accelerated in the early 1990s when Dick Cheney was Defense secretary.¹⁴⁶ Despite endless conflicts of interest (most notably with Cheney subsequently becoming the CEO of Halliburton whose Kellogg, Brown and Root unit is one of the largest PMCs in the United States), they captured increasing numbers of Pentagon contracts during the 1990s and, like any other burgeoning business keen to foster support in Washington, formed a trade group, the International Peace Operations Association. The euphemism might once perhaps have seemed to affirm *Empire's* picture of a global peace police, but it was really much more resonant with Barnett's double-edged depiction of the United States as a systems manager exporting violence and using the tools and techniques of the

capitalist system—such as outsourcing—to manage the geoeconomic margins with geopolitical intervention.

The Iraq war created a whole new set of opportunities for the privatized but distinctly American "Peace Operations" of the PMCs. Asked about whether U.N. peacekeeping troops would help with policing in postwar Iraq, one Pentagon official gave a telling answer. "We know we want something a little more corporate and more efficient," he said, while back in the United States a PMC called DynCorp—which had previously held Pentagon contracts to fly coca eradication missions in Columbia—began to run advertisements on its Web site offering jobs to "individuals with appropriate experience and expertise to participate in an international effort to re-establish police, justice and prison functions in post-conflict Iraq."¹⁴⁷ This was the administrative machine of Hardt and Negri's peace police in action, and yet, of course, it was a distinctly American operation.¹⁴⁸ The working assumption throughout was that Americans and, specifically, American private companies do neoliberalism best. In practice, though, as Paul Krugman bemoaned in a *New York Times* opinion column, the assumptions did not hold up. The privatized system serviced by U.S. PMCs proved anything but efficient and accountable. The cases of American troops torturing Iraqis under instruction from private contractors working for army intelligence were only the most egregious cases of unaccountability.¹⁴⁹ Citing a Newhouse News Service report, Krugman also described how instead "US troops suffered through months of unnecessarily poor living conditions because some civilian contractors hired by the Army for logistics support failed to show up."¹⁵⁰ Subsequently, two senior Democratic congressmen raised other concerns over the extremely inflated price Kellogg, Brown and Root was charging the U.S. government for providing, of all things, imported gasoline in Iraq.¹⁵¹ But mind-boggling as this was—especially so given that Halliburton's other assignments in Iraq included the rebuilding of the oil production infrastructure—it was significant that the congressional critics, like Krugman, effectively issued their criticisms on economic grounds. The greatest leverage for their arguments, it seemed, was not so much outrage at the whole war-making-profit-taking machine, nor even the insider deals for particular PMCs (although Krugman was a stalwart critic of these ties throughout the war), but rather the poor product delivery, bad accounting, and cost overruns of the outsourcing

system. Potential worries about unpatriotic privateering (a geopolitical framing) were thus displaced by concerns about accountability and transparency (a geo-economic framing). In this sense, the PMCs and their political allies (many of them, like Cheney and Richard Perle, in the PNAC patriot circuit) had preemptively neutralized criticism by moving their business onto geo-economic ground.

The geo-economic assumptions used by and made manifest in the treatment of PMCs reflected not legalistic ploys but rather their basic economic outlook as private for-profit companies. Halliburton is especially notable in this regard because through its oil and gas business it has regularly infringed geopolitically framed U.S. laws against doing business in countries such as Iran, Libya, and, of course, Iraq (where two companies in which Halliburton held stakes sold Saddam Hussein over \$73 million of production equipment during the post-Gulf War period when Cheney was CEO and sanctions were in force).¹⁵² Against the seeming contradictions, Cheney took the god's eye view: "The good Lord didn't see fit to put oil and gas only where there are democratic regimes friendly to the United States."¹⁵³ This economic calculus of global opportunity, it needs remembering, here came from the same man who did perhaps the most to promote the Bush doctrines of primacy and preemption. For him and Halliburton, it seemed, the charmed complicity of geo-economic assumption and geopolitical assertion was complete. The same remains true for a limited number of other military contractors (such as the Bechtel corporation) that have been major recipients of post-war reconstruction contracts in Iraq. For this charmed community of capitalists the links between the global bottom line and American unilateral assertiveness are clear and not at all contradictory. Indeed, while busily profiting from the huge costs being passed on to future U.S. taxpayers and future generations of Iraqis, Bechtel and Halliburton meanwhile continued to fund the costs of neoconservative politicking in Washington, paying for events such as a gala tribute to Wolfowitz as a "Keeper of the Flame" at the right-wing Center for Security Policy.¹⁵⁴ Wolfowitz won that honor (following others such as Reagan, Gingrich, and Rumsfeld) as the policy architect of the war. However, the flame of patriotic leadership he was thereby supposedly keeping was increasingly only visible to the charmed circles funded and guarded by the likes of Bechtel and Halliburton. Elsewhere, among growing numbers of the transnational business

class, the heightened contradictions of U.S. informal imperialism (including the crony capitalism of the military contractors) were buffeting the flame of American "leadership" on all sides.

Already extremely fragile in the aftermath of the 1990s bubble, facing huge problems of overcapacity around the world, and experiencing heightened vulnerabilities of global interdependency in commodity production as well as in finance, the representatives of business classes from outside the United States saw their geo-economic world of boundless opportunity imperiled by the unilateralist war.¹⁵⁵ One indication of this disruption was the changing reception American representatives were greeted to at various corporate gatherings in Europe. At the annual meeting of the World Economic Forum in Davos, for example, John Ashcroft (Bush's Christian conservative attorney general) was looked at askance by global business leaders more accustomed to American leadership from the likes of Bill Gates. They were worried by the prospect of a new American Davos man inclined more toward prayer breakfasts and warmongering than to "friction free" capitalism.¹⁵⁶ As a result, reporters noted that anti-American feeling ran as high inside the conference as outside on the streets where global justice and environmentalist groups also turned their critical ire on America and distributed fake dollar bills with tanks on them. Likewise, the *Financial Times* reported that when Alan Larson, the U.S. undersecretary of state for economic, business, and agricultural affairs, went to Brussels to ask for support in the postwar reconstruction efforts he "met a barrage of criticism" from business leaders.¹⁵⁷ It was not as if all these concerns were about the abstract idea of sustaining global capitalism. Some complainants such as George Brodach from ABB, the Swedish industrial group, were simply worried about why U.S. companies were being awarded all the contracts for postwar reconstruction. But even at this level of critiquing Washington's crony capitalism, foreign corporate criticism worried away at the contradictions in the American position.

At the same time as American emissaries were hearing the criticisms of non-American neoliberals, American commodities were suffering boycotts in foreign stores. The *Washington Post* ran an article that noted in this way that

While America has won the war in Iraq in less than four weeks and with astonishingly few casualties, it has been suffering collateral damage in another theater of conflict—its trade relations. In the Arab

world, and more seriously in the rich markets of Europe, American companies and their famous brands have been at the receiving end of a small but highly visible boycott movement. In ordinary times this might be shrugged off; in today's fevered atmosphere it is further tinder on the fire—and has all the potential, if unchecked, to have ugly economic consequences.¹⁵⁸

The actual examples of threats to American exporters were idiosyncratic and dispersed. In Germany:

[a] restaurant chain in Hamburg no longer sells Budweiser, Marlboro or Coca-Cola. An antiwar Web site, www.consumers-against-the-war.de, lists 27 American companies, including American Express and Walt Disney, whose products German consumers should avoid. It has received some 100,000 hits since it was launched a month ago. Bicycle maker Riese and Mueller GmbH has stopped taking supplies from its American contractor.¹⁵⁹

Meanwhile, in France, the reporter noted,

the spread of "Mecca Cola," a Coca-Cola substitute developed by French entrepreneur Tawfik Mathlouthi, is ominous for what it represents: Tagged with the slogan "No more drinking stupid, drink with commitment," it was launched last November and first sold only in Muslim districts of France. Now it is available in the larger supermarkets in Belgium, France and Germany; and Mathlouthi describes advance orders as "phenomenal." And of course, almost ritually, a McDonald's in Paris has been attacked.¹⁶⁰

Disparate as they might have been, the attacks on American brands were worrying for the business elites. Back in America itself, leaders of TNCs such as Howard Schulz of Starbucks braced for trouble.¹⁶¹ More generally, business opinion leaders amplified a concern they had begun to raise at the start of the war. Michael Sestrit writing in the *Wall Street Journal* had lamented that the war "unleashed forces that could impact the global economy and financial markets for years." As the war proceeded, Jeff Madrick of the *New York Times* argued that "American unilateral bravado regarding the war would be misplaced and could be costly to the economy." And as the war went from bombing to an unstable occupation with looting and multiple civilian casualties, *Business Week's* Christopher Farrell worried about how "collateral damage from the war to the global economy is also all too possible."¹⁶² Summarizing these con-

cerns about disruption and underlining the threat they posed to the smooth-world vision of globalization, Stephen Roach of Morgan Stanley stated that "[t]his postwar period is the real challenge for the world and globalization as we know it."¹⁶³

Against the backcloth of these concerns the Bush administration nevertheless pressed ahead with its own geo-economic expansion plan for the Middle East, a plan centered on converting Iraq into an embodiment of neoliberal doctrine and an anchor of a new Middle East Free Trade Area (MEFTA). In the damning words of free trade critic Naomi Klein, Iraq was thus being "treated as a blank slate on which the most ideological Washington neoliberals can design their dream economy: fully privatized, foreign-owned and open for business."¹⁶⁴ "Some argue that it's too simplistic to say this war is about oil," she went on. "They're right. It's about oil, water, roads, trains, phones, ports and drugs. And if this process isn't halted 'free Iraq' will be the most sold country on earth." Just as with the old Washington Consensus, the plan still allowed for all kinds of monopolistic privileges for American corporations, but the overweening ideology remained the geo-economic one. The fact that the leveling of this blank slate had required an asymmetric assault carried out by the most powerful military machine in history, and the fact that the so-called postwar peace demanded an extraordinarily costly military occupation, did not mean that the neoliberal nostrums were all wrong. This, after all, was just the visible fist coming to the aid of the invisible hand, or in Barnett's terminology, the work of systems administration. Against such complicit assumptions, Klein asked two sharply critical questions:

So what is a recessionary, growth addicted superpower to do? How about upgrading Free Trade Lite, which wrestles market access through backroom bullying, to Free Trade Supercharged, which seizes new markets on the battlefields of pre-emptive wars?

This critique of the geopolitical formalization of American informal imperialism was extremely astute, and Klein's subsequent debunking of the new Washington Consensus was brilliant. "Bush hasn't abandoned free trade," she wrote, noting the neoliberal worries in Europe and elsewhere, "he just has a new doctrine: 'Bomb before you buy.'"

In a subsequent article Klein quoted British journalist Robert Fisk as arguing that the uniform of Paul Bremer, the American administrator

of Iraq, said it all: "a business suit and combat boots."¹⁶⁵ This business suit, it might be added, was not just for show. Just before heading off to an economic forum on the MEFTA in Jordan in the summer of 2003, Bremmer announced that his administration would be radically cutting funding for Iraqi state enterprises. "Short term sacrifices," the *Economist* reported him as saying, "would create 'a level playing field' with the private sector. Inefficient industries would close down, or like oil, be privatized."¹⁶⁶ With this symptomatic announcement of yet one more level playing field vision there also came, however, a gigantic catch, a catch that no amount of geo-economic smoothing could assume away. This was the problem of oil and specifically the economics of postwar oil production, and lack thereof, in Iraq. These, as the *Economist* noted, completely overshadowed the deliberations over the MEFTA and the hopes for the entrenchment of neoliberalism across the Middle East. Moreover, the oil economics, as we shall now see, also comprised a still more contested condensation point for the contradictions in the precarious American articulation of geopolitics and geo-economics.

Was It a War for Oil?

The geopolitical interpretations of the war by both critics and advocates not only focused on the doctrines of primacy and preemption, they also stressed the issue of American access to Iraqi oil. "No war for oil," critics shouted in street protests around the world. And, in the big antiwar march in Seattle, one of the more ironic protest signs underlined the imperial outlook of the energy grab: "Who put our oil under their sand?" This oil geopolitics interpretation of the war was buttressed in many critics' minds by the close relationship between the Bush administration and Texan oil companies, as well as by the whole history of American oil companies using the U.S. government to secure access to Persian Gulf oil.¹⁶⁷ This was also how it must have seemed to some enterprising soldiers from the 101st Airborne Division in Iraq when they named one forward operating base "Shell" and another "Exxon."¹⁶⁸ More senior military personnel acknowledged the point too, and later on, in June 2003 when still no weapons of mass destruction had been found, Wolfowitz himself explained to reporters that the protesters had basically been right. "Let's look at it simply," he said. "The most important difference between North Korea and Iraq is that economically, we just had no choice in Iraq. The country swims on a sea of oil."¹⁶⁹

The admission from Wolfowitz was doubly telling because as well as acknowledging the oil imperative he also coded it as an economic one. Here a certain set of geo-economic assumptions also came into play about the global supply of oil and the smooth functioning of global capitalism. The hope of the neoconservatives, it seems, was to rapidly increase Iraqi oil production, flood the world market with oil, and push the price of oil per barrel down to \$15 or less. Such transformations were expected to at once reinvigorate the global economy and destroy OPEC's price-setting capabilities, while also disciplining states such as Iran, Syria, and Libya. Larry Lindsey, one of President Bush's top economic advisors, argued in these ways that "When there is regime change in Iraq, you could add 3 million to 5 million barrels of production to world supply . . . successful prosecution of the war would be good for the economy."¹⁷⁰ On the surface of it such possibilities must have appeared compelling, allowing American geopolitical aggrandizement to again be imagined in terms of improving the global economy and making the world safe for liberal capitalism. The appeal of Iraq's oil in this respect was not just its plenty (the second largest reserves in the world), but its relatively low production costs. According to Thomas Ferguson and Robert Johnson, this meant that (at least in theory) controlling Iraq's supply of oil to the global economy would not only help cap and bring down world oil prices, but also, and just as significantly, serve to prevent global price-gouging by the other main low-cost producer, Saudi Arabia. They explained thus that

if the Saudis decide, as they have twice done in recent years, to wage a ruinous price war, lowering prices sharply in order to deter other cartel members from overproducing, then Iraq's role is again key. With another low-cost gas station open for business, the Saudis cannot count on maintaining total revenues as prices fall, because they will now have to split the take with the Iraqis. This downward price deterrence will be welcome news to marginal producers [i.e., high-cost producers] around the world, including those in Texas, and it is very important in assessing the long-run impact of the American move.¹⁷¹

This picture of Iraqi oil as a regulator on both the upward and downward movement of global oil prices seems much more resonant with a vision of maintaining the smooth operations of global capitalism as a whole. To be sure, there is still the direct American interest in preserving the viability of high-cost production out of the Gulf

of Mexico—where Halliburton as an oil production logistics firm has a lot to lose. But, by the same token, the price-capping effect of releasing Iraqi supply would reduce the likelihood of companies like Halliburton benefiting from developing new high-cost facilities in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska. Moreover, it was clear in these prewar economic analyses that the release of Iraqi oil also cut both ways for big American oil companies such as Exxon-Mobil and Chevron. They might gain advantage in Iraq over France's Total-Elf-Fina and Russia's Lukoil, but profiting very well from the preceding system and their business in the rest of the Gulf, their economic interest in the war was counterbalanced by the prospects of adjustment costs and the mid- to long-term likelihood of lower prices. In these anticipations of the impact of the war on oil economics, therefore, the immediately American benefits were less than clear. The expected long-term advantage was imagined instead in terms of the balancing of world supply and predictable prices in a deterritorialized global marketplace.

The big problem with the idea of turning Iraq into a global oil price regulator was that in reality it depended on more than just regime change. Huge infrastructural investments were necessary in order for Iraqi oil to flow in the requisite amounts onto the global market. Before the war Daniel Yergin of Cambridge Energy Research Associates had predicted that the grand vision of flooding the world market and disciplining OPEC was extremely hard to imagine happening in these more practical terms. “[A] ‘new’ Iraq,” he said, “is unlikely to do any flooding, even if it wanted to. The first task of a new regime would be to get production capacity, damaged by the war and poor operating practices, back into gear. Fixing the immediate problems would take time and money. It would take even more time—as well as a great deal of investment and a lot of technology—to get capacity back to where it was in 1979.”¹⁷² According to Yahya Sadowski, a growing awareness of these realities also “finally rebutted the neoconservative plan” when PNAC associate Douglas Feith led a Pentagon study in January 2003 that

learned just enough about oil economics to retreat in horror from the neoconservatives’ earlier proposals. Initially, officials at the Pentagon and the White House assumed that they would be able to recoup the costs of the war by dipping into Iraq’s oil revenues. . . . But when they did the maths, they made unpleasant discoveries. Expanding Iraq’s production will not only take time, it will also be very expensive.¹⁷³

It appeared that at least \$58 billion would have to be spent to reach the production goals originally thought possible. The geo-economic concept of Iraq being reintegrated into the global system as a price regulator (with America simply controlling the geopolitical levers) was not going to be as easy to bring about in practice as it was in the economic graphs of Larry Lindsey. In the context of the postwar occupation these sobering economic realities began to sink in. Oil prices in July 2003 did not go down—staying around \$30 a barrel—because of the slow pickup in Iraqi production caused by looting, sabotage, and the legacies of all the years of sanctions and disinvestment. Instead of the 2.5 million barrels a day being produced just before the war started, instead of the 3.5 million barrels a day when Iraqi production was at its height in 1979, and far from the 6 million barrels a day originally anticipated by the neoconservatives, Iraq was only able to produce 8 million barrels in the whole of July.¹⁷⁴

If the difficulties of restarting Iraq’s creaking oil production infrastructure upset ideas of quickly turning the country into a global price and supply regulator, they also indicated a significant chink in the vision of an all-powerful America intervening geopolitically on imperial impulse. To be sure, the Iraqi adventure enabled the United States to establish a long-term base for its military in the Middle East, it destroyed a regime that might one day have threatened Israel and other U.S. client states in the region (had Hussein’s military ever recovered from the sanctions), and combined with the bases in central Asia secured by the Afghanistan campaign (including key footholds in Pakistan and the old Soviet satellite states), it also allowed the United States to surround much of Iran. These were more than geopolitical fantasies. They were practical military achievements that not only secured long-term access to Iraqi oil, but also a strong U.S. presence in the whole Caspian oil and gas basin.¹⁷⁵ In Christian Parenti’s critical terms, all this established the United States as an “oil gendarme” for the world: a military (not peace) police with a powerful weapon to wield over both East Asia and Europe at once.¹⁷⁶ However, just as Iraq had once been imagined as the geopolitical centerpiece of this sweeping empire, its postwar experience and, in particular, the problems of restarting its oil production began to reveal the economic unsustainability of the overall imperial project. With the costs of occupation spiraling and with scarcely any oil profits to pay for them, a humbled President Bush was forced to return to the United Nations to plead for multilateral

financial and military support.¹⁷⁷ However, a senior official from the Bush administration said, "We expect billions of dollars out of the rest of the world. Billions." Meanwhile, an additional \$87 billion had to be requested in the form of a supplemental spending appropriation from Congress.¹⁷⁸ Primacy and preemption, it seemed, had found their match in looted pumping stations, sabotaged pipelines, and a degraded oil-production network.

It might be protested that one geopolitical-geoeconomic complicity concerning the global oil supply system nevertheless remained intact and, indeed, resecured in the aftermath of the war. In this view America's war could be understood as having successfully preempted the possibility of switching the currency in which oil is globally traded from dollars to euros. In November 2000 Iraq had switched to only receiving payments for its oil in euros. At first blush it was an accounting shift, hardly a weapon of mass destruction. But its implications for American global influence might well have been huge had other oil producers, particularly those in OPEC, followed suit. It would have led to huge transfers of funds out of dollars into euros as oil purchasers bought euros to pay for oil and oil sellers moved their dollar assets into euros to protect them from a falling dollar. This would have removed one (though, by no means all) of the structural asymmetries elevating the value of the dollar in the global economy, and the result would well have been devastating to a U.S. economy completely dependent on foreign capital investments to fund its monumental current account deficit. By thereby weakening the ability of the United States to borrow in its own currency—an exceptional privilege that, as Gowan and others have long pointed out, lies at the contradictory heart of America's fragile financial dominance—a transfer in oil pricing to euros may well have expedited American hegemonic decline.¹⁷⁹

The way in which the war preempted a wider switch in oil pricing was by no means just the focus of leftist debate. Mainstream newspaper accounts articulated the same calculus quite directly. The *Boston Globe* published an article suggesting that at minimum a coordinated move to trading oil in euros would decrease America's gross national product by as much as one percent permanently.¹⁸⁰ And in the *Los Angeles Times* business section Ferguson and Johnson explained both the problem and the solution:

A major prop for the dollar has long been the simple fact that oil is priced in U.S. dollars. If the new Iraqi petroleum authorities announce that they will accept checks only in dollars, invest their sur-

plus in dollars, and swell U.S. exports by contracting principally with American firms for services and goods, the dollar's prospects will brighten.¹⁸¹

Not surprisingly, postwar Iraqi petroleum authorities (i.e., the Americans) did make the change back to dollars. But the prospects for the dollar did not brighten as a result. Instead, the lack of meaningful oil exports and the high costs of occupation came together, as we shall now see, with the more chronic and systemic problems facing the U.S. economy to dim dollar prospects and, with them, the long-term viability of the vision of American global systems management. Both the assertion of geopolitical ambition and the assumption of a geoeconomic playing field were in financial jeopardy, and the war had only made things worse.

What Has Been the Financial Fallout?

The day-to-day reporting in the American business pages depicted the end of the war as the "end of uncertainty" and thus, combined with the stimuli of tax cuts and war spending, a good reason to expect a Reagan-style recovery and renewed economic growth. In the third quarter of 2003 this sanguine view saw a certain amount of vindication in rising stock-market indices and increased corporate profits. But the grim news from Iraq of the rising costs of the occupation brought into focus a much more unsettling economic outlook, a future promising little but increasing indebtedness, financial turmoil, and crisis. It was this outlook that threatened both the vision of American geopolitical omnipotence and the enframing geoeconomic assumption of a global level playing field at the very same time.

Well before the war the progressive American economist William Greider summarized the financial threats to the geopolitical vision of primacy in an article suitably entitled "The End of Empire." "The imperial ambitions of the Bush administration," he said,

are founded on quicksand and are eventually sure to founder. Bush's open-ended claims for U.S. power—including the unilateral right to invade and occupy "failed states" to execute "regime change"—offend international law and are prerogatives associated only with empire. But Bush's great vulnerability is about money. You can't sustain an empire from a debtor's weakening position: sooner or later the creditors pull the plug. That humiliating lesson was learned by Great Britain early in the last century, and the United States faces a similar reckoning ahead.¹⁸²

Greider emphasized that the United States would be unable to keep ignoring the worldviews of its foreign creditors when its debts to them increasingly represented such a large percentage of such a rapidly expanding overall debt load. During the war, the French economist Frédéric Clairmont noted in the same way that, while busily sending thousands of missiles and troops overseas, the United States was simultaneously importing over \$2 billion in new foreign capital *per day*. This meant that foreign investors were now holding more than 18 percent of long-term U.S. equity securities and 42 percent of U.S. Treasury bills.¹⁸³ As the veteran *New York Times* business commentator Floyd Norris put it in a headline “Foreigners May Not Have Liked the War, but They Financed It.”¹⁸⁴ Norris’s point was hardly celebratory. He acknowledged that the “flood of foreign money helps to keep interest rates low while supporting the dollar.” He also accepted that the war could “be financed relatively cheaply at those low rates.” But he returned at the close to the basic point about interdependency: “borrowers may eventually need to pay attention to the views of the lenders. It would not be fun if foreigners began to invest the way they talk.”

At the end of the war there were still foreign investors (the Japanese and Chinese in particular were both still buying dollars with a view to keeping their own currencies down and the spending power of American consumers up). However, the short-term economic fun of a “victory” bull market was overshadowed by declines in the value of the dollar and widening concern about whether U.S. interest rates could continue to remain low and growth steady while government borrowing ballooned to pay for the war and Bush’s tax cuts. The occupation of Iraq was also starting to look like an increasingly expensive proposition, especially given the lack of oil export receipts. In addition to the \$1 billion a week in military expenses and all the investment needed to repair and improve the oil production system, other bills were piling up fast: \$5 billion for initial humanitarian aid, \$7 billion for repairs to utilities and public services, \$3 billion for resettlement costs, and an estimated \$200 billion to rebuild all the country’s institutions.¹⁸⁵ Moreover, even if the net profits of Iraq’s oil exports did reach the unlikely but promised figure of \$20 billion a year, much of this money was already spoken for in the form of the \$200 billion war reparation debt forced on Iraq after the first Gulf War, \$60 billion in contractual debts, and \$90 billion in

conventional debt to former arms suppliers, most notably the French and Russians.¹⁸⁶ The Bush administration was of course geopolitically inclined to just cancel the latter debts, but the wider economic drain of occupation could not be so arrogantly ignored in light of America’s own economic insecurity. It was in this new context that Bush sounded new notes of humility about consensus building, that Colin Powell replaced Donald Rumsfeld as the administration’s chief foreign policy spokesman, that Condoleezza Rice’s National Security Office took over from the Pentagon in overall Iraqi policy coordination, and that even Wolfowitz talked about how the United States did not “own” the Iraqi situation. Certain cheerleaders of geopolitical imperialism such as the indefatigable Max Boot complained that such changes represented “pragmatism winning out over unilateralism.”¹⁸⁷ Nonetheless, the changes began to be more and more marked. Predictions about the limits of a hegemony of force that were made by Perry Anderson before the war now looked correct: “the sputtering of the US economy, where the ultimate foundations of American hegemony lie,” he had argued, “does not, in any case, promise the Republican administration a long leash.”¹⁸⁸

Greider’s own view had been that the “Bush warriors’ reckless American unilateralism [would] only hasten the day when the creditors conclude that they must assert their leverage.”¹⁸⁹ While this point about the economic constraints on geopolitical recklessness was well taken, Greider’s example of wealthy Saudi investors pulling almost \$200 billion out of U.S. financial markets in the buildup to the war represented a much more direct financial tit for tat than was ever likely to happen in the normal course of market movements.¹⁹⁰ In this wider networked world of currency and equity trading America’s financial problems had long been acknowledged as well as hedged with all kinds of derivative profit-making. The difference the war and its aftermath made was more in the form of an additional shock to the system. Nevertheless, insofar as the extra costs of the war and occupation coincided with an especially vulnerable moment for global capitalism, they led to increasing deliberations among economists and business elites about the problems of American global economic preeminence. They therefore brought into more explicit focus the defining asymmetries of the not-so-level global financial playing field, and in catalyzing this concern, the economic turmoil exacerbated by the war and its aftermath heralded

a crisis in geoeconomic assumptions as much as they humbled the champions of geopolitical primacy.

If the big story in the markets was that the end of the war promised the end of uncertainty, not everyone in the financial world accepted it. "I don't buy that" exclaimed Stephen Roach, the chief economist of Morgan Stanley. Instead, Roach countered, "[t]he big story is the ever-mounting and unsustainable imbalances in our U.S.-centric world."¹⁹¹ Coming from one of the leaders of global finance, what followed was a clear elaboration of the huge asymmetries and unevenness more normally obscured in geoeconomic flights of fancy about financial deterritorialization.

In the fourth quarter of 2002, America's current-account deficit surged to an annualized \$548 billion, a record 5.2 percent of GDP. Financing such a shortfall requires \$2.2 billion of capital inflows each and every business day—hardly a trivial consideration for a postbubble U.S. economy offering low returns. Nor is the situation stable. As the federal budget goes deeper into deficit, the U.S.'s net national savings rate—that of consumers, businesses and the government combined—could easily plunge from late 2002's record low of 1.6 percent toward zero. If that occurs, the U.S. current-account deficit could approach 7 percent of GDP. This would require about \$3 billion of foreign financing every business day. History is pretty clear on what would happen next: a classic current-account adjustment. This would entail a very different macro outcome for the U.S.—namely, a weaker dollar, higher real interest rates and a slowdown in domestic demand.¹⁹²

Like other economists focused on the long-term trajectory of the global economy, Roach saw this looming economic crisis as stemming from bigger and broader imbalances than those presented by the geopolitics of war. However, he did see the Iraq war as having two significant effects on the overall macroeconomic situation. First, Roach argued that it threatened to hasten the growth of both the U.S. budget deficit and the current account deficit. This would therefore increase the "adjustment" requirements and, with them, all the attendant dangers of a global economic crash. Second, and still more sweepingly, he suggested that

the war could spell trouble for globalization. The war threatens to undermine political support for the supranational alliances that have long bound the world together. The possibility, combined with the potential trade frictions arising from a weaker dollar, a supercompetitive

Chinese economy and the outsourcing of white-collar jobs to nations like India, portends tough times ahead for globalization.¹⁹³

Here "globalization" was being used to refer to both the political commitment to a global neoliberal system and the actual economic realities of economic interdependency. In this sense, Roach was also effectively arguing that the war was undermining both the ideological and practical underpinnings of geoeconomics at the same time. The necessary global vision needed to make multilateralism work was becoming harder to muster at the exact same time as the war was unleashing the very economic contradictions that the cant of "multilateral" governance more usually covered up. In the place of a smooth world of deterritorialized financial flows, the war was unmasking the perils of what Roach openly labeled as a dysfunctional U.S.-centric global economy.

Roach's dire predictions from the belly of the global financial beast were not the only cautions on offer to the transnational capitalist class. The *Economist* provided a perhaps still more sobering assessment in September as the bad news from Iraq continued apace. Like Roach it noted that "a dollar crash and a global recession are not the only gloomy possibilities. Equally worrying, and much more likely, is a surge in protectionism . . . [which] would have grave consequences."¹⁹⁴ Again the whole project and vision of globalization was seen as under threat. Ironically, however, having argued at length that the problems stemmed from the world economy "flying on the one engine" of American-centered growth, the magazine concluded that the solution could only lie, once again, in American leadership.

If America shows the necessary leadership, and others live up to their responsibilities, there is still time to replace the one-engined global economy with a safer model. But if nothing changes, get ready for a crash landing.¹⁹⁵

Having noted that the Bush administration was not even admitting there was a problem, having argued that the Plaza accords (in which James Baker as U.S. Treasury secretary in 1985 orchestrated a controlled descent for the dollar) would be extremely difficult to restage in the context of globally reduced governmental controls over monetary policy, and having emphasized that American policy priorities were a big part of the problem, this ritual call for American systems administration was contradictory in the extreme. How American

"leadership" could do anything but worsen the crisis tendencies was unclear. Indeed, as Roach suggested, the most likely scenario was yet one more attempt to manipulate the global financial system enough to create another speculative credit-binge-cum-consumption-boom in America ahead of the 2004 elections. This hardly augured well for the project to geopolitically engineer a "new" American century. In this sense, Peter Gowan's predictions of unfolding tragedy for *Pax Americana* (in his review of Mearsheimer's *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*) appeared especially apposite: "The commanding vision of the architects of the American century, from Elihu Root through Stimson and Acheson to the Rockefellers, who believed America's surplus capital could transform and knit the world together, risks turning into something approaching its opposite: A US economy requiring manipulation of global monetary and financial, as well as political relationships to suck in capital to sustain its domestic consumer booms and speculative bubbles."¹⁹⁶ After Iraq, these risks were turning into realities. The days of American arrogance containing and profiting from the imbalances of global finance seemed numbered.

If transnational capitalist-class commentaries about the dysfunctional, one-engined, American-centric global economy represented symptoms (albeit especially influential symptoms) of the failure to hold geopolitical appeals for American dominance and geo-economic assumptions about globalization coherently together, there were many others. Beyond the mournful predictions of a global economic crash-landing, perhaps the most obvious of all the more immediate symptoms of contradiction was the notable absence of a democracy and free enterprise ripple effect through the Middle East. Tensions only rose as the level-the-playing-field-with-bombs strategy created its entirely predictable blowback of resistance in Iraq and across the region (not to mention a related upsurge in increasingly violent and authoritarian attacks on Palestinians by Israel). Far from igniting a "new era of global economic growth through free markets and free trade" as the *National Security Strategy* had promised, the systems administration of Bush et al. had brought only a growing free trade in violence.

All this is not to deny that at a more micro level American administration in Iraq was attempting in various ways to interpellate and incorporate a new generation of neoliberal visionaries. However, accounts of their faltering attempts to reimagine Iraq along the lines

of a neoliberal smooth world order only seemed to make plainer the contradictions of geopolitical and geo-economic complicity. Take for example the case of Wathiq Hindo, a would-be Iraqi tourism entrepreneur whose vision was described in the *New York Times*. The journalist writing the article approached Mr. Hindo's neoliberal vision with a mix of admiration and disbelief at the absurdity of it all in the midst of the postwar violence.

At first glance, Iraq may not seem like an ideal place for a holiday in the sun. Terrorists and bandits roam through a bomb-scarred landscape, and gun battles rage by night in the capital. But to Wathiq Hindo, this is the world's next great tourist destination. "You've got all the ingredients," Mr. Hindo said, pointing excitedly at a large map of Iraq on the wall in his spacious offices off Karrada Street. "People still think of this as the birthplace of civilization. You've got Babylon and Nineveh, and near Ur you've got the site of the garden of Eden." Mr. Hindo, a 55-year-old entrepreneur, does not just want to lure history buffs. He envisions package tours, four-star hotels and resorts, American families cruising in minivans down new super-highways, water skiing, maybe even a Disneyland on Lake Habbaniya. Religious tourists will flock to see where Job and Jonas died, or to the Muslim holy cities Najaf and Karbala.¹⁹⁷

Here, it seems, the whole Iraqi landscape was being reimagined in neoliberal terms and, as such, appeared as inserted (like a tourism promotion pamphlet in the Sunday paper travel section) into the larger geo-economic space of global competition for touristic consumption spending. The nationalist violence of geopolitical orientalism seemed replaced in this way by the bland but still violently abstracting and homogenizing imperatives of commercial orientalism. Iraq was being imaginatively inducted into the smooth space of the functioning core, a smooth space where the marketplace remakes lived-place in the economicistic image of accountancy. Najaf and Karbala were thus to be reimagined yet once more: from holy sites, to terrorism sites, to bomb sights and battle sites, all the way finally to tourism sights, and for the geo-economic visionary at least, profit sites too perhaps. But at the end of the newspaper account of Mr. Hindo's vision, the incongruity of it all with the quotidian geopolitical struggle over American occupation came violently to the foreground. The reporter was being taken by Mr. Hindo to the site of a potential future attraction when

a large boom sounds close by, possibly a grenade. The reporter glanced around warily, but Mr. Hindo scarcely seemed to notice. "You put up a concession here, maybe a tent, people can stop here and have a snack," he said, squinting happily into the setting sun. "It's going to be real nice."

Back in America the contradictions of geopolitics and geoconomics were also increasingly evident. During the war the PNAC patriot Richard Perle, for example, had been forced to resign from his position as chair of the Pentagon's civilian Defense Policy Board after reporter Seymour Hersh publicized the ways in which Perle was using his influence on the board to enrich himself.¹⁹⁸ Specifically he had been talking geo-economic talk and lobbying on behalf of a Hong Kong billionaire in order to overcome American opposition to the Chinese buyout of the bankrupt MCI-Worldcom corporation. Perle went back to his geopolitical register immediately and quickly labeled Hersh a "terrorist," but the damage was done and the contradictions of Perle's complicities exposed.¹⁹⁹ Later in 2003 such contradictions also caused problems for Wolfowitz and Rumsfeld themselves when they were obliged to finesse differences between geopolitical Republicans and geo-economic Republicans over Pentagon outsourcing. The former side wanted a law to oblige the Defense Department to "buy American," but at the risk of not seeming altogether patriotic Rumsfeld felt obliged to declare himself a free trader while Wolfowitz tried to work out language in the buy-American bill that would allow enough freedom (and thus free trade) to keep the office of the U.S. trade representative and other administration neoliberals happy.²⁰⁰

To some extent, the brouhaha over the buy-American bill represented another case of successful ideological crisis-management, but the same was not possible for perhaps the best example of a contradictory breakdown in geopolitical-geoeconomic complicity: the public furor over retired Admiral John Poindexter's terrorism futures market plan. Poindexter, infamous to many but not seemingly enough Americans for his role in the Reagan-era Iran-Contra free trade deals, had been working behind the scenes in Rumsfeld's Pentagon where his unit had come up with a creative scheme to establish a futures market that would supposedly predict future terrorism strikes. Examples of the sorts of bets that could be made on this market were given on the project's Web site and included such events as the overthrow of the king of Jordan, a missile strike by North

Korea, and the assassination of Yasir Arafat. It was just another attempt to reframe geopolitics in geo-economic terms. Speculators from all over the world would have been able to access the market and place bets on the chances of terrorism strikes all over the world. The site would thereby supposedly have provided valuable information to the Pentagon about where it would have to intervene. But given the bizarre implications of how the Pentagon might address future investor complaints that its preemptive geopolitics represented unfair government intrusion into the marketplace, and considering the still more absurd anticipations of what insider trading might look like on this market, the plan quickly became a futures market without a future.²⁰¹ Senator John Warner, the powerful Republican chair of the Senate Armed Services Committee called it "a very significant mistake," and with a tacit acknowledgment of the geo-economic inventiveness of the project, Wolfowitz noted that "[i]t sounds like they got too imaginative in this area."²⁰²

CONCLUSIONS UNBOUND

The contradictory and, as I have shown, increasingly crisis-bound complicity between geopolitical assertion and geo-economic assumption by no means describes all of the complexities and brutalities of the Iraq war. However, it does take us beyond the crippling either-or intellectual debates that set up American imperialism as a power structure or project somehow separate from neoliberal globalization. As Thomas Friedman is ever keen to remind us, we need instead to understand how these forces come together.

The United States can destroy you by dropping bombs and the Supermarkets can destroy you by downgrading your bonds. The United States is the dominant player in maintaining the globalization gameboard, but it is not alone in influencing the moves on that gameboard. This globalization gameboard today is a lot like a Ouija board—sometimes pieces are moved around by the obvious hand of the superpower, and sometimes they are moved around by the hidden hands of the Supermarkets.²⁰³

Here Friedman's Ouija board is just another metaphor for the level plain of geo-economics, and as we have seen, his own complicitous discourse (double entendre intended) can thus be seen to reflect the much more widely shared assumptions about the role of the United States as the level game board's player-manager. It is this distinctively

double-decked worldview that overdetermines what I have problematized in this chapter's title as empire's geography. If we want to understand the ongoing transnational graphing of the geo of American state hegemony, I am suggesting that we need to come to terms thus not just with the god-trick of globalist geoconomics, but also with what might be called a Jesus-trick: a Jesus-trick imagined in the geopolitically incarnate form of the U.S. military coming down to earth (or at least dropping bombs down to earth) and bringing neoliberal apostates and agnostics into order.²⁰⁴ Perhaps the best intellectual rendering of the resulting double vision came in the midst of the buildup to the Iraq war with the publication of Phillip Bobbitt's symptomatic *The Shield of Achilles*.²⁰⁵ Even the anachronistic Christian rhetoric of the book's dedication—"To those by whose love God's grace was first made known to me and to those whose loving-kindness has ever since sustained me in His care"—alludes to the godly imaginations that follow for readers who can bear to go beyond the Baptist unction. If they do they are exposed to an argument of enormous arrogance (as well as eloquence) that builds on its author's god's eye view as a powerful Washington intellectual: a nephew of Lyndon Johnson, a law professor in both Texas and Oxford, and a former Director of Intelligence on the National Security Council under Clinton. What makes Bobbitt's vision a double one, though, is that he combines all kinds of geopolitical assertions about the need for American leadership with a remarkably lucid discussion of neoliberal globalization, or what he likes to portray as the rise of "the market-state." He suggests along the way that the market-state's indifference to justice not only relates to the transnational entrenchment of the free market and "the cliché 'level playing field,'" but also stems from the military and technical legacies of the cold war.

The rocket technology developed to deliver weapons in the Long War has propelled man into a perspective from space; his communications technology, also developed for strategic reasons, has sent back an image from that perspective. I am inclined to think that something of the market-state's indifference to fate and sensitivity to risk is related to this reorientation, where the illusion of limitless opportunity meets the reality of choice.²⁰⁶

This is part of his wider argument about how the legacies of one military-cum-constitutional order shape the next, but it also illustrates an uncanny awareness of the illusions that attend the Father

and Son god-tricks of geoconomic and geopolitical perspective. As the war went on, these illusions became clearer to many critics too, critics for whom the "reality of choice" was resistance: not Bobbitt's Achilles Shield so much as American imperialism's Achilles heel. Roy's critique of the illusory military-cum-corporate missionary mandate was one of the best:

So here we are, the people of the world, confronted with an Empire armed with a mandate from heaven (and, as added insurance, the most formidable arsenal of weapons of mass destruction in history). Here we are, confronted with an Empire that has conferred upon itself the right to war at will, and the right to deliver people from corrupting ideologies, from religious fundamentalists, dictators, sexism and poverty by the age-old, tried-and-tested practice of extermination. Empire is on the move, and Democracy is its sly new war cry. Democracy home delivered to your doorstep by daisy cutters. Death is a small price to pay for the privilege of sampling this new product: Instant-Mix Imperial Democracy (bring to a boil, add oil, then bomb).²⁰⁷

For Roy such Democracy with a capital D is just "Empire's euphemism for neo-liberal capitalism" because capitalists "have mastered the technique of infiltrating the instruments of democracy—the 'independent' judiciary, the 'free' press, the parliament—and moulding them to their purpose."²⁰⁸ Yet Roy did not reproduce smooth-world discourse in the course of critiquing this biopolitical machine. Speaking in New York at the height of the war, she told her American audience that they had a special role to play in rejecting the instant-mix imperial democracy. "You have access to the Imperial Palace and the Emperor's chambers," she argued. "Empire's conquests are being carried out in your name, and you have the right to refuse."

Much more might be said about how the complicity of geo-economics and geopolitics relates to the material archipelagoes of American TNCs and American military bases around the world, and how they thereby at once underpin and reflect what the radical historian Bruce Cummings once called a "Global Realm With No Limit, Global Realm With No Name."²⁰⁹ Here, however, I have been more narrowly focused on how the complicity underpinned the war in Iraq. A much more detailed geographical critique by Derek Gregory of the visioning of the assault has described the mediatized American depiction and projection of the violence in the terms of "Boundless War."²¹⁰ Gregory's damning critique of this visioning of

the violence highlights with great precision and detail what had to be bounded out—including the horrendous Iraqi injuries and casualties that “embedded” reporting ignored—for the war to be effectively legitimated and thereby pursued without limits and beyond bounds. Here, by contrast, I have focused on how the war depended at the same time on the ideological binding of ideas about American geopolitical destiny to the geo-economic concept of a boundless smooth world order. In the latter part of the chapter, I have also sought to show how this working complicity has been subject to all kinds of contradictory convulsions in the context of Iraq’s occupation. But if understanding the force of geo-economics, geopolitics, and their articulation helps us unpack empire’s geography and increasingly unstable foundations, what do they tell us about the geography of *Empire* the book?

By this point it should be clear that the main concern about Hardt and Negri’s project at issue here is the way in which it encrypts a privileged place for America in the midst of a geo-economic scripting of smooth-world space. It is, I have suggested, this very same gesture that Barnett and so many others repeat in their gung ho arguments about America’s constitutional manifest destiny to manage globalization. Insofar as the war has illustrated the practical force of this geo-economics that encodes and allows for American privilege, it also has a number of theoretical implications for the kinds of arguments advanced in *Empire*. It has revealed first of all the dangers of reproducing discourses of imperial denial in the context of offering critical accounts of globalization. Second, it has obviously also made manifest the need to examine how the ideological encoding of American privilege relates to real but by no means permanent privileges relating to America’s long experience with the liberal model of laissez-faire capitalism. And third, by thematizing American dominance it has provided at least a starting point for investigating the likelihood of its decline. In the last part of this chapter I have suggested that a real decline is clearly in the financial offing, but having made this case, I do not want to suggest that imminent hegemonic collapse is certain. Such chiliastic accounts of economic doom are, just like Hardt and Negri’s account of the jump from imperialism to empire, ultimately disabling. For one thing, as Gindin and Panitch suggest, such crisis theories of American capitalism risk ignoring the continuing victories of the U.S. capitalist class ranging from their

successful extraction of extra work hours from American workers, to the not unrelated production of a docile body politic, to the global entrenchment of neoliberal norms. They note thus that “by focusing on the fragility of American capitalism and searching for data that provide evidence of the next and deeper crisis, the left tends to downplay the significance of the continuing capacity of American capital and the American state to restructure the world ‘in its own image.’”²¹¹ One result, they argue, is that the Left has frequently failed “to come to terms with the reconstitution of American Empire that followed the crisis of the early seventies.”²¹² This is the point I have repeated here by arguing that we need to examine how the globalization dynamics that supposedly eclipsed American hegemony in the 1970s instead generated a biopolitically productive regime that has actually worked to legitimize and consolidate ongoing and generally informal forms of American imperialism right up to the present. The fact that this work of legitimization now appears threatened by all the extra geopolitical affect it has been obliged to carry is hardly cause for great celebration.

It would be comforting to end like Hardt and Negri do with an affirmative appeal to the spirit of the multitude to resistance, but instead of genuflecting before Saint Francis of Assisi the protocommunist, I am arguing against god-tricks of all kinds, including faith in some ineffable global resistance. There were of course many concrete examples of resistance to this latest war. Some like that of Gerhard Schröder, the German leader, were quickly and predictably revoked afterwards.²¹³ But the more globally networked antiwar movement was more persistent, and partly so because of its articulation—as in Roy’s arguments—of a simultaneous critique of neoliberalism too.²¹⁴ This is not to invoke a global community of the multitude at all. If anything, the war has taught us that the worn-out fictions of global community, global village, and global level playing field have been used in the interests of American dominance once too often. But understood as overburdening geo-economics with a geopolitical project that cannot last, the war has revealed the critical importance of examining and critiquing how American imperialism works in conjunction with neoliberal globalization. Such a critique, I have argued, can only really begin when imperialism and globalization are no longer posed as binary opposites, and no longer seen as the exact same thing. To avoid these parallel pitfalls of compartmentalization

and homogenization, studying the complicity of geopolitics and geopolitics seems a useful first step.

After all the pages of this chapter and after all the argument of this book as a whole it may seem strange to end with talk about making first steps. However, if there is one clear conclusion of *In the Space of Theory* it is that the geographies of displacement and disjunction disclosed by deconstructive graphings of the geo in geography can never be fully finalized. This is not to deny the political, economic, and cultural geographic forces that remake social life in powerful, sometimes lethally, finalizing ways. American military force contradicts such inane arguments on a daily and panglobal basis. It is rather to make the critical intellectual point that our work of charting such forces is never done, and that we must persistently examine our own complicities with dominant discourse in the process of attempting to produce such charts. One strategy for such persistent critique, the one that I have offered in the preceding chapters, has been to focus on the ways in which critical postfoundational work, however deterritorializing it may be vis-à-vis certain cherished political categories, can often end up reterritorializing the dominant spatial rubrics of the nation-state along the way. Against this I have suggested that the heterogeneous geographies disclosed by the displacements and disjunctions of North American nation-states demand another, more geographically critical kind of approach. In attempting to chart this approach my own mappings have no doubt foreclosed diverse political struggles. My own concluding hope therefore is that others can turn the force of persistent critique on my own arguments and disclose other critical geographies that I have left obscured. From Justice McEachern's B.C. courtroom to Cascadia's boardrooms to NAFTA's negotiations to the divergent citizenship reforms relating to welfare in the United States and the constitution in Canada, I have introduced spaces of such diversity that the elisions have also been many. Other geographical struggles continue aplenty: or at least they should, so long as geopolitical and geo-economic complicities charted in this chapter do not smooth them out. Persistent critique, in this sense, is not just about the heterogeneity of human geography, but about the continuing viability of life itself.



Notes

INTRODUCTION

1. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Translator's Preface," in Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. G. C. Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), lxxxii.

2. Other scholars have read Derrida's deconstructions of the center and margin as operating "geographically as well as conceptually, articulating the power relationships between the metropolitan and colonial cultures at their geographical peripheries." Robert Young, *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 22. Noticing these interarticulations, however, does not adequately answer Spivak's concern that, "[P]aradoxically, and almost by reverse ethnocentrism, Derrida insists that logocentrism is a property of the West." "My final question . . . is plaintive and predictable: what about us? . . . The multiple, oppressive, and more than millennial polytheistic tradition of India has to be written out of the Indo-European picture in order that the difference [in this case between the white masculine West and the rest] may stand." These quotations are taken from two different places: Spivak, "Translator's Preface," lxxii, and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (New York: Routledge, 1988), 140.

3. See Jacques Derrida, "White Mythologies," in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982). Derrida makes his own argument by blurring the meaning of the words of Polyphilos in Anatole France's *Garden of Epicurus*. He is thus able to move from the cynic's claim that the output of philosophy is only a bloodless form