

A Moveable Fascism: Fear and Loathing in the Empire of Sand

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This article discusses the political and cultural fallout following the illegal war and occupation of Iraq by the U.S. military and its allies, focusing on the lies, deceptions, and hypocrisy of the Bush Jr. regime and the media.

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At this particular historical moment, democracy seems acutely perishable. Its contradictions have become as difficult to ignore as sand rubbed in the eyes. Although dressed up as a promise, democracy has functioned more as a threat. Spurred on by feelings of “righteous victimhood” and by a “wounded and vengeful nationalism” (Lieven, 2003) that has arisen in the wake of the attacks of September 11, and pushing its war on terrorism to the far reaches of the globe (with what Terry Eagleton calls a “world-hating hubris” [2003, p.227]), the United States is shamelessly defining its global empire as an extension of its democratic project. The U.S. National Security Strategy of 2002 (see <http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss.pdf>) states quite clearly that the United States will not hesitate to act alone and will “preemptively” attack against “terrorists” that threaten its national interests at home or abroad. And one of its national interests is to bring free-market democracy to the rest of the world. What used to be called gunboat diplomacy is being rewritten as a diplomatic gunning down of any and all opposition to the unfettered movement of finance capital in and out of new markets. Sidestepping the inconvenient possibility that Iraq had no connection to al Qaeda, the Pentagon hawks swept through the streets of Baghdad like whirling dervishes on steroids and arrived at the near culmination of their civilizing mission by marching into the very den of the barbarians, enacting a negation as one-sided as the positivity they oppose.

Despite the fact that tens of millions of people, many of whom were presumably within a hair’s breadth of Saddam’s weapons of mass destruction, marched in the streets of cities on every continent to denounce the U.S. decision to launch an unprovoked invasion of Iraq, the United States pressed ahead with its plan to seize its oil fields, privatize its industries, demonstrate to would-be “evildoers” what was in store for them, and secure a strategic geopolitical stran-

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glehold on the Middle East. Those nations that supported its imperial design on behalf of fighting terrorism are now being rewarded with some of the spoils of victory (i.e., subcontracts to rebuild the infrastructure of Afghanistan or Iraq), or at least a promise not to be invaded. Nearly \$5 billion in military aid and training will be distributed to countries that have contributed to the so-called global war on terrorism or to the war in Iraq (a war whose definition remains unknown) in the coming months. Human Rights Watch International warns that these same nations have a recent history of committing human rights violations. The Philippines is primed to receive \$19 million worth of sniper rifles, mortars, grenade launchers, and helicopters. A broadened U.S. role in Colombia has extended from counternarcotics to a unified campaign against insurgents. In the case of Colombia, this signals the connivance of U.S. special operations protecting oil pipelines working side by side with right-wing paramilitaries. Indonesia, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, the Republic of Georgia, and Kyrgyzstan will soon profit from the global market for terror—they too will receive millions in military aid from the United States.

But perhaps the most alarming case is that of India and Pakistan. Two nations that have taunted each other with the threat of nuclear warfare have had their sanctions lifted and are being provided with millions of dollars worth of artillery for their support of the United States. Rather than trying to quell the possibility of nuclear warfare over Kashmir, the United States has equipped India with \$78 million worth of artillery, while Pakistan, a much more visible force post 9/11, stands to gain fighter jets and armored personnel carriers with a price tag of over \$1 billion.

The hawks around Bush genuflect at the intellectual altar of the late philosopher-king and University of Chicago classicist, Leo Strauss, who maintained that only an elite few in the government warrant the sacred custodianship of the truth and are thereby charged with using “noble lies” to keep the truth from the unwashed masses by preoccupying everyday citizens not only with real or perceived external threats to the nation but also with the task of developing nationalist or militantly religious sentiments fanatical enough to ensure their willingness to die for the nation. The hawks agree that fighting “preventative wars” requires a “global cavalry” that can establish U.S. military hegemony throughout the world. Chalmers Johnson (2004) writes, “According to the American Enterprise Institute, the idea is to create ‘a global cavalry’ that can ride in from ‘frontier stockades’ and shoot up the ‘bad guys’ as soon as we get some intelligence on them” (p. M6). Johnson also notes that most of these bases “will be what the military, in a switch of metaphors, calls ‘lily pads,’ to and from which our troops could jump, like well-armed frogs, depending on where they were needed” (p. M6). The Pentagon has bases on every continent except Antarctica and occupies 702 overseas bases in approximately 130 countries (although the Defense Department does not count huge military installations such as Camp Bondsteel in Kosovo or sizeable outposts in Afghanistan, Iraq, Israel, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Qatar, and Uzbekistan because it classifies these as only temporary

bases). And although the U.S. military employs 71 Learjets and other luxury planes to fly generals and admirals to the armed forces' ski and vacation centers at Garmisch in the Bavarian Alps or to the 234 golf courses worldwide operated by the Pentagon, life is much harder for the grunts now occupying Iraq, although they are a bit happier now that the first Burger King has just gone up inside the military base at Baghdad's international airport (p. M6). Iraqis have more to learn from GIs than how to have themselves and their family members blown apart at military roadblocks. They can learn from enterprising officers such as Captain Nick Guran about how to turn Hatra, Iraq into a theme park. Luxuriating in the role of financial speculator in between missions to hunt down Iraqi insurgents, Guran plans to turn the site where movie maker William Friedkin in 1972 shot the opening sequence to *The Exorcist* into a desert tourist attraction called "The Exorcist Experience." Already Guran has created a car park and revamped a nearby hotel.

With promiscuous persistence, the United States distributes itself around the world in gleeful anticipation of being welcomed with open arms as long-awaited liberators. The problem is that those welcoming arms have been, more often than not of late, severed at the joint by U.S. imperialism's signature cluster bombs, shells of depleted uranium, and cruise missiles. When democracy does announce itself, it arrives under the sign of its own negation. Claiming to bring freedom and liberation to the Iraqi people, the U.S. invasion has, according to some estimates, been responsible for the death of approximately 10,000 innocent civilians. The occupying force has prohibited the Iraqi people from forming their own government, preferring to select its leaders for them from a group of perfumed and pampered exiles, already thoroughly Westernized and plumping for the creation of an Iraqi neoliberal state. U.S. officials have begun to stage-manage the country for democracy's free-market drama: privatization of its oil, agriculture, and just about everything that will put U.S. dollars in investors' pockets. Like hyenas descending on a carcass, the trade lawyers, consultants, bankers, and CEOs from transnational corporations are licking their chops in anticipation of the United States fulfilling its mission of opening up Iraq to foreign (mainly U.S. and British) investment and bringing Washington's neoliberal imperative to the uncivilized territories of the Middle East.

When the Ministry of Oil claimed the dubious status of the only ministry the U.S. troops deemed worthy of protection after the fall of Baghdad, the Iraqi people should have known at that very moment that America's self-designation as a bastion of freedom was vacuous. By now they should realize that the United States is also an oil-producing nation, because so much snake oil drips persistently from the lips of its politicians and policy makers. It is now as clear as the business suit on Paul Bremer's back that Iraq is up for sale to the highest foreign bidder, with the U.S. serving as the Divine Broker.

The accelerating bellicosity of the liberating army can be put in its proper perspective when you recognize that its overall goal is to open up Iraq to the free market. But the end results will not be what many Iraqis believe them to be.

Once the transition to the neoliberal marketplace has been accomplished, the Iraqi business elite will be able to purchase for themselves the best democracy money can buy, and the bogus freedom that goes with it (i.e., the freedom to be rich or poor, to own a palace or to lack shelter, to shop at an upscale supermarket or to starve to death in the streets).

In light of present historical circumstances, Washington's vision of an eventual post-Saddam Iraq—Bugsy Siegel meets *Baywatch*—was, to say the least, ill conceived. It is more likely that the occupation of Iraq will turn into a blood-soaked civil war, not the transformation of Baghdad into the capitalist mecca of the Middle East, complete with grinning sultans and harem girls in spandex American-flag jumpsuits. Now that the country lies in tatters, its infrastructure in ruins, its water and electricity supplies failing to meet even the most basic needs of the people, its museums and hospitals looted and destroyed beyond redemption, and Iraqi protesters shot like animals, is it any wonder the U.S. occupation has produced such an incandescent anger among the Iraqi populace? Any occupying power that decides in advance who will rule their conquered territories cannot lay claim to being liberators. U.S. forces are currently engaged in Vietnam-style operations eerily similar to the “search-and-destroy” tactics of 40 years ago with predictable responses from an increasingly tense civilian population whose anger against the U.S. troops is growing steadily to a fever pitch.

The United States is following a carrot-and-stick approach to occupational warfare. The military raids civilian homes and “enemy outposts” at night, before the scorching 120-degree heat begins to set in. Targeted missions are patterned after the occupation of Palestine and are designed to intimidate and frighten an already humiliated and degraded population into acquiescence. However, this is sure to increase resentment and armed reprisals. An Iraqi truck driver captured this resentment following the armed search of his truckload of potatoes. Stoically facing the lens of an American photographer, he asked, “Do they think we are monkeys?”

Some may argue that the Iraqi postwar state is better off than before and that nation building takes time, perhaps decades. But from where will democracy arise? Will it arise from the leadership of Paul Bremer, the appointed Iraqi governor who is better known among the ruling elite as a terror expert entrepreneur? Following 9/11 and the subsequent attacks on Afghanistan and Iraq, Bremer helped to form Crisis Consulting Practice, a business designed to assist U.S. multinationals in taking advantage of nations newly destroyed on behalf of democracy. Meanwhile, millions of Iraqis remain jobless, without electricity, and wondering—when will the occupation end?

The ongoing war in Iraq has signaled to the world that the United States is willing to use any means necessary in its fanatical plight for world dominance. A recent survey by the Pew Research Center unveils the stark reality that the majority of civilians in the predominantly Muslim nations of Indonesia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Turkey, Kuwait, Lebanon, and Jordan fear a military strike from

the United States. About the only place where people of color do not appear threatened by patterns of merciless war and imperialism is on the moon or other uninhabited celestial bodies, which cautions us about the prospect of interplanetary travel (see *Views of a Changing World* 2003).

Citizens of the world have placed their hope in the hands of international organizations such as the United Nations, designated to halt unilateral massacres. However, the U.N. has proven to be more like a vaudeville stage for the political charades of Powell and Blair than a viable organ for peace. Although the Security Council staged a temporary revolt, it has now obediently fallen back into line. No longer content to play Edgar Bergen to the U.N.'s Charlie McCarthy or Mortimer Snerd, the United States recognizes that in a world with only one superpower, it's no longer in need of ventriloquism. If you are in control of the most powerful military force in world history, you can speak directly without a mediator, even if your words fall like blood-soaked sand from both sides of your mouth.

The U.S. administration is now transforming itself into the same junta it once supported in the person of Saddam (recall the 1980 photo of Rumsfeld and Saddam shaking hands) but later turned against when it was in their best interest to do so. The U.S. administration looks at the Iraqis like Custer's cavalry looked at the Indians: They couldn't possibly be ready for democracy yet. They inhabit a culture so incommensurable with our own that they are not yet able to grasp fully enough the fiscal advantages and moral superiority of global capitalism and free-market democracy. It's a democracy that will enable the United States to raid their raw materials and exploit their labor power (with all those bid-free contracts awarded to Republican-friendly U.S. corporations). It's a democracy that is designed not for the Iraqi people but so that the United States can ensure its own economy will reap enough oil profits to be able to keep any upstart country from challenging its sole military superpower status for another century and beyond (Bush's inner circle of neocon zealots don't belong to a think tank called the Project for the New American Century without taking the name seriously). Of course, the United States will make sure that a new class of Iraqi businessmen will become rich beyond their wildest dreams, maybe even as rich as Saddam used to be.

The key point to be made is recognizing that the United States is out to weaken and cheapen labor in order to compensate for a major loss of profits and dramatic increase in debts over the past several decades. As further evidence, one need only witness Bush invoking the Taft-Hartley Act against the West Coast dockworkers' union or his granting of federal aid to failing airlines on condition that management purges the airline unions. How many social services will need to be cut in order to finance Homeland Security? How much rebuilding can occur in Iraq in the face of U.S. budget deficits as a result of the current recession? How will tax cuts for corporations and the wealthy help to pay for the war and occupation? Is reducing domestic budget deficits by exclusive U.S. control of Iraqi oil production worth the price of further enraging

France, Germany, Russia, and China and making Trotsky's concept of inter-imperialist rivalry seem tame by comparison? Is it worth increasing the number of terrorist recruits who will dedicate themselves to eliminating the U.S. military presence in the Middle East? Here it is easy to recognize how capitalism has been turned into a quasi-natural force by the corporatized lawmaking of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank of which workers are the passive victims. The United States has successfully alienated much of both the developed and so-called Third World and has sent an unmistakable message to both Russia and China that Washington's newfound military brinkmanship and aggression are a profound threat to their strategic interests and geopolitical influence. As if the lessons of Afghanistan and Iraq were not enough, Washington is now clearly preparing the ground for a possible attack on Iran.

Here at home, the pusillanimity and fecklessness of the Democrats has been as difficult to stomach as Bush *hijo's* bumptious belligerence toward the nation's poor and his failure to recognize how he is in ironic violation of democracy's own fundamentals. Their integrity addled, the Democrats for the most part remain unwilling to name Bush the liar and deceiver that he is (although Howard Dean and John Kerry appear to have stepped up to the plate). What worries them is the spin that the media are likely to give their criticisms of Bush; they fear that attacking a wartime president will condemn them irrevocably in the public eye as unpatriotic.

The relatively compliant U.S. citizenry should have known they were orbiting disaster when as early as July 2001, Attorney General John Ashcroft was warned not to fly commercial airlines due to a CIA threat assessment but did not share with the public what that assessment was, when Bush delayed to release the Reagan presidential papers, violating a post-Watergate law and protecting those in his administration who were involved in the Iran-contra crimes when they worked for Reagan and Bush *padre*, when the House of Representatives passed the U.S. Patriot Act without reading it or holding a hearing or public debate about it, when Bush and Cheney urged Tom Daschle not to make an inquiry related to 9/11, when thousands of librarians started destroying records so federal agents would have nothing to seize under the Patriot Act, when convicted felon Vice Admiral John Poindexter began to run a clandestine new government agency known as the Information Awareness Office, when the government created a no-fly list in order to prevent certain political dissidents (like some members of the Green Party) from flying, when CIA director Tenet told the country there was no 9/11 intelligence failure, when the U.S. military unveiled the Total Information Awareness System, when FBI director Mueller denied that information related to any aspect of the September 11 plot crossed his desk before that fateful day when the twin towers collapsed, when the Pentagon started to consider the creation of execution chambers for Camp Delta in Guantanamo Bay, when Bush *hijo* opposed establishing a special independent commission to probe how the government dealt with terror warnings before 9/11 (he finally consented to a "token" commission after public pressure), when

Ashcroft permitted government agents to monitor domestic religious and political groups without advanced approval from superiors, when Bush unveiled Operation Tips, a program encouraging Americans to spy on each other, and when the U.S. death toll kept mounting in Iraq long after Bush *hijo* appeared (in a flight suit) on the deck of an aircraft carrier, revealing his trademark smirk and a set of ungainly gonads, bragging: Mission accomplished! But these incidents don't seem to phase the American public, partly because they are played down in the news shows and partly because many citizens have become adept at hearing only what they want to hear. And that's really not such a difficult task when the official media are there to help you along.

Rarely has any country been in such total control by the media. A recent opinion poll conducted by the Program on International Policy Attitudes at the University of Maryland found that one third of the American public believed that American military forces had found weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. Approximately 22% said that Iraq had actually used chemical or biological weapons in the war. Other polls have reported that some 50% of those questioned believed Iraqi citizens participated in the September 11 attacks, whereas 40% believed that Saddam Hussein directly assisted the hijack bombers (see Center on Policy Attitudes, 2003). This reflects the staggering power of the U.S. corporate media as a whole—and not just FOX TV—to dramatically distort the facts in favor of the Bush administration and the business elite.

Viewed as liberators of Iraq and defenders of truth and justice, those GIs lucky enough to finish their first tour of duty arrive home in the guise of valiant warriors who have done their patriotic duty by protecting the homeland. Those troops who are not being picked off weekly by Iraqi snipers and improvised roadside bombs and have the good fortune of making it back to U.S. soil with all their limbs have been taking advantage of a visit to a legal Nevada brothel—The Moonlite Bunny Ranch—that offers free sex (featuring the likes of Air Force Amy and others) to troops returning from Iraq. The proprietor of the brothel also plans to extend 50% discounts to the military for the next few weeks. As of this writing, 13 men and 3 women in uniform have claimed their free gift (CNN, 2003).

Personally, we believe that the blinkered mentality of the Bush junta is so self-discrediting that it does not need a commentary such as ours to make a case against it. Yet we offer our perspective nevertheless, if only because of the shameful lack of venues available these days for a critical analysis of the Bush administration. For all his self-inflating rhetoric about cleaning up the Middle East of its freedom-hating terrorists, his stagey relish for challenging evildoers, and his dyspeptic remarks about his antiwar critics being nothing more than punk-ass revisionists, we believe there is a strong case for impeaching our commander-in-chief for using misleading evidence to bring the country into war. The Bush administration's lies about Iraq's so-called imminent danger to the safety of the United States and world-at-large constitutes a shameful basis upon which to wage an invasion and to risk the lives of American soldiers,

knowing full well there would be American casualties. The deployment of America's vast military machine was undertaken for reasons Bush and his entire foreign policy apparatus knew to be based on false and falsified information. No government in Europe or the Middle East regarded Iraq as a serious threat to their safety. The U.N. weapons inspectors had for months been unable to locate any weapons of mass destruction, despite meticulous searching.

While the White House hawks presented the attack on Iraq as an extension of the "war on terrorism," it was revealed that the Bush administration had drawn up plans to use military force to overthrow the regime of Saddam Hussein well in advance of the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. September 11 was seized on as a pretext to shape public opinion in favor of the war, and now the White House lies about the extent of Saddam's weapons of mass destruction have come to light. Consider the June 15 edition of NBC's *Meet the Press*. During the show, former general Wesley Clark told anchor Tim Russert that Bush administration officials had engaged in a campaign to implicate Saddam Hussein in the September 11 attacks on the very day of the attacks. Clark said that he had been contacted by Bush administration officials on September 11 and urged to link the regime of Saddam Hussein to the terror attacks. Clark declined to do so because of a lack of evidence (not surprisingly, there has been very little media coverage of Clark's remarks). Even Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz later admitted that the charge that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction was selected for "bureaucratic reasons"; that is, it was the one allegation that the State Department, the Pentagon, and the CIA all agreed could provide a workable cover for a U.S. invasion. The editors of the World Socialist Web site (Editorial Board, 2003) captured the essence of this situation with the following remark: "Not since Hitler and the Nazis dressed up storm troopers as Polish soldiers and staged 'attacks' on German positions in 1939 has there been such a flagrant and cynical effort to manufacture a casus belli."

A frequently invoked quotation during discussions of contemporary global politics is the one made famous by Prussian military officer Karl Marie von Clausewitz (1780-1831): "War is the continuation of politics by other means" (cited in Mészáros, 2003, p. 18). However, István Mészáros (2003) notes that this definition no longer is tenable in our time. This is because such a definition "assumed the *rationality* of the actions which connect the two domains of politics and war as the continuation of one another" (p. 18). For this definition to hold, war had to be winnable—winnability in war was its absolute condition, for even a defeat in war would not destroy the very rationality of war between competing nation-states. This absolute condition for Von Clausewitz's definition no longer exists, maintains Mészáros. This is especially true if we consider that today the objective of a winnable or feasible war is tied to the objective requirements of imperialism, which is "*world domination* by capital's most powerful state, in tune with its own political design of ruthless authoritarian 'globalization' (dressed up as 'free exchange in a U.S. ruled global market)'"

(p. 18). This situation is clearly unwinnable and could not be considered a rational objective by any stretch of the imagination. War as the mechanism of global government is untenable because the “weapons already available for waging the war or wars of the twenty first century are capable of exterminating not only the adversary but the whole of humanity, for the first time ever in history” (p. 19). Mészáros warns that Bush’s national security strategy “makes Hitler’s irrationality look like the model of rationality” (p. 19). For Mészáros, humanity entered a qualitatively new phase of imperialism after the structural crisis of the 1960s and early 1970s, which he calls “*the new historic phase of global hegemonic imperialism*” (p. 20) with the United States as the preponderantly dominant force. Clearly, the logic of capitalist global integration is inextricably linked to this new phase of U.S. military aggression.

Currently, the majority of U.S. citizens are enjoying the empire-chic status of the victor and comforting themselves with the notion that although no weapons of mass destruction were found, mass graves of Saddam’s enemies were. This ignores the whole question of organized deception on the part of the Bush administration and his cabal of hawks and conforms to the fascist vocabulary of the newly minted Bush doctrine of preventive war. Those justifying the war on the basis of Saddam’s mass graveyards are all too willing to discount the reason put forward by Bush for going to war and supports the notion that the ends justify the means. Are those people who support the war for humanitarian reasons aware that many of Saddam’s victims are the result of his reprisals after 1991, when Bush *padre* exhorted the Iraqis to rise up against Saddam only to abandon them later on to the ensuing slaughter?

It may seem quixotic for us to remark that we believe another world outside of capitalism’s military industrial precincts is possible. We believe that calling for a socialist future is more than a hollow paean to the revolution by cross-grained polemicists but a creditable—and necessary—stance given the crisis of overaccumulation and overcapacity that drives capital’s endless wars and environmental destruction. Marxists have unpacked the whole discreditable logic upon which capitalism rests, and we would do well to take stock of those arguments today in our struggle to lay the groundwork for a future of peace and prosperity.

When Bush Comes to Shove, Shove Back

For many of us who were part of the burgeoning U.S. antiwar movement, protesting at every turn the Bush administration prior to its invasion of Iraq, hope seemed to be within grasp as momentum against the Bush junta was building worldwide. But shortly after the ground invasion began, the antiwar movement began to stagger, as many of the protestors were not prepared to continue their activism once U.S. troops were in the war theater itself. What seemed like a light at the end of the tunnel for the U.S. left was really Bush *hijo* igniting a flame-thrower, incinerating the dream of a new revolutionary dawn.

With the mighty chains of his Christian faith, Bush has hoisted his conscience onto the biblical back of God, to whose wrath he has faithfully committed himself and his armies of invasion. Bush wraps his depleted uranium shells in the “divine right of kings” and the doctrine of the U.S. Manifest Destiny before hurling them into the theater of war with the deftness of a Super Bowl quarterback. As U.S. weapons of mass destruction effortlessly saw through tendon and bone, blast apart organs, and incinerate flesh with a vengeful fury, Bush sleeps as soundly as the 10,000 innocent Iraqi civilians that he has recently killed, but remains oblivious to the wails and shrieks of the countless numbers that he has left orphaned and crippled. After his routine 3-mile jog and bedtime prayers, the former governor of Texas, who set the record for most executions by any governor in American history, has learned to unburden his heart by invoking the Lord for help in directing the nation’s foreign policy. His mind unmercifully devoid of functioning synapses and unencumbered by the power of analysis, Bush unhesitatingly made his decision to invade and occupy Iraq “because he believes, he truly believes, that God squats in his brainpan and tells him what to do” (Floyd, 2003, p. 4). The Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* was given transcripts of a negotiating session between Palestinian prime minister Mahmoud Abbas and faction leaders from Hamas and other militant groups. In these transcripts, Abbas described his recent summit with Ariel Sharon and Bush *hijo*. During the summit, Bush allegedly told Abbas,

God told me to strike at al Qaida and I struck them, and then He instructed me to strike at Saddam, which I did, and now I am determined to solve the problem in the Middle East. If you help me I will act, and if not, the elections will come and I will have to focus on them. (Regular, 2003, p. 1)

Perhaps Bush *hijo*’s bedtime reading includes one of the novels in the best-selling *Left Behind* series (with sales so far of over 40 million) by Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins that center around a heroic group of evangelical Christians at the time of Tribulation, who miss out on the Rapture (when God takes the faithful up to heaven) and are left on earth to battle evil and face off with the Antichrist in the final battle of Armageddon that will usher in the second coming of Jesus (see McAlister, 2003 and Dreyfuss, 2004). Our group of fearless, wholesome Christian warriors (that includes an Israeli rabbi whose timely recognition that Jesus was the Jewish Messiah will save his otherwise eternally damned soul) organize themselves into the “Tribulation Force” to convert Jews and save all souls lost to Jesus. Based on what has been called by critics “a theology of despair” or “beam me up” theology (McAlister, 2003), the *Left Behind* novels (so far 11 have been published) appeal to Christian fundamentalists and Christian Zionists (House majority leader Tom Delay has a close working relationship with LaHaye) who are obsessed by biblical prophesy. It should come as no surprise to those who have witnessed the White House administration’s contempt for the United Nations that the Antichrist of *Left Behind* is a former sec-

retary general of the U.N. who tries to force his lover into having an abortion. The Antichrist's henchmen describe the Tribulation Force members as a "right-wing, fanatic, fundamentalist faction" (McAlister, 2003, p. 35), echoing the language of many antiwar protestors worldwide who opposed the Bush gang's preventive war on Iraq. Tellingly, the capital city built by the Antichrist from which to rule his totalitarian one-world government is located in New Babylon, Iraq. His faith and politics forged in the fetid ideological bowels of late 1950s San Diego among former McCarthyites, neo-Nazis, and John Birchers, LaHaye went on in 1979 to establish (with Jerry Falwell) the Moral Majority and also the powerful Council for National Policy in 1981. The CNP brought together right-wing billionaires and conservative Christian politicians such as Ed Meese and John Ashcroft, representatives of the Heritage Foundation, and activists such as Grover Norquist and Oliver North. Secret CNP donors helped to fund Oliver North's aid to the contra rebel terrorists and also helped to finance the impeachment drive against President Clinton (Dreyfuss, 2004). Placing his imprimatur on the Bush-Cheney ticket in 2000, LaHaye helped get them into the White House. A year earlier LaHaye had proclaimed that Saddam was "a servant of Satan, possessed by a demon, and that he could be 'the forerunner of the Antichrist'" (Dreyfuss, 2004, p.46). A recent *Time/CNN* poll revealed that 59% of Americans believe that the events in Revelation are going to come true (McAlister, 2003), which has led Melani McAlister (2003) to write that the evangelical population is "fast becoming a—perhaps the—dominant force in American life" (p. 36). Clearly, the fanatical adherence of this group to biblical prophecy is having a profound effect on U.S. foreign policy as it did during the Reagan administration (Reagan was a firm believer in the impending Armageddon).

When, on the freshly mopped deck of the carrier, *USS Abraham Lincoln*, the U.S. warrior president emerged in a snug-fitting flight suit from an S-3B Viking aircraft, tautened groin-accentuating straps strung salaciously between his legs, and glistening helmet clasped snugly against a proud chest (a brazenly hypocritical move considering his military records reveal that he stopped flying during his final 18 months of National Guard duty in 1972 and 1973 and was not observed by his commanders at his Texas unit for a year), his trademark swagger and petulant grin were greeted by patriotic cheers from throngs of wild-eyed officers and sailors. Appearing topside before a bold banner that announced "Mission Accomplished" our tumescent boy emperor declared the "battle of Iraq" a "victory" in the ongoing "war on terror". This event was carefully choreographed by Bush's team of seasoned image-makers that included a former ABC producer, a former FOX News producer, and a former NBC cameraman paid for out of an annual budget of 3.7 million that Bush allots for his media coordinators. We do not believe that it's coincidental that a comparison clearly can be drawn between this example of right-wing showmanship and Leni Riefenstahl's infamous propaganda film about the 1934 Nazi *Parteitag* in Nuremberg, *Triumph des Willens* (Triumph of the Will) that displayed Adolf

Hitler as the world savior. In the German version, Hitler emerges from a Junker 52 aircraft that had been filmed landing at Nuremberg airport to the lofty strains of a Wagner composition. Thousands of Nazi onlookers chant, *Sieg hiel!* as the musical score builds to a thunderous crescendo. And while the scene was carefully crafted to suggest that Hitler was a modern manifestation of the ancient Aryan deity Odin, the event on the *USS Abraham Lincoln* was pitching George Bush as a major player in the decidedly Christian drama known as the Second Coming. Bush's speech on the carrier paraphrased Chapter 61 of Isaiah, the very book that Jesus used when proclaiming that Isaiah's prophecies of the Messiah had come true, suggesting perhaps that Bush believes the Second Coming has begun (Pitt 2003) and that his war on terror is playing an important role in this Biblical prophecy. Leftist commentators have noted that the Pentagon's "Shock and Awe" bombing strategy was copied from the Nazi strategy of *Blitzkrieg* (lightning war) and the Luftwaffe's doctrine of *Schrecklichkeit* aimed at terrorizing a population into surrender, and that the Bush Doctrine of preventive war mirrors the rationale behind Hitler's march into Poland (Hitler had claimed Poland was an immediate threat to the safety of the Reich). And while Bush *padre's* vow to establish a New World Order and Hitler's vow to create a *Neue Ordnung* have to be seen in their historical and contextual specificity, the comparison of the Bush dynasty to the Third Reich does extend beyond fascist aesthetics, media spectacle, and the police state tactics of the Office of Homeland Security. It can be seen in the machinations of capital and the role of the military-industrial complex in imperialist acts of aggression disguised as "freedom."

Lacking the enameled self-importance that often accompanies an aristocratic intellect, Bush *hijo* betrays the spittoon arrogance of the tough-talking, God-fearing Texas oil baron, a ghostly veneer of saloon sawdust coating his forked tongue. His cowboy hauteur affords him a hayseed endearment among paleocons, radiocons, evangelical Christians, and loyal viewers of FOX TV news but positively repulses sober thinkers averse to displays of unvarnished contempt for the world community and the enlightened masses who seek union membership and a living wage. The Pentagon hawks have Bush by his Ponderosa belt buckle and are in no danger of losing their central role in leading the bloody march toward empire. In the meantime, Bush can dream that should he be left behind after the Rapture (maybe for slacking off during his Air Force days with the Texas National Guard), he will get an opportunity to play a prominent role in the Tribulation Force team and be afforded a second chance at salvation. Bush will continue to represent those loyal minions who were outraged by Janet Jackson's exposed breast at the Super Bowl, but sat down with their families to watch with patriotic pride the Shock and Awe bombing of Baghdad spectacle on CNN.

The longer the Second Coming takes, the longer the U.S. will have an opportunity to build new military bases throughout the world, to work behind the scenes to support a coup against President Hugo Chavez of Venezuela, to

stampede its neoliberal policies throughout Latin America, and to provide funds to so-called dissidents in Cuba in an attempt to undermine the Cuban government. In response to a recent criticism by Colin Powell that Cuba sponsors child prostitution as part of its tourism industry, Cuban author and journalist Rosa Miriam Elizalde captured the current spirit of U.S. diplomacy when she called the secretary of state “ese comprador de almas que va como Mefistófeles con una mancha de sangre en la solapa del traje, y que quiere hacernos creer a la fuerza que es apenas un clavelito iraquí” (“a merchant of souls who goes about like Mephistopheles, bearing a blood stain on his attire, but wanting us to believe that it is merely a little Iraqi carnation,” (see Martin, 2003).

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