Beyond Security, Ethics and Violence
War against the other

WHO IS FREE TO CHOOSE?
WHO IS BEYOND THE LAW?
WHO IS HEALED?
WHO IS HOUSED?
WHO SPEAKS?
WHO IS SILENCED?
WHO SALUTES LONGEST?
WHO PRAYS LOUDEST?
WHO DIES FIRST?
WHO LAUGHS LAST?

Anthony Burke
In a world plagued by war and terror, *Beyond Security, Ethics and Violence* sounds a warning: not only are global patterns of insecurity, violence and conflict getting ever more destructive and out of hand, but the ways we understand and respond to them will only prolong the crisis. When security is grounded in exclusion and alienation, ethics licenses killing and war, and freedom is a mask for imperial violence, how should we act?

Anthony Burke offers a ground-breaking analysis of the historical roots of sovereignty and security, his critique of just war theory, and important new essays on strategy, the concept of freedom and US exceptionalism. He pursues searching critical engagements with thinkers such as Giorgio Agamben, Hardt and Negri, Emmanuel Levinas, Carl von Clausewitz, Jean Bethke Elshtain, Michael Walzer, Michel Foucault and William Connolly. Combining a diversity of critical thought with analyses of the war on terror, Iraq, the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, the Vietnam war, the Indonesian crisis, globalisation and the new drive for empire, Burke refuses easy answers, or to abandon hope.

This innovative study will be of key interest to students and researchers of politics and international relations, security studies, social and cultural theory and philosophy.

**Anthony Burke** is Senior Lecturer in the School of Politics and International Relations at the University of New South Wales, Sydney.
Praise for *Beyond Security, Ethics and Violence*

It’s time someone in international relations penetrated the many rationales for security that enable us to get away with murder. To Burke, security is a self-justifying system of politics that operates mainly to keep itself going. How leading philosophers, scholars and governments bolster that system becomes clear through Burke’s careful, fearless, innovative, tender and important analysis.

*Professor Christine Sylvester, University of Lancaster, UK*

In a lucid and compelling book Anthony Burke dissects the politics of security in several theories of state territory. He also addresses closely a series of recent state practices of security. In doing so, he opens the door to a post-security politics, a politics that goes beyond the construction of permanent, unspecified enemies.

*Professor William E. Connolly, Johns Hopkins University, USA*

It is rare to find a work of political philosophy that so skilfully combines a detailed knowledge of the contemporary scenes of national and international violence with close attention to the ontological and ethical principles by which we might regard and evaluate them. This properly scathing treatment of the modern paradigm of ‘security’ opens the way to an urgently demanded interrogation of the terms on which the lauded freedom of the West might be pursued beyond its current blatant disregard for the life of the Other.

*Dr Fiona Jenkins, Australian National University, Australia*

The volume engages many of the major figures in political and ethical thinking in a dialogue that is both informative and self-reflective. Burke refuses to duck the big questions or take sides in some of the more polarised debates about international ethics. As such these meditations are provocative critical essays that should raise numerous talking points for scholarly discussion. Pitched as such to critical scholars looking for a fresh innovative theoretically informed but non-dogmatic voice in the seminar room, this book should do very well.

*Professor Simon Dalby, Carleton University, Canada*

This is a very substantial book with an excellent and timely analysis of many significant security issues currently at play in the international community.

*Professor Thomas Keating, University of Alberta, Canada*

*Beyond Security, Ethics and Violence* is one of those rare books that successfully combine sophisticated philosophical reflections with meticulous analyses of concrete political situations. In a series of compelling studies that range from the Middle East to East Timor, and from Vietnam to the war on terror, Burke convincingly demonstrates that the strategic use of violence is far less controllable – and far less ethical – than commonly assumed. *Beyond Security* is a must-read for anyone interested in critical moral reasoning at a time when war has become widely accepted as a normal and rational way of pursuing political objectives.

*Associate Professor Roland Bleiker, University of Queensland, Australia*
Beyond Security, Ethics and Violence
War against the Other

Anthony Burke
In memory of Joachim and Paul

And dedicated to those who loved them:
Nicola, Bernard and Robyn
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The coexistence in our political structures of large destructive mechanisms and institutions oriented towards the care of individual life is something puzzling and needs some investigation. It is one of the central antinomies of our political reason . . . Life insurance is connected with a death command.

Michel Foucault

Introduction
Security, freedom and death

In my memory it is dark. I am with a group of other boys, in a field behind the boarding school I attended as a child. It is cold. I am lying on the grass, having been kicked and punched to the ground, and now they have sticks and rocks in their hands. As they throw them at me I start to panic, not knowing if they will stop, what could hold them back or restrain their sudden, inexplicable malice. My world shrinks to blackness and contorted, horror-film faces; I flinch from their blows and wonder if I will die. Then, just as suddenly, it stops. One of them saying: ‘no, that’s enough’, the vicious knot of boys turns away, their laughter leaving me bawling and alone. I am six years old.

There were plenty more occasions like that at school, but such experiences are trivial in comparison to those that lie at the heart of this book’s moral and political concerns: East Timorese being chased down the streets of Dili and Maliana by Indonesian troops and militia, to be murdered with machetes and gunfire; organised gangs raping and hunting Chinese in Jakarta, as the currency bottoms out and an aged president resists relinquishing a rule built on surveillance, propaganda and mass murder; Palestinians arguing with Israeli checkpoint police as a baby dies in its mother’s arms, or watching helplessly as their houses are demolished before their eyes; kids dancing at a disco on the beach at Tel Aviv, caught on freeze-frame just before their lives are shattered by a suicide bomber; asylum seekers held at gunpoint by the Australian SAS on a container ship, or going slowly mad while being held indefinitely in desert immigration prisons; Iraqis dying under US missile strikes and bombs, torn apart by the car bombs of the ‘resistance’, or tortured in police cells and vast prisons, all in the cause of freedom; office workers in New York, finding their computer screens suddenly replaced by flying glass, ripped metal, choking smoke and burning flesh.

These are glimpses of a world addicted to suffering – to a rational, functional suffering embedded in the very patterns of politics and order that regulate global life. My experience and theirs are barely comparable, but they are connected by a long, glowing filament of fear and dread. I learned much from those formative years: how it felt to be displaced, torn
from what is familiar and comforting and placed in a strange and ambiva-

lent environment, where one is watched and nurtured yet exposed to vulnerabil-
ty and horror; how the social, intellectual and ethical environ-

ment of the school, a conduit to the demands and values of society, coexisted with the terrorist violence of the gang; how power could be loving and nurturing, but also flawed and abusive. I learned about the selfish possibilities of parental authority, the seeming permanence of insecurity, and the nearness of cruelty. I learned, in my craving for love and protection and home, about my desire for security; I learned, in the gap between my experience and the comforting, paradoxical wisdom of Christ, about the ambivalence and fragility of ethics; and I learned, in the experience of discipline and the predations of the other boys, about the ever-present possibility of violence. In short, in the fissure between the promises of my world and my experiences of it I learned the necessity of critique.

Working between international relations, philosophy, and political and cultural theory, and with those whose daily suffering is most shocking and unbearable in mind, this book thus brings sustained critical attention to the promises and practices of security, ethics and violence as they manifest themselves in the statecraft, foreign policy, diplomacy, terrorism, war-making, geopolitics and strategy of the last few decades. This book does so to sound a warning: that not only are global patterns of insecurity, violence and conflict getting ever more destructive and out of hand, but that the dominant conceptual and policy frameworks we use to understand and respond to them are deeply inadequate and dangerous. Given this danger, the book insists upon a ‘critical’ approach: one that refuses to accept the representations of the world most available to us and apparently most credible, but instead questions the very categories we have used to understand and shape our modernity and its relation to power, violence and existence.

Hence none of these things – ethics, violence, security or war – are taken for granted, as if we know what they are and how they fit together. Rather this is a book that asks about the kind of violence that war is, that we think and allow it to be; that asks about the kind of ethics that relates to security and violence, that by turns condemns, demands or exonerates killing; that asks about the violence that we think enables, defends or threatens security; and that asks about the security that conjures violence from its soul, which pushes kindness or cruelty or murder through its veins like a life-giving fluid.

It asks if violence is really as rational, ethical and controllable as we believe; if a security that hinges upon violence is tenable or meaningful, and if it can be refigured; and it asks if ethics can offer us a path beyond violence or is in danger of becoming reduced to it. While a concern with ethics, as both a source of hope and danger, is a central theme of the book, it is not based on an approach that brings ‘ethics’, as a fully formed
and systematic body of principles, to something that lies outside it: ‘security’, ‘war’ or ‘international relations’. Rather it interrogates the very practical and conceptual structure of these processes, along with ethical reasoning itself, in order to understand the ethical outcomes of various approaches to security and violence even when they claim to be governed by the demands of ethics. Nor are ethics, security and violence the limit of this book’s concerns. It puts significant related ideas under scrutiny: sovereignty, freedom, identity and power.

These frameworks are interrogated at the level both of their theoretical conceptualisation and their practice: in their influence and implementation in specific policy contexts and conflicts in East and Central Asia, the Middle East and the ‘war on terror’, where their meaning and impact take on greater clarity. This approach is based on a conviction that the meaning of powerful political concepts cannot be abstract or easily universalised: they all have histories, often complex and conflictual; their forms and meanings change over time; and they are developed, refined and deployed in concrete struggles over power, wealth and societal form. While this should not preclude normative debate over how political or ethical concepts should be defined and used, and thus be beneficial or destructive to humanity, it embodies a caution that the meaning of concepts can never be stabilised or unproblematic in practice. Their normative potential must always be considered in relation to their utilisation in systems of political, social and economic power and their consequent worldly effects. Hence this book embodies a caution by Michel Foucault, who warned us about the ‘politics of truth . . . the battle about the status of truth and the economic and political role it plays’, and it is inspired by his call to ‘detach the power of truth from the forms of hegemony, social, economic and cultural, within which it operates at the present time’.1

It is clear that traditionally coercive and violent approaches to security and strategy are both still culturally dominant, and politically and ethically suspect. However, the reasons for pursuing a critical analysis relate not only to the most destructive or controversial approaches, such as the war in Iraq, but also to their available (and generally preferable) alternatives. There is a necessity to question not merely extremist versions such as the Bush doctrine, Indonesian militarism or Israeli expansionism, but also their mainstream critiques – whether they take the form of liberal policy approaches in international relations (IR), just war theory, US realism, optimistic accounts of globalisation, rhetorics of sensitivity to cultural difference, or centrist Israeli security discourses based on territorial compromise with the Palestinians. The surface appearance of lively (and often significant) debate masks a deeper agreement about major concepts, forms of political identity and the imperative to secure them. Debates about when and how it may be effective and legitimate to use military force in tandem with other policy options, for example, mask a more fundamental discursive consensus about the meaning of security, the

effectiveness of strategic power, the nature of progress, the value of freedom or the promises of national and cultural identity. As a result, political and intellectual debate about insecurity, violent conflict and global injustice can become hostage to a claustrophobic structure of political and ethical possibility that systematically wards off critique.

Security, the exception and the political

The nature of the problem that this book addresses can be demonstrated by considering a statement by made by US President George W. Bush during his 2004 *State of the Union* address. Early in the speech he stated that ‘our greatest responsibility is the active defense of the American people’ and later, after defending the decision to invade and occupy Iraq, stated that ‘America will never seek a permission slip to defend the security of our country’.2 This sentiment was repeated, with a slightly altered phrasing, by Richard Cheney on 1 September, in his speech accepting the Republican Party’s nomination for a second term as Vice-President of the United States: ‘George W. Bush will never seek a permission slip to defend the American people.’3

We know what came with this thinking: the wars against Afghanistan and then Iraq; a new ‘preventive’ strategic doctrine aimed at ‘rogue states’ and a ‘forward strategy of freedom’ in the Middle East; the rejection of the International Criminal Court and the Kyoto Protocol on Climate Change; the long-term detention of ‘enemy combatants’ at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and the ‘rendition’ of terrorist suspects to US allies with poor human rights records; the torture and abuses of Abu Ghaib. Certainly Bush and Cheney’s arguments are designed to overcome and disarm those who object to the administration’s ‘unilateral’ exercise of force in defiance of the legal and normative frameworks provided by the United Nations Charter, the laws of war and other instruments of international human rights law. They are asserting a privilege and priority of sovereignty familiar to many political realists. However, while such unilateralism is regarded as imprudent by many realists because, it may undermine US leadership, cause needless harm and destabilise global security relations, its possibility is inherent in the very paradigms of security, sovereignty and strategy many realists also affirm.4 Hence the need to interrogate them.

What is especially revealing about Bush and Cheney’s statements is their insistence upon security – and the security of a exclusive national community at that – as the most fundamental principle and objective of modern politics and national leadership. This may seem self-evident to many and I would not dispute that it should be an important priority – after all, we live in a dangerous world of well-armed states, frightening weapons and determined terrorists – but there are real dangers in the obsession with national security, especially given how it is most often conceived and mobilised. My concerns go beyond legitimate debates about the
prioritisation of threats, or the role of force in counter-terrorism and security policy; they go to the very concept of security itself as a historical formation and system of power. I thus argue that we must resist conceptualising community, identity, freedom and otherness through the lens of security as we have understood it in the West since the Renaissance – that is, as the ultimate container for and meaning of being. Rather we need to trace out security’s history, uncover and question its assumptions, and deconstruct its categories so that we can decide which of them are legitimate and whether they form an adequate template for understanding, and reacting to, the diverse and bewildering challenges to survival that we face. This, in its broadest sense, is the task of this book. It certainly leaves open the possibility of reconfiguring security in normatively better ways, but cautions that its historical forms will act as a stubborn barrier to doing so.

In Bush and Cheney’s statements there is also an affective, parental quality claimed for government, gendered aggressively masculine; one that refuses to concede authority to a higher legal order and promises its child citizens the protection of their father – the President and State. This mobilises feelings of love, identification, dependence and trust between leadership and people, and either effaces the presence of power and violence, or legitimises them as an exercise of protective authority. This echoes the familial quality ascribed to the state by Rousseau, along with the disappearance of individual subjectivity into the state prefigured in Thomas Hobbes’s and John Locke’s conception of the state as a Body-Politic in which the bodies of the citizenry combine into the undivided body of the Sovereign, with whom they form a single unity and will. (Think of the subtle shift of pronouns in Cheney’s speech, whereby the presidency, in the figure of Bush, becomes synonymous with ‘America’.) Such a unity – ‘the American people’ – is conceived in a way that is intolerant of internal diversity and dissent; it is constituted in a fundamentally antagonistic relation to some Other (or others) which it must control, transform, expel or destroy. Linking with such parental images is a gendered dichotomy between (masculine) public and (feminine) private, strength and passivity, war and peace, violence and submission. The threat and difference of the Other works to constitute the unity and identity of the body-politic (which may well be fissured by all kinds of internal differences and antagonisms) and thus constitutes the nation-state ontologically through the promise of a security that is never quite realised. In short, insecurity is the very condition of the nation-state as a structure or promise of Being.

How can security be meaningful if its achievement is somehow always impossible? In the face of this problem, this book specifically develops a critique of security that conceives it less as an end than as a form of power. It conceptualises security as a political technology that mobilises two linked techniques of social production and regulation: ‘totalising’ power, of the kind exercised by states over vast areas, economies and
populations; and ‘individualising’ power, which works at the level of individuals and souls, on their bodies and minds. Security then is less a desired end of politics than a system of politics whose end is only itself. It is a form of politics that mobilises horror and pleasure, coercion and desire in equal measures, through linked systems of language, force, administration and freedom. Security is both a mode of administrative and governmental action – bureaucratic, ideological, military and economic – and a system of ‘truths’ that reach into people’s hearts, framing their identities, feelings and hopes. Whereas classical political theory frames security as an overarching guarantee of autonomous freedom and existence, I argue that when individuals are incorporated into such systems of power freedom is a chimera; our fears and desires may not be our own. Furthermore, the spatial differentiation of security’s promises and power is simultaneously a moral differentiation: pleasure here, suffering there. We are all subject to the same system, but only some are victims of it. Even terrorism, which self-consciously seeks to erode such spatial divisions by bringing fear into the national home, only provokes ever more aggressive efforts to reinstate them, perpetuating a dynamic whose fundamental premises remain untouched.

In this light, a further feature of Bush’s statement is worth highlighting. By refusing the legitimacy and constraints of international law or the US constitution, especially in its treatment of detainees and the prosecution of the war on terror, the administration mobilises two disturbing political forms, which have been advocated and theorised by the German legal scholar (and one-time Nazi party member) Carl Schmitt: ‘the state of exception’, in which the sovereign has the power to decide on the suspension of the normal legal order to meet ‘a danger to the existence of the state’, and the ‘friend-enemy’ distinction, which he argues is the very essence of the political. These in turn have consequences for the relationship between identity, politics and war, and the possibility of universal human rights. Schmitt’s work has been related to the contemporary world, and especially the war on terror, by the philosophers Giorgio Agamben and Judith Butler, and to contemporary security practices by the political scientists Michael Williams, Jef Huysmans and Benjamin Muller.

In *The Concept of the Political* Schmitt argued, given that ‘the concept of the state presupposes the political’, that there was a need to understand ‘the nature of the political’ in a ‘simple and elementary’ way. This should be through ‘the specific political distinction . . . between friend and enemy’:

> The distinction between friend and enemy denotes the utmost degree of intensity of union or separation, of an association of disassociation . . . the political enemy need not be morally evil or aesthetically ugly; he need not appear as an economic competitor, and it may even be advantageous to engage with him in business transactions. But he is,
nevertheless, the other, the stranger; and it is sufficient for his nature that he is, in a specially intense way, existentially something different and alien, so that in an extreme case conflicts with him are possible. 

Like Hobbes before him, Schmitt conceived a figure of the enemy – a threatening Other – that is constitutive of the state as ‘the specific entity of a people’. Without it society is not political and a people cannot be said to exist:

Only the actual participants can correctly recognise, understand and judge the concrete situation and settle the extreme case of conflict . . . to judge whether the adversary intends to negate his opponent’s way of life and therefore must be repulsed or fought in order to preserve one’s own form of existence.

It is clear that such a conception of the political has a tendency to surround the entirety of political life with an aura of emergency and threat to one’s very existence. Problems such as terrorism, flows of asylum seekers or weapons of mass destruction, are thus easily magnified into ones that must be viewed through the prisms of identity, existential antagonism and combat. While Schmitt claimed to be opposed to militarism (like many realists he advocated the avoidance of war) he stated that the political was only existent ‘when a fighting collectivity of people confronts a similar collectivity’. Hence the potential for war was an existential condition:

the entire life of a human being is a struggle and every human being is symbolically a combatant. The friend, enemy and combat concepts receive their real meaning precisely because they refer to the real possibility of physical killing. War follows from enmity. War is the existential negation of the enemy.

In his 2004 State of the Union speech, Bush went out of his way to defend his administration’s conceptualisation of the response to terrorism as ‘war’ and the use of extraordinary legal powers and unilateral military force to meet the threat: ‘after the chaos and carnage of September the 11th’, he argued, ‘it is not enough to serve our enemies with legal papers. The terrorists and their supporters declared war on the United States, and war is what they got.’ He also lectured Congress on the need to renew the Patriot Act, ‘key provisions [of which] are set to expire next year. The terrorist threat will not expire on that schedule’. Yet many provisions of that Act and other administrative measures were deeply controversial, especially the Executive Order that authorised the ‘indefinite detention’ and trial by ‘military commissions’ of the ‘battlefield detainees’
held in camps at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. As if sprung whole from Schmitt’s theory, the Order stated that:

it is not practicable to apply in military commissions under this order the principles of law and the rules of evidence generally recognized in the trial of criminal cases in the United States district courts. . . .

Having fully considered the magnitude of the potential deaths, injuries, and property destruction that would result from potential acts of terrorism against the United States, and the probability that such acts will occur, I have determined that an extraordinary emergency exists for national defense purposes, that this emergency constitutes an urgent and compelling government interest, and that issuance of this order is necessary to meet the emergency.13

An important detail about this extraordinary measure was that it only applied to non-citizens of the United States; citizens suspected of terrorism must be prosecuted under US criminal codes. Such orders invoke what Schmitt called the ‘state of exception’ wherein the existing legal order is suspended and ‘unlimited authority’ seized by the sovereign to meet a ‘danger to the existence of the state’. This, he argues, is the essence of sovereignty: ‘Sovereign is he who decides on the exception.’14 What is especially distinctive is not only the idealistic alignment of extra-judicial powers of life and death with sovereignty, freed from the dominance of the constitution and the rule of law, but the enactment of an uncertain threshold between law and the human in which the human can disappear as a matter of executive power and whim ‘in the interest of the state, public safety and order’.15 Giorgio Agamben argues that ‘what is new about President Bush’s order is that it radically erases any legal status of the individual, thus producing a legally unnameable and unclassifiable being’.16 Similarly, Judith Butler suggests that we are witnessing the emergence of ‘normative conceptions of the human that produce, through an exclusionary process, a host of “unliveable lives” whose legal and political status is suspended’; lives ‘viewed and judged so that they are less than human, or as having departed from the recognisable human community’.17

Agamben, drawing on the work of Hannah Arendt and Michel Foucault, has done most to describe and denounce the violent and impoverished conceptualisation of life implicit in such a politics. He saw in the convergence of a Schmittian theory of sovereignty and what Foucault termed ‘biopolitics’ a diabolical system of political and administrative power that reduced human existence to ‘bare life’ (Homo sacer) that ‘may be killed and yet not sacrificed’ – Homo sacer being ‘an obscure figure of archaic Roman law in which human life is included in the juridical order solely in the form of its exclusion (that is, of its capacity to be killed)’.18 He sees such a simultaneously exceptional and biopolitical power at work in ‘the Camp’, which took on its most horrific form in the Holocaust but
is also in operation at the US prisons in Cuba and Abu Ghraib, and, as Suvendrini Perera has shown, at immigration detention centres like Woomera and Baxter in remote South Australia, where sovereign power is unchecked and life is taken hold of outside the existing legal order (or at least within a radically unstable and arbitrary one). The camp, Agamben argues, is ‘the biopolitical paradigm of the modern’ and the state of exception is becoming normalised and universalised: it ‘tends increasingly to appear as the dominant paradigm of government in contemporary politics’.

Agamben thus issues a profound warning for anyone concerned with interrogating modern conceptions of security – which, after all, posit the sovereign nation-state as the collective to be secured and abrogate to government powers to protect the ‘life’ of this collective. Yet life is not valued equally and its ‘protection’ comes with a simultaneous seizing of life by power:

... in the age of biopolitics this power [to decide which life can be killed] becomes emancipated from the state of exception and transformed into the power to decide the point at which life ceases to be politically relevant. When life becomes the supreme political value, not only is the problem of life’s nonvalue thereby posed as Schmitt suggests, but further, it is as if the ultimate ground of sovereign power were at stake in this decision. In modern biopolitics, sovereign is he who decides on the value or nonvalue of life as such.

In a world where life and existence are defined biopolitically, and government takes on the responsibility to secure, enable, regulate and order life, Agamben argues (after Foucault) that it is as if: ‘every decisive political event were double-sided: the spaces, the liberties, and the rights won by individuals in their conflicts with central powers always simultaneously prepared a tacit but increasing inscription of individuals’ lives within the state order, thus offering a new more dreadful foundation for the sovereign power from which they wanted to free themselves.’ In this light, the ‘active defense of the American people’ comes to sound sinister indeed, for Americans and their Others alike.

Thinking beyond the exception

The works of Schmitt, and the critiques of Agamben, Butler and others are very important to an understanding of the forms of ethics and power mobilised in the name of security by modern sovereign states, whether they are liberal, democratic or authoritarian. However, they have significant limitations, and would be misleading if treated as a general theory of security, modernity or the state. Their analyses – which in many ways develop different concerns to mine – are not discussed in the body of this
book, but they are echoed and complemented at many points. Its first chapter ‘Aporias of security’, the theoretical core of the book, was drafted before Agamben’s *Homo Sacer* appeared in English in 1998 and published before Butler’s *Precarious Life* appeared in 2004, as were Chapters 2 and 5, and for important reasons I have chosen not to reframe the book in terms of their analyses, but instead draw attention to some points of convergence and divergence.

As incisive and relevant as it is, the focus of both thinkers on law – on the state of exception as an ambiguous threshold between law and its outside (‘the legal form of what cannot have legal form’23) – constrains the explanatory power of their analyses in the face of modern formations of security, sovereignty and strategic violence. This book, which analyses sovereignty and security through the general paradigm of international relations, does not locate its analysis around this threshold precisely because the forms of policy, intervention, warfighting and geopolitical power it critiques have often operated at some distance from law, both domestic and international (even if they do not always break with it utterly). The practices of secrecy, intervention and executive power at work in these realms demonstrate that an enormous executive freedom of action is the rule (not the exception), a freedom that is legitimated in only the thinnest way by law and is rarely limited by it. In most nations foreign policy is rarely made by legislation, and its legitimacy derives less from a remote source in constitutional law than from other performative criteria – security, effectiveness, identity, power or influence. Therefore, while the invasion of Iraq in defiance of the UN Security Council, the disturbingly high number of civilian casualties and the abuse of human rights might be a normative scandal when framed against the standards of international or even US law, they are far from novel when viewed in terms of influential conceptions of strategy and national security, past US policies in Chile, Panama, El Salvador, Vietnam and Nicaragua, or Australia’s policies towards Indonesia and East Timor. In the case of Iraq, the administration could in fact claim legal legitimacy from a Congressional resolution (even if many members of Congress subsequently regretted voting for it). It might be tempting to suggest that in geopolitics and national security policy a permanent state of exception is in play (certainly the kind of dictatorial freedom of decision Schmitt envisaged is present), except that we cannot think of the problem in terms either of the transgression of a legal threshold or a ‘zone of indifference . . . where [the law’s] inside and outside blur with each other’.24 Rather, sovereign states have long held and exercised such powers under the name of national security; as a normal sovereign prerogative available to executive government in the sphere of defence and foreign policy. Such powers are, in short, not exceptional or ‘outside’ the law, but are all too often consistent with constitutional legal structures and grants of executive power.
What this means is that a normative recourse to constitutionalism or the rule of law to counter such apparent legal exceptionalism may be of limited value, if the overarching ontology of security within which the rule of law takes shape is not also transformed. Laws and moral principles that valorise or excuse violence, such as just war theory and the international law of war, only compound this problem (see Chapter 6). In this light Agamben’s theory is frustratingly limited. This book seeks to overcome these limits by putting this very ontology of security into question. This is important when we consider the redemptive conclusion of Agamben’s critique in *State of Exception* – that a ‘politics’ that has been reduced merely to ‘negotiating’ with the law can be revived if it is political action that ‘severs the nexus between violence and law’.

I am in accord, but it is not enough: politics must sever the nexus between violence and *being*.

I also believe that it is misleading to characterise the generalisation (or widening) of the ‘state of exception’ as a ‘new’ or recent event, in the way Agamben and Butler tend to do, or Bülent Diken and Carsten Lausten do quite strongly in *The Culture of Exception* – a book that, says Zygmunt Bauman in his Foreword, predicts ‘the imminent promotion of the camp from the periphery of modern society . . . to the centre of social life’.

Agamben’s critique does have wide importance in his analysis of the exercise of the sovereign power to arbitrarily partition, value and dispose of life in the defence of life, but we cannot theorise such power solely around the systems of the camp and the exception. His claim that the camp is the biopolitical paradigm of the modern is too strong. I would instead argue that it is security that forms such a paradigm – a paradigm of both economic and political modernity and human existence within such a modernity – and that it relies upon much more than coercive power, successfully exercised by a sovereign in camp-like spaces at the limit of law.

Security operates over much larger spaces and fields, as a geobio-political paradigm, and mobilises ‘positive’, enabling and seductive forms of power as well as those that are repressive, disciplinary and nihilistic. Hence this book also seeks to identify the forms of *desire*, *consent* and *identity* that security mobilises and constructs, and to interrogate the *goods* that states claim to be securing – freedom, prosperity, justice and progress – which imparts to security such a potent, idealistic sheen. (As I show in Chapter 9, any one of Bush’s speeches will show the significance of such an enlightenment gloss, one central to US narratives of history and identity.) In particular, it is important to show how discourses of historical progress and destiny are central to modern technologies of security and sovereignty, and to challenge their hold upon our minds. In contrast to the somewhat paralysing tendency of Agamben’s analysis, this book also interrogates the fissures and weaknesses of such power, the possibilities for refusal and resistance, the flaws in its assumptions about its own
efficacy and viability. Thus the book analyses and challenges the myriad tactics of security, along with the basic paradigmatic structures that govern how policymakers think and act; conceptual structures that constitute powerful images and practices of the real, and offer systems through which they act in an effort to manipulate and control the real, yet are ultimately just that – images of the real which must eventually crumble under their own violent weight.

Gender is one such subterranean conceptual structure that helps to organise both the tactical moves of security, and structure its architectonic promise of community and safety. This I analyse in the closing parts of Chapter 1, but gender also organises dominant conceptualisations of the human in complex ways. For example, as Christine Sylvester argues in an important analysis of the war on terror – one that echoes Agamben and Butler’s concerns with imperialism and dehumanisation, this time through gender critique – images of insecure, vulnerable and assertive gender identity organise global security politics bizarrely and unpredictably: from the ‘gender panic’ of Australian military operations against the ‘cultural violation’ of refugee boats, the woman-phobia of the 9/11 hijackers, to the ‘big and manly’ grand strategic response when the bombers depart for their targets in Afghanistan. Gender thus traces violence into security as an apparent, but illusory, promise of national strength and masculine reassurance.

It is in this light that the book subjects ‘strategy’, which the Prussian general Carl von Clausewitz defined as the State’s use of military force to achieve political ends, to a critique of its fundamental presuppositions. In Chapter 8 I argue that not only is it deeply suspect in ethical terms – because of the instrumentalism of life and the utilisation of suffering it embodies – but that it founders upon its embedding in the means-end assumptions of instrumental reason. The effects of strategic violence, however carefully planned or brilliantly executed, are all too often chaotic and perverse; an easy control over bodies, the long-range exercise of power, and smooth transformations of political reality are not its result. This only adds to its dangers, but it also offers a space for critique. As Hannah Arendt has argued, and as is occurring in Iraq as I write, violence always threatens to defeat those who wield it.

In short, this and other chapters suggest that our understanding of how power produces, takes hold of and utilises life must be more complex than Agamben’s imagery of life in the camps reduced to ‘bare life’, as revealing as it is in many contexts. Mitchell Dean’s comment that perhaps ‘we are all *homo sacer*’ – that the ‘bare life which constituted the sovereign exception [has begun] to enter a zone of indistinction with our moral and political life and with the fundamental presuppositions of political community’ – is an intriguing expansion of Agamben’s thinking, but it nonetheless portrays us as potential victims of our own societies (which is certainly a possibility). However, what if we are simultaneously
beneficiaries of such power, or perceive ourselves as such? Hence the need to understand the production and seizure of life by power, beneath the overarching promise of security, in more complex ways. We need to understand how the living are created, organised and utilised by forms of social, political and economic power in diverse and differentiated ways, not all of them coercive or unpleasant; how the living are conceived as resources for use and exploitation; and how death and suffering can then be seen as necessary and productive, as perhaps regrettable but not immoral. In short, we need to understand how the pain and annihilation of some can be the condition of existence and happiness for others.

It is this insight that Beyond Security, Ethics and Violence takes up as a central theme and focus of critique: how the dreams of security, prosperity and freedom hinge, from their earliest conceptualisations to the contemporary politics of the national security state, on the insecurity and dying of others. Our societies run, prosper and survive – however dangerously and dysfunctionally – on the back of a political economy of death and suffering that is embedded and legitimised in our most basic ethical and political ideals.³¹

**Beyond security, ethics and violence**

How stable and comforting then is security? Can it be at all meaningful, and what ethical and conceptual resources can be called upon either to restore it to wholeness or help us conceive a form of existence and relation beyond it? It is to these questions that this book addresses its enquiry. The book’s methodology is carefully chosen, being both transdisciplinary at the theoretical level, and tightly intertwined with empirical (but not empiricist) cases and policy studies. This is because I prefer to derive theoretical problems from worldly situations, using them to challenge theoretical constructs and assumptions, and vice versa, using critical theories to pose new questions of the real. I have always been sceptical of theory that overstates its universality; too often, especially in IR, this is little more than power play. Rather, I see theory as perpetually linked to, and limited by, specific contexts and problems. Thus the book’s theorising is underpinned by a Foucauldian analysis of ‘power-knowledge’, which sees each implicated in the other in a ceaseless struggle over the status of knowledge and the shape of our social and political worlds. Particular philosophers and theorists are then of concern, not in relation to the ‘integrity’ of their thought, or their place in an intellectual canon, but in terms of how their works constitute sources of socio-political authority, insight or possibility. In this sense the discourse of policymakers, institutions and media is just as important, as the book analyses theorists and political actors in terms of what they might reveal about the structures of ‘truth’ that underpin particular forms of social and political power, defines the limits of possible critique, or provides clues to
alternative futures, and beyond them, the book seeks to think the problems anew and alone.

The book is divided into three parts, tracing out a thematic and conceptual development whose concerns and insights continually fold back on each other. Part I, ‘Security’, provides a conceptual underpinning to the book by first developing a genealogy of security in the West, and then exploring ethical and political strategies that can be used to resist or refigure it. After first analysing some of the contemporary paradoxes of security which have placed enormous pressure on its status as an unproblematic end of policy, Chapter 1 (‘Aporias of security’) traces the development of security into a powerful political technology that combines what Michel Foucault calls ‘individualising’ with ‘totalising’ power, linking sweeping forms of bureaucracy, regulation and coercive power focused on territories and populations, with forms of discipline, self-government and identification that work at the level of the body and mind. Building upon and going beyond his work on ‘governmentality’, the chapter traces the complex development of security as a technology from the ‘social contract’ theory of Thomas Hobbes and John Locke to its evolution into the twentieth-century national security state.

Their founding political theory is, notwithstanding their differences, responsible for the modern sovereign state as we know it. Their work conceived the modern political community, driven by a desire for security, as an organic unity of sovereign and subject constituted by a primal existential estrangement from the Other of the criminal, the subversive, the Indian and the minority – directly incorporating an image of violence, otherness and fear into the very basis of modern political life. (While they did not theorise the state among states, their ontology provides a basis for the later Schmittian vision of ‘collectivities’ of friends and enemies engaged in an existential struggle for survival in the international realm.) Then, via analyses of the liberal utilitarian thinkers Adam Smith and Jeremy Bentham, the chapter traces this formation through the development of liberal political economy, a project to which a refined and reformulated idea of security was central, linking this in turn with nineteenth- and twentieth-century discourses of citizen-state subjectivity, imperialism and historical progress – as most starkly exemplified by the philosopher G. W. F. Hegel and former US Department of State official, Francis Fukuyama. Chapter 1 also links this genealogy with a feminist analysis of the masculine images of force, identity and privilege in mainstream security practices, before concluding with some speculations on the possibilities of moving beyond such a violent political technology via new approaches to ethics, agency and resistance.

Chapters 2 (‘Poetry outside security’) and 3 (‘Security after security’) continue the critical excavation of such images of security in new contexts (Asia-Pacific conflict and security discourse in Chapter 2, and Israeli
security discourse in Chapter 3), while further developing the ethical theory that could begin to radically rethink security and possibly move beyond it as a modern political ontology. ‘Poetry outside security’, which was drafted for a special issue of Alternatives on ‘Poetic World Politics’ edited by Roland Bleiker, does this by linking political discourse with the critical potentials opened up by cultural theory and poetic texts, specifically those of Sylvia Plath, Robert Lowell and Gig Ryan, who combine powerful insights into the psychological structure of security discourse with an ironic critical challenge to its forms of power and truth. (This methodological approach, combining aesthetic, cultural and political theory, is also evident in Chapters 4, 7 and 9, and could be characterised as a contribution to the ‘aesthetic turn’ of recent critical IR theory.)

Chapter 3, ‘Security after security’, situating its problem in relation to the insights of Chapter 1 and the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, more systematically develops the ethical theory hinted at there via a critical analysis of thinkers such as Foucault, Edward Said, Martin Heidegger, Emmanuel Levinas, Martin Buber and William Connolly. These writers offer ways of rethinking violent and exclusivist ontologies of nationhood and security in favour of (agonistic but non-violent) forms of ethical engagement and interconnection that go beyond the fantasies of control and separation inherent in post-Renaissance images of political being. In particular, the ethics of Buber, Connolly and Levinas radically undermines the enclosed and alienated form of being central to the modern sovereign state and turns it – ethically, sympathetically, and existentially – towards the Other. At the same time they critique those ways of thinking being through an objectivising knowledge that makes the Other into an object that can be reduced to control and use. Hence by rethinking the form and structure of being that security secures, along with the instrumental forms of strategy and diplomacy that accompany it, we can begin to develop relationships not of dominance and antagonism but mutual dependence and responsibility. The Israeli–Palestinian conflict – where the existence, security and histories of both peoples are hopelessly interdependent and intertwined, yet their relations are dominated by increasing alienation – provides an example par excellence of the relevance of such an ethics of responsibility. However, given the perseverance of rigid ontologies of security in Israel and Palestine, deriving their power from a stubborn historical paradigm and every new act of violence, the chapter does not underestimate the difficulties in putting such an ethics into action.

Part II, ‘Ethics’, explores this ethical theory in a range of new contexts. Chapter 4, ‘Strangers without strangeness’, draws on a conceit of Julia Kristeva’s to critique the images of identity and difference structuring the strategic, cultural and diplomatic relationships between Australia and Indonesia. These it relates to the Indonesian occupation of East Timor, the 1999 referendum crisis and international intervention, and the Suharto regime’s efforts to consolidate its power and destroy its political enemies.
by redefining Indonesian cultural identity in tandem with the development of a pervasive security apparatus. It argues that the elite rhetoric of the two nations being ‘strange neighbours’ who must nonetheless co-operate, masks efforts to violently consolidate identity within both societies. This brings about a paradoxical situation in which state discourses of sensitivity to difference are part of a systematic effort to violently repress or annihilate difference – whether this takes the form of struggles for economic justice, self-determination or indigenous rights. A better ethics, it argues, is one that shapes interdependent relations within and between identities that are no longer bounded nor whole.

Chapter 5, ‘The perverse perseverance of sovereignty’, is framed as an argument with Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri’s important work of critical theory, Empire. Its particular focus is on their view that the globalisation of capital and the political ascendancy of neo-liberalism are seeing modern (state) sovereignty recede in favour of a new form of trans-national imperial sovereignty. While this is a powerful and suggestive argument, the chapter argues that it is overstated, and misunderstands the way in which modern forms of sovereignty have actually become more virulent in a complex functional interrelationship (and sometimes dissonance) with capitalist globalisation and neo-liberal politics. Against Hardt and Negri’s dismissal of the political relevance of deconstruction, Levin-asian ethics and postcolonial theory, the chapter argues for their continuing importance via analyses of Indonesia’s treatment by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), European and Australian refugee policy, the war on terror and the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, which together form sites where violence, identity and economic power coalesce in diverse and complex ways.

Chapter 6, ‘Just war or ethical peace?’, focuses on the mutually constitutive relationship between ethics and force in the war on terror. It bridges Parts I, II and III of the book by placing the conduct of military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq under close scrutiny, particularly in relation to the moral apologetics offered for the violence by US officials, IR scholars such as Barry Buzan, and ‘just war’ theorists Jean Bethke Elshtain and Michael Walzer. In tandem with an analysis of the impact of coalition military operations on civilians, the chapter closely critiques the conceptual commitments and limitations of post-Vietnam just war theory, and its claims about the legitimacy and humanity of the war on terror. It criticises just war theory for normalising war and – due to its investment in a decontextualised procedural ethics, and the restrictive moral community of the social contract – for creating dangerous ethical loopholes for militaries in which the killing or injury of civilians, however systematic and foreseeable, can be excused as ‘unintentional’. To this, the chapter contrasts a vision of ‘ethical peace’ that asserts a multiple affirmation: of peace as a norm, a moral community above and beyond the state, a strengthened and more enforceable international legal framework as a basis
for protecting civilians in war, and gradual demilitarisation and disarmament as the best way of securing communities and protecting ‘innocent’ life. This is to offer a normative vision of how both ethical and strategic practices must be transformed if a ‘security after security’ is to be possible.

Part III, ‘Violence’, draws the various themes of the book together by placing violence as such under rare critical scrutiny, especially as it takes the form of strategic power and military force directed to apparently ‘rational’, political ends. Chapter 7, ‘Violence and reason on the shoals of Vietnam’ does this by examining a number of key historiographic texts about the American war in Vietnam (by journalists Stanley Karnow and Neil Sheehan, former US Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara, and film-maker Francis Ford Coppola) in terms of the way in which a tragic narrative of American identity (‘the end of American exceptionalism’) structures an effort to develop forms of political and strategic reason that might have staved off defeat. The chapter critiques the narrowly instrumental, mechanistic limitations of this reason, explaining why it ultimately failed and had such terrible human and social costs for Vietnam.

Chapter 8, ‘Iraq: strategy’s burnt offering’, further develops this critique of modern political and strategic reason as it played out in US Persian Gulf policy over the next 30 years. It surveys some of the key positions in the debate over the 2003 invasion (neo-conservative, liberal and realist), but finds them ultimately wanting because of their common acceptance that force, in varying circumstances, can be a legitimate and effective means to a political end. In this sense they all present differing contemporary faces of Clausewitz. In parallel with a critical survey of Western policy towards Iraq since the early 1980s, Chapter 8 develops a critique and partial genealogy of Clausewitzian strategy by tracing its antecedents to the scientific world-view of Francis Bacon and René Descartes. This in turn forms a discursive foundation for twentieth-century strategy via Henry Kissinger’s faith in the West’s superior Newtonian paradigm, a geopolitical obsession with control over the Third World, and a widespread faith in political utility of strategic violence – which culminates in the 1975 ‘Kissinger plan’ for the takeover of Persian Gulf oil, the 1990s policies of ‘dual containment’ of Iraq and Iran, and the invasion and occupation in 2003. This period sadly demonstrates the validity of Martin Heidegger’s critique of modern ‘technological’ reason as a debased form of thought that reduces humans to a ‘store of energy’ for use. When Western policies of containment, sanctions and regime change are thus considered together, Iraqi suffering was conceived of as a resource. However the 2003 invasion and the chaos that followed demonstrates not only the inhumanity, but the political failure of such a ‘strategic’ paradigm, which cannot understand – as Hannah Arendt did – that a reliance upon violence eventually results in the disappearance of ends into means, until means become ends in themselves, the ‘end result of which is meaninglessness’.32
Chapter 9, ‘Freedom’s freedom’, draws the book’s concerns together in a critical analysis of the Bush administration’s relentless rhetoric of freedom – one manifest in numerous presidential speeches and the naming of military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, and with deep historical roots in the US political imagination. Rather than representing a standard liberal account of ‘negative’ freedom, the chapter argues it is best understood in this context as a form of instrumental and unbounded action by a nation that conceives itself as the subject and engine of world history. My critique echoes and builds upon Isaiah Berlin’s suspicion of ‘positive freedom’ in his ‘Two Concepts of Liberty’ and Freedom and Its Betrayal, and Jacques Derrida’s concerns, in Rogues: Two Essays on Reason, about contemporary manifestations of the Greeks’ image of ‘unlicensed’ freedom. Berlin is right, in opposition to Rousseau, to wonder whether the ‘transference by a successful rising of unlimited authority, commonly called sovereignty, from one set of hands to another does not increase liberty but merely shifts the burden of slavery’.

The chapter traces this image of freedom through American exceptionalism and Hegel’s philosophy of historical progress, paying special attention to their mutation into American defence and foreign policy via Henry Luce’s image of the ‘American century’ and the neo-conservative manifestos of Francis Fukuyama and the Project for a New American Century. Conceived in this way, freedom is rooted in a militaristic, security-obsessed ontology with overweening global ambitions, one that refuses all contrary facts, historical or contemporary. (Those who suffer its force, however, respond with biting irony. As Christian Parenti’s Iraqi colleague Akeel remarked to him: ‘Look, we have the gas-line freedom, the looting freedom, the killing freedom, the rape freedom, the hash-smoking freedom. I don’t know what to do with all this freedom.’) Not only does this self-referencing ontology of freedom generate ‘grandiose aims in politics’, its instrumental confidence in its rightful exercise of violence is echoed by US enemies such as Osama bin Laden, but with very different ‘ends’ of history in mind. When conceived in such absolutist and irreconcilable terms, such a struggle can only continue as an endless, ever-worsening conflict. Such a truly alarming, murderous and chaotic image of freedom raises a very serious question of whether freedom can be rehabilitated and the honour of its name recovered.

How are security, freedom and violence to be rethought, so that they no longer constitute such a terrible triad? My answer is not to revert, as Berlin did, to a defence of negative liberty, of the ‘frontiers . . . within which men should be inviolable’. However laudable, this is not enough. The vast, machinic and violent power of freedom at large in our world is what must be thought, unflinchingly, and its powers and dangers recognised, limited and made subject to a test of responsibility to the world and to nature. It is what must in turn be unthought along with the systems of security, sovereignty and violence that form its limbs and
beating heart. What awful paradox: that all these things, so intimate with death, claim to define and support life. In defence of the living, we must rethink, and redignify, life.

**Hopes and fears**

How are security, freedom and violence to be rethought? In every chapter of this book this question is engaged, but it inevitably raises, in explicit terms, the issue of the book’s normative and political trajectory. What alternative futures does it offer or imagine? I raise this because writers on security whose thinking has been influenced by post-structuralist thought – as this book partly is – have often been accused of lacking a clear normative standpoint. Richard Wyn Jones, for example, asks (not without reason) why such writers ‘have been so loath to engage seriously with emancipation? Why, indeed, do they seem to lack the necessary theoretical and political vocabulary with which to do this?’ A similar question – addressed at the close of Chapters 7 and 9 in particular – is often asked about the commitment of such work to the project of the Enlightenment, as if such critique amounts to a simplistic anti-Enlightenment view that rejects any of its positive humanistic potentials.

Alert readers of this book will recognise that while the broadly ‘post-structuralist’ thought of Foucault, Derrida, Kristeva, Laclau and Connolly has a strong presence, it is not dealt with uncritically and its limits are acknowledged. My approach is neither to reject normative argument nor enlightenment, but nor is it to suggest that we can enter into such a discourse uncritically. It contains its own dangers. To the extent that some of the most destructive potentials of our modernity – of which security, sovereignty and ethics are powerful signs – are fuelled by claims about morality and enlightenment, they must be placed under sustained critical scrutiny.

With that caveat, this book does have some clear normative sympathies and could usefully contribute to existing normative projects. It also explores alternative normative potentials of its own. The two existing projects are the progressive discourses of emancipation and cosmopolitanism; the alternatives centre around a re-imagination of human subjectivity so that it is disentangled from the social contract and ‘governmental’ forms of power – to at least gain a critical and independent relation to them – and can be rethought socio-politically around an ethics of responsibility and reciprocity.

Hence I would endorse the 1991 argument by Ken Booth, which is associated with the ‘Welsh School’ of Critical Security Studies (CSS), that security should be rethought as emancipation: ‘a holistic and non-statist’ approach to security that does not emphasise the use or threat of force, and that would involve ‘the freeing of people (as individuals and groups) from those physical and human constraints that stop them carrying
out what they would freely choose to do. War and the threat of war is one of those constraints, together with poverty, poor education [and] political oppression’.39 He links it with cosmopolitan ideals with an argument that ‘the concept of emancipation shapes strategies and tactics of resistance, offers a theory of progress for society, and gives a politics of hope for a common humanity’.40 The book likewise supports J. Ann Tickner’s vision of a security based upon ‘the elimination of unjust social relations, including unequal gender relations’ and for a reformulation of international relations in terms of the ‘multiple insecurities’ represented by ecological destruction, poverty and (gendered) structural violence, rather than the abstract threats to the integrity of states, their interests and ‘core values’.41 Together, they have stated inspirational normative goals that rightly guide many attempts to reformulate security in more positive ways.

At the same time the idea of emancipation is not without its problems, especially as it has been conceived in Welsh School thinking. First, as set out by Booth, human agency is a concern of individuals who are constrained and repressed by power, who if secured properly might exercise their agency freely and be ‘more fully human’.42 Notwithstanding his cosmopolitan ethic and the normative drive of his argument, there is little in such a formulation to prevent its co-option by the communitarian vision of the social contract idealists, from Hobbes to Rousseau and Hegel, for whom human existence is most realised in the body of the state, which is not an alien and repressive form but an extension of our own will. This is what it is, they argue, to be fully human. Likewise, Foucauldian understandings of power, discourse and freedom have made conceptions of human agency far more complex, and in the wake of his insights this book sets out to theorise security as a political technology that enables, produces and constrains individuals within larger systems of power and institutional action. The exercise of human agency is not precluded by this theory, but it is not entirely free, for important ethical and pragmatic reasons. Rather such agency struggles with its social definition and reproduction within systems of knowledge and power that continually work to define identity, frustrate autonomy and align individual interests with those of the state and capital. Nor, for important ethical reasons that I explore in the closing sections of Chapter 9, can emancipated individuals or communities be devoted to self-realisation or heedless freedom; they must consider their impact on the Other. The struggle is threefold: to identify available ways of being, to choose among them responsibly, and if they do not yet exist, to conceive and enable them.

Second, with Chapters 8 and 9 as a background warning, an overly idealistic invocation of emancipation runs the danger of sliding into the concepts of positive liberty, instrumental reason and unlicensed freedom that I analyse there and that were of such concern to thinkers like Berlin. This is especially true when individual emancipation becomes the target of a systemic or strategic process like US foreign policy. (Neither Booth
nor the rest of the CSS school are guilty of this, which I raise as a cautionary note. Indeed Wyn Jones suggests that we should understand emancipation as a ‘process’ rather than an ‘endpoint’.43) We must be careful to set out what we actually mean by emancipation, how it differs from ‘freedom’ and ‘democracy’ (and may be endangered by them), and why it may need to be limited in its exercise and conception.44 In the wake of the Enlightenment and the industrial revolution, when modern science and reason seized the powers of heaven for the aggrandisement of man, we have been confronted by a form of freedom that accepted no limits and authorised vast impersonal projects in which ‘the pattern matters more than the individual’ (as Berlin wrote of Hegel, charging him with an ‘historically fatal identification of liberty . . . with security’).45 The imperial idealism of the Bush administration is one example of such freedom, but it is fed by deeper roots in modern thought and especially in the social contract where, as Rousseau wrote, we truly give ourselves up to the pattern: ‘in giving myself to all, I give myself to none’.46

A further argument of the CSS thinkers, one that adds a sharply conservative note to their normative discourse, needs comment. This states that proposals for political transformation must be based on an identification of ‘immanent possibilities’ for change in the present order. Indeed, Richard Wyn Jones is quite militant about this:

[D]escriptions of a more emancipated order must focus on realizable utopias . . . If [critical theorists] succumb to the temptation of suggesting a blueprint for an emancipated order that is unrelated to the possibilities inherent in the present . . . [they] have no way of justifying their arguments epistemologically. Furthermore, it is highly unlikely that a vision of an emancipated order that is not based on immanent potential will be politically efficacious.47

Certainly it is helpful to try to identify such potentials; but whatever the common sense about the practicalities of political struggle this contains, I strongly reject the way Jones frames it so dogmatically. Even putting aside the analytical ambiguities in identifying where immanent possibilities exist, such arguments are ultimately disabling and risk denying the entire purpose of the critical project. It is precisely at times of the greatest pessimism, when new potentials are being shut down or normative change is distinctly negative — arguably true of the period in which I am writing — that the critical project is most important. To take just one example from this book, any reader would recognise that my arguments about the resolution of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict will be extremely difficult to ‘realise’ (even though they endorse a negotiated two-state solution). This only makes it more important to make them because the available contours of the present, confined as they are within the masculinist ontology of the insecure nation-state, fail to provide a stable platform either for peace or
a meaningful security. In the face of such obstacles the critical project
must think and conceive the *unthought*, and its limiting test ought not to
be realism but responsibility.

The realism underlying the idea of immanent possibility sets up an
important tension between the arguments of this book and the normative
project of cosmopolitanism – which was most famously set out by Kant
in his *Perpetual Peace* as the establishment of a ‘federation of peoples’
based on Republication constitutions and principles of universal hospi-
tality, that might result in the definitive abolition of the need to resort to
war. However, Kant’s image of universal human community and the
elimination of war exists in fundamental tension with its foundation on a
‘pacific federation’ of national democracies. With two terrible centuries’
hindsight we know that republics have not turned out to be pacificist
vehicles of cosmopolitan feeling; instead, in a malign convergence of the
social contract with Clausewitzian strategy, they have too often formed
into exclusivist communities whose ultimate survival is premised upon
violence. Is the nation-state the reality claim upon which cosmopolitanism
always founders? Could a critique of security, sovereignty and violence,
along the lines I set out here, help us to form a badly needed buttress for
its structure?

A developed normative critique and reformulation of cosmopolitanism
is well beyond this work, but undeniably it begs the question. Nor can
the arguments of this book be smoothly assimilated to existing theoretical
explorations of the possibilities and shapes of a cosmopolitan ethos.
However, this work is intrinsically sympathetic to efforts to rethink
cosmopolitanism and hospitality, and the state with them, by writers such
as William Connolly, Richard Shapcott, Andrew Linklater, Paul Keal,
Seyla Benhabib and Jean Cohen, among many others. In his recent works
*Neuropolitics* and *Pluralism*, Connolly seeks to explore the promise of a
cosmopolitan politics across and beyond the state, but is concerned to
pluralise the sources of morality that it might mobilise, given that we live
in a world where diverse faiths must coexist, ethics is a site of political
and cultural contestation, and we are forced to engage with ‘speed and
dense interdependencies’. In a similar way, Shapcott and Keal are
concerned to conceive of a logic of cosmopolitanism which can be both
universal and enable ‘justice to difference’, especially that of minorities
and indigenous peoples, and their challenge both to the dominant construc-
tion of state identities and the norms of international society is profound.

Linklater and Benhabib have been concerned to expand the limited
model of hospitality in Kant to grapple with the human claims of migrants
and refugees, which requires that citizenship no longer be the determining
basis of moral or political subjectivity. Rather, as Benhabib argues in her
2002 Seeley Lectures, we need a ‘vindication of the right of every human
being “to have rights”, that is, to be a legal person, entitled to have certain
inalienable rights, regardless of the status of their political membership’.
Cohen has also sought to defend the claims of cosmopolitanism (and a minimalistic version of sovereignty in international law) against faux universalisms like the new drive to Empire. She argues that while ‘the sovereign equality of states’ is necessary as a buffer against ‘the proliferation of imperial projects and regional attempts at Grossraum ordering’, we also need ‘a revised conception of sovereignty and human rights . . . the [internal and external] rearticulation and democratisation of sovereignty’.52 However, both Cohen and Benhabib identify a key dilemma for such a project – what Cohen describes as ‘a dualistic world order’ and Benhabib a ‘tension between sovereignty and hospitality . . . a fragile but necessary negotiation of constitutional universalism and territorial sovereignty’.

The arguments of this book endorse such normative goals, and echo their critiques of Empire and exclusivist conceptualisations of the human. However, while sympathetic to Benhabib’s effort to overcome democratic exclusivism ‘through the renegotiation and reiteration of the dual commitments to human rights and sovereign self-determination’, this book can offer an important note of historical caution. Benhabib’s account of popular sovereignty and the social contract is remarkably uncritical and sanguine (the ‘rights of man’ and the ‘rights of citizens’ do not contradict one another, she incredibly claims), while Cohen mobilises a similarly sunny model of democracy as ‘popular sovereignty’ to support a laudable argument for ‘the internal democratization of all states’.54 However the Hobbesian legacy of the social contract, as formed into the suffocating and violent political ontology I describe here as security, will always threaten to defeat their goals unless the very model of sovereignty we have inherited is rethought. (Without doing so we can never abolish the ‘hierarchal, ethnocentric, and racist assumptions that informed the Westphalian sovereignty order’, as Cohen rightly hopes.55) This is why I have been less concerned with expanding the boundaries to moral community, as cosmopolitans generally are, than with interrogating and re-imagining the fundamental concept of being that animates the modern body-politic exercising its powers of strategy and violence according to the claustrophobic ethic of its own survival. Hence the need for Levinas and Buber.

So against these fears I pit my hopes. I am no longer a frightened boy, kicking and panicked in the dark; and, as a global community, we need be no longer beholden to such existential visions of exclusion, dominance and violence, where life exists at the whim and mercy of power. No more war against the Other; we can light our own paths out.
Part I

Security
1 Aporias of security
From the Leviathan to the security state

Maybe the [task] nowadays is not to discover what we are, but to refuse what we are. We have to . . . get rid of the political ‘double-bind,’ which is the simultaneous individualization and totalization of modern power structures . . . the political, ethical, social, philosophical problem of our days is not to try to liberate the individual from the state and from the state’s institutions, but to liberate us both from the state and from the type of individualisation which is linked to the state.

Michel Foucault

What does it mean to be secure?
Surely we know. We know that security is one of the most fundamental human needs: an irrefutable guarantee of safety and well-being, economic assurance and possibility, sociability and order; of a life lived freely without fear or hardship. That security is a universal good available to all, and a solemn pledge between citizens and their political leaders, to whom their people’s security is ‘the first duty’, the overriding goal of domestic and international policy-making. As such it has been able to trace a powerful path between subject and world, state and citizen, to promise simultaneously a solution to the inchoate fears and insecurities of everyday life and the enormous spatial, cultural, economic and geopolitical complexities of government. In short, security remains one of modernity’s most stubborn and enduring dreams.

However, I believe that, more than ever, we do need to ask what it is to be secure. Surely we no longer know what security is – in that platonic sense. Surely more than a decade after the end of the Cold War, after the Clinton Doctrine and the destruction of the Twin Towers, after humanitarian and policy disasters in Indo-China, Africa, East Timor, the Middle East and Central America, and after a growing body of humanist and critical scholarship has questioned security’s unity, discursive structure and political implications, security no longer possesses a credible wholeness?

This chapter begins with the premise that security’s claims to universality and wholeness founder on a destructive series of aporias, which derive first from the growing sense that security no longer has a stable referent.
object, nor names a common set of needs, means or ways of being, and second, from the moral relativism which lies at the centre of dominant (realist) discourses of security which pretend to universality but insist that ‘our’ security always rests on the insecurity and suffering of an-Other.

While this chapter argues strongly that security has no essential ontological integrity, it also argues that if the power and sweep of security are to be understood and challenged, its claims to universality must be taken seriously. Such claims underpin and animate sweeping forms of power, subjectivity, force and economic circulation, and cannot be dismissed out of hand. Nor, in the hands of some humanist writers – who have sought to conceive human and gender security in radical counterpoint to realist images of national and international security – are such claims always pernicious. They have a valuable moral and political force that undermines, perhaps unwittingly, the logocentric presuppositions of the realist discourses they question. Yet a common assumption that security can be ontologically completed and secured does present a hurdle for the kind of ‘ontopolitical’ critique that we really need.3

The answer is not to seek to close out these aporias; they call to us and their existence presents an important political opening. Rather than seek to resecure security, to make it conform to a new humanist ideal – however laudable – we need to challenge security as a claim to truth, to set its ‘meaning’ aside. Instead, we should focus on security as a pervasive and complex system of political, social and economic power, which reaches from the most private spaces of being to the vast flows and conflicts of geopolitics and global economic circulation. It is to see security as an interlocking system of knowledges, representations, practices and institutional forms that imagine, direct and act upon bodies, spaces and flows in certain ways – to see security not as an essential value but as a political technology. This is to move from essence to genealogy: a genealogy which aims, in William Connolly’s words, to ‘open us up to the play of possibility in the present . . . [to] ‘incite critical responses to unnecessary violences and injuries surreptitiously imposed upon life by the insistence that prevailing forms are natural, rational, universal or necessary’.4

This chapter explores the aporias of security, and then begins the work of its genealogy. A genealogy of security’s conceptual and discursive roots that aims to uncover, at its crucial points of formation, the order of knowledge lying beneath security’s drama of struggle, technology, violence and metaphor – in the hope that this order of knowledge can in turn be challenged, altered and rethought. It is to ask: is there something beyond or ‘outside’ security? What might its possibilities and dangers be?

**Two kinds of aporia**

In both its realist and humanist guises, security takes the form and promise of a metaphysical discourse: an overarching political goal and practice
that guarantees existence itself, which makes the possibility of the world possible. US President Bill Clinton prefaced the 1997 National Security Strategy by saying that ‘protecting the security of our nation – our people, our territory and our way of life – is my foremost mission and constitutional duty’. Dr Mahathir Mohamad of Malaysia has argued that ‘national security is inseparable from political stability, economic success and social harmony’. In 1995 former Australian Labor leader Paul Keating argued that ‘a prime minister’s duty, his first duty, is to the security of his country’, while his successor Kim Beazley declared the party’s central values as ‘security and opportunity’, and elevated security to an overarching goal that linked, along a seamless continuum, the personal security of individuals and families with the security of the nation itself. In Indonesia, security was a fundamental societal discourse during the entire tenure of the Suharto New Order, and has only taken on greater urgency in the turmoil which accompanied his retreat from power. In Indonesia’s doctrinal continuum between national and regional ‘resilience’, security links the unity and prosperity of the nation to ideal systems of regional and international order.

Indeed the political theorist R. N. Berki argues that security is the ultimate and overriding human value, the basic condition for life and freedom, and the critical scholar Michael Dillon recognises the same drive: ‘security impress[es] itself upon political thought as a self-evident condition for the very existence of life – both individual and social’. R. B. J. Walker likewise argues that modern accounts of security define ‘the conditions under which we have been constructed as subjects subject to subjection. They tell us who we must be’.

Even a position admirably antithetical to that of Berki and other realists, as set out by J. Ann Tickner in her book Gender in International Relations, accepts that ‘the achievement of security has always been central to the normative concerns of international relations scholars’. Her work seeks to realise a ‘truly comprehensive security’ that adds the removal of ‘gender relations of domination and subordination’ to ‘the elimination of physical, structural and ecological violence’. Similarly Walker’s earlier book One World, Many Worlds argued for ‘a clearer sense of what it means to have security for all people rather than the national security that now renders everyone increasingly insecure’. Whatever the important differences between Tickner, the early Walker and the still hegemonic claims of realism, there remained a common assumption that security is universal.

However, these differences should not be quickly effaced. While the common metaphysical assumption presents a problem, the critiques of Tickner, Walker and others have been of enormous political value, and implicitly contested both their own and realist assumptions that security was universal. This occurred in two ways. First, in arguments for human security there was a radical shift in the nature of the subject to be protected:
from the highly abstract imaginary of the nation-state to the immediate, corporeal distress of the human; a human which, in that distress, activates a call for difference that simultaneously undermines the illusory unity of a body-politic that would subsume all differences beneath a common imagination of home.

Second, the force of such critiques shattered Realism’s claim to be a founding and comprehensive account of security: scattering its objects, methods, and normative aims into an often contradictory and antithetical dispersal. What was revealed here was not a universality but a field of conflict – as much social as conceptual. This creates some serious problems for a more radical and inclusive language of security, however important its desire for justice. This was recognised later by Walker, who argued in 1997 that ‘demands for broader accounts of security risk inducing epistemological overload’.

Indeed Simon Dalby argues that security, as a concept, may no longer be viable. He thinks that radical reformulations suggest that: ‘the political structures of modernity, patriarchy and capitalism are the sources [rather than the vulnerable objects] of insecurity . . . [are] so different as to call into question whether the term itself can be stretched to accommodate such reinterpretations. Inescapably, it puts into question the utility of the term in political discourse after the Cold War.'

Thus humanist critiques of security uncover an aporia within the concept of security. An aporia is an event that prevents a metaphysical discourse from fulfilling its promised unity: not a contradiction which can be brought into the dialectic, smoothed over and resolved into the unity of the concept, but an untotalisable problem at the heart of the concept, disrupting its trajectory, emptying out its fullness, opening out its closure. Jacques Derrida writes of aporia being an ‘impasse’, a path that cannot be travelled; an ‘interminable experience’ that, however, ‘must remain if one wants to think, to make come or to let come any event of decision or responsibility’.

As an event, Derrida sees the aporia as something like a stranger crossing the threshold of a foreign land: yet the aporetic stranger ‘does not simply cross a given threshold’ but ‘affects the very experience of the threshold . . . to the point of annihilating or rendering indeterminate all the distinctive signs of a prior identity, beginning with the very border that delineated a legitimate home and assured lineage, names and language . . .’. With this in mind, we can begin to imagine how a critical discourse (the ‘stranger’ in the security state) can challenge and open up the self-evidence of security, its self- and boundary-drawing nature, its imbrication with borders, sovereignty, identity and violence. Hence it is important to open up and focus on aporias: they bring possibility, the hope of breaking down the hegemony and assumptions of powerful political concepts, to think and create new social, ethical and economic relationships outside their oppressive structures of political and epistemological order – in short, they help us to think new paths. Aporias mark not merely the failure of
concepts but a new potential to experience and imagine the impossible. This is where the critical and life-affirming potential of genealogy can come into play.

My particular concern with humanist discourses of security is that, whatever their critical value, they leave in place (and possibly strengthen) a key structural feature of the elite strategy they oppose: its claim to embody truth and to fix the contours of the real. In particular, the ontology of security/threat or security/insecurity – which forms the basic condition of the real for mainstream discourses of international policy – remains powerfully in place, and security’s broader function as a defining condition of human experience and modern political life remains invisible and unexamined. This is to abjure a powerful critical approach that is able to question the very categories in which our thinking, our experience and actions remain confined.

This chapter remains focused on the aporias that lie at the heart of security, rather than pushing into the spaces that potentially lie beyond. This is another project, one whose contours are already becoming clearer and which I address in detail in Chapters 2 and 3. What this chapter builds is a genealogical account of security’s origins and cultural power, its ability to provide what Walker calls a ‘constitutive account of the political’ – as he says, ‘claims about common security, collective security, or world security do little more than fudge the contradictions written into the heart of modern politics: we can only become humans, or anything else, after we have given up our humanity, or any other attachments, to the greater good of citizenship’. Before we can rewrite security we have to properly understand how security has written us – how it has shaped and limited our very possibility, the possibilities for our selves, our relationships and our available images of political, social and economic order. This, as Walker intriguingly hints, is also to explore the aporetic distance that modernity establishes between our ‘humanity’ and a secure identity defined and limited by the state. In short, security needs to be placed alongside a range of other economic, political, technological, philosophic and scientific developments as one of the central constitutive events of our modernity, and it remains one of its essential underpinnings.

Security derives its enormous cultural power from its place at the centre of modern political thought: of a thought which, after first establishing the founding myths of modern political society, has further sought to think the juridical basis and function of the state, its enabling relation to a broader cultural and economic modernity, and to the imagination of ‘progressive’ forms of modern political and economic subjectivity. Just as Foucault sought, through the idea of governmentality, to trace the emergence of simultaneously totalising and individualising forms of state power, I would argue that security occupies a key enabling position at their junction. The remainder of this chapter elucidates security’s ‘constitutive account of the political’ through a critical reading of Hobbes, Locke, the
utilitarian philosopher Jeremy Bentham, and Hegel, using Foucault’s writings on governmental reason as a loose template.

It is in this constitutive account of the political that we find the second aporia of security, which is opened up as an impasse within its basic conceptual structure. Sadly, this is a moral impasse that also possesses a malign functionality. This aporia occurs because despite their presumption to universality, realist structures of security have always argued that the security of the self (the individual, the nation or the ‘way of life’) must be purchased at the expense of another. This was starkly laid out by Berki, who wrote in his book *Security and Society* that:

> Seeking after security for oneself and being a cause of insecurity for others are not just closely related; they are the same thing, with no chance of either logical or existential separation . . . when the chips are down, and to a certain degree, they are always down . . . it is my life, my freedom, my security *versus* the rest of the human race. ¹⁸

Ur-theorist of realism Hans Morgenthau, surprisingly enough, expressed some qualms about such an image of security, despite having done so much to entrench national security at the apex of modern policy making. With the advent of the nuclear age, he argued, no state could purchase its security at the expense of another; now diplomacy must seek to make all nations *equally* secure. ¹⁹

However, this insight was lost on a generation of later theorists and policymakers, for whom security would inevitably imply the sacrifice of the Other. Consider George Kennan’s argument, in 1948, that the United States would have to ‘to devise a pattern of relationships which will permit us to retain our position of [economic] disparity without positive detriment to our national security . . . We should cease to talk about vague – and for the Far East – unreal objectives such as human rights, the raising of the living standards, and democratisation’. ²⁰ One of Australia’s most senior and influential policymakers of the post-Vietnam era, Richard Woolcott, underlined the continuing power of this view when he argued in 1995 that ‘sentimental notions’ of self-determination for East Timor and Bougainville were a threat to Australia’s national security (a security that for two decades had been premised on close relations and military co-operation with the murderous Suharto regime). ²¹ This highlights an urgent need to examine the images of Self and Other that animate (in)secure identities, and to expose the violence and repression that is so often relied on to police them.

I am serious in arguing that the aporias of security do create important room to move, to disrupt its claim to universality and truth, to imagine new possibilities that escape its repressive dialectic of Self and Other. Yet here we also encounter a disturbing irony. Security forms a political technology *whose power partly derives from its aporetic structure*. 
A generalised opposition between society and its others has worked as an effective technology of fear, to construct and police forms of national and ethnic identity; while illusions of universal security have simultaneously worked as a smokescreen for a Realpolitik that purchases the security of the Self at the expense of the Other. In short, security’s power lies in the very slipperiness of its significations, its ironic structure of meaning, its ability to have an almost universal appeal yet name very different arrangements of order and possibility for different groups of people. This is why it is pointless to try and stabilise security’s ontology. It is better to track security’s tactical and discursive power though its development as a constitutive account of the political, one that is simultaneously structured, enabled and fissured by its aporias.

Security and ‘government’

In his Governmentality lecture Foucault traced the emergence of security within Western political thought through two linked developments: the first, during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, of the administrative and governmental apparatuses of the territorial monarchies, of mercantilism, statistics and the Cameralist’s ‘science of police’; and the second, of what he called an ‘anti-Machiavellian literature’, which sought to formulate an ‘art of government’ against that narrower focus on the Prince, his sovereignty and preservation’. Security and its associated problems of ‘government’ lie, he argued,

at the crossroads of two processes: the one which, shattering the structures of feudalism, leads to the establishment of the great territorial, administrative and colonial states; and that totally different movement which, with the Reformation and Counter-Reformation, raises the issue of how one must be spiritually ruled and led on this earth in order to achieve eternal salvation.22

Foucault highlighted two key features of Machiavelli’s study. The first was that its central problematic, the link between the prince, his subjects and territory, was a ‘purely synthetic one’, and thus eternally fragile, vulnerable to both external enemies and from within, from ‘subjects who have no a priori reason to accept his rule’. Second, this implied that the objective of the exercise of power was ‘to reinforce, strengthen and protect the principality, but with this last understood not to mean the objective ensemble of its subjects and territory, but rather the Prince’s relation with what he owns’.23

The art of government was thus distinguished from the drama of possession, and implied both the ‘government’ of individuals and social institutions and the designation of new techniques and objects of power that would emerge within the problem of ‘governing the state as a whole’.
Between these realms was posed an essential continuity: the more discrete forms of governing were still ‘internal to the state or society’ and the task of the art of government was to establish them within a continuum that worked ‘in both an upwards and a downwards direction’. The downwards line, which ‘transmits to individual behaviour and the running of the family the same principles as the good government of the state’, was at this time beginning to be called ‘police’. The upwards line meant the application of principles of self- and familial government to the conduct of the state’s affairs; we can also locate it in the emergence of what Foucault elsewhere discussed as ‘reason of state’, which sought specific forms of knowledge whose object was the state itself, rather than the uncertain relation between the prince and his realm.²⁴

In a formulation echoed powerfully in the writings of Jeremy Bentham, one that would be central to the general economic function of security, Foucault argued that reason of state implied a rationality of government which could ensure that the state would be infinitely extended in time:

The aim of such an art of governing is to reinforce the state itself . . . This idea is a very important one. It is bound up with a new historical outlook. Indeed, it implies that states are realities which must hold out for an indefinite length of historical time – and in a disputed geographical area. [This] presupposes the constitution of certain types of knowledge. Government is only possible if the strength of the state is known; it can thus be sustained.²⁵

An analogous development was the extension of the idea of economy and its introduction into a general political practice: the invention of ‘political economy’ as we now understand it. Here Foucault cited Rousseau, who sought to derive from economy (which to that point had signified ‘the wise government of the family for the common welfare of all’) a principle for the general organisation of society: ‘To govern a state will therefore mean . . . exercising towards all its inhabitants, and the wealth and behaviour of each and all, a form of surveillance and control as attentive as that of the head of a family over his household and his goods.’²⁶ Foucault related this to a shift, in the work of Guillaume de La Perrière, from a focus on sovereignty as a rule over territory to the government of things, or ‘a sort of complex of men and things’, which would incorporate territory into a set of economic relations:

The things which government is to be concerned with are in fact men, but men in their relations, their links, their imbrication with those other things which are wealth, resources, means of subsistence, the territory with its specific qualities, climate, irrigation, fertility etc.; men in their relation to customs, habits, ways of acting and thinking
Foucault argued that in order to fully realise this objective, the art of government had had, through a difficult and lengthy historical process, to substantially recast its ties to the model of sovereignty and its basis in the narrow economic model of the family, which ‘was unlikely to be able to respond adequately to the importance of territorial acquisitions and royal finance’. Thus an important new object of politics emerged: population.

Statistics – the science that sought knowledge about the state in all its elements and expanse – now discovered that population had its own measurable ‘regularities’, that with it came new objects of medicine, labour and wealth, and that population had analogous economic effects through its movements, customs and activities. The family was thus recast as ‘an element internal to population, and as a fundamental instrument in its government’. We can see here the convergence with the phenomenon Foucault has elsewhere described, the linked development of the human sciences and the social technologies of discipline which enabled a more detailed and flexible production of subjectivity: ‘Discipline was never more important or more valorised than at the moment when it become important to manage a population.’

Political economy, he wrote, ‘arises out of the perception of new networks of continuous and multiple relations between population, territory and wealth’ and out of the development of new techniques of intervention which, I would argue, become by the twentieth century a field encompassing the whole task of government: linking welfare, defence, economics, health, immigration, communications, science, education and law. Sovereignty is then rearticulated in the terms of Rousseau’s attempt, in The Social Contract, to divine ‘a general principle of government which allows room both for a juridical principle of sovereignty and for the elements through which an art of government can be defined and characterised’. What forms is a triangle of rationalities linking sovereignty, discipline and government, which together is governmentality: a powerful ensemble ‘formed by the institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, the calculations and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific albeit complex form of power, which has as its target population, as its essential technical means apparatures of security’.

Colin Gordon argues that Foucault treats security here not merely as a self-evident object of political power, but ‘as a specific principle of political method and practice, distinct alike from those of law, sovereignty and discipline, and capable of various modes of combination with these other principles and practices within diverse governmental configurations’. He goes on to argue that for Foucault security, from the eighteenth
century onward, ‘tends increasingly to become the dominant component of modern governmental rationality: we live today not so much in a Rechtsstaat or disciplinary society as in a society of security’. 31

The artificial man: foundations of the nation-state

If Foucault emphasised the intense problematisation of sovereignty within the emergence of an ‘art of government’, the work of Hobbes and Locke countered this problem exactly in the terms later posed by Rousseau (of reconciling a juridical model of sovereignty with the new rationalities of ‘government’), and in so doing achieved a more powerful fusion of both. What they anticipated was the kind of triple articulation Foucault sought to highlight – between the juridical basis of the state and civil society expressed by sovereignty, the detailed tactics of individualisation represented by discipline, and the regulation of the economic phenomena of population. If we resist Foucault’s tendency to draw such strict lines between legally codified and uncodified power (‘sovereignty’ and ‘government’), we might suggest that sovereignty now had discursive and ontological effects which extended to subjectivity and enhanced governmentality’s more diffuse model of power. By tying together sovereign and subject, state and citizen, and nation and human with such a tight existential bond security became an ontological form, a vehicle and container for being.

In short, through their narrative of the emergence of the modern political society, Hobbes and Locke laid out the discursive limits and conditions for the citizen as a form of subjectivity and bound the citizen to the state as an essential figure. Sovereignty became not merely a juridical foundation for the state as a concept and set of institutions, but a rhetorical trope that persuades the ‘citizen’ of the state’s inevitability, necessity and superiority. Security was a key figure in this formation – addressed to subjectivity as a promise of protection and adjudication, and to population as a trans-societal task of multiplying prosperity. All this reposed on a powerful political humanism, centred on the body, in which state and citizen find their identity and ontological ground – a circular movement, which begins with the liberty and reason of men in their singularity, imagines the state as the common body-politic of men in their collectivity, and returns as an enhanced promise of individual freedom within the now safer bounds of the state’s supreme rationality and protective violence.

Both thinkers begin from the same founding myth – the emergence of political society from the state of nature. This both demands a price, and brings with it a greater reward. In his Second Treatise of Government Locke asked: if in the state of nature man is ‘absolute Lord of his own person and possessions, equal to the greatest, and subject to no Body, why will he part with his freedom?’ His answer is security:
although in the state of nature he hath such a right, yet the enjoyment of it is very uncertain, and constantly exposed to the Invasion of others. For all being Kings as much as he, every Man his Equal, and the greater part no strict Observers of Equity and Justice, the enjoyment of the property he has in this state is very unsafe, very unsecure. This makes him willing to quit a Condition, which, however free, is full of fears and continual dangers: And 'tis not without reason that he seeks out, and is willing to join in society with others who are already united, or have a mind to unite for the mutual preservation of their Lives, Liberties and Estates, which I call by the general name property.\textsuperscript{32}

For Locke, the state of nature, which is defined by the lack of any overarching authority able to adjudicate disputes, can rapidly descend into a 'state of war' in which force is the only means of arbitration and in which there are no agreed and universal standards of justice. The great appeal of the political society is that 'every one of the Members hath quitted this natural power' and 'resigned it up into the hands of the Community'; thus they become 'one People, one Body Politick', which 'puts Men out of a state of nature into that of a Commonwealth . . .' (emphasis in original).\textsuperscript{33}

Hobbes's description of this process in \textit{Leviathan}, while virtually identical, was considerably more theatrical. For him the state of nature was by definition a state of war – because there is no single concept of right, 'every man has a right to everything, even to one anothers body'; because there is no common power: 'there is no Law: where no Law, no Injustice. Force and Fraud are in warre the two Cardinall virtues . . . as long as this naturall Right of every man to every thing endureth, there can be no security to any man (how strong or wise soever he be) of living out the time which Nature ordinarily alloweth men to live.' The equality of men in the state of nature led only to a perpetual cycle of insecurity: '. . . where an invader hath no more to feare, than another man’s single power; if one plant, sow, build, or possess a convenient Seat, others may probably be expected to come prepared with forces united, to dispossesse, and deprive him, not only of the fruit of his labor, but also of his life, or liberty. And the Invader again is in the like danger of another.'\textsuperscript{34} From this flowed the famous conclusion that:

Whatever therefore is consequent to a time of Warre, where every man is Enemy to every man; the same is consequent to the time, wherein men live without other security, than what their own strength, and their own invention will furnish them withall. In such condition there is no place for Industry; because the fruit thereof is uncertain; and consequently no Culture of the Earth; no Navigation nor use of the commodities that may be imported by sea; no commodious
Building; no instruments of moving and removing of things as require much force; no Knowledge of the face of the earth; no account of Time; no Arts; no Letters; no Society; and which is worst of all, continuall feare, and danger of violent death; And the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.35

Aside from the famous closing lines, this passage is highly important, providing a link between the myth of the state of nature, and the fundamental promise and objectives of the state, which are not only to provide a means of protection for individuals but to enable a new kind of society to flourish.

Here we can see security’s function at the threshold and fulcrum of our modernity – the birth of the Artificial Man, Leviathan, enables not merely the development of more efficient forms of governmental reason but also new industrial and cultural possibilities in which the idea of a great and progressive civilisation – of the modern itself – can become real. In an echo of the continental theorists of reason of state, we hear the same themes of the strength and felicity of the state as a whole, the multiplication of its powers, allied to a founding myth of sovereignty as the higher unity of men in civil society. The Commonwealth is a ‘multitude united in one Person’; more than ‘Consent, or Concord’ but ‘a reall Unitie of them all’:

The only way to erect such a common power . . . is to conferre all their power and strength upon one man, or upon one Assembly of men, that may reduce all their Wills, by plurality of voices, into one Will: which is as much to say, to appoint one man, or Assembly of men, to beare their Person; and every one to owne, and acknowledge himselfe to be the Author of whatsoever he that so beareth their Person . . . and therein to submit their Wills, everyone to his Will, and their judgements, to his Judgement.36

All their power and strength – here was the imaginary of not merely a new ‘productivity’ of power but of an enormous quantitative revolution, expressed in the cover image of the book’s first edition in the British Museum: the crowned sovereign rising over his territories, head piercing the clouds, his body formed from the thousands of bodies subsumed within his own; the Mortall God to whom all are subject and of whom all Others are in awe. In this metaphor of the body-politic was the problem of Machiavelli’s prince resolved: no longer a ‘synthetic’, vulnerable link between sovereign and subject but their absolute fusion and identity, in a chilling prophecy of Hegel’s merging of the subject with the unity of the One.

The enormous political closure this achieves is demonstrated most powerfully in Hobbes’s introduction to Leviathan, in which the state is
imagined as an immense natural machine, an ‘Artificiall Man’ for whom to be torn apart is tantamount to annihilation:

For by Art is created that great Leviathan called a Commonwealth, or State which is but an Artificiall Man . . . in which the Soveraignty is an artificial Soul, as giving life and motion to the whole body; The Magistrates, and other officers of Judicature and Execution, artificial Joynts; Reward and Punishment (by which fastened to the seate of the soveraignty, every joynt and member is moved to perform his duty) are the Nerves, that do they same in the Body Naturall; the Wealth and Riches of all the particular members, are the Strength; Salus Populi (the people’s safety) is Business; Counsellors, by whom all things needful for it to know are suggested unto it, are the Memory; Equity and Lawes, an artificial Reason and Will; Concord, Health; Sedition, Sickness; and Civill war, Death (emphasis in original). 37

Here, in embryo, was the philosophical basis of the modern nationalisms whose darkest manifestations would be fascism, imperialism and genocide, and of the rhetorics and narratives of national identity which gave them signifying force. Here too was the basis for the state’s repression of critics and reformers (as seditious) and, most violently, elimination of minorities whose claims appear to threaten the state’s bodily integrity. Here, in a dark and protean form, is R. N. Berki’s image of a security based on the abandonment and repression of the Other.

In cases such as the colonisation of Australia or the Americas, the inability of indigenous peoples to conform with such a model of sovereignty was taken as a sign of backwardness and thus legitimated dispossession, as an image of security’s outside; or, more sadly, in various instances of decolonisation subaltern ‘freedom’ has been achieved only to yield to problems caused by the ethnic makeup of states or the abuse of power by the new elites. What becomes clear is that all too often the constitution of sovereignty subsumes and represses cultural, linguistic and political differences, rather than liberates them, and that such unities would already be secured through the negative imagination of the Other. This economy of sameness is central to security’s system of thought and the entire history of the West: the expansion, refinement and modernity of its civilisation. As the image of conflict is seemingly eliminated from the inside of the sovereign body, it is reconstituted as its essential and threatening outside, its very condition of possibility and thus its interior. Its function is one of self-definition, as Foucault wrote of madness for reason: ‘the way in which a culture can determine in a massive, general form the difference that limits it’. 38

Such a negative image of the Other was already strongly present in Hobbes and Locke: first in the idea of the state of nature itself, as an essential realm of conflict where passions rule reason and insecurity.
is perpetual; second, in the division between reason and unreason, in which ‘Children, Fools and Mad-men’ cannot be the authors of their own or the sovereign’s actions, and thus not whole subjects; third, in the division between criminal and society, strictly established by the Law, which conforms to reason and embodies the will of the people; and finally, in the division between savage and civilised. Hobbes wrote that while he did not believe that the state of war was always a general condition of life, the exception was ‘the savage people in many places of America’ who, ‘except the government of small Families, the concord of which dependeth on natural lust, have no government at all; and live at this day in that brutish manner’. 39

Locke echoed that ‘in many parts of America there was no Government at all’ and, in an argument essential for the security–political economy relation evident in Bentham, developed an image of ‘Indian’ backwardness on the basis of their imperfect use of labour. For Locke ‘Labour’ (which was the ontological basis of property as the productive use of land) pivoted on an image of waste and impoverishment in the ‘Indian’s’ failure to exploit the earth:

There cannot be a clearer demonstration of any thing, than several nations of the Americans are in this, who are rich in Land, and poor in all the Comforts of Life; whom Nature having furnished as liberally as any other people, with the materials of Plenty, i.e. a fruitful soil, apt to produce in abundance, what might serve for food, rayment, and delight; yet for want of improving it by labour, have not one-hundredth part of the Conveniences we enjoy: And a King of a large and fruitful Territory there feeds, lodges, and is clad worse than a day Labourer in England. 40

For Locke, a claim to property was only secured by land’s exploitation through labour: ‘As much Land as a man Tills, Plants, Improves, Cultivates, and can use the Product of, so much is his Property. He by his Labour does, as it were, enclose the common.’ He further argued, in a crucial formulation, that the preservation of Property was itself the ‘chief end’ of ‘men’s uniting into Commonwealths’, and was thus the prime object of security. Property included men’s ‘lives, liberties and estates’; all such possessions found their origins in a man’s ‘property in his own person’ which is brought out of the state of nature through the ‘Labour of his body’. This was in turn secured via the Other, within the boundary between reason and unreason: ‘God gave the world to men in Common; but since he gave it them for their own benefit, and the greatest conveniences of life they were capable to draw from it, it cannot be supposed he meant it should always remain uncommon and uncultivated. He gave it to the use of the Industrious and Rational.’ 41
Thus we can see, in embryonic form, the idea of subjectivity as a movement of self-realisation upon which Hegel would base a philosophy; what Locke also achieved was a new ontological condition for subjectivity in work. (Here we also see the creeping instrumentalisation of life; if life is property it can be commodified and alienated, and henceforth seized by power.) Subjectivity was now an economic category, subsumed within a movement of progress and overcoming which would be quintessentially modern. This was also true for Locke’s discussion of money (an invention which allowed men to enlarge upon their property and conceive the economic as an idea of the future) which again reposed on the backward Other of the non-economic ‘Indian’: ‘in the beginning of the World was America, and more so than that is now: for no such thing as money was anywhere known.’

The temporal possibility for the modern economy and civilisation was thus secured by a long chain of oppositions – between the commonwealth and the state of nature, the criminal and society, the economic and the non-economic, and the savage and the civilised. As Pierre Clastres has argued, this was to establish modernity within a founding ethnocentrism, within ‘the complementary conviction that history is a one way progression, that every society is condemned to enter into that history and pass through the stages which lead from savagery to civilisation’. Security was what would make this history possible, in all its promise and horror, having already achieved an indivisible sovereign in the metaphor of the body-politic, an essential link between sovereign and subject in security, a new ontological ground for subjectivity in work and for property in subjectivity. From here political economy – and modernity as an inexorable historical progression – became thinkable. Closely anticipating the phenomenon of governmentality, security was emerging as a form of reason which aimed to liberate the economic as the goal of a general government of ‘men’.

**Bentham: security and the future**

Jeremy Bentham’s *Principles of the Civil Code* could be said to straddle this historical moment, within a context where the centrality of *raison d’état* was giving way to a form of liberalism in which the linkages between reason of state, the art of government and political economy were more problematic, yet no less necessary. While police science (or Cameralism) had already formulated a relation between totalising and individualising power which had as its objective a general prosperity, Foucault sees Adam Smith’s *The Wealth of Nations* as then marking out the point at which the Cameralists’ notion of an equivalence between state and economy was placed under stress. Political economy becomes a knowledge which is ‘lateral to’ the art of governing but cannot itself constitute
government, and its ‘effect is to resituate governmental reason within a newly complicated, open and unstable politico-epistemic configuration’ (emphasis in original).44

This new strategic complexity led to a resuscitation of Cartesian approaches that would first acknowledge such instabilities yet attempt to control them through the certitude of method; and, second, in a further ironic twist, emphasise instability to buttress established practices of state. Instability and objectivity – in both a political and epistemological sense – would become dangerous twins in the political refusal to accept uncertainty. These dilemmas would also re-emerge in the crisis of Keynesianism and the rise of economic rationalism in the 1970s, and in a related crisis in foreign policy practice and the global political economy which was a focus for theorists such as Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye.45 Yet neither Keynesianism nor monetarism was an absolute break from Smith; they were rather competing attempts at economic regulation within the complex space he had outlined.

Smith’s ‘invisible hand’ marked a shift from reason of state in that it sought to place limits on governmental intervention in contrast to an earlier emphasis on its expansion, and conceived the economy as an autonomous realm with its own laws which worked, ostensibly, for the public good. Laissez-faire then, writes Foucault, was an injunction ‘not to impede the course of things, but to ensure the course of natural and necessary modes of regulation, to make regulations which permit natural regulation to operate’.46 In twentieth-century foreign economic policy we can then see the combination of two modes: a kind of soft mercantilism wherein governments use aid programs and diplomacy to promote trade and contracts for the corporations domiciled within their state, and a form of ‘regulation of natural regulation’, which takes as its focus infrastructure, labour and foreign investment law, cost structures and trade regimes that have a more general effect on business activity and profits. Nor should we forget that Western governments, most notably the United States, have used diplomatic pressure, military intervention and sponsored coups in order to improve the business climate in many states.

Bentham’s Civil Code appeared in the space Smith carved out, entrenching security as a fundamental societal objective within the openness and uncertainty of this new political configuration. Bentham began The Civil Code by asserting that the principle object of the legislator ought to be the ‘happiness of the body politic’. This happiness consists of four objects – subsistence, abundance, equality, and security – of which security was the most important. Security guaranteed all the others, contained them, and designated acts and persons dangerous to them: ‘actions hurtful to security, when prohibited by the laws, receive the character of crimes’. Security or crime – within this brief, claustrophobic formula lay the basis of a whole system of order.
Furthermore, Bentham made the crucial and far-reaching argument that, as a guarantee of all the objects of government: ‘security is the only one which necessarily embraces the future: subsistence, abundance, equality, may be regard for a moment only; but security implies extension in point of time, with respect to all the benefits to which it is applied. Security is therefore the principal object.’

In a prophetic convergence of enlightenment thought with economic liberalism, government now took on a temporal dimension: the future was now a thinkable space in political discourse, and a general progressive movement could be imagined as an essential condition of human society. Bentham argued that security protects Man’s expectation of the future: ‘[through expectation] we are enabled to form a general plan of conduct . . . Expectation is a chain which unites our present and our future existence, and passes beyond ourselves to the generations which follow us. The sensibility of the individual is prolonged through all the links of this chain.’

Above all, as expectation the future was an economic principle, linking the construction of subjectivity as interest and desire with the general increase in prosperity modern economics calls growth: ‘the active desire of adding to our happiness, will, under the safeguard of security, incessantly produce new efforts after new acquisitions. Wants and enjoyments, those universal agents in society, after having raised the first ears of corn, will by degrees erect the granaries of abundance, always increasing and always full.’

This in turn enabled new modes of government which linked discipline with population, individualising with totalising power: a power which, seemingly without coercion, could produce individuals as subjects of their own desire while integrating them into a much broader system of regulation. Elsewhere Bentham contrasted ‘the doleful motive of punishment’ with the ‘gentle motive of reward’, the apparatus of law with ‘the gentle liberty of choice’; labour, he said, is ‘so easy and so light when animated by hope’.

This ‘uncoerced’, economic form of liberal individualism generated what Foucault has called ‘the subject of interest’, and introduced a contradiction into governmental reason: while it made individuals more accessible to power, it also distanced them from it, forming a rhetoric in which, as Bentham said, security also guarantees ‘political liberty’ against ‘the injustice of the members of the government’. This introduced, said Foucault, a ‘dissonance of rationalities’ between the juridical form of government implied by sovereignty and the more diffuse and accidental reconciliation of individual and societal interests in liberalism. Subjects were to be subservient to the exercise of sovereign power, but were also assumed to be free and autonomous economic actors. Liberalism as an art of government began, he argued, when it could formulate the ‘incompatibility between the non-totalisable multiplicity which characterises subjects of interest, and the totalising unity of the juridical sovereign’.
This generated a political problem: to discover a form of government that, while recognising that no sovereignty can fully comprehend the totality of the economy, or regulate every act that may have an economic effect, must still seek to do so. It was at the appearance of this problem that Foucault sited the junction of security, discipline and population – a mix of rationalities that might more fully grasp this uncertain political space. Thus, he argued: ‘liberty is registered not only as a right of individuals legitimately to oppose ... the sovereign, but also now as an indispensable element of governmental rationality itself.’\(^{52}\) This engendered a drive for flexibility, mobility and vigilance – as Bentham declared, ‘Economy has ... many enemies’ and hence Security ‘requires in the legislator, vigilance continually sustained, and power always in action, to defend it against his constantly reviving crowd of adversaries’.\(^{53}\) In short, the new, open space of liberalism had engendered a prophetic paranoia: the theme of a new productivity of political power which simultaneously reaches into the heart of the citizen and multiplies its own spatial reach. It seems no accident that both Bentham and Smith wrote at the height of the European imperialisms, a time in which the discursive imagination of the twentieth century – global trade, geopolitics, Clausewitzian war, and technological progress – was slowly but inexorably born.

**The strategic imagination**

In describing this productivity Foucault emphasised the simultaneous individualisation and totalisation of governmental power: discipline and desire addressed to individuals, bio-power addressed to populations, in a perpetual feedback and productive combination – a power producing the very life it sought to order and utilise.\(^{54}\) To these, however, we must add geopolitics as the form of power which combined these rationalities with the vast lusts of modern imperialism.\(^{55}\) By the mid-twentieth century geopolitics had become the practice of security par excellence: a spatialising rationality of power which sought the control of territories and populations (as both economic resources and strategic possessions) within a perpetually dangerous and contested arena, through the interdependent production of domestic and transnational political space. Not withstanding the fascist imperialisms of the 1930s, we could thus characterise geopolitics as a liberal philosophy of global intervention, which links increasingly global issues of economic management with domestic policy formations across the whole of government. The domestic and international become fused spaces through a series of interlinked processes: of domestic and foreign economic policy, transnational business and trade, or the raising of armies with images of fear and otherness which simultaneously secure and rigidify domestic identities. As global influence becomes conceivable, the inter-relation of political economy, nationalism and the Other become central to security as a vector and rationality of power.
The technology security puts into action here, which has been central to its extension from a relation between state and citizen to a principle for the actions of the body-politic in the international arena, I have chosen to call the strategic imagination. This imagination is primarily spatial, but not exclusively so, becoming powerfully linked with temporal discourses of racial superiority, political enlightenment, or cultural and economic progress (see Chapters 7–9). The strategic imagination is not so much an entry into a pre-existing space as the production of a new one by a detailed political technology which seeks to make it meaningful as it orders and partitions it into the vehicle, effect and arena of an industrial, political, military and cultural economy. Through the mapping and traversal of this space by transport, its appropriation through sovereignty, its defence by acts and means of war, and its cultivation and exploitation by industry, agriculture and commerce, the strategic imagination thus seeks to engender economically and politically useful arrangements of bodies, communities and social institutions. In this sense its space is never static and unchanging, but itself has a history: changes in technology introduce changes in its extent and permeability, changes in political doctrine change its meaning, and in turn affect not only the economic and social possibilities of individuals but their psychic interiors. Therefore, its representation is crucial: is this space threatening or safe, familiar or alien, masculine or feminine, productive or recalcitrant? What are its flows and boundaries? Above all, what is our capacity for action within its geopolitical and psychic contours?

Thus in security, vigilance, paranoia and absolutism coalesce: the post-war US national security state, with its ferocious anti-communism, its vast military deployments and its endeavour to build and strengthen a ‘global’ economy (at least outside the communist bloc), is perhaps the most powerful example. The combination of such absolutism with the rigid demarcations of anti-communism was already visible in The Civil Code: a hostility to socialism was posited as an ineradicable principle of security as prosperity. Even though equality was a goal of legislation, it must not be favoured unless ‘it does not injure security’:

>[if] property were overthrown with the direct intention of establishing equality of fortune, the evil would be irreparable: no more security, no more industry, no more abundance; society would relapse into the savage state from which it has arisen.56

These are strong words, and they lie at the heart of the liberal philosophy of government. A reconciliation of security and equality can only be achieved gradually, and without coercion, through the ‘natural’ processes of growth and prosperity. To do otherwise is to exchange ‘the gentle motive of reward’ for ‘the doleful motive of punishment’, and thus abandon the search for less coercive – and thus more effective – modes
of subjectification; to suggest that the ‘prospects of benevolence and con-
cord, which have seduced so many ardent minds . . . are only the chimeras
of the imagination’. The passage, perhaps unsurprisingly, also repeated
the Lockean formulation which posited economic progress on the move-
ment away from a ‘savage’, non-economic Other.\textsuperscript{57}

Thus by the beginning of the nineteenth century the political and onto-
logical architecture of security was firmly established, and was being
slowly refined. All its elements – sovereignty, the Other, geopolitics, eco-
nomic man – were in place and finding productive new articulations. They
must be considered essential to the vast industrial, economic and techno-
logical changes that were gathering pace under the aegis of the modern.
A fundamental platform had been laid, over which the twentieth century
could take form. There was only one missing piece.

\textbf{Hegel: security as progress}

This missing piece was described and systematised in the writings of
G. W. F. Hegel. Close in time to Bentham’s, it captured a range of influ-
ential discursive currents flowing around the Industrial Revolution and the
political and philosophical events of the European Enlightenment. His
work intervened, in a political sense, at the point where Enlightenment
rationalism and the liberal problem of government coincide, and his
thinking is especially important because he characterised such a ‘secure’
future as an entry into the radically new temporal space of the \textit{modern}.
Hegel lifted liberal ideas of freedom and right into a philosophical univer-
salism that powerfully illuminates the ontological structure of modern
nationalisms, the forms of subjectivity they engender, and the essential
(and negative) role of the Other for their thought. In particular, he devel-
oped a formal model for discourses that would attempt to reconcile liberal
political economy with a strong image of the secure nation-state. In this
transition we can see the ‘political double-bind’ take on a powerful new
form: linking a future-directed mode of self-belief and conduct with grander
nationalist and civilisational narratives in a mutually reinforcing exchange.

In the \textit{Phenomenology of Spirit} the modern appears as a break with the
past that creates exciting new possibilities and horizons. Yet it also engen-
ders uncertainty and loss: having sundered its foundations and ‘the
immediacy of faith’, and having gone ‘beyond the satisfaction and security
of the certainty that consciousness then had, of its reconciliation with the
essential being’, Spirit ‘lost its essential life’. Philosophy’s (and thus
ontology’s) task then was to recover ‘through its agency that lost sense
of solid and essential being’.\textsuperscript{58} Jürgen Habermas suggests that Hegel sought
to limit this problem through the idea of progress, ‘to close off the future
as a source of disruption with the aid of teleological constructions of
history’.\textsuperscript{59}
As if to reconcile liberalism with conservatism, Hegel sought to liberate the restless energies of modern subjectivity while controlling them, retaining a vision of stability and order in which progress takes the form, not of an irruption, but a measured and ‘rational’ design. It was again security, refracted through the liberal problematic of Smith and Bentham, which would provide the framework for this difficult calibration. It would be in the harnessing and management of uncertainty that security and spirit would coincide: security manages change and peers into the cloudy future; Spirit strives to illuminate its promise and strengthen the resolve of the present to move on.

Hegel here developed a thematic of certitude earlier visible in Descartes, which has become central to modern statecraft. Cartesian thought posits less a world which is stable prior to its cognition, than one which begins as disordered – to obtain truth it was first necessary to postulate absolute doubt and uncertainty beyond the boundaries of the Subject’s own existence and cognition, then to move, via the correct method, to stable and universal truths. As Costas Constantinou argues, ‘securitization as a discursive practice works by synchronising security, safety, and certitude’. This enters our contemporary modernity as the foundation of both a dangerous empiricism by which policymakers (stable cognitive minds) feel that policy can be made to correspond with a verifiable and accessible external reality, and as the foundation of a continual projection of uncertainty as the discourse’s own condition of possibility. In the midst of a modernity whose imagination of the future paradoxically opens up a space of darkness and unpredictability, the Cartesian model has had a potent appeal as a formal and procedural solution. As I describe in Part III, this was particularly visible in Robert McNamara’s (since disavowed) approach to the Vietnam war, and it is a desire still powerful in dominant approaches to strategy and policymaking. We have only to consider George W. Bush’s assertion, in the wake of the New York and Washington attacks of 11 September 2001, that ‘this country will define our times, not be defined by them’.

Just as subjectivity was a key achievement for Hobbes, Locke and Bentham – formed into a principle for citizenship, the secure body-politic, and economic man – it provided a central overarching principle for Hegel’s thought. He replayed the levels of subjectivity present in their work, introducing them into a temporal movement which would constitute subjectivity itself and merge it with the restless labour of the age. In particular, in the Philosophy of Right, this culmination of subjectivity was made hostage to its immersion in the greater identity represented by the nation-state. The potentially dangerous division immanent in liberalism – between state and civil society – was here controlled by a system which, allowing for the diffusion of nodes and mechanisms of power conceived by the ‘art of government’, sought to seize subjectivity at its very centre, through its effacement in the greater identity of the One. Membership of the state
was not optional – rather the full ethical development of the individual depended on its absolute psychological immersion in the ‘universal life’ of the state. In this way Hegel intensified the logocentric closure of the system visible in Hobbes and Locke. He clarified and intensified the necessity of the Other for security, for prosperity and for progress in general, incorporating it into a wholly restricted economy in which the Other was always subsumed within a return to the higher unity of the Same – that is, the Other was either physically destroyed, or its difference and political autonomy annihilated. In this way security, political violence, economic prosperity and a central organising racism powerfully coalesce.

This racism is starkly clear in the Lectures on the Philosophy of History, in which Hegel sought to show the progress of Spirit through World History. Unsurprisingly this practical forward movement of Spirit (in which Europe was at the most advanced stages of world history and America ‘the land of the future’) turned on the opposition to – and negation of – a backward Other, much as it did in Hobbes, Locke and Bentham. Hegel spoke of the ‘want of spirit’, ‘crouching submissiveness’, and ‘inferiority in all respects’ of the ‘native Americans’, and the African, he declared, ‘exhibits the natural man in his completely wild and untamed state. We must lay aside all thought of reverence and morality – all that we call feeling – if we would rightly comprehend him; there is nothing harmonious with humanity to be found’. In the face of this, it is not surprising that Pierre Clastres should write that the ‘spirituality of ethnocide is the ethic of humanism’.

This ‘progressive’ ethnocentrism in turn provided an apologia for imperialism. Hegel argued that imperialism was an entirely natural resolution of ‘the inner dialectic of civil society [which] drives it . . . to push beyond its own limits and seek markets . . . in other lands which are deficient in the goods it has overproduced’. At this point the relation between the art of government and political economy came into its own, and security made the leap from a principle for the production and management of the nation-state, to one that simultaneously directed the policies of states within an inter-national system. The historic gap had been bridged; the modern could now become possible.

Gendering security as a political technology

It would be fair to conclude, then, that a secure modernity has itself been fundamentally characterised and constituted by various modes of imperialism. Whether in ‘realist’ or ‘liberal’ forms, these modes of imperialism and geopolitics drew their underlying ontological frameworks from the constitutive account of the political analysed here. Gender is a further crucial element of this ‘geopolitical’ liberalism, affecting security’s images of Self and Other, its spatial and economic organisation of bodies and work, and in particular, the economy of action that dominates policy-
making. Most significantly, it has also been a repressed organising principle for the modern architectonic of security.

In her essay ‘Corporeal Representation In/And the Body Politic’, Moira Gatens challenges Hobbes’s account of the Leviathan as a neutral image of the political body, arguing that it is an implicitly masculine ideal: the ‘artificial man’, which, by establishing a commonwealth, ‘frees himself from the necessary but difficult dealings with both women and nature’. She argues, as I have tried to here, that this body politic has difficulty accommodating ‘anything but the same’ – because this image of sameness is secured through a refusal to acknowledge difference as such; rather difference is produced as Otherness through the exclusion of ‘different kinds of beings from the pact . . . slaves, foreigners, women, the conquered, children, the working classes’.68

This problem bears on both the subjects who have historically directed state actions (most often men) and the kinds of actions deemed legitimate and effective (those that have tended to conform to a ‘masculine’ drive for certitude and sameness). A crucial division here is that between the ‘public’ and ‘private’, which has been central to so much liberal thought, and that helps organise the interplay between the individualising and totalising modes of power that security puts into action.

Hegel is of special relevance here. In a similar way to which the mad, the criminal and the savage had to be excluded from the body politic in earlier accounts, in the Philosophy of Right Hegel denied fully one half of the species full subjectivity within even a ‘European’ state. This reproduces a gendered division between public and private, which would in turn be crucial for modern practices of security:

[M]an has his actual substantial life in the state, in learning, and so forth, as well as in actual labour and struggle with the external world and with himself so that it is only out of his diremption that he fights his way to self-subsistent unity with himself . . . Woman, on the other hand, has her substantive destiny in the family, and to be imbued with family piety is her ethical frame of mind.69

Thus he preserves, for subjectivity, a dialectical schema of realisation that still repose on the negation and supersession of the Other, and whose culminating moments in public life, the state, the liberal ontology of labour, production and struggle, will always be essentially ‘male’ – preserved both for male bodies and male modes of being. Writers such as Gatens, while acknowledging the partial advances of women into public life, still argue the body politic remains dominated by masculine languages and modes of existence: ‘If woman . . . speaks from this body, she is limited in what she can say. If she lives by this reason and this ethic, she still lives from the body of another.’70

These insights have direct relevance to the international conduct of states. Christine Sylvester has argued there is a pernicious ‘normativity
of sex’ structuring international relations, while Tickner argues that statecraft is dominated by an image of ‘hegemonic masculinity’ that is ‘sustained through its opposition to various subordinated and devalued masculinities such as homosexuality . . . and through its relation to various devalued femininities’. In international policy the characteristics of hegemonic masculinity ‘are projected onto the behaviour of states whose success as international actors is measured in terms of their power capabilities and capacity for self-help and autonomy’.71

What this achieves is a whole series of exclusions (and norms of action) based on the dichotomy between masculine and feminine. This generates a chain of analogous oppositions which align maleness with reason, activity, objective truth and the mind, and woman with passion, passivity, subjective truth and the body – realms and values constructed as perpetually threatening, backward and disruptive. By then aligning these with two other crucial dichotomies – between savage and civilised, and the commonwealth and the state of nature – this chain of oppositions gives life to the progressive movement of Being central to a post-Enlightenment politics of security.

In the liberal chain that links subjectivity, economy and geopolitics, gender is simultaneously a work on the Self, a principle for the participation of individuals in society, and a principle for the conduct of the state in managing subject populations and constructing geopolitical space. Hegemonic masculinity has also been crucial to universalising the liberal mode of economic subjectivity based around the subjugation, control and exploitation of nature – with the implicit exclusion of other possible modes of economic life.72 A pivotal figure here is Descartes, whose philosophical account of method and the division between mind and body has underpinned many characteristics of the modern liberal order – its obsession with political and epistemological certitude (stability and equilibrium), the vision of nature implicit in modern economics, and the control and production of international space.

Genevieve Lloyd emphasises how the separation of mind and body was essential to Descartes’ vision of a ‘unitary pure thought’, which secured the foundations of modern science, yet simultaneously separated it from the rest of life. Lloyd also draws out the links between Cartesian method and Hegel’s association of male attainments with universality. Maleness becomes a technical attribute achieved by breaking away from the nature associated with woman, and thus analogous to modern theories of technological, political and economic progress based on the manipulation and control of nature.73 Christine Sylvester shows how such formations are mobilised in policymaking when she examines the masculine effacement of embodiment in international relations – arguing, for example, that Graham Allison depicted Washington decision-makers during the Cuban missile crisis as ‘rational pulsating brains detached from other body parts’.74
This critique of security’s Cartesian underpinnings opens up significant questions about its structure and operation as a concept – however much they disavow it; Derrida reminds us that all such metaphysical ideals exist in a relation of dependence to a subordinated term they claim to supersede or expel. Security is no different. While betraying pretensions to absolute self-presence, security only ever exists in relation to ‘insecurity’ – it thus operates according to the Hegelian economy, which incorporates this dichotomy into a ‘dialectical’ movement and which poses the second term as the anathema of the first, which then becomes an ideal state, or goal, towards which one aspires in a movement away from the second. Security then becomes a powerful signifier of an ideal political, economic and cultural order, opposed to ‘others’ designated as inferior or threatening. Yet its promise breaks down when we consider that, because ‘security’ is bound into a dependent relation with ‘insecurity’, it can never escape it – it must continue to produce images of ‘insecurity’ in order to retain meaning.

Deployed into a political technology that activates the exchange between the ‘individual’ and the ‘total’, this economy has two potent effects. At the level of the individual, it forms a powerful mechanism of subjectivity in which images of fear and insecurity (at a personal, societal or geopolitical level – often all at once) can be used to manipulate individuals and populations. As Michael Dillon suggests, ‘Don’t ask what a people is . . . ask how an order of fear forms a people.’ Such images portray the state as patriarchal and protective, provoking feelings of allegiance, safety and submission: activating the exchange between public and private, they tend to feminise the citizenry while reserving full masculine participation in the defence of the state for men. The argument that women are unsuitable for combat has served both to make legitimate the exclusion of women from public life, and to make men’s participation in war the vehicle of a more ‘total’ enactment of subjectivity. Moira Gatens believes this derives from the condition (dating from the Greeks or even ‘the original covenant between God and Abraham’) for full admission to the political body being that one can make the appropriate forfeit. For Abraham it was the ‘corporeal sacrifice’ of his foreskin; for modern men it has too often been life in battle.

At the level of the total, insecurity also works as a metaphor describing both the inherent nature of the international system and an ideal mode of state action. Thus we have the realist assertion that the international system is essentially anarchic, and that the objective of states should be to order it, using force as a fundamental mechanism; only within such a Cartesian metaphysic does a statement like E. H. Carr’s, that military strength is ‘a recognised bearer of political values’, take on meaning. In fact, in this discourse a hegemonic masculinity, an enlightenment progressivism and a founding ethnocentrism coalesce to generate the modern politico-economic thematic of order – one that imagines certain economic modes (indigenous or agriculture-based) and forms of identification
(sub-state and local) as backward, and often also unstable and threatening. Thus feminised and demonised they are made subject to the ordering effects of both a male economy of action (too often military and repressive) and to the ultimate masculine meta-subject (the industrialising state). As Tickner notes, ‘nonwhites and tropical countries are often depicted as irrational, emotional and unstable, characteristics that are often attributed to women.’

Order, in this sense, becomes analogous to the taming of woman and nature. From the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century movements of colonisation, to the Cold War battles over the Third World, and the millennium-turn efforts to manage and accelerate globalisation, such integrated images of race and gender have been central to the construction of an architectonic mode of security and order – one that, through the operations of the strategic imagination, might reach simultaneously into the depths of the subject and integrate them into the vast spaces and flows of geopolitics. In this vision, security appears as what it has too often been: a stifling disciplinary machine. How could it ever be escaped?

Refusing security

It is perhaps easy to become despondent, but as countless struggles for freedom, justice and social transformation have proved, a sense of seriousness can be tempered with the knowledge that many of the tools are already available – and where they are not, the effort to create a productive new critical sensibility is well advanced. There is also a crucial political opening within the liberal problematic itself, in the sense that it assumes that power is most effective when it is absorbed as truth, consented to and desired – which creates an important space for dissent, critique and refusal. As Colin Gordon argues, Foucault thought that the very possibility of governing was conditional on it being credible to the governed as well as the governing. This throws weight onto the question of how security works as a technology of subjectivity. It is to take up Foucault’s challenge, framed as a reversal of the liberal progressive movement of being we have seen in Hegel, not to discover who what are so much as to refuse what we are. Just as security rules subjectivity as both a totalising and individualising blackmail and promise, it is at these levels we too can intervene. We can critique the machinic frameworks of possibility represented by law, policy, economic regulation and diplomacy, while challenging the way these institutions deploy language to draw individual subjects into their consensual web.

This suggests, at least provisionally, a dual strategy. The first asserts the space for agency, both in challenging available possibilities for being and their larger socio-economic implications. Pushing beyond security requires tactics that can work at many levels: that empower individuals to recognise the larger social, cultural and economic implications of the
everyday forms of desire, subjection and discipline they encounter, to challenge and rewrite them, and which in turn contribute to collective efforts to transform the larger structures of being, exchange and power that sustain (and have been sustained by) these forms. As Derrida suggests, this is to open up aporetic possibilities that transgress and call into question the boundaries of the self, society and the international that security seeks to imagine and police.

The second seeks new ethical principles based on a critique of the rigid and repressive forms of identity security has heretofore offered. Thus writers such as Rosalyn Diprose, William Connolly and Moira Gatens have sought to imagine a new ethical relationship, which thinks difference not on the basis of the Same, but on the basis of a dialogue with the Other that might allow space for the unknown and unfamiliar, for what Gatens calls a ‘debate and engagement with the other’s law and the other’s ethics’ – an encounter which involves a transformation of the self rather than the other. (The potentials and limits of these models of ethics are explored in more detail in Chapter 3, where I critically analyse the political possibilities offered by the thought of Emmanuel Levinas, Martin Heidegger and Martin Buber.) In short, while the sweep and power of security must be acknowledged, it must also be refused: at the simultaneous levels of individual identity, social order and macroeconomic possibility, it would entail another kind of work on ‘ourselves’ – a political refusal of the One, the imagination of an Other that never returns to the Same. It is to imagine a world in which alternative possibilities of society, justice and existence are free to develop, independent of sovereign ontologies and their animating forms of geopolitical control, desire and violence. It is to ask if there can be a world or a security after security, and what its shimmering possibilities might be.
2 Poetry outside security
The jagged edges of Southeast Asia

So Daddy, I’m finally through.
The black telephone’s off at the root
The voices just can’t worm through . . .
There’s a stake in your fat black heart
And the villagers never liked you.
They are dancing and stamping on you.

Sylvia Plath, ‘Daddy’, 1962

Can security be escaped?
This chapter speculates that it can – that a certain kind of poetry provides a way of thinking past the dominant ontological assumptions and emotional promises of prevailing political discourses of security. While security is an idealist state promise of perfect safety and ‘smoothness’, it also reposes on a structure of fear, threat and ‘jaggedness’ through its association with militarism, repression and economic exploitation. In this chapter I argue that such poetry – which presses the limits of both textual form and psychic experience – could provide valuable clues to escaping the binary trap that orders either security or chaos, smoothness or jaggedness. By doing so it can help liberate subjectivity from a powerful modern technology of the soul which binds state and subject into an intimate, but ultimately destructive, relation.

It is a central argument of this book that security should be seen as such a technology of the soul, a political technology, which at least since the eighteenth century has used an ever more sophisticated play of metaphor, policy and power to weave the subject, the nation and the international system into a common space of pleasure, production and war. In this guise security is a guarantee of identity and being, a system of ‘governmental’ power over subjects and populations, and a discursive, administrative and technological relation between such subjects and a global space of conflict and opportunity.

By beginning with Sylvia Plath’s most (in)famous poem I want to present security as a malevolent, vampyric, indeed parental power, which
ought to be as much a source of revulsion and struggle, as of comfort. The parental figure in security is obviously the state, but it is also the very complex ‘type of individualisation which is linked to the state’.\textsuperscript{2} So Plath’s struggle, as ours, might be both against the figure of the father and her own psychic status of daughter; against her own historic investment of identity in the father, her abject binds of love and anger and submission, against her social, cultural and familial structure of \textit{being}. For what else is patriotism, but a psychic immersion in the myths and identity of the nation? What is consumption, but a psychic immersion in the pleasures of the commodity and the political, administrative and productive binds of the modern economy? What does security secure, in the words of countless policymakers, but ‘our’ territorial integrity, our ‘prosperity’ and our ‘way of life’ – our \textit{being}? How does security frame and police identity, but in an outward spiral from subject, family and state to an ‘anarchic’ world it sees as at once turbulence, threat and opportunity? And perhaps most importantly, to whom is security available? To those who are citizens, not aliens; patriots, not subversives; to the docile and productive, not recalcitrant or criminal.

Plath’s poem ‘Daddy’ is remarkable because it refuses to celebrate any of those things waiting, fearfully, to be secured. Rather it is a wonderfully recalcitrant performance both of language and self, that we can read as an example of Foucault’s challenge to ‘refuse what we are’\textsuperscript{3}. In the movement of its narrative and the force of its metaphor the poem is an exorcism: a reclaiming of the past, of subjectivity and agency, from those who would suffocate her with the arrogance of a patriarchal law, with the pain of a desire always postponed, known only as lack and abjection, that promises as well as denies, and that is visible only as an absence that can never be closed over. In her choice of subjectivity the poem would claim the impossible, to bring the Other to life with a scandalous speech that seeks not an escape but a passage \textit{through} fear and loss; that scatters, burns, sears the past in the barely imaginable horror of its signifying moment; that makes us new but chills us to the bone as well:

\begin{quote}
An engine, an engine
Chuffing me off like a Jew
A Jew to Dachau, Auschwitz, Belsen.

\ldots Panzer-man, panzer-man, O You –

Every woman adores a fascist,
the boot in the face, the brute
brute heart of a brute like you.\textsuperscript{4}
\end{quote}

Whatever potential for refusal – even liberation – the poem offers, it obviously is a dangerous strategy, involving the entry into a space of fear...
and pain which must have been an element in her suicide in 1963. That the poem is also a highly stylised fiction – her father was neither a Nazi nor she Jewish – also underlines the way in which the poem’s metaphoric work was deliberately chosen, whatever its obvious psychic risks. But why? As a vehicle for an exploration of her unresolved grief – at her father’s death when she was nine, or the disintegration of her marriage to Ted Hughes – this strategy seems outlandish. However I believe there was more going on. In her poem ‘Lady Lazarus’, she repeats these metaphors (‘my skin bright as a Nazi lampshade / My face a featureless, fine Jew linen’), while her poem ‘Mary’s Song’ cites the Holocaust, not as direct ‘personal’ experience, but as an historical and psychic atmosphere which constrains and saddens being:

Gray birds obsess my heart,
Mouth ash, ash of eye . . .
On the high
Precipice
That emptied one man into space
The ovens glowed like the heavens, incandescent.

It is a heart, this holocaust I walk in.⁵

As a model for agency, such risky strategies, which walk the edge of an abyss in which being dissolves completely, would seem less than wise. Yet if we site such work historically, we might understand it better. While Plath has long been read as a purely ‘confessional’ poet, enacting her private traumas for a curious public audience (‘The peanut-crunching crowd / Shoves in to see / Them unwrap me hand and foot’),⁶ my wager is that such work can be read as an argument about (and with) culture – with a culture that, after Auschwitz and the two most destructive conflicts of human history, seemed unable to narrate its own failures. Horkheimer and Adorno wondered if the Holocaust had undermined the utopian claims of the European Enlightenment through its terrible culmination of ‘instrumental rationality’; Lyotard likewise argued that Auschwitz produced ‘an immense fission affecting the unity of the great discourses of modernity’.⁷ This chapter, likewise, reads such poetry as a critique of the way in which a modern experience of security similarly disavows its own historical contradictions, the violence of its own realisation. Thus, with this poetry, comes a radical inversion, in which we are asked to bear what seems unbearable, and in which that which seems necessary and comforting in turn appears unbearable. However unlikely, this is a model for a politics: the smooth must reveal the presence of the jagged, and security the scars of its own history.
The jagged and the smooth

The movement of the poem ‘Daddy’ – from the most private experience of subjectivity to the larger historical culture that contains and informs it – is an uncanny mirror of the double movement security makes as a technology. As I argue in Chapter 1, security combines the techniques of self and societal management Foucault termed ‘governmentality’ with a transnational production and management of resources, populations and space. This combination of governmentality and geopolitics employs a ‘political double-bind’, which Foucault described as ‘the tricky combination in the same political structures of individualisation techniques and totalisation procedures’.8

This double-bind is clear in the statements of key political leaders. We can recall President Clinton’s preface to the 1997 National Security Strategy and Malaysian leader Dr Mahathir Mohamad’s argument that ‘national security is inseparable from political stability, economic success and social harmony’, while Australian Prime Minister John Howard believes that ‘the success or failure of a nation essentially begins in the homes of its people’.9 Similarly security was a potent political technology during the entire tenure of the Indonesian New Order. In the doctrinal slide from national to regional ‘resilience’, security linked the compliance of citizens to the unity and prosperity of the nation, and thence to ideal systems of regional and international order.10 While there are obvious local and historical differences, all of these societies see family values, education and economic participation as essential to the creation of ideal subjects who will in turn enhance national and international structures of stability and prosperity. Likewise the elites which they represent would see themselves participating in a common project of economic modernisation, development and prosperity.

These dreams too are an inheritance of the European Enlightenment, especially a liberal-utilitarian strand running from Locke, through Smith and Bentham, and inflected by Hegel’s metaphysical reconciliation of the strong state with liberal political economy.11 Yet this history falters on the same aporias that the Holocaust brings to the Enlightenment project: the United States’ and Australia’s prosperity underpinned by the destruction of indigenous societies; Malaysia and Indonesia’s prosperity by the destruction of domestic left-wing movements and the continuing suppression of indigenous people in Sarawak, Kalimantan and Irian Jaya (Papua); and all of them bound together by common membership and co-operation in a post-Second World War geopolitical structure shadowed by the awesome destruction of Vietnam and Cambodia during 50 years of war. In what some would recognise as a movement of deconstruction, this chapter thus contrasts the smooth experience of life – consensual, pleasurable and safe – that security has historically promised and enacted, with the jagged history that has enabled and underpinned its dreams of prosperity, order and realisation.
How can poetry talk about, or even resist, such powerful discursive constructs? I make no claim that poetry, as a form of writing and speaking, automatically constitutes a challenge to violent political histories and the technologies that have made them possible. Poets have been just as guilty as any other artists of lauding and enabling them. What I do recognise, however, is that since the rise of cultural modernism poetry has possessed the formal possibilities for a more daring, more socially critical and creative, work of metaphor and imagination. This work disrupts the subject positions of both author and reader, and exposes and questions their political and social consequences. It links them with history and, at its most exciting, dissolves and re-imagines the whole system of thought underpinning that structure of history and subjectivity. Its poetic signposts might be the work of Plath, Robert Lowell, or Gig Ryan, which while diverse shares a common desire to take risks with form, voice, subjectivity and world. At its best it is held together by a marvellous tension: between the perfection of its form, the controlled manipulation of imagery and sound, applied to an unstable, volcanic material that might explode into pieces at any moment. It is a form of writing that explores what has been called ‘limit-experience’, experience outside experience, that ruptures our ideas of what seems tenable, real, truthful or moral. In short, it is writing that skates the edges of being, hoping to find something on the other side.

These poetic concerns are central to interrogating the project of security. For at its most comprehensive and seductive, security is a promise of the very possibility of being – for the person, the state, and the larger structures of cultural and geopolitical order which sustain them. Worse, this identity, which links the individual, nation and civilisation into an idealist unity, has always been constructed in terms of its violent hostility to, or incorporation of, the Other. The twentieth century has only offered darker combinations of such forces and desires, in which ‘Third World’ subjects are caught in an ever more intense circulation of capital and geopolitical power, and are simultaneously bound into the subjective experience of secure modern citizens through the distancing (yet deceptively intimate) vectors of the global media. Gig Ryan’s poem ‘For Katrina’ (titled in ironic honour of a former Australian television personality), seeks to explore and intensify such contradictions:

The sensitive newsreader cries in Ethiopia
and we admire
Emotion a delicacy that surprises us more than murder
Mrs Thatcher, we’re with you
in your blitz pyjamas
We put the effects under a microscope
while the cause gets off
He steps out of his uniform and kills
Capitalism’s extended hours reach out and embrace you
in a till of love
We forget his orders that want the country renovated.\textsuperscript{15}

Another poem by Ryan explores the same disjunction of media and reality, distance and responsibility. She seeks to break apart the smooth contours of a secure Western reality with irony and an anti-lyrical tone, which subverts both the romantic aesthetic of much poetry (celebrating the beautiful) and a technology of subjection in which reading is an activity of self-improvement and realisation (and thus of self-government). Instead her work cultivates more ‘jagged’, upsetting edges. Thus the mediated experience of the horror of modern Cambodian history is read like this, in ‘The Killing Fields, nominated’:

The jouno heroically watches the bomber planes dive
His mawkish face backtracks, sees headlines
that is, money . . .

Back home, he flips through the video
stalking news, his hands full of gore he didn’t cause
Wisely he writes ‘the despicable Khmer Rouge’
the ditch of bones fired by fervour
for an ‘inhuman’ ideology . . .

He’s artistic, uninvolved,
weeping for the source’s loss. His big American heart throbs
and gets paid.\textsuperscript{16}

The poem, which satirises David Puttnam’s Academy Award-winning film \textit{The Killing Fields}, asks its readers to go beyond a natural feeling of horror to question the film’s more subtle political strategy, which again distances its audience from what it views, and allows for too easy a set of moral conclusions. The poem questions a comfortable denunciation of the genocidal Other – the Khmer Rouge’s brutal form of Maoism – with the subtext that this horror also had its causes in the tremendously destructive dimensions of the Vietnam war, whose expansion into Cambodia in 1973 at the price of 150,000 lives was central to the Khmer Rouge’s rise to power.\textsuperscript{17} As any historian of Southeast Asia will know, within the logic of the ‘domino theory’ the war in Indo-China was deemed crucial to the security of the United States, Australia, Japan and other Southeast Asian states, and thus its horror was central to a powerful image of economic and geopolitical identity.\textsuperscript{18} What Ryan’s poem condemns is an evasion of responsibility – the way in which the film assigns the authoritative reading of this history to the heroic subject of the Western observer who remains morally innocent. Yet to escape a security achieved through such history means recognising that none of us is innocent.
The smooth and the jagged

Security, however, reposes on such an assumption of historical innocence, which leaves its structure of desire and belonging safe from disturbance and rupture. Security makes its appeal to subjectivity as a truth of the emotions and the body: what it promises, both in so-called developed Western states and rapidly modernising Third World states like Indonesia, Malaysia or China, is an emotional, tactile experience of smoothness. Smoothness captures the effacement of social conflicts in political discourses of consensus, national development and prosperity; the ideal of movement captured in international travel, free trade and porous flows of investment and profit; and the associated pleasures of subjectivity, of consumption and taste. Its model is an Americanism without contradictions – historical or imperial – which had already been exposed by Lowell in his great poem ‘For the Union Dead’:

On Boyleton street, a commercial photograph
shows Hiroshima boiling
over a Mosler Safe, the ‘rock of ages’
that survived the blast. Space is nearer . . .

Everywhere,
giant finned cars nose forward like fish;
a savage servility
slides by on grease.19

Lowell contrasts a complacent 1950s consumer modernism with the slaughter of the American Civil War, while splintering the smooth historical forgetting of the modern American identity (lauded by Life publisher Henry Luce in 1941 as the inspiration for a new ‘international moral order’) amid irony and remembered horror.20 Here the metaphoric power of the poem, its disturbing ability to unite disparate emotions and experiences, finds a way to expose and criticise a culture which so easily transforms one of the century’s greatest moral enormities into witty advertising.

It is this kind of strategy, among others, which can rupture the smooth promises of security. Jacques Derrida has powerfully revealed how the metaphysics that underpins such utopias at the same time incorporates, generates and hinges on the values it pretends to supersede, control or expel.21 Security is a kind of metaphysics, and it too manufactures aporias and contradictions from both its conceptual structure and its very history. So in Asia we were told, for instance, to embrace the ‘father of development’ Suharto, while ignoring his regime’s accelerating corruption and repression, along with the vast murder of 1965–6 that brought him to power over the ashes of the Indonesian communist party. Australians were told that this murder – which saw as many as 1,000,000 people killed in
six months – was one of the most beneficial strategic developments to affect them in recent history, in turn enabling the formation of ASEAN and the political, economic and strategic co-operation which saw the rapid Southeast Asian growth rates of the 1980s and early 1990s. It is in the same vein that some argue the virtually genocidal war in Indo-China provided a ‘shield’ for such development to take place, and thus another enabling tragedy insinuates itself into the economic fabric of our history.

Only three years of terrible economic and political crisis in Asia briefly dented the mythology, which nonetheless seems set to revive amid a new cycle of forgetting. Yet with her poem about the Indonesian killings, ‘1965’, Gig Ryan challenges us to remember, to have our ‘secure’ reverie to be broken by the voices of their survivors:

The river winding red and green with corpses
She told me
They stood them on the banks
and shot them . . .

Blood and rotting, you could smell it
she told me, crying, rivery
out of earshot
We keep the books, the names, hope
in our heads
The blocked rivers trailing like glaciers
The Army’s fear like a slowworm . . .

We can be forgiven for feeling that the contained, pleasurable, progressive model of self that security offers us is deeply illusory; that however smooth its contours for elites and acquisitive middle classes, it in fact binds us to the jagged, in a profound, functional embrace. We start to see how central to its dreams of perfect, easy management, security’s violent imaginary has been. In this way the Orwellian paradox of security can be explained: while it promises safety, to ward off death, it generates fear and reposes upon death.

Poetry outside security

It is here that the whole question of the Outside begins to press in, both as a challenge to the way cultural totalities operate and as a series of valuable clues for individuals who want to escape security’s blackmail of fear and pleasure, to focus instead on the possible connections between subjectivity, responsibility and social transformation. For Foucault, in his 1968 essay on Blanchot, the Outside was above all a question of subjectivity: a subject cut loose from its metaphysical moorings, its interior certitudes and its familiar boundaries, and turned instead to the social medium of
language in which it sought its impossible unity.\textsuperscript{25} If the subject is now turned to language in order to interrogate its very conditions of existence, it follows that the poem – in which the very form, structure and possibility of language is at risk – could be crucial to this work. This ‘turning’ needs to be an ethical one: an engagement with language that understands its undoubted social power, and attempts an interrogation of its imbrication with the real in all its human, economic and political consequences. As Roland Bleiker suggests, ‘Poetry can be a way of coming to terms with history – of searching for more inclusive ways of looking at the constitution of things present and past. Poetry . . . fulfils the task of a critical memory.’\textsuperscript{26}

Foucault felt that ‘the thought from outside’ was a still mysterious thought, a ‘vague possibility . . . sketched by Western culture on its margins’. Its signposts – Nietzsche, Blanchot, Klossowski, Bataille – suggest that it was also a thought which worked to rupture the very moral, humanist and normalising discourses whose hold on identity Foucault sought to unlock and question. ‘When language arrives at its own edge,’ he wrote, ‘what it finds is not a positivity that contradicts it, but the void that will efface it. Into that void it must go . . . a pure outside where words endlessly unravel . . . the streaming and distress of a language that has always already begun.’ Fiction, he argued, was crucial to thinking the outside, but it would ‘no longer be a power that produces images and makes them shine, but rather a power that undoes them’, that sees them ‘burst and scatter in the lightness of the unimaginable’.\textsuperscript{27} This is precisely what poets like Plath and Gig Ryan have done: cultivated a form of metaphor which dared to anticipate the unimagined, to startle us with it, to think what Thought could not. It is not a ready-made set of solutions they offer but a path to a re-imagination of whatever discourses seduce and ensnare us. To this idea of the Outside, Foucault later added a powerful challenge to subjectivity, framed as a reversal of the liberal-progressive movement of being, not to discover what we are but to refuse what we are.\textsuperscript{28} Can we do both at once: refuse our limits and imagine an unthought beyond them?

Here I would suggest the poem, or a particularly daring kind of poem, can provide us with glimpses of the Outside and its broader social and political possibilities. In Gig Ryan’s work, modern poetry’s subversion of form is given a concrete urgency, which is at once everyday and surreal, and which connects us with the glittering promises of the outside, the pathos and struggle of daily life, and the routine ethical betrayals of a geopolitics that pretends, again and again, to make us secure:

Our clown Prime Minister jostles on the steps, unable to dissemble, unable not to be loved by Indonesia, France, Chile, China . . .

He holds his broken minister in a camera grip
and weeps a tub
‘Your women are beautiful,’ says the Yank
in relay with his Navy darkening the harbour.29

She mocks the pretensions of statesmen, exposes their hypocrisy and delusions, but always returns to the struggling, human voices of the maimed and dispossessed. Constraint and hope work in ineluctable tension, with an astringent burst of anger finally thrown out as a direct challenge to action. Her dissonant, surreal use of language invokes a world which is both real and unthought; a startling and courageous work of metaphor in which the limits of being are remorselessly interrogated and rewritten.

Sylvia Plath’s work too takes up the problem of subjectivity in just the terms envisaged by Foucault. More than anyone else, she used language and metaphor to deliberately place her own subjectivity at risk (perhaps she felt she had no choice), exploding its unity by dispersing it among the most difficult moral questions the West has had to face. The Holocaust functions in her work, not as some kind of delirious fantasy, but as a potent signifier corroding the complacent certitudes of an idealist Western identity. It is this quality that disturbs, that constitute its unsettling challenge to historical, authorial and feminine models of subjectivity, which are at the same time crucial building-blocks of social power. With its outrageous personas, its childlike rhythms and its barely controlled rage, her work mocks attempts at discipline and normalisation. And in ‘Daddy’, by turning the parent into a systemic historical figure, and its exorcism into a broad cultural drama, she merges subject with metasubject – in a bitter parody of security’s own strategy – and makes the question of liberation and escape into a general cultural problem which requires first a prolonged confrontation with horror. Even if it seems like bravado, the writing still strikes a powerful note of revelatory triumph:

Herr God, Herr Lucifer
Beware
Beware.

Out of the ash
I rise with my red hair
and I eat men like air.30

To ask the question of what the Holocaust – or any of the twentieth century’s other terrible crimes – means for the certitudes of a modern liberal identity and its economic and geopolitical infrastructure, is an absolutely essential political task at this time. As Gig Ryan suggests in her poem ‘1965’, among others, such questions need to be asked of an Asia-Pacific modernity which effaces its history beneath the smooth promises of trade, co-operation and prosperity. We need to ask what moral,
ethical and ontological lessons should be drawn from the enabling role that Western colonialism, the Indonesian massacres, the bombing of Hiroshima, the Indo-China war, the destruction of East Timor and Tiananmen Square have played in the development of the regional capitalist order. So jagged, such events resist recuperation. They demand a new path, a new thought.

However, I am not suggesting that there are easy ways to solve the problems this work poses. Rather I want to liberate the question itself as an integral part of the slow, yet increasingly urgent, work of addressing its challenges. It is worth doing so because poetry helps us to acknowledge the jaggedness – the insecurity, corruption and death – that is central to our structural, economic and psychological reality. It helps us to acknowledge but not to reconcile: an acknowledgement that understands that while at the roots of our culture there is something very wrong, this wrong is not so easy to escape, to thrust outside of ourselves and our responsibilities.

This is to refuse the kind of normalising ethics of the pure, and the model of self it sustains, which we find in Hegel’s phenomenology and classic liberal thought – a thought which cannot bring its nihilism into its centre, to allow it to nestle there, to begin a simultaneously corrosive and ethical work of transformation. Rather this ethics thrusts evil outside the Self (which is only to fix it ever deeper in its interior) and ponders the negative only to expel and supersede it in its passage to the Ideal. At its worst, it sees evil only in the presence of the Other, which is never allowed an independent challenge to the certitude and security of the Same.31 Yet this metaphysics still animates elite models of international relations, and continues to do so much terrible damage. In the search for a new ethic, we need to see evil as present within the Same: as generated by the drive for the Same and its remorseless suppression of difference. Pushing beyond security will involve jettisoning this egoistic fiction of identity at all its levels. It will replace a violent, technological and exploitative relation to the Other with an ethical encounter with alterity – an encounter that recognises economic and existential interdependence, problematises them, and promotes a new politics of responsibility, justice and mutual transformation.32

The work of the Same has always been performed by the technology of security, and held out the promise of identity, utopia and culmination. This is the violent metaphysics that links the doctrine of the national interest with the shimmering promises of stability, security and prosperity. Against this destructive appeal of liberal modernity, this poetry invites us to explore the paths opened by refusal, creativity and responsibility. A refusal of the discursive, social and linguistic limits to being, in the hope of finding room to move; creativity in searching for the unthought, and exploring its political and human potential; and responsibility in translating personal transformations into social ones, with an awareness of the
ethical dilemmas involved in adjudicating wounds and differences, and in mobilising the potent economic, political and organisational machines which modernity has invented. So in seeking to challenge, escape and refigure security, my appeal is to allow the question of the Outside, of this poetry, to exist for a little longer. To allow it, however disturbing an experience it may seem, to colour our horizon, and to listen to its plea to readdress, in a more difficult and sober fashion, the basic ethical questions that must continue to preoccupy us. This is the promise of a poetry outside security.
3 Security after security
Israel, Palestine and the wall

Man is not the lord of beings. He is the shepherd of Being.
Martin Heidegger1

Q has a hard time answering her students’ questions. One girl in her class who lives near the border – a place that attracts IDF fire – was hit in her back with live ammunition. ‘Didn’t the soldiers know that I just went out to get some bread?’ she asks her teacher again and again. And another wounded boy keeps asking the adults in the neighbourhood whether the Jews have no children – if that is why ‘they shoot at us indiscriminately’.
Amira Hass2

How does security connect with life?

In 1979, in an article about the first wave of settlers into the ancient Palestinian town of Hebron, the Israeli writer Amos Elon quoted one of them explaining his commitment to forcibly enacting the vision of ‘greater Israel’ on land seized in the 1967 Six Day War. The man, a former Tel Aviv lawyer named Eliakim Haetzini, explained: ‘Sovereignty is like a woman. Do you share your wife with someone else?’3 I first read these words in Jerusalem, a day after two terrible suicide bombings in Be’er Sheva that killed sixteen people and wounded 100. The bombers had come from a Hamas cell based in Hebron, and the press was saying that they had, in part, been successful because Be’er Sheva was an ‘easy target’, given that the formidable security wall under construction since 2003 had not yet extended that far south. Indeed, the foreign minister stated that the bombing ‘proves the necessity of speeding up the separation barrier’s construction’.4 I had seen this wall a few days before, in ‘Arab’ East Jerusalem, from the other side: 8 metres of ugly prefab concrete slabs slicing across a roadway, dividing neighborhoods and shops, before vaulting the next hill and disappearing into the landscape. Young Palestinians had painted its lower part white, then sprayed it with graffiti in Arabic and English, like a Middle Eastern echo of Cold War Berlin. Here and there, impressionistic screen-printed portraits of Yasser Arafat appeared,
symbolising both the undimmed force of Palestinian nationalism and a
darker – more organised and selfish – political force in their lives.

The wall has many purposes, and means many things. One under-
standable purpose is to provide Israelis with better security against the
deepest immoral, politically misguided and strategically disastrous Palestin-
ian campaign of suicide attacks waged inside the pre-1967 borders of
Israel – attacks that most often strike the innocent, even the sympathetic,
and that have done so much to set back the Palestinian campaign for self-
determination and hand the agenda to Israeli conservatives who wish to
hang on to the territories forever. These conservatives have in turn sought
to re-route the wall deep into Palestine, separating farmers from their
land, workers from employment, families from hospitals, and commu-
nities from each other, while seeking to use the wall to achieve the virtual
annexation of conquered land now host to extensive Jewish settlements.5

Even more profoundly, the wall separates peoples – Jewish and Palestinian
– in a way that the ‘two-state solution’ imagined in the Oslo or Geneva
accords would not have (given the accords’ provisions for ongoing co-
operation and longer-term reconciliation).6 This is a wall of separation as
much existential as physical, mirroring and solidifying the mutual hostility
and alienation that has deepened since the Al-Aqsa Intifada began in
September 2000. Ironically the wall, which is supported by a large majority
of Israelis, may provide them with greater short-term security only to
undermine it over the long-term – by emboldening the champions of the
occupation and further embittering Palestinians for whom its meaning is
utterly different, yet another fact of colonisation and control. How does
security connect with life?

Security appears and disappears, like a desert mirage; it is simultan-
eously desired and warned away. It stands in for other things, dark and
unsettling to speak of; it takes on rich and terrible meaning. Twenty-five
years – but little else – separated Haetzini from the violent impasse of
2004; the same towns, the same earth is in dispute, and the same atti-
dudes hold the day. The same concepts and dreams arise to trouble us –
security, sovereignty, being – their meanings violent and increasingly
untenable. In a place where security is an overwhelming obsession and a
very real problem we are witness to its simultaneous failure and dissolu-
tion, not merely as an existential state but as a meaningful concept. Hence
the question that frames and opens this chapter. If life is at stake, and
existence is in question, what is security, and how can it meaningfully
secure us? What visions of life and existence does it imply, and for whom?
Can they be sustained? If it has failed us, can we move beyond security,
or to a more viable vision of security, to a practice of politics and life
that is durable and humane?

To ask the question what comes after security may seem curious,
quixotic, or lacking in seriousness. It is not meant as an absolute rejec-
tion of the traditional problems and concerns of international security
studies, or the significant debates about what security is, and how it should be focused (on states, communities, humans) and achieved. For example, in a world awash with arms, questions and strategies of deterrence are still salient so long as their complexity and danger is acknowledged. Likewise, as I argue in the Introduction, there is great value in thinking of security as a process of emancipation or re-conceiving it as human security. This chapter grapples, however, with a fear I have long harboured about such efforts to think security holistically: that they could founder on a deeper set of obstacles posed by the way in which we conceive and represent sovereignty and identity – those basic forms and containers for life that apparently pre-exist and require security.

This chapter is thus an exercise in thinking, which challenges the continuing power of political ontologies (forms of truth and being) that connect security, sovereignty, belonging, otherness and violence in ways that for many appear like enduring political facts, inevitable and irrefutable. Conflict, violence and alienation then arise not merely from individual or collective acts whose conditions might be understood and policed; they condition politics as such, forming a permanent ground, a dark substrata underpinning the very possibility of the present. Conflict and alienation seem inevitable because of the way in which the modern political imagination has conceived and thought security, sovereignty and ethics. Israel/Palestine is chosen here as a particularly urgent and complex example of this problem, but it is a problem with much wider significance.

While I hold out the hope that security can be re-visioned away from a permanent dependence on insecurity, exclusion and violence, and I believe it retains normative promise, this analysis takes a deliberate step backward to examine the very real barriers faced by such a project. Security cannot properly be rethought without a deeper understanding of, and challenge to, the political forms and structures it claims to enable and protect. If Ken Booth argues that the state should be a means rather than an end of security, my objective here is to place the continuing power and depth of its status as an end of security, and a fundamental source for political identity, under critical interrogation. If the state is to become a means of security (one among many) it will have to be fundamentally transformed.

The chapter pursues this inquiry in two stages. The first outlines the historic strength and effective redundancy of such an exclusivist vision of security in Israel, wherein Israel not only confronts military and political antagonists with an ‘iron wall’ of armed force but maps this onto a profound clash of existential narratives, a problem with resonances in the West’s confrontation with radical Islamism in the war on terror. The second, taking up the remainder of the chapter, then explores a series of potential resources in continental philosophy and political theory that might help us to think our way out of a security grounded in violence and alienation. Through a critical engagement with this thought, I aim to construct
a political ethics based not in relations between insecure and separated identities mapped solely onto nation-states, but in relations of responsibility and interconnection that can negotiate and recognise both distinct and intertwined histories, identities and needs; an ethics that might underpin a vision of interdependent (national and non-national) existence proper to an integrated world traversed by endless flows of people, commerce, ideas, violence and future potential.

**A better reality?**

The problem of security that we confront is starkly visible in Haetzini’s words, and those of the other Hebron settlers, for whom sovereignty, the land, is ‘like a woman’ – a wife, a possession who cannot be shared with other men. Writing of the settlers, Amos Elon commented how ‘many of those who come to worship their God on these dead stones [at Hebron’s “Tomb of the Patriarchs”] speak of faith but actually mean power. They constantly say “this place is ours, not theirs”, “we conquered it”, “we won the war, not they”.’ Conquest precludes the need to think about the presence or claims of the Other; it brings rights to exclude and dominate, sexually, physically, ontologically, because ‘we won the war, not they’. Perhaps, after those six fateful days in 1967, this seemed true, but now the war continues without conclusion. The Others now violently remind them of their presence and claims, refuting the static language of victory; and in the absence of victory the separation wall becomes the ultimate physical metaphor, and the only means possible, for a security that could secure their colonising project. Sovereignty is like a woman: nothing can be divided, and if it must be divided, it is because it cannot be shared.

Security itself cannot be shared – as the Israeli historian Avi Shlaim argues, commenting on the systematic military campaign waged by Israel against the Palestinians since September 2000:

> The Israeli concept of security is counterproductive, because Israel wants 100 per cent security for itself. That translates into zero security for the other side. Israel’s concept of security is so inflated that it denies any security for the Arabs or for the Palestinians – and this means that they have no incentive to co-operate. A much more sensible concept of security for Israel would be to recognise legitimate Palestinian interests, because what matters is not just where the border lies, but the motivation of the country, the person on the other side of the border.  

This discourse of absolute security has such force because it builds upon a deeper sense of existential insecurity that preceded the establishment of Israel, was strengthened immeasurably by the Holocaust, and for which Zionism conceived a militarily powerful state of Israel as an answer:
that insecurity, which Martin Buber in 1934, ascribed to a Jewish people ‘hurled into the abyss of the world . . . always living on ground that might at any moment give way beneath its feet’. One way this understandable anxiety was incorporated into Zionism, however, was through the ‘Masada complex’ which ‘led Israel to take uncompromising positions and perceive itself to be much weaker than it really was’. The contemporary dilemma, which I take up below, is how out of that tragedy new tragedy was created, and what that means for Israel with regard to those Primo Levi called ‘the Jews of the Israelis’, the Palestinians, who themselves have been condemned to permanent insecurity as an apparent condition of Israel’s own survival. As Ephraim Nimni argues, while ‘in a world order that is so manifestly cruel to refugees and dispossessed cultural minorities, the goal of a separate nation-state is seductive’, it ‘ends up in a curious and indecent metamorphosis: casualties of ethnic persecution who seek emancipation are transformed into cruel oppressors’.

Such a coercive, zero-sum vision of security was never more visible than in March 2002, when the Sharon Government launched ‘Operation Defensive Shield’, a military invasion of Palestinian autonomous areas in the West Bank and Gaza that represented the largest Israel Defense Forces (IDF) operation since the 1982 invasion of Lebanon. As if to underline the parallel, the operation was launched by the same man who master-minded the Lebanon policy, and had much in common with its vision of destroying any possibility of meaningful Palestinian self-determination. In a chilling echo of Sharon’s 1982 ambitious plans to drive the PLO from Beirut, absorb the West Bank into Greater Israel and create a Palestinian ‘state’ in Jordan, Operation Defensive Shield was launched, wrote Tanya Reinhart, as the centrepiece of a premeditated plan to ‘smash the Palestinian authority, force out leader Yasser Arafat and kill or detain its army’. The operation, which killed 497 Palestinians and injured 1,447, many of them civilians, and destroyed US$465 million in property and infrastructure (including 870 homes), represented a policy that not only destroys the lives, livelihoods and security of the Palestinians, but also of the Jews. In her book Israel/Palestine, Reinhart discusses how a number of Israeli operations during the second Intifada were designed to provoke Palestinian counterattacks, and sets out how plans for Operation Defensive Shield – presented to the Government in early July 2001 – ‘called for an assault to be launched after a large bombing takes place in Israel, and called for citing the bloodshed and defense against terrorism as a justification’. She concluded that ‘it is not just Palestinian life that does not count in Israel; those in the military sect have no reservations about sacrificing their own people’. How does security connect with life?

If the exercise of conventional military power manifestly fails to provide security, and yet is still exercised in the name of security, what is it that we are in the presence of? How could this security be at all meaningful? What kind of life does it secure? The answer lies in the peculiar, tragic contours of Israeli–Palestinian history and politics, but also in the concep-
tual foundations Israel shares with other states – with the modern ontology of the secure nation-state. What is being secured, then, is that political abstraction of life we know as the body-politic, the sovereign state.

The immediate politics at work in March–April 2002, which the settlers exemplify, was to secure the ambitious project of extending the control – and, for some, borders – of Israel to Egypt, Jordan and Syria (including the Golan), taking up as much of the ‘biblical’ land of Israel as strategically possible. To this end the Oslo Accords were perverted by the Netanyahu and Barak governments into a mechanism of postponing final agreement while building more settlements and entrenching the occupation. Whatever criticisms can be made of the Palestinians’ resort to violence at the outset of the second, ‘Al-Aqsa’ Intifada, and the terrible failures of leadership and vision this represented, it was Palestinian frustration at the ongoing colonisation of their land under the guise of ‘peace’ that led to the explosion.18

Since the election of Ariel Sharon as Prime Minister in 2001, the Oslo process has been abandoned, replaced by the so-called Quartet’s ‘performance-based road map to a permanent two-state solution’ (which has been in effect a way of marginalising Europe and allowing the Israeli and US governments an effective veto over progress). Sharon’s plans for ‘disengagement’ from the Gaza Strip, announced in 2004, saw the unilateral evacuation of settlements there, but was cynically designed to relieve the Israelis from political pressure to give up territory in the West Bank and Jerusalem. As Sharon’s advisor Dov Weisglass told Ha'aretz in October 2004: ‘the disengagement is actually formaldehyde. It supplies the amount of formaldehyde that’s necessary so that there will not be a political process with the Palestinians.’19 His remarks were confirmed by the text Sharon released explaining the Plan, which stated that:

in any future permanent arrangement, there will be no Israeli presence in the Gaza Strip. On the other hand, it is clear that some parts of Judea and Samaria (including key concentrations of Jewish settlements, civilian communities, security zones and areas in which Israel has a vested interest) will remain part of the State of Israel.

The statement explained that the Plan’s aim was ‘to bring about a better security, diplomatic, economic and demographic reality’.20

**History, security and identity: narratives**

This Jabotinskyist ideal is indeed a disturbing (and I think untenable) vision of security and life, one with deep roots in revisionist Zionism, but one also opposed by those sections of the Israeli population and intelligentsia who support some kind of territorial settlement with the Palestinians – two rather different visions of the Israeli security project. However, it can be argued that their far more ethical vision of a ‘two-state’ solution
that preserves the ‘Jewish and democratic’ nature of Israel shares a deeper ontology with the settlers and offers its own barriers to peace. Underlying both positions is the exclusivist ontology of the secure nation-state that I described in Chapter 1, one based originally upon a primal alienation from the Other. Such ontologies of national being view such Others as threatening an idealist unity of individual, state and nation, a unity naturally based on a restrictive community of moral obligation and privilege. There are many versions of this ontology in Israel, from the settlers at one end, to, at the other end, the peacemakers who want to end alienation and violence but ultimately dictate peace on terms that preserve Israeli power and prerogative. (There are also many fine examples of everyday gestures and relationships, of empathy, co-operation and generosity that, gesture by gesture, help build a world beyond such ontologies. I shall return to these at the end of this chapter.)

In Israel’s case, this ontology is complicated by its history as a settler-colonial nation – a history it shares with states like Canada, South Africa, the United States and Australia. To this colonial project is added the tragic complications of the Holocaust and the refusal of the world to provide Jewish refugees with sanctuary (facts that, notwithstanding the beginnings of organised Zionist emigration from the 1920s, give the Jewish settlement of Palestine a legitimacy not available to these earlier examples). In such histories, the indigenous peoples displaced from or incorporated into the new nation-states often constituted, in complex and varying ways, threats to both their physical and ontological security; they constituted a threat both to the members and concept of the new nations. Conflict, violence and security thus become performances (or defences) of dangerously incommensurable narratives of history, legitimacy, purpose and being. As the historian Dirk Moses has written, in the case of Israel and Palestine ‘both sides construct their respective collective identity in such a way as to totally negate the victimisation experience of the other’. Demands for peace, reconciliation and justice in such cases involve not merely pragmatic compromises over territory and interests but create inevitable pressures for the transformation of national narratives and the grand existential projects they represent.

In the Israeli–Palestinian case, this dilemma was underlined for me by the comments of Yossi Alpher, a member of the Council for Peace and Security (an influential grouping of former security and defence officials), an editor of the joint Palestinian-Israeli website bitterlemons.org, and a committed supporter of the two-state solution (of substantive territorial compromise and peaceful coexistence such as that outlined in the Geneva Accords). In comments that combined both personal conviction and broader societal analysis, he outlined the deeper clash of narratives that stood as a barrier to peace.

Two issues in particular, Jerusalem and the return of Palestinian refugees, he marked out as profound sources of existential friction. The provisions in the Geneva Accords for a (very limited) ‘right of return’
and Palestinian sovereignty over the al-Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount (the Muslim holy places in the old city) evinced, in his view, ‘a refusal to come to terms with Israel’s legitimate existence as a Jewish state’. He argued that at the 2000 Camp David negotiations it became clear that ‘the Palestinians have no feeling whatever for our history on the Temple Mount [where the first and second Jewish temples were built]; from their standpoint the history of the Temple Mount begins with Islam’. Refugees raised even deeper problems for Israel:

The problem is not how many refugees come back . . . the problem is the right of return – the ‘right’ – when they say, ‘You have to recognise our right of return’, they are saying to us: ‘You have to admit your country was born in sin. It is an illegitimate country that stole our land and therefore we have the right to return.’ Because what does our narrative say? ‘We’re a legitimate country. We were legitimised by the United Nations. We fought a terrible war in 1948 – you attacked us . . . and in the course of that war many refugees were created.’ You cannot ask us to admit we were born in sin; we will not do it. 25

Alpher argued that, in consequence, making peace with the Palestinians and ‘making peace with Egypt or Jordan and eventually Syria and Lebanon’ represent profoundly different challenges:

While most Arabs don’t recognise Israel’s legitimacy,’ he said, ‘they have a pragmatic acceptance of the material fact of its existence . . . we can live with that, but not [in the case of] the Palestinians because we’re here amongst one another, we’re dividing up the same land. We have to recognise their legitimacy and they have to recognise ours and this is why the peace with them is so difficult. 26

When asked why it made sense to allow seemingly symbolic issues to hold up a peace agreement that was urgently needed for all kinds of practical reasons – especially security and economic reasons – he responded by saying that the territorial issues can be resolved:

but this is not what holds up an agreement . . . the ‘symbolic’ issues are far more than symbolic issues, they’re really existential issues. I think we have to recognise that, perhaps even back off for a few more generations . . . we can find de facto ways to coexist in which neither side gives up its narrative. 27

It is perhaps too glib to remark that all national narratives are in effect historical constructs, when they are put with such force and represent convictions running deeply through an entire society, animating its entire modern history. Yet it is important to consider the political implications
of all such national-cultural narratives, however deeply felt and legitimate, and to consider how they can founder on uncomfortable facts. Critics of the occupation easily acknowledge how it undermines the moral legitimacy of Israel yet sometimes speak as if a single month – June 1967 – divides a period of purity from a fall from grace; a date that similarly cordons off moral and ethical obligations. Likewise, the idea that its birth should be free from sin is an unbearable burden for any nation, because no nation has been created or built in circumstances free from tragedy and moral ambiguity. However – and in this way we perpetuate tragedy – our narratives of secure sovereign being not only tend to avoid or efface such tragic national histories but incorporate and transform them, silently and pathologically, into rigid forms of existential antagonism; into projects of security in which the security of some Other is always sacrificed. In this way, Israel’s dilemma is shared by many other nations, and the need to rethink and question such images of security is of much wider significance.

Alpher’s pragmatic conclusion that such issues should be postponed given the difficulty of Palestinians and Jews ‘giving up’ their narratives is understandable, but its resignation is countered by his profound demand for a mutual recognition of history and legitimacy. Such a recognition implies both narrative preservation and transformation, to allow for a recognition of the claims of the other, a recognition of distinct and intertwined histories, and a commitment to joint survival based on principles of justice. Thus just as there is pressure on the Israeli narrative, there is an ethical pressure on the Palestinian one, as Edward Said has acknowledged on a number of occasions. Like Alpher, he believed that ‘a major problem in all discussions of this terrible conflict has been the irreconcilability of the Zionist/Israeli official narrative and the Palestinian one’, and he began to explore how this incommensurability – this clash of two mutually unrecognisable realities in the same land – could be transformed into narratives softened by genuine communication and recognition. ‘What is desired,’ he wrote in 1997, ‘is a notion of coexistence that is true to the differences between Jew and Palestinian, but true also of the common history of different struggle and unequal survival that links them.’

In terms of the founding of Israel, Said was concerned neither to salvage some purity from 1948, nor assert that it was fundamentally illegitimate and must somehow – even if only in rhetoric and declaration – be reversed. Rather he argued that the consequences of the Holocaust, for the world and Palestine/Israel, need to be acknowledged together with the moral and historical consequences of the Palestinian dispossession – both as it occurred in 1948 and continues to occur during the occupation, as land is expropriated for new roads and settlements, homes are demolished, olive groves are uprooted and Arab Jerusalemites are stripped of their identity cards.

Said has written eloquently of the Holocaust, of its distinctive and terrible place in the history of human suffering and evil, and of the need for Arabs to acknowledge its impact on Jews at both an individual and
societal level. Notwithstanding the often crass politicisation of the tragedy, he argues that: ‘for any decent human being the slaughter of so many millions of innocents must, and indeed should, heavily on subsequent generations . . . there can be little doubt that the tragedy’s collective memory and the burden of fear it places on all Jews today is not to be minimized.’29 Hence he argued that ‘we must think our histories together . . . for there is a link to be made between what happened to the Jews in World War II and the catastrophe of the Palestinian people’:

But it cannot be made only rhetorically, or as an argument to demolish or diminish the true content both of the Holocaust and of 1948. Neither is equal to the other; similarly, neither one nor the other excuses present violence; and finally, neither one nor the other must be minimized. There is suffering and injustice enough for everyone. But unless the connection is made by which the Jewish tragedy is seen to have led directly to the Palestinian catastrophe, by, let us call it ‘necessity’ (rather than pure will) we cannot coexist as two communities of detached and uncommunicatingly separate suffering . . . the only way of rising beyond the endless back and forth violence and dehumanization is to admit the universality and integrity of the other’s experience and begin to plan a common life together.30

What flows from this process are deeper forms of recognition and compromise on each side; one directed both within and without (towards the Self and the Other). Looking within, Said suggested a need for a ‘self-critical’ exercise by Arabs and Palestinians to ‘explore our own histories, myths and patriarchal ideas of the nation . . . we have a duty to look at our history, the history of our leaderships and institutions with a new eye’.31 Looking without, Palestinians would need to acknowledge the existence and legitimacy of the Jews in Palestine – however difficult and unfair this seems – including their historical links to holy sites, such as Hebron and Jerusalem, where religious and cultural histories are hopelessly overlapping and intertwined. For their part, Israelis could acknowledge how this represents a profound and painful acceptance of injustice by Palestinians, who not only lost land in 1948 but whose representatives (at Taba in 2001, and in the Geneva Accords) appear willing, in principle, to cede to Israel the most heavily settled parts of the West Bank in Jerusalem, and west of Ramallah and Nablus.) At the same time, mutual recognition requires that Israel abandon its impossible desire to have a pure and sinless founding – which is neither to deny that Israel’s founding had no heroic or tragically necessary qualities. In the present, this requires accepting both the necessities and the injustices of the past and the ethical claims they make on us today – most importantly, to accept some responsibility for the refugees created during the war of independence and open the Israeli identity to their (at least partial) return and restitution. Even
here there are many moderate Palestinian proposals that stop short of demands for massive repatriation. Said remarks that ‘the Law of Return for Jews and the right of return for Palestinians have to be considered and trimmed together’, while Marwan Bishara suggests that: ‘if the historical conditions are not suitable for a comprehensive solution, then at least certain Palestinians living in the dark camps of Lebanon and Gaza should have the right to return first, or else be compensated.’ Building on this, the refugee advocate Sari Hanafi innovatively suggests the development of a ‘confederation’ of two ‘extra-territorial nation states, with Jerusalem as their capital’ in which rights to citizenship and political participation are not limited by territory.

Security, sovereignty and the time of terror

Absolutist, right-wing images of Israeli security and identity trace their roots back to the ‘revisionist Zionist’ views of Ze’ev Jabotinsky, who in the 1920s outlined his vision of an integral land of ‘Eretz Israel’ on both sides of the Jordan river over which a Jewish state should have absolute sovereignty. This ‘maximalist’ territorial vision – to which the settlers are the modern heirs – was combined with a sharp, and unapologetic, settler-colonial awareness: the Arab population of Palestine, wrote Jabotinsky, would never accept a Jewish state because ‘they are not a rabble but a living people . . . every indigenous people will resist alien settlers as long as they see any hope of ridding themselves of the danger of foreign settlement’. The only solution, he argued, was either to give up Zionism or continue settlement ‘under the protection of a force which is not dependent on the local population, behind an iron wall which they will be powerless to break down’.

In Avi Shlaim’s view, all Israeli governments have followed this reasoning in regard to the Palestinians, forestalling the need for negotiation and compromise with ‘an iron wall of Jewish military force’. Such convictions underpin the strategic overconfidence underpinning the absolutist vision of security, one in which a maximalist territorial vision of the Israeli nation is allied to a permanent state of coercion, violence and fear. This paradigm was starkly visible in the comments of Lieutenant General Moshe Ya’alon upon his retirement as Chief of Staff of the IDF in 2005. Ya’alon had helped to conceive and direct the war against the Palestinians over the previous two years, and he was remarkably pessimistic about peace, even after a final settlement. He described his strategy as being to ‘create a wall in the face of the Palestinians. To prove to them that terrorism does not pay . . . to burn that into their consciousness’. However, he lamented that he had not been successful in ‘building a wall in the political sphere’, because the Palestinians are still talking about a refugee right of return ‘in concrete terms’.
Eight decades later the separation wall, the military operations and the endless diplomatic evasions stand as testament to the practical and ethical bankruptcy both of this policy and the ontological vision it aims to protect and extend. Yet at least Jabotinsky acknowledged the Palestinians’ status as a people, and that Israel was a settler-colonial project; however, any ethical responsibilities this implied were brushed aside in favour of an unapologetically realist vision of military dominance. Notwithstanding the important dispute over its boundaries, the ontology of the settler-colonial society thus rests on an idealist unity of nation, people and territory, one that by virtue of its history stands as perpetually vulnerable and aporetic; a vulnerability in turn managed by violence and coercion. A body-politic craving security yet existentially insecure, to the core of its being. Can such a claustrophobic, exclusivist image of the body-politic be rethought, and what could security look and feel like once it has been?

The very concept and structure of Israel is formed around a dilemma that it not only shares with other settler-colonies like the United States and Australia, but with the Western political imagination at least since Hobbes and Locke. Yet even if the nation-state were not already politically and ethically vulnerable, as Hannah Arendt recognised, in a time of globalisation, postmodernity and terror this classical modern image of the secure and bounded body-politic is objectively under stress – especially in its equation of violence, security, territory and identity. (Israel is a particularly ironic subject in this case, if we contrast its confident national identity with the fact that it has never officially declared its own borders, and is riven by a bitter internal debate about where they should lie.)

Policy now seeks to defend this linkage, dogmatically and dysfunctionally, in the face of new forms of violence and threat that cross boundaries, utilise transnational networks and forms of belonging, and mobilise identities that are fuelled and rigidified by violence. Contrary to the Pavlovian assumptions of military strategy, the use of force often only inflames and magnifies such threats. Likewise nations with extensive networks and deployments of investment, military power and influence can hardly claim to be pursuing an existence limited by territory. Conventional forms of strategic power, security doctrine and identity, along with an ethics focused on reason of state, are all brought into question at such a time.

Dangerous paradoxes abound: the attacks by al-Qaeda on the American homeland, and by Hamas and others within the 1948 armistice lines of Israel – the Jewish ‘homeland’ – are deeply disturbing to the imagination of the settler-colonial nation. Yet instead of recognising the objective challenge to their strategic and national ontologies that these attacks represent (by carefully limiting the use of military force, and seeking cosmopolitan responses to terrorism that delegitimise it morally and ameliorate underlying causes and grievances as much as possible) Bush and Sharon have looked for the ‘states’ behind the terrorists and sought to use strategic violence to manage and contain them. However vast and destructive this
use of force, it has at best been of limited effectiveness and, at worst, exacerbated the crisis. (According to State Department reports up to 2003, incidents of ‘significant’ high casualty international terrorism have been increasing since 2001, and were so high in 2004 that the Bush administration discontinued publication of statistics.) In this sense, speaking of a time ‘after security’ is no mere intellectual exercise; we are already there.

After security: theoretical and practical reflections

In the face of the dreadful strategic and existential stalemate of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, and the manifest failures of a US-directed ‘war on terror’ that has seen both state and non-state terror only stimulated and emboldened, there is an undeniable need to think beyond current policy paradigms and their underlying conceptual and ontological frameworks. This means enacting a paradox: if security, in a genuinely universal, holistic and humanistic sense, is be achieved, we must think beyond security.

One underlying framework requiring rethinking is strategic violence, based on the Clausewitzian formula that holds that war is a natural and orderable feature of human society, a means to a political end directed rationally by the state. (This is a project I begin to map out in Chapter 8, and one that involves posing what ought to be an obvious question: can the use of strategic violence actually lead to security in a genuinely holistic sense?) Even more fundamentally, there is a need to rethink the ethical and ontological structure of the community – the nation-state – that is being violently secured, especially in its relation to others, to lives, to modes and spheres of responsibility.

The remainder of this chapter explores some theoretical resources that might work as a guide to thinking security after security. The thinkers it cites and discusses – Martin Heidegger, Emmanuel Levinas, Martin Buber, Michel Foucault and William E. Connolly – are not dealt with as objects of analysis, in the mode of some political theory, but as conceptual resources for a new kind of politics: one that could re-imagine the nation-state and its relationship to violence and difference. The aim is not to see their thought as if it were a fully worked out template for politics, but as a series of potential routes towards it. (This is especially true for Levinas, who seemed virtually unable to extend his critique of ontology to nation-state ontologies, especially Israel’s.)

The critique of ontology and exclusivist identity that Buber and Levinas develop provides a very powerful tool for deconstructing the existential estrangement between Palestinians and Israelis – along with the broader structure of alienation central to the ontology of the insecure nation-state – and then imagining a new ethics of interrelationship, reciprocity and responsibility. Both of these thinkers, along with Heidegger, also challenge those images of modern being and life that see it as a form of technological
(and hence geopolitical) mastery that reduces nature and people to objects from which the self is distinct, distant, related only through utilitarian calculations of self-interest, domination and power. (As Fred Dallmayr argues, Heidegger spent much of his career after 1933 steadily building a body of work that critiqued the ‘totalising and totalitarian’ features of Nazism and its roots in ‘modernity’s infatuation with “making” and domineering fabrication’, while trying to imagine ‘a more generously open mode of co-being among humans, and between humans and the world’.)

At the same time, all three thinkers are painfully aware that power cannot be escaped: it resonates through societies and relationships, and hence abstract ethical principles will be mediated through institutions and conflict. Their comments in this regard are however sparse and impressionistic. Connolly is of significance here, because while he echoes their critique of instrumental reason and nationalist ontology, and mobilises a similar ethics (of ‘democratic pluralisation’), he does so aware of the unavoidability of antagonism, conflict and power in a contemporary time of globalised uncertainty.

**Shepherding Being: a critical humanism**

The beginnings of the problem lie with our difficulty in putting the thing that security aims to secure – the nation and its identity, and the social and individual identities that exist in such intimate interconnection with it – into question. This is where Martin Heidegger’s intriguing statement in the 1947 ‘Letter on Humanism’ provides an initial signpost. He writes: ‘Man is not the lord of beings, but the shepherd of Being’. While I would resist the way he resolves the issue, by promoting a reconciliation of man with the ‘truth’ of Being, we should not underestimate its profound departure from the kind of metaphysics that governs and provides a raison d’être for security. Directed against the ‘unconditioned self-assertion’ of Descartes and Hegel, Heidegger’s text offers a vision of Being that is not possessed by humans, that does not culminate in ‘subjectivity’, and that is not limited to the hubris of the animal rationale. It suggests Being exists outside and beyond the obsessive self-knowing, self-making capacities of modern subjects (whether they are citizens, ministers, armies or nations); that Being is humble, even elusive; that humans should take up a position of ‘guardianship’ for a Being that they do not solely own or control – a care for Being. Thus Being is ‘being-in-the-world’, in which the world ‘does not at all [ontologically] signify beings or any realm of beings but the openness of Being’.

The ‘Letter on Humanism’ is very allusive, and to some extent I may be building on his text rather than passively interpreting it. However, when read in conjunction with later texts such as ‘The Age of the World Picture’ and ‘The Question Concerning Technology’ (discussed in Chapter 8), it stands as a suggestive critique of that image of Being that marries an
essentialist nationalism to an instrumental image of human power, making and fabrication: the domination and utilisation of nature, of humans as natural resources amenable to use and control.\textsuperscript{44} Much of the text is taken up with a critique of Being that sees man as merely a rational animal, lending itself to a ‘biologism’ that fails to capture the ‘essence’ of man: ‘Metaphysics thinks of man on the basis of animalitas and does not think in the direction of his humanitas.’\textsuperscript{45} In an earlier text that closely approximates the arguments developed in the ‘Technology’ and ‘World Picture’ essays, he criticises the dominance of a Machenshaft ontology promoted by science and technology that renders everything ‘makeable’, reducing action to ‘cause and effect’: ‘Both the mechanistic and biologic world views are only consequences of the underlying machenshaftlich interpretation of being.’\textsuperscript{46}

What is most suggestive about the ‘Letter on Humanism’ is, first, the way in that Being is thought as openness, rather than completion and finality; second, the way the link between nationalism and (Hegelian) subjectivity – as the teleological sublimation of otherness into the ideal totality of the state – is criticised; and, third, the way in which Heidegger is willing to permanently lay Being – and thus metaphysics and ontology – open to question. He urges that: ‘thinking . . . risk a shock that could for the first time cause perplexity concerning the humanitas of homo humanus and its basis. In this way it could open a reflection . . . that thinks not only about man but also about the nature of man, not only about his nature but even more primordially about the dimension in which the essence of man, determined by Being itself, is at home.’ This, he argues, does not lead to a defence of the inhuman but ‘opens other vistas’ for the human.\textsuperscript{47} Half a century after the ‘Letter on Humanism’ was first published, many of these vistas have been opened, and the work must continue. Already it offers valuable clues to the kind of critical humanism (or ethical anti-humanism) needed to rethink a security that styles itself as the mechanism and telos of a chain that links nation, identity and Being in global opposition to otherness, uncertainty and difference.

I use Being here to refer to both the individual’s experience of existence, and that of the larger structures of community (such as nations and civilisations) which political elites have tried to imagine within stable forms of identity. Here we confront the basic power and cunning of the political technology we know as security – its ability to organise particular experiences of personal subjectivity in tight conjunction with larger, totalising forms of (national or civilisational) subjectivity. As I explained in Chapter 1, this is what Foucault called the ‘political double-bind’ – a ‘tricky combination in the same political structures of individualisation techniques and totalisation procedures’. It was, he thought, a particularly insidious form of power, particularly hard to thwart or resist. Yet challenge it we must – he urged people to forget the injunction (so central to a politics of identity) to ‘discover what we are’, and instead to, if necessary:
'refuse what we are... the political, ethical, social, philosophical problem of our days is not to try and liberate the individual from the state, and from the state’s institutions, but to liberate us both from the state and from the type of individualisation that is linked to the state. We have to promote new forms of subjectivity through refusal of this type of individuality which has been imposed on us for several centuries.'

Whatever the power of its insight, the absolutist tendency of Foucault’s rhetoric requires qualification. States and governments are fundamentally ambiguous, simultaneously nurturing and dangerous. Thus the refusal of a type of ‘individuality’ and Being that ties individuals to the state and its commands is one that at least asserts some agency and choice with regard to them; that engages them in refusal, dialogue and dissent without necessarily jettisoning them completely (every ‘Refusenik’ or conscientious objector, who still considers themself a patriot, is just such one example of the ‘new forms of subjectivity’ Foucault hints at). Nation-states and bureaucratic governments are certainly relatively recent inventions, but as the dominant form of domestic society and the normative core of international society, they are not about to disappear. Hence the urgency, not in doing away with states (as if that were possible), but in questioning their ontologies, their politics of identity and otherness, their narratives and practices of history, responsibility and self. Therefore, we should interpret Foucault’s argument not as one for an egoistic, unconditioned form of liberation, but as a call to enable new forms of Being and society that cut through and beyond the insecure national community and its technologies of individualisation and power. That is: new forms of Being and society whose powers are ethically limited, yet whose webs of relationship, dialogue and responsibility are theoretically unlimited. Hence, I would rewrite his argument to say: we need to enable new forms of subjectivity, new kinds of selves who are not merely less credulous and pliable in the hands of modern power, but who can build newly ethical, just and non-violent forms of relationship and interconnection, and new social forms and institutions that can extend and preserve such relationships. The nation-state may be one of these forms, but only one, and it will feel and act very differently.

You, It, Other

In order to think security differently we must rethink the form and structure of being it secures. Martin Buber’s and Emmanuel Levinas’s work is especially valuable to this enterprise because of the way it breaks up the self-enclosure and certainty of identity and turns it – ethically, sympathetically, and existentially – towards the Other. Their ethics is in turn combined with a critique of those ways of thinking being through an objectivising knowledge that makes the other into an object that can be reduced to control and use. Levinas poses a fundamental question for
existence: ‘Do I have the right to be?’ In *Time and the Other* he points out: ‘we never exist in the singular. We are surrounded by beings and things with which we maintain relations. Through sight, touch, sympathy and common work we are with others. All these relations are transitive.’ Hence we must put into question this with: ‘Does existing represent a veritable sharing of existence? How is this sharing realised? Or again (for the word ‘sharing’ would signify that existence is in the order of having): Is there a participation in being which makes us escape from solitude?’ He goes on to argue, even more radically than Heidegger, that existence cannot be thought on the basis of an enclosed and self-sufficient ontology, because existence is based in relation: ‘The social is beyond ontology.’

Buber and Levinas, therefore, provide us with a profound normative intuition that can help us to think a secure existence with others, even if their work needs refinement and supplementation in order to grapple with the nature and operation of institutions, or with relationships that are antagonistic and violent.

The significance of both thinkers resides in the way in which they emphasise not merely the relatedness of people (hatred, domination and violence are still modes of relation after all), but normatively insist on the right mode of relation: ‘responsibility’ for Levinas and ‘reciprocity’ for Buber. However these modes of relation are not ethical choices as portrayed in much international policy, wherein a primordially self-interested subject or state can choose to act ethically or support a policy of cosmopolitan generosity or ‘good international citizenship’. Whatever the value in this, such policies are always optional; secondary to government’s primary responsibility to the national interest and security. In contrast, for Buber and Levinas ethics is existence; the norm is not a choice layered altruistically over the real.

In their visions of identity and existence the Other is neither a threat, nor an alienated ground for identity, nor a moral object we can choose to assist. Rather the Other is the very purpose and condition of existence. This is the profound argument of Levinas’s *Otherwise Than Being or Beyond Essence*, where he writes of: ‘responsibility as the essential, primary and fundamental structure of subjectivity . . . Ethics here, does not supplement a preceding existential base; the very node of the subjective is knotted in ethics understood as responsibility . . . for the other.’ Buber makes a similar argument for not merely the ethical superiority but the factual superiority of the reciprocal ‘I–You’ relation over the objectivising ‘I–It’ relation. In *I and Thou* he writes that while entering into the world of things and processes (I–It) is necessary and in many ways unavoidable, a person for whom everything is a thing is simply ‘not human’. However important for the ‘improvement of man’s capacity for experience and use’ modern powers of technique and rationalisation are, they bring with them a spiritual degradation, because they ‘generally involve a decrease in man’s power to relate – that power which alone can enable man to live in the
spirit’. Spirit, he explains, ‘is not in the I but between I and You. It is not like the blood that circulates in you but like the air you breathe. Man lives in the spirit when he is able to respond to his You. He is able to do that when he enters into this relation with his whole being.’52 Only when the I–You relation is set free in the world are we truly alive; and hence we can begin to understand how security can truly connect with life.

The relation to the You, or the vision of identity as based upon a primal responsibility to the Other: these speak to us in a context of violent conflict and insecurity, because so many contemporary discourses of nation and threat refuse to acknowledge either the fact of interconnection or the obligation of responsibility that should naturally arise out of it. Certainly Levinas’s vision of primally indebted Being may seem utopian, for it stands as a refusal of the real as it has been hegemonically defined; however, it provides a profound normative intuition for living according to the facts of interrelationship and interconnection which we deny at our peril. This is true for the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, for a world linked through processes and structures of globalisation (however atemporal and asymmetrical) and for a world whose security dynamics interweave through the imperial footprints of global powers and networks of terrorist activity, propaganda and global media and communications.

In this light, the separation wall is a perverse attempt to deny both the fact of the dense and troubled web of interconnection between Palestinians and Israelis – historical, economic, political and territorial – and the ethical implications that flow from this fact: the practice of responsibility it necessitates if the conflict is ever to be resolved. The Wall, the ‘separation barrier’ as it is so often called, is simultaneously an effect of previous policies and national discourses – Palestinian violence, Israeli occupation – and a renewed politics that seeks to both entrench colonisation and ward off and break down interconnection. It stands, in literally concrete form, as both a tool and symbol of that politics that has systematically sought, in a more detailed and haphazard way, to break up or besmirch ethical relationships between Palestinians and Israelis. Here we can cite the many Israeli police efforts to prevent joint demonstrations and actions between Jews and Palestinians in the territories, and the Palestinian woman who used an internet chatroom to lure a 16-year-old Jewish boy to a Tanzim ambush in January 2001.53

There is a further quality of interconnection that neither Buber nor Levinas identify, but is nonetheless important to analyse. The factual insistence on interconnection needs to be further extended from selves and societies to actions and events, all of which intertwine in complex and often dangerous ways. In a world connected by media, travel, religion, warfare, terrorism and imperialism, a world in which states, inter-governmental and non-governmental organisations all interact, actions, ideas and identities flow and connect in complex and unpredictable relations of dissonance
and (non-linear) causation. However, the causal thinking of much instrumental reason and strategy – that sees decisions, actions and events linked through a controllable, linear process – generates policy that often fails, worsening violence and insecurity rather than stabilising it. (Heidegger remarks that ‘language under the domination of the modern metaphysics of subjectivity’ is seen not as ‘the house of Being’ but ‘as an instrument of domination over beings . . . actualities in the interaction of cause and effect’.) Such perverse outcomes occur because instrumental reason fails to understand how violence forms part of an interactive, interpretive process – it is a non-linear form of communication subject to unpredictable reverberations, echoes and feedbacks that not only express cultural, historical and political incommensurability but go on to reinforce it. As such, violence always threatens to defeat those who wield it. What meanings and effects might be intended are not the meanings received, and then circulated and amplified, in a new context that is nonetheless politically crucial. Power is exercised and fought over in this bloody, grief-stricken and angry semiotic exchange – but what kind of power can be exercised, for good or ill, when we do not know what our actions mean or how to convey what they might mean?

Consider the case of the suicide attacks against Israeli civilians pursued by various Palestinian factions since 1999: thinking of them as a form of communication highlights the fact that they are not just immoral but a flawed strategy of resistance, which serves to make Israelis feel that they are being targeted as Israelis, as Jews, that there is no one to negotiate with, no one to talk to, no one who might compromise or be willing to share the land. When considered against a historical and ideological backdrop in which the Holocaust is the overwhelming shadow, and in which discourses of victimhood and centuries-old existential threat to Judaism are strong, the bombings work to harden and further isolate the Israeli identity. At the same time, Israeli violence against Palestinians is interpreted by them not as defensive but – often correctly – as the repressive hand of a colonial occupier who is similarly uninterested in peace. The pre-existence of incommensurable narratives worsens and complicates such a-causal actions, and this is why the effort by thinkers such as Said and Alpher to foreground the question of narrative in the context of Palestine and Israel is so important. Incommensurability is also a feature of the war on terror (as I explore in some depth in Chapter 9) where policy and rhetoric play out a stark and violent clash of meanings. A conflict in which neither set of actors can acknowledge or understand the other, much less exist in the same linguistic world, and in which so many actions merely confirm the caricatures of ruthlessness that each hold of the other (think of Abu Ghraib or the Madrid bombings) threatens to go on without end.

The structure of primally interconnected identity and responsibility that is activated in the thoughts of Buber and Levinas, and the need to privilege
it over instrumental and coercive visions of existence, provide important principles for understanding and resolving such conflicts. Moreover, they implicitly critique the forms of politics, diplomacy and violence that have been used to manage and prolong them. This is especially true for the Israeli–Palestinian conflict and the so-called ‘peace processes’, ‘Oslo’ and the ‘road map’. On the one hand, these processes’ tactic of deferring key ‘final status’ issues – settlements, water, Jerusalem, refugees – was portrayed as a way of managing the profound incommensurabilities of narrative and expectation in the course of a genuine search for peace. On the other hand, such incommensurabilities were never resolved or addressed in any significant way, and no kind of dialogue based in a mutual sense of interconnection and responsibility – one that would see compromise made in the service of the other rather than the self – ever took place.

Following the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin, successive Israeli governments used the Oslo process as a way of limiting progress so as to entrench their hold over the territories and continue colonisation. This strategy was pursued at the same time as the Palestinian authority, in exchange for minor grants of administrative autonomy, was tasked with securing Israel, using its new ‘preventive security force’ against militants organising attacks. This led to a bizarre proliferation of security forces, dangerous new divisions in Palestinian society, and an appalling pattern of Palestinian human rights abuses. So much of Israeli policy during this period was based on a tactical obsession with power and control; a control of the Other and their lands that could only end in new violence and an eventual loss of control. Sharon’s disengagement plan, and his adviser Weisglass’s characterisation of it as ‘compel[ling] the world to deal with our idea, with the scenario we wrote’ is merely the latest in this practice of coercive power, one built on dangerous political illusions. In short, the You was never addressed; diplomacy substituted for dialogue; strategy for reciprocity.

**Barriers to responsibility**

Nevertheless, as much as such a politics might be politically bankrupt and inimical to genuine security, it is enormously powerful, embedded in hegemonic discourses and institutions that are deeply and vigilantly entrenched. Hence we face a sobering obstacle to Levinas’s and Buber’s utopian images of relationship and responsibility. We have to ask whether their ethics can grapple with, and account for, the difficult realities that stand in its way. Two challenges in particular stand out. First, how can their ethics address the realities and necessities of power, political and economic, of institutions, government, exchanges and machines? And, second, how can it address the realities of societies, which aggregate individuals into larger formations, define and codify subjectivities, and force relations between groups mediated not by immediate encounters but
by abstractions: relations of representation and power like law, media reporting, political rhetoric, institutional actions, and word of mouth? (Consider the tragedy inherent in how the most ubiquitous face of Israel for Palestinians in the territories are IDF soldiers and their machinery. Amira Hass writes: ‘Al-Yahoud [the Jews] for most children and many adults means soldiers and army. “Dad”, asked the three year old Damir, “Are the Jews born like us, little babies, or are they born already big with uniforms and guns?”.’57)

While both thinkers question the egoistic, separate vision of identity and underline its fundamental indebtedness to and relation with others, they write as if encounters occur between two people, in person, virtually unmediated. Yet, as David Campbell writes of Levinas, there is a need to interrogate how such an ethics based on the ‘one-to-one or face-to-face relationship can function in circumstances marked by a multiplicity of others . . . in a world populated by others in struggle’.58 Regardless, Buber insists that:

The relation to the You is unmediated. Nothing conceptual intervenes between I and You, no prior knowledge and no imagination, and memory itself is changed as it plunges from particularity into wholeness. No purpose intervenes between I and You, no greed and no anticipation; and longing itself is changed as it plunges from the dream into appearance. Every means is an obstacle. Only where all means have disintegrated encounters occur.59

I think Buber is half-right, especially at a spiritual and ethical level. Encounters, dialogue and friendship can produce surprises and challenge existing prejudices and beliefs (these could even be mediated encounters such as films or texts that richly describe the lives and experience of the Other), and his injunction to transcend means and ends in relationships is a profound one. However, this is hard to do; it rarely occurs purely and the mediation of both prior subjectivities and roles, and institutional powers, will always affect and potentially spoil the encounter. Addressing the You will always be a striving, not an achieved state. Geopolitics will always be in the background.

Levinas’s work is especially troubling in the face of this problem. He has an inexplicable difficulty in translating his profound critique of modern subjectivity at an individual level to the societal level, especially when it must address the question of the nation-state and politico-juridical systems of justice. This problem is recognised by Zygmunt Bauman, who remarks upon ‘the obsessive, almost compulsive urgency with which [Levinas] returns in his late writings and interviews to ‘the problem of the Third’ and the possibility of salvaging the validity of his life-long description of the ethical relationship in the presence of the Third Party – that is, under the conditions of ordinary mundane life’.60 Likewise, David Campbell analyses the inherent tensions in Levinas’s (laudable) argument that, on
the one hand, ‘the commitment to the other to the third party calls for control, a search for justice, society and the State’ yet on the other ‘not even in politics or warfare can the relationship to the Other, the relationship of primary responsibility and the demand it imposes, be eradicated’. The tension, rightly raised but poorly resolved by Levinas, is between the inescapable permanency of politics and power and the ethical demand that must never be reduced to a self-regarding ontology that yields to the instrumental. Systems of justice, as I have been arguing here, impose forms of channelling and mediation upon encounters and relationships; they supply them with meaning and, while potentially giving them an enabling form, too often see them congeal into rigid systems of power that entrench dominance and exclusivity. The modern security state is exactly such a technology, and it perpetually haunts Levinas’s ethics – both as practical power of deterrence and a dangerous weakness in his thinking.

In a short essay, ‘The State of Israel and the Religion of Israel’, Levinas writes almost in the vein of Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right*:

the State is not an idol because it permits full self-consciousness . . . Leisure, security, democracy: these mark the return of a condition, the beginning of a free being. This is why man recognises his spiritual nature in the dignity he achieves as a citizen or, even more so, when acting in the service of the State.

He even seeks to rescue Israel from being a merely secular idol by merging Jewish ‘religious genius’ with Israel’s national existence, ‘the living ladder that reaches up to the sky’. While ‘acting in the service of the state’ can certainly be honourable, it often is not, and in such passages Levinas bizarrely enacts and sanctifies the very national security ontology I am at pains to dismantle. We have to look to obscure references in texts, such as ‘From the Rise of Nihilism to the Carnal Jew’, for hints of a critique and a reassertion of his ethics (one that, however, never calls the Palestinians by name). There he admits Israel’s builders: ‘found themselves abruptly on the side of the colonialists. Israel’s independence was called imperialism, the oppression of native peoples, racism. Fact became separate from the Ideal.’ He goes on with tentative efforts to re-imagine the idea of Israel as a ‘chosen’ nation that already belongs ‘to a supranational order’; being ‘chosen’ expresses ‘the responsibility a nation cannot shirk’. In this cause he argues that the Jewish experience of persecution is ‘the obverse of a universal responsibility – a responsibility for the Other [but which other, where?] – that is more ancient than any sin’.

Buber, in contrast, opposed the creation of separate Jewish and Arab states in the land of Israel, which he saw as evidence of the creeping ‘evil’ of a ‘politicisation’ of life that seeks ‘to achieve more than what it truly needs’; he supported instead a ‘bi-national socio-political entity . . . with complete equality of rights between the two partners [and] joint sovereignty founded upon those principles’, and during the 1948 war
supported public calls for a cessation of inter-ethnic violence.64 Years earlier, in a profound critique, he had warned that modern nationalism is ‘in constant danger of slipping into power hysteria’ and that Judaism should not be reduced to nationality or ‘sanction [such] a group-egoism that disclaims responsibility’. Rather it must ‘point to a supernational sphere’ of peoples all subject to God, ‘the Sovereign of the World’.65

Most controversial were Levinas’s remarks to an interviewer in the wake of the Sabra and Shatila massacres, which combined a strongly felt revulsion at the murders with a new category that sharply attenuated his vision of infinite responsibility. When asked if the Palestinians were not ‘above all’ the other for Israel he asserted, in an almost Schmittean way: ‘My definition of the other is completely different. The other is a neighbour, who is not necessarily a neighbour, but who can be . . . but if your neighbour attacks another neighbour or treats him unjustly, what can you do? Then alterity takes on another character, in alterity we can find an enemy.’66

The danger here is two-fold. First, is his introduction of a boundary to responsibility that risks undermining his entire ethics, whatever the understandable need to seek legal or ethical redress for acts of injustice. Second, is the way that once a group (rather than particular violent individuals) is signified as an ‘enemy’ the basic fact of interconnection and responsibility, even it is occasionally expressed through violence, is denied. In a case like Israel and Palestine (and countless other conflicts) the need for dialogue and reconciliation, however difficult, and however coloured by grief and resentment, means that dialogue must occur with the enemy, who must be recognised as human; the enemy who is also a neighbour, a life, a fellow life in a common humanity that exceeds the nation. (In fact, Judith Butler argues that being able to incorporate the violent other into a common understanding of the human ‘precisely when we think that others have taken themselves out of the human community as we know it, is a test of our very humanity’.)67 It is particularly important not to label an entire people as an enemy, even if some of their members commit acts which can be legitimately construed as those of an enemy (their reasoning and motive cannot be dismissed out of hand, but must be brought into the dialogic process). Hence the need for the ethical demand to permeate, mediate and transform institutions.

Geopolitics is always in the background. Buber too seems to sense something like this, when he writes of the ‘fate’ of ‘the relational event . . . the more powerful the response, the more powerfully it ties down the You and as by a spell binds it into an object . . . All response binds the You into the It-world. That is the melancholy of man, and that is his greatness. For thus knowledge, thus works, thus image and example come into the world of the living’.68 This tension runs through the entire second part of the book, and is never resolved. (He has an imaginary interlocutor
ask: ‘Consider the two chambers of this life, the economy and the state: are they even thinkable in their present dimensions and ramifications, except on a superior renunciation of all “immediacy”? ’ Nonetheless Buber, like Heidegger and Levinas, strongly challenges the dominance of ‘the It-form of conceptual knowledge’ that fixes all things into a stable utilitarian matrix and system of belonging: ‘What has become an It is then taken as an It, experienced and used as an It, employed along with other things for the project of finding one’s way in the world, eventually for the project of “conquering” the world.’ (As the settlers told Elon, ‘We won the war, not they’.) The You relation still must have priority and condition the It-relation: ‘Man’s will to profit and will to power are natural and legitimate as long as they are tied to the will of human relations and carried by it’. 69

But can this balance be struck so easily? Is the lure of violence and control, the temptation to preserve unjust and exploitative structures through coercive means, too great? The necessity then is not merely to encourage relationship and reciprocity, but to continually critique and transform the institutional structures, technologies and powers of mediation that shape and condition encounters, and that limit and channel the possibilities for life – especially when they do so violently and coercively. Patriotism, identity, social role and the desire for acquisition are such powerful technologies of being that the conditions under which it is made possible to exist and relate must always be subject to critique. A politics that can enable a more creative and ethical exercise of individual and social agency must be combined with one that ethically transforms the overarching structures of power and political enclosure, corporate, administrative and social, within which life takes form. If security is a ‘political double-bind’ that works at simultaneously individualising and totalising levels, it must be undone and transformed at both.

Toby Miller has already hinted at such a project, saying that we need to push beyond the discourse of citizenship because it ‘is a doctrine of equivalence that denies difference’ and ‘is not usable for producing selves that are otherwise outside convention’. This, he says, ‘is to assert the existence of agency. It assumes that people can organise their own emancipation from definition and enclosure, in search of selves that are not transactions with the deeply secreted truth, but rather rejections or appropriations of surface categories.’ Roland Bleiker likewise formulates an idea of agency that shifts away from the lone (male) hero overthrowing the social order in a decisive act of rebellion to a form of agency that understands both the thickness of social power and its ‘fissures’, ‘fragmentation’ and ‘thinness’. We must, he says, ‘observe how an individual may be able to escape the discursive order and influence its shifting boundaries . . . By doing so, discursive terrains of dissent all of a sudden appear where forces of domination previously seemed invincible.’ 70
However, again, we are dealing with a world in which individuals, by themselves, can only achieve so much; structures and technologies of security prevail because they function in such a way as to ensure that the individual is rarely free either to act or exist outside of larger forms of subjectivity and power. It is these that must be transformed, at simultaneously ideational and practical levels, which is not a simple matter. For example, William Connolly intuitively understands how, in a time when intransigent appeals to identity, sovereignty and truth exist in tension with transnational flows of capital, suffering and violence, it is those formations of power and identity that exceed and incorporate individuals that are most at stake – that are most deeply implicated in ongoing conflicts and need transformation. In *The Ethos of Pluralization* he seeks to walk a fine line between a stance that accepts the value and necessity of overarching structures of belonging, and one that seeks their transformation. This he sees as a project that interrogates how current models of democracy and normalisation, based on the ‘territorial/security state’ play out a coercive ‘drive to convert difference into modes of otherness’. He reminds us that *territorium*, as ‘the place from which people are warned’, is a space where one both ‘receive[s] sustenance and exercise[s] violence’. This generates a dysfunctional politics of sameness that exacerbates rather than resolves the crises posed by the claims of marginalised groups and peoples:

If competing demands for nationhood do not fit together well on the same territory . . . a crisis is fomented or a set of suppressions is transcribed into the background noise of territorial politics. And in more settled territorial democracies, when the reach of issues affecting people exceeds its bounds, the stomach of the state digests the excess into strategic interests, diplomatic issues, or political excrement.

This is the situation we have when, at a time of globalised uncertainty, ‘the nostalgic idealism of territorial democracy fosters the nostalgic realism of international relations’. In an attempt to escape this kind of politics, Connolly offers a model of agonistic ‘engagement’ in which the claims of new identities are negotiated with established social structures and forms so that neither is abolished nor remains unchanged by the process. This he calls ‘an ethos of critical responsiveness’, a mode of being that affirms an ‘indebtedness to what it is not while reconfiguring dogmatic interpretations of what it is’. If this can be found, ‘a new respect might emerge for drives by the other to break out of injurious definitions, even as these drives destabilise and denaturalise the identity of established constituencies’. This is a vision of ‘the political’ reshaped to ‘honor the politics of disturbance, the politics of enactment, and the politics of movements across
Edward Said’s call for a politics ‘that is true to the differences between Jew and Palestinian, but true also of the common history of different struggle and unequal survival’ could perhaps be characterised as such an ethos.

Two problems haunt Connolly’s ethics, as they do that of Buber and Levinas. The first relates to the role that should legitimately be played by the state in defining identity, and adjudicating different and competing claims, over a pre-existing bedrock of hegemonic identity, privilege and power. The second relates to the problem of uncertainty and fundamentalism: the danger that a political assertion of a reciprocal ethics might antagonise atavistic forces and worsen the crisis.

In one chapter of The Ethos of Pluralization, Connolly calls for a ‘dis-aggregation of the democratic imaginary’ by ‘identifying elements in it that can exceed its state territorialization’, but it seems strangely tentative: ‘some elements of a democratic ethos can extend beyond the walls of the state’ (emphasis added). Much of the force and tendency of his argument pushes laudably in this direction, but an idealism about the pluralising possibilities of ‘democratic citizenship’ threatens to rob his analysis of a crucial critical edge. (Indeed he flirts, somewhat ambivalently, with the idea of accepting territorial democracy as ‘the consensual background to late-modern life’ – even if it is an ‘ironic consensus’ that involves a ‘reciprocal appreciation of the contestability of contending presumptions’ and which is not a valorisation of the nation as such which he sees as ‘non-pluralistic both internally and externally’.) True, democratic institutions can ‘mobilise citizens as critical agents in multiple cultural arenas’, and he is right to highlight that potential, but working powerfully against that is the fundamental modern division of human subjectivity between citizens and aliens.

This primal division, which Arendt so eloquently denounced, forms the very condition of possibility (and sometimes impossibility) for such agency, partitions rights and responsibilities exclusively, and works to bind the subject – juridically and psychologically – into those structures of power, identity and fear central to the insecure nation-state. How then can ‘democratic citizenship’ work, other than in a situation of troubled tension with such structures? Could it be an oxymoron, or, if somehow coherent, be the very antithesis of a transnational ethos? With what category can we then recognise those stateless humans without status in any sovereign ‘body-politic’ – humans whose hearts and bodies beat, feel and think but struggle to gain moral and legal recognition, status or protection within the inter-national system as we currently know it. Cosmopolitanism is a weak support in the face of this – international human rights instruments and conventions (including the 1951 refugee convention and 1967 protocol) are difficult to enforce and are riddled, in their text and operation, with disabling compromises to sovereign power and prerogative.
The refugee is the victim, par excellence, of this situation, but it occurs in every case of invasion, imperialism or occupation also, not to mention within sovereign states where persons nominally citizens may suffer systematic discrimination on the basis of religion, ethnicity, sexuality, indigeneity or sect. Israel is certainly a case where this is true. How are Arab/Palestinian citizens of Israel to belong and assert rights in a nation-state that regards itself, without contradiction, as simultaneously ‘Jewish’ and ‘democratic’? The record to date has been terribly flawed, with Arab citizens marginalised politically and vulnerable to expropriation of property and other arbitrary acts of state. While it is right to criticise the marginalisation of Arab citizens of Israel and call for reform, they remain perpetually vulnerable within such a structure. To this problem is added the resistance of many Israelis, even those in the peace camp, to acknowledging the ‘right of return’ for Palestinian refugees – even symbolically – which ultimately suggests that the terribly ambivalent, plastic and exclusivist category of citizenship is an uncertain ground for any ethics or politics that could help us escape or rethink security. In short, I fear that if democratic agency is too tightly bound to the figure of the citizen, it risks losing its critical and emancipatory power; it risks making a transnational ethos stillborn.

Geopolitics is always in the background, and in its shadow we must continually remain aware of the ways in which any desired activity of critical agency will struggle with the larger ontologies – the laws, discourses and institutions – that act reflexively to channel and constrain it; hence the ease with which dissent is so often labelled seditious, ‘self-hating’ or unpatriotic. Every event, every act of violence or solidarity or hope, occurs beneath this vast political shadow cast by security.

In this half-light it is thus important to affirm, and find political forms for, the truly radical reorientation of ontology achieved by Levinas and Buber, in which identity has no independent form or integrity outside of a system of relations and a responsibility to the other. Indeed Levinas, pushing beyond Buber, argues that this is a ‘non-symmetrical relation . . . I am responsible for the Other without waiting for reciprocity, were I to die for it. Reciprocity is his affair’. This should lead us to argue two important consequences. The nation-state, however nurturing or inspiring, should be only one locus of allegiance, identity and rights among many others, whose shapes we do not yet know. In turn, a vision of life after security needs to grapple, comprehensively and fearlessly, with the fundamental aporia of the modern system of sovereign nation-states by which they not only purchase their security at the expense of others but mobilise a politics in which humans can be included and excluded, saved, used or killed, at will. Sadly Palestinian violence, which often mobilises a similar instrumental callousness in attacks on civilians, enacts the same fundamental politics. The actions of the armed factions of the Palestinian national movement (who, already representing a ‘people’, form the nucleus
of a nation-state) thus reinforce the very structure that made it an oxymoronic ‘nation of refugees’. Even if unwittingly, their actions collude in and reinforce their people’s oppression.

Once we attempt to enact an ethics of responsibility that challenges existing political ontologies, especially nationalist ones, a new danger appears: it seems unmooring. By playing out what Connolly calls ‘a politics of disturbance’ through which sedimented identities and moralities are rendered more alert to the deleterious effects of their naturalisation upon difference’ and ‘a politics of enactment’ through which new possibilities of being are propelled into established constellations’, the new ethics produces uncertainty – political and ontological. ‘The politics of disturbance can backfire’, he writes, ‘inducing that identity panic upon which the politics of fundamentalism feeds’.83 By antagonising conservatives and provoking them to cling to fundamentalist certitudes, the deployment of such an ethics may unwittingly reinforce the very politics it is seeking to transform. The Israeli settler lobby, and the US government’s fundamentalist faith in the utility of military violence as a panacea for insecurity and uncertainty, are powerful contemporary examples of this problem. As Michael Barnett suggests, the post-Oslo process exacerbated such problems: the growing divisions within Israeli society exemplified by Yitzhak Rabin’s assassination in fact ‘grew more severe, in no small measure due to his secular and liberal response’.84

Buber senses this problem in advance, arguing that a movement from a form of existence based on I–It to one that privileges the You forsakes a world that is ‘ordered’, ‘detached’ and ‘somewhat reliable’ for one that ‘cannot be surveyed’, that must live with contingency and surprise. This, he argues importantly, is still better, because it holds the promise of a more durable and stable world order:

the encounters do not order themselves to become a world, but each is for you a sign of the world order. They have no association with each other, but every one guarantees your association with the world. The world that appears to you in this way is unreliable, for it appears always new to you, and you cannot take it by its word.85

Connolly writes of ‘the persistent need for a precarious balance between ‘a politics of governance and a politics of disturbance, not only in the present, but in the regulative ideal of pluralistic politics itself’’.86 This is not appreciated by conservatives or fundamentalists (among these we could perhaps include uncritical nationalists) who privilege the politics of statism, governance and ‘security’, and who see in the current structure of social truth and political order a promise of continuity, certainty and reassurance. It is not easy to avoid this problem, and I believe that the more common response – seeking to avoid it tactically either by softening one’s message or by confrontation – will not work. Even if we’re lucky enough
to defeat such forces at the ballot box or, God forbid, by some more violent means, the discursive power of their thinking remains untouched and may become more organised and determined. This is as true for fundamentalisms like Islamist terrorism as for the coercive policies and convictions of their Western state antagonists in the United States, UK, Australia and Israel. Fundamentalisms are powerful, not only because they represent well-organised and ambitious attempts at power or hegemony, but because they are also driven by fear, trauma or psychological insecurity. Violence and antagonism, however perverse and chaotic its effects, provides ontological reassurance, especially for those who (like Sharon and Weisglass) hope that an untenable and fundamentally unjust status quo can be imposed indefinitely.

In the face of this, a patient and determined process of argument and organisation is necessary; a politics of self-critical, energetic and tenacious discursive transformation that works through and across societies without (or with a minimum of) coercion. One powerful argument against repressive and violent efforts to tame contingency and uncertainty is that such efforts only make the problem worse, by compounding injustices and leaving resentments to fester and build into new forms of violence and instability. The two Intifadas – however chaotic, misguided and sometimes heroic – are textbook examples of this phenomenon. Control in such circumstances, whatever the preponderance of arms, is a dangerous illusion. Sadly, conservative politicians and security managers, for whom a violent insecurity politics provides them with votes and a raison d’être, can become addicted to crisis (even delude themselves that crisis, such as in the Palestinian camp, can be managed and exploited) and fail to understand its proliferating tendency.

Security after security

This chapter has sought to think and negotiate two fundamental paradoxes in modern international life. While the nation-state – as the normative and legal core of the global system and an entrenched form of social organisation and governance – is not going to disappear, and may well constitute a source of hope for oppressed and marginalised communities like the East Timorese or the Palestinians, it is fundamentally Janus-faced and ambivalent. In the face of globalisation and proliferating transnational problems such as refugees, terrorism, economic crisis or climate change its function as an exclusive container for identity and moral community is becoming ever more ethnically suspect and practically ineffective. It is becoming just as clear that the dual basis of modern security – the indivisibly sovereign body-politic and the ‘rational’ exercise of coercion and violence against its others – fails to eliminate threats but tends, in practice, to constitute and worsen them; to wager national identity and survival on the permanence of insecurity and violence.
Such is the contemporary global politics of Being. It is not natural, inevitable or bearable, especially for those who are its daily victims. Against this I have sought to illuminate a path beyond our current politics of security, by combining a series of theoretical arguments that advance the need to challenge and rethink the ways we are made into subjects, to reject images of being based on separation and mastery, and to privilege relations of reciprocity and responsibility over instrumental forms of life that reduce humans to things and politics to an endless struggle for hierarchy and control. In short, I have sought to outline a set of normative, ethical and political intuitions that can assist in building a new politics – if not exhaustively prescribe its forms. I am suggesting transformation at both the local and transnational levels: transformations in the meaning and practice of ‘statecraft’ and strategic policy, in narratives and practices of identity, and in the way transnational movements of ‘democratic citizens’ organise and act to support and negotiate the diversity of identities at stake in the path to peace. Ultimately, I hope that such a model of transnational responsibility, ethics and agency will work as a profound subversion of the modern architectonic of security that might – and this is no paradox – in turn hold out a promise of genuine and sustainable security in which no one is sacrificed, and in which there are no permanent victims.

It is important to restate that such an ethics does not mean a totalising rejection of the state, but it does demand its transformation. Such a transformation needs to address both the nation-state’s fundamental ontologies – its structures and practices of identity, meaning, exclusion and violence – and its political and administrative architecture. The desire for identity and sovereignty is not per se illegitimate – such an ethics could plausibly aim to advance the achievement of Palestinian self-determination and make the state of Israel state more just and tenable – but it must be matched with a reflexive critical ethos that puts the dignity and call of the human, in all its alienness and diversity, before the abstract being of the nation. Nor can such a politics ever seek to efface the injustices and aporias that fissure its history and its claims – which is why the question of narrative and incommensurability at the heart of this conflict, and so many others, is of such significance. It might be to agree with one of Jacques Derrida’s many intuitions about his ‘democracy to come’: ‘an extension of the democratic beyond nation-state sovereignty, beyond citizenship . . . [that would] come about through the creation of an international juridico-political space that without doing away every reference to sovereignty, never stops innovating and inventing new distributions and forms of sharing, new divisions of sovereignty.’ In every new context, the ethical test might be Buber’s: have we addressed the You?

This is the ultimate tragedy of the conflict in the Holy Land, which since 1989 has seen no end of ‘dialogue’ and negotiation but little hope
of peace. In this sense the ethical resources I have outlined here constitute an important challenge to existing conceptions of strategy and diplomacy. As shown in authoritative accounts of the Oslo and road map processes and the discussions at Camp David, Taba and Sharm El-Sheikh, laudable experiences of genuine dialogue have been overshadowed by endless tactical and strategic manoeuvring compounded by mutual incomprehension. Prior to the Al-Aqsa Intifada, Israelis may have been understandably angered by the Palestinian failure to acknowledge the significance of the Temple Mount to Jews, but ought likewise to acknowledge the unfairness of the territorial proposals offered by Barak for the West Bank that were still based on a desire for division and control.91

Not only does this ethics, and the deeper critique of security to which I have offered it as a partial solution, form a challenge to our concepts of strategy and diplomacy. It also asks questions of the ways we combine sovereignty, territory, identity, history, culture and faith into the apparently unproblematic and tenable whole we think of as security. The dispute over the old city of Jerusalem, especially the site of the ancient Temple Mount/al-Haram-al-Sharif and Western Wall, highlights this problem. It was in retrospect one of the most sensitive issues and profound obstacles to a final agreement prior to the outbreak of the Al-Aqsa Intifada (named for the mosque at one end of the compound), which as we know was sparked by Sharon’s inflammatory visit in September 2000 intended, so he claimed, ‘to actualise Israel’s sovereignty over it’.92 In the model settlement offered by the Geneva Accords sovereignty is shared, with Israel gaining the Western Wall and the Palestinian state the upper levels of the compound where the mosques are; the Israeli right vehemently objects to any relinquishing of Israel’s sovereignty claim; while some Palestinian negotiators in 2000 suggested placing the area under the ‘sovereignty’ of the UN Security Council.93 Only this last proposal perhaps incorporated a discomfort with the extraordinary hubris inherent in any state establishing ‘sovereignty’ over an area sacred to three ancient religions, where the prophets walked and the faithful pray daily. However, while sovereignty remains modern international society’s ultimate mark and measure of Being, conflict over this area can only continue.

At the time of writing, in early 2006, the future certainly looked bleak, with powerful forces opposed to even the smallest concessions of territory. Settlers had been forced to evacuate the Gaza strip, but there were no guarantees it would not become a vast prison for its inhabitants and that the Israeli government would not proceed with its plans to make the ‘disengagement’ into a bitter endgame that checkmates all possibility of a viable Palestinian state. After the 2005 split in the Likud, the stroke suffered by Sharon, and the narrow election win of his Kadima successor Ehud Olmert in March 2006, this policy became entrenched. Olmert’s main objective appeared to be a series of unilateral actions: the dismantling of some West Bank settlements, the annexation of other large settlement
blocs to Israel, and a declaration of Israel’s borders on a line close to the separation wall. All Palestinian factions were vehemently opposed to the plans and the Hamas leadership described them as ‘a declaration of war’. It seems small comfort to point out that, over the medium to longer-term, such a politics must fail: its human, economic and social costs will simply be too high for all concerned, including Israel. Such a ‘general’s peace’ is not peace; nor is it security.

Those genuinely searching for peace must overcome the deepening alienation between Israelis and Palestinians, an alienation that the violence of the last five years has only entrenched and the separation wall now symbolises. At the same time, there are many courageous efforts at co-operation and communication that both highlight disagreement and difference, but enact in quite tangible ways (and in the face of active opposition) the ethics of reciprocity and responsibility I have explored here. Examples include: the activists working jointly with Palestinians in organisations like Gush Shalom, Women in Black and Ta’ayush; the joint Jewish and Palestinian governance of Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam with its School For Peace; and internet publishing experiments like bitterlemons.org. More ambiguous is the peace politics of the Israeli centre, which while having great value and importance, retains traces of the instrumental strategy of peace as separation and control. We may rightly fear that it is what Zvi Bar’el – after surveying the new party positions revealed by the late-2005 split in Likud and the election of new Labour leader Amir Peretz – sardonically called ‘a peace without Palestinians’. The recognition of compromise shown on the centre and right is valuable, but it must be transformed into a politics and diplomacy that acknowledges interconnection and interdependence; that might genuinely pluralise and transform the identities, narratives and relations within and between each society.

Can this ethics be made real? Can it not be the basis for a security after security, a security that genuinely nurtures, rather than destroys, life? For such a difficult, traumatic, and ultimately hopeful project, the words of Levinas could act like a terrestrial guiding star: ‘A person is more holy than a land, even a holy land, since, faced with an affront made to a person, this holy land appears in its nakedness to be but stone and wood’.
Part II

Ethics
4 Strangers without strangeness

Power and difference between Australia and Indonesia

. . . our destiny is inseparable from Indonesia.

E. G. Whitlam

It has become a powerful cliché among foreign policy elites that Australia and Indonesia are ‘strange neighbours’. As Australian foreign minister Gareth Evans said at a 1994 conference in Jakarta: ‘More than any other two countries in the world living alongside each other we are different in languages, cultures, religions, history, ethnicity, population size, and in political, legal and social systems. We might as well be half a world apart.’ Yet, so the argument always runs, we must find a way to live together. If both societies are to prosper and co-operate, and if the Asia-Pacific region is to remain prosperous and stable, greater sensitivity and understanding must be cultivated. This discourse has been strong for at least 30 years, both in Indonesia and as an integral part of the cultural and policy machinery with which Australia has sought to banish the memory of the White Australia policy.

Indeed, at the end of 1999, the ‘strangeness’ that separated the two cultures had never seemed more dangerous or true. The popular outrage against the terror wrought in East Timor by the Indonesian military (TNI) and militias had forced a rift between Australia and Indonesia that came close to a permanent break, even war. Over 6,000 Australian troops were deployed there, and the SAS had exchanged fire with (and killed) Indonesian and militia forces. As the Australian-led International Force for East Timor (Interfet) gathered strength, the Indonesian army was forced into a humiliating withdrawal, burning everything as they went. By October, little of the infrastructure was left; hundreds of thousands of people remained trapped in West Timor and other parts of Indonesia, to where they had been abducted after the vote for independence; hundreds were known to have been murdered, including Catholic nuns and priests; and a further 80,000 people remained chillingly unaccounted for. Only threats by the US government to freeze financial aid to the struggling being deployed economy brought Indonesian consent to an international
force and an end to the carnage. Aware of Australia’s advanced military preparations, foreign minister Ali Alatas had previously warned that ‘you will have to shoot your way in’.2

As the crisis grew, Australia’s leading diplomatic and military role produced a wave of both elite and popular anger against Australia through Java, Bali and eastern Indonesia. Violent protests began outside Australia’s embassy and other missions, schools received death threats, and the bilateral security treaty signed only three years earlier was torn up. The Indonesian media resounded with calls for relations to be broken off completely. Such feelings, which reached even into very liberal sections of the Indonesian polity, were fuelled by resentment at Australian union blockades and protests against Indonesian missions. Australians were accused of being imperialistic, arrogant, insensitive, hypocritical and racist.3 Although the crisis stabilised after the formation of the new government by Abdurrahman Wahid, when it appeared relations might slowly improve, a deep-seated bitterness remained. Reading between the lines, it appears that the only way to have completely avoided the breach was to stand dumbly by as genocide was perpetrated. A disturbing legacy of the events was the powerful sense that the two countries were separated by an unbridgeable gulf in moral values and understanding.4

As strongly as I feel this, I know it must be deconstructed. If a rift did exist, it was not one between nations or cultures, but between political actors and values, which cuts across the boundaries of nations and cultures even as they invoke and seek to solidify them. Many Indonesians were appalled at the TNI’s behaviour and supported international intervention, among them Arief Budiman5 and the Jakarta Post, which editorialised that the army and the Habibie government were solely responsible for the violence in Timor and the indignity now being forced on Indonesia:

We, or rather our government, failed the East Timorese, the international community and the Indonesian people. The international outrage was understandable, for no self-respecting nation could remain silent in the face of this humanitarian catastrophe . . . By now we hope our leaders have truly learned their lessons well: that as a self-respecting nation and member of the international community we must respect universal humanitarian values and live up to our responsibilities.6

With their recognition of a distinction between government and people, and of the need for common cause between Indonesians and outsiders on crucial issues like human rights, these words can be read as a welcome call to break the understanding of such events away from a crude politics of identity. Yet as the attacks on Australians continued – including shots fired into the embassy in Jakarta – and as the Australian government and media began to justify their policy on the basis of a new assertion of ‘Australian values’, it appeared sadly, that this insight would be lost.7
Basic humanitarian values are not the property of any nation or culture, and ought not to be fuel for new assertions of identity or otherness. Indeed the *ethical* challenge is to see such crises, not as an intensification of totalising structures of difference, but as a recognition of moral, political and economic interdependence and responsibility. The *Jakarta Post*’s editorial – along with new discussions of federalism and minority rights – demonstrated that many Indonesians were making a courageous effort to free their understandings of nationalism and community from the ideological straitjackets of the New Order.

However the continuing force of such rigid categories of identity and difference (of which ‘strange neighbours’ is a powerful sign) highlights the need to interrogate their discursive and historical roots. This is the task of this chapter. In many ways this dilemma mirrors the larger conflict over ‘Western’ and ‘Asian’ values, and is a crucial test of the capacity of Western states to respond generously (and self-critically) to countries in transition. Thus rather than accept the idea of strangeness at face value, this chapter analyses how it has been used politically: how it has mobilised images of sameness and difference to regulate transnational flows of information and meaning, trade and investment, military force, and people and ideologies. The deployment of this metaphor – in conjunction with others relating to security, culture, national identity, subjectivity and economics – has also been crucial to simultaneous attempts to regulate life within each state.

The chapter also considers the kind of *ethics* strangeness has mobilised – because, for all its appearance of sensitivity to difference, strangeness has in fact been central to the systematic repression of difference. It cannot be accepted as an unproblematic description of the real. As with our most powerful political metaphors, at stake in the deployment and management of strangeness has been the very shape and potential of the world we inhabit and create. Rather than soothing turmoil, this politics has created and manipulated conflict, to the advantage of particular groups and actors rather than whole societies. Nor has it managed relations between stable forms of identity, but has been integral to their construction and the politics of their incitement and operation.

**Two kinds of strangeness**

What does it mean to be ‘strange neighbours’? This image resonates with the same paradox Georg Simmel located in the figure of the stranger: that it is at once near and distant, different but close.8 This combination of proximity and difference generates a political anxiety: that difference is *too* close, that it may be magnified and lead to misunderstanding and conflict. Or worse, it may infect the integrity of the self and force unwelcome changes in its character and direction. When the image of the self is the nation or culture, and the stranger its neighbour, we can get a
sense of the political stakes involved. Thus over the past 30 years the rhetoric of strangeness has oscillated between reinforcing difference and trying to break down and dissolve difference. Consider the ambivalence in Gareth Evans’ statement that, despite the dramatic differences between the two nations, they were developing a ‘mature’ relationship based on ‘a growing level of understanding and appreciation, very much one of comprehensive engagement’, and the inherent tensions in his argument that ‘our task is not . . . to blend our two very different cultures, or to ensure that they evolve in the same directions . . . [but] to promote a sympathetic awareness and understanding of our very different social and cultural values’. Yet earlier in the same speech he had been driving for sameness: promoting the virtues of a free press, praising Indonesia’s relaxation of foreign investment rules and urging ‘hard continuing work by governments to set the policy conditions within which business can flourish’.9

Evans purports to recognise Indonesian ‘difference’ absolutely, but betrays a historic Western drive for sameness that, while anxiously tolerant of political and cultural difference, has consistently sought to integrate Indonesia into a pro-Western strategic and capitalist order in the region. These were the conditions under which the West accepted Indonesian independence in 1949 and under which they intervened through the 1950s and 1960s when their interests were threatened. However, the solution is not to assume ontological difference at a societal level, as the rhetoric of ‘strange neighbours’ does, because it assumes internal sameness and effaces the diversity and conflict within cultures. In opposition to this, and as a contribution to a model of cross-cultural analysis, this chapter refuses to assume large cultural, economic or political totalities as viable signifiers of the real. While it acknowledges their metaphoric and historical force, and seeks to trace their construction and maintenance, I believe that essentialised constructions of identity or otherness (however ethical their intention or appearance) are inadequate for understanding the complexity and diffraction of identities in this type of political arena. While I remain sympathetic to many assertions of identity, particularly marginalised identities, it is with the caveat that their recognition and use should remain an ethical problem. In short, it is more important to analyse the politico-cultural economy within which identities are mobilised, often in highly strategic and tactical ways.

As well as wanting to track the political use of this metaphor, this chapter has a related ethical concern about the violence and injustice inherent in the politics of identity that being ‘strange neighbours’ implies and obscures. In challenging such a politics of identity, there are two key tasks. One is to deconstruct the universalising claims of states or cultures in the name of the more local identities and differences that such totalising claims repress and efface; having broken these down, the second is
to consider the relation between such pluralised identities in ways which liberate and preserve them without seeing them ossify into newly xenophobic forms. In his essay ‘Universalism, Particularism and the Question of Identity’, Ernesto Laclau poses, but does not quite solve, these dilemmas. His great insight is to understand universal claims to identity as always political and historically contingent. Every universal is contaminated by the particular, both in the form of the differences it colonises and its own particular historical status: ‘the chasm between the universal and the particular is unbridgeable . . . the universal is no more than a particular which at some moment has become dominant’.10

Yet he cautions that the answer is not a wholesale rejection of universalism through the assertion of a pure or essential difference. This, he says, is a ‘political blind alley’ which would limit minority political participation or worse, reproduce and buttress older forms of oppression. Difference will instead exist in a difficult tension with universality, which is now stripped of ‘fullness’ but remains as the trace of a possible common context: ‘the separation – or better, the right to difference – has to be asserted within a global community – that is, within a space in which that particular group has to coexist with other groups.’ Thus Laclau begins, but then closes off, an exploration of the ways in which such ‘coexistence’ can take place – saying merely that ‘negotiation’ is far from ideal because, as a ‘process of mutual pressures and concessions whose outcome depends on the balance of power between antagonistic groups’, it does not form the basis for a workable ‘sense of community’.11

Relation and coexistence are the key dilemmas here; this is the place of entry for ethics and the fundamental terrain of this chapter. Some valuable clues can be found in the writings of Julia Kristeva, who offers a meaning of strangeness very different to that used by Australian and Indonesian policymakers. In Strangers to Ourselves she invites us to welcome the strangeness that exists, not so much outside or beyond us, but within us. Instead of incorporating difference into an economy of the Same, she asks us to acknowledge the ‘abysses and incoherences’ within our own hegemonic images of coherence and identity. ‘The question,’ she writes, ‘[is] no longer that of welcoming the foreigner into a system that obliterates him but of promoting the togetherness of those foreigners that we all recognise ourselves to be.’ We can interpret this as a need to consider an ethical relation between individuals, cultures or peoples not on the basis of fixed identities but on the basis of the differences and conflicts that already cut through those identities and require recognition. The ethical question here is how to be with others without assuming what it is to be or what it is to be other. ‘We are all foreigners’, says Kristeva; the ‘uncanny strangeness’ within us is ‘the ultimate condition of our being with others’.12

For Indonesia and Australia then, we are faced with the startling proposition that they should be strangers to themselves before they are strangers...
to each other – that this might in fact reduce the strangeness between the societies at the same time as it intensifies it within them. This is to turn the idea of ‘strange neighbours’ on its head – towards a very different ethics that, writes Kristeva, tests ‘our ability to accept new modes of otherness’. This provides a profound alternative to an elite image of strangeness which, with its basis in fixed modes of national and cultural identity and its transnational strategy of Realpolitik, invokes a ‘realist’ ethics that, as Jim George reminds us, permits ‘an abrogation of responsibility to objectified or otherworldly sources . . . egoistic human nature, anarchical [world] structure, history, scientific method, or free world’.13

Kristeva’s call to admit the strangeness within us embodies an ethics that, as Emmanuel Levinas tells Richard Kearney, would be a ‘theme of justice and concern for the other as other, a theme of love and desire, which carries us beyond the infinite being of the world as presence’. This ethics, says Simon Critchley, ‘occurs as the putting into question of the ego, the knowing subject, self-consciousness [or] the Same’ – that is, by putting into question our stable images of nation, culture and sovereignty. This mobilises what Jim George calls an ‘ethics of responsibility’ in which the self and other are necessarily bound together and must find a way to ethically coexist.14 Such a ‘postmodern’ ethics, I would argue, problematises the human and national subjects framed as discrete identities with prime responsibility to their own security and ‘interests’, in favour of a view which sees nations and communities as constituted by their relations with each other – by their image of and relation to the Other. Put simply, this is a transnational ethics not of self-ishness but of generosity.

The danger, however, is that the rhetoric of ‘strange neighbours’ already mimics this ethics while actually mobilising its totalising ‘realist’ antithesis. As Gareth Evans and others speak it, ‘strange neighbours’ poses a structure of identity and difference based on mutual and critical recognition; appeals for tolerance, co-operation and understanding can then become a mask for a regulative machinery aimed at warding off the claims of alternative social forces. Yet Evans’s calls for a ‘sympathetic awareness of and understanding of very different social and cultural values’ bear a disturbing surface resemblance to postmodern ethics, even to its injunction for the self to be open to transformation or for the encounter with otherness to be mediated by, in William Connolly’s admirable phrase, ‘agonistic respect, studied indifference, critical responsiveness, and selective collaboration between interdependent, contending identities’.15 Obviously writers like Connolly or Moira Gatens16 would share my concern about the political formations I am analysing and have gone far to question their ontological claims. The main problem seems to be that the language of postmodern ethics assumes unified images of self and other, at least prior to their encounter; yet at the practical level of a totalising political economy, such images are themselves fractured by multiple formations of inequality.
and difference – and are in fact deployed to manage and tame such subsumed identities. This is the ruse of a strangeness without *strangeness* – instead, ethics must now shape relations within and between identities that themselves are neither bounded nor whole.

**Strange neighbours meet**

The 1999 crisis between Australia and Indonesia had its roots in a pattern of engagement and thinking developed during the Cold War, whose basis was a rigid and violent deployment of identity. When Suharto came to prominence after the so-called ‘coup attempt’ of October 1965, a powerful image of Australian identity combined an intense anti-communism with the fear and suspicion of Asia, present throughout Australia’s colonial history. While identity was still premised on a hostility towards cultural, political and strategic images of the Other, this previously monolithic image was fractured by strategic imperatives: Asian trading partners and military allies were subsumed into an economic and geopolitical image of the Same, which was nonetheless destabilised by continuing anxieties about cultural difference. These ‘friendly’ forms of otherness, it was hoped, could be slowly modified to allow for economic integration and the cultivation of bourgeois forms of life and desire; the more threatening otherness represented by left-wing and nationalist movements was simply to be eliminated, however violently.  

By the early 1960s the high hopes aroused by Australia’s support for Indonesia’s independence had given way to a situation in which Australia and other Western governments were increasingly hostile to the regime of Indonesia’s President Sukarno because of his closeness to the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) and the threat this posed to their strategic and economic interests in Southeast Asia. Thus the Menzies and Holt governments responded to the Indonesian army’s takeover in 1965–6, during which as many as a million people were slaughtered, with enormous relief and admiration. Australia would play a crucial role both in protecting the New Order’s position in Indonesia, and in securing the broader regional order it had sanctioned. It was in this context, and the uncertainty created by Nixon’s 1969 announcement that American ground forces would never again be deployed to Southeast Asia, that the rhetoric of ‘strange neighbours’ made an early appearance. An American strategic analyst, Kathryn Young, wrote in 1970 that if a co-operative relationship between Australia and the New Order did not develop in the wake of American failure in Vietnam, ‘the prospects for stability in the wider Southeast Asian area would become quite bleak’.

In this scenario serious conflicts of interest (and emotional attachment) would develop for Thailand, Singapore and Malaysia – who had deep cultural, language and religious ties with Indonesia but military, trade and political ties to Australia – along with possible great power involvement
as tensions escalated. Whatever the growing warmth in relations between Australia and the Suharto regime, Young wrote, sensitivities over the Papua New Guinea border and differences in ‘modes of thinking, value systems, economies and forms of political organisation’ left the relationship vulnerable to upheaval and misunderstanding:

the usual factors making for a sense of community, or even sympathetic mutual relations, between two nations are objectively absent in this case. . . . Yet in spite of this objective dissimilarity a recognised and increasingly understood relationship has begun to develop.19

Thus the trope of strangeness became integral to a potent blackmail that portrayed the relationship as a stabilising factor of ‘global’ significance, in a newly ambiguous and uncertain world. A drive for sameness coexisted with continuing anxieties about differences, which Australian policy in particular now sought to reduce and manage. Although a latent possibility, such differences had not yet emerged as a problem. The vast slaughter that had accompanied the destruction of the PKI’s social and political infrastructure, and the hundreds of thousands still held without charge or trial, were more cause for relief than concern; the regime had written a generous new foreign investment law, was receiving millions of dollars from the new international aid consortium, IGGI (Intergovernmental Group on Indonesia), and had engineered a dramatic pro-Western reversal in foreign policy. Notwithstanding the war in Vietnam, Suharto’s regime seemed to have singlehandedly transformed Southeast Asia into a bulwark of anti-communism and security. Thus at this time strangeness displayed its Janus-face: growing mutual assumptions of sameness and homogenisation. Assuming the theoretical oneness of Western elites and their publics, the New Order regime took for granted a broad Western acceptance of authoritarianism; for their part Western elites assumed a long-term convergence of values to match Indonesia’s integration with the international strategic and capitalist order. Gough Whitlam was moved to say that the region was witnessing the creation of ‘a just and prosperous Indonesia . . . an example to our neighbourhood of progress and social transformation’.20

This shockingly benign image of the New Order was also being incorporated into a new Australian politics of nation-building and identity. Whitlam assumed that the New Order regime was essential to Australia’s national security, and that acceptance by the New Order was crucial to the cultivation of profitable and co-operative relations with a region that retained recent memories of the White Australia policy and a neo-colonial war in Vietnam. Indeed in 1973 he told an audience that ‘our destiny is inseparable from Indonesia’. This cleaved, however strangely, with Labor’s claims for a new national mission and identity: an Australia, as Whitlam told Suharto, committed to ‘social justice, human rights and peaceful
regional co-operation’, ‘not open to suggestions of racism’, and which could now take ‘her rightful, proud, secure and independent place in the future of our region’.21

At the same time the New Order was playing out a more repressive politics of sameness. In 1949, with the aim of welding thousands of islands and numerous religions, languages and cultures into a single nation, the nationalists had declared the national motto ‘Unity In Diversity’. After 1966 the New Order seized on this, and the five principles of the Pancasila, in an effort to subsume political and cultural differences beneath a unifying model of identity that they could go on to re-interpret and control.22 However ‘unity in diversity’ was bought at a frightening cost: before 1970 the army fought uprisings and rebellions in Central and West Java, Sumatra, Sulawesi, the Moluccas, and faced strong resistance from the West Papuans. Likewise the fear engendered by the PKI’s destruction remained a powerful (if rarely stated) factor in the tranquillisation of political life. Only 18 months before Suharto’s fall the slogan ‘Satu Nusa, Satu Bangsa, Satu Bahasa, Indonesia’ (One Land, One People, One Language, Indonesia) still hung triumphantly over Jakarta roadways as a testament to the New Order’s power over national myths and institutions.

The ‘difference’ of Timor

These two drives for sameness converged when Portugal announced its intention to decolonise East Timor in 1974. At the same time the politics of their suppression of difference became more risky, and the contradictions contained by the idea of ‘strange neighbours’ more likely to erupt. The Indonesian army’s paranoia about national unity and stability, and its intense hostility to the Left, ensured it would feel threatened by the emergence of Fretilin; likewise Cold War geopolitics saw the West turn a blind eye to Indonesia’s brutal December 1975 invasion. Having argued that Australia’s very destiny lay with the New Order, Whitlam had made an ‘Australian’ politics of identity hostage to the generals’ whims. In September 1974 he told Suharto of his preference for an Indonesian rather than an independent East Timor. While he asserted this should occur peacefully, by the outbreak of civil war in August 1975 he had abandoned this opposition to the Indonesian use of force.23 In the most destructive way possible, East Timor had now been incorporated into a repressive Indonesian politics of sameness, which the West encouraged in the cause of its own geopolitical drive for stability and identity.

Australia’s national security was now wagered on the indivisible control of the New Order regime throughout the archipelago, whatever its violence and cost; likewise the pursuit of Australia’s ‘national interests’ and the ontological realisation of its larger project – a renewed and modernised identity – hinged on the preservation of its relationship with the New Order. The contradictions this would generate were quickly visible, as the
Fraser government – pushed by outraged public opinion – publicly condemned Indonesia’s full-scale invasion in December while privately showing understanding. After a meeting with Indonesian foreign minister Adam Malik six weeks after the invasion, Australian foreign minister Andrew Peacock said that ‘differences of attitude . . . should be seen in the context of the long-term importance to both countries and the region as a whole of close and co-operative relations’.24

At this stage there was still a belief that the differences contained by the metaphor of strangeness, particularly those around societal values, could be managed and finessed. However, the invasion brought Australian public activism and opinion to focus on Indonesia, in a way that the 1965–6 massacres never had. Although the convergence of elite geopolitical values remained strong, the broader differences in political culture (dissent suppressed in Indonesia having relatively free rein in Australia) had decisively emerged. Nancy Viviani writes that the generals ‘took great exception to this expression of the democratic process’ and that they ‘found it difficult to appreciate that no Australian Government can prevent press speculation or political activity by Australians’.25 As a result, they resorted to using their superior leverage to blackmail successive Australian governments into acquiescence.

The invasion of East Timor thus graphically exposed the dilemmas anticipated by Kathryn Young – that the ‘differences’ between the two nations would lead to tension – which Australia alone took on the task of managing and mitigating. Yet such differences were primarily political, and served to separate much Australian and Timorese public opinion from the Indonesian regime. Other key Australian actors, like Whitlam and Jakarta Ambassador Richard Woolcott, shared the Indonesians’ perceptions and had staked a view of Australia’s national security on them. The blackmail worked to discipline the consciences of wavering diplomats and politicians, while also being a useful way to police critical public opinion. Thus Australia made only subdued protest at the resumption of an Indonesian military offensive in Timor in 1983, none at the killings of Muslims in Jakarta in 1984, and sought to limit the fallout from the influx of over 10,000 West Papuan refugees into Papua New Guinea during 1984 and 1985.

The 1986 crisis and the politics of ‘culture’

In 1986 these barely suppressed contradictions were to boil over. Angered by the publication of a front-page Sydney Morning Herald article exposing the Suharto family’s corruption, and reflecting longer-term resentment of Radio Australia’s broadcasts into the archipelago, the regime struck back.26 Defence co-operation and high-level government-to-government contact was unilaterally suspended, talks on the Timor Gap postponed, journalists expelled and a planeload of tourists were deported. Prolonging the
controversy, the Armed Forces newspaper *Angakatan Bersenjata* published a series of articles making a broad attack on Australia’s motives, culture and political system: Australia was a threat to Indonesia because of its economic ties to Japan and the United States, because its diplomacy was calculated to isolate Indonesia and because of its deliberate, government-sanctioned media campaign to sully Indonesia’s international reputation.27

The sudden crisis over the article, written by David Jenkins and headed, ‘After Marcos, now for the Suharto billions’, was shocking and unsettling to many. Even worse, it followed euphoric suggestions only a year earlier that the two countries sign a treaty of friendship marking their close relations.28 Richard Robison suggests that Australia attracted such a violent response, because simmering resentment over Timor careered into Suharto’s fears that a debate over corruption could threaten the regime, at a time when the dramatic collapse in world oil prices undermined its economic credentials and the fall of Marcos showed how effectively Western opinion could be mobilised against Asian dictators.29

The sanctions may have been thought of as a short sharp shock with the aim of forcing the Australian government to act against the media – especially Radio Australia – and to reduce critical scrutiny of the regime and pressure over human rights violations. Citing a secret Bakin (Indonesian intelligence) document, Robison suggests that ‘a retaliation against Australia was planned and not spontaneous. It was evidently intended to inflame rather than calm the situation. One prominent interpretation . . . is that [Armed Forces head] General Murdani is attempting to bolster his political position by becoming identified with an extremely anti-Western, anti-Australian stance. Others stress more sinister forces at work, aiming at nothing less than the destabilisation of the regime’.30 Ironically while seeking to restore relations as quickly as possible, Australian officials found themselves, for the first time, downplaying the significance of the relationship – with Prime Minister Bob Hawke saying its importance had been ‘exaggerated’ and foreign affairs official John Holloway arguing for ‘greater pragmatism and reduced expectations’.31

The 1986 crisis also demonstrated how ‘culture’ was becoming a key category within the larger ‘realist’ deployment of strangeness. For example, an Indonesian academic, Dr Budiono Kusumohamidjojo, argued at this time that Australia should be less concerned with press freedom than with ‘the disastrous results of plain expressions without wisdom’. The West could not lecture others for long about ‘universal norms’ before striking the confidence of Indonesians in:

their own political culture and tradition, preserved and intact during the colonial era . . . While Australians believe in universal humanism as a heritage of the Renaissance, Indonesians used to say that they are the melting pot of great cultures and traditions. Australians then think that they have a convincing standard for judging political acts
taken according to different systems and values. Indonesians, on the contrary, think they have the right to reject everything deemed to be alien.\textsuperscript{32}

It was a revealing cosmology, in which key ontological categories – Indonesia, culture, tradition – were thought in the singular; all prior differences were subsumed into the ‘melting pot’ of the Same, and a repressive mobilisation of otherness remained a crucial last resort. Yet this totalising deployment of identity was in turn being used to mask a highly political, and obscure, series of tactical moves.

Australian supporters of the regime, sometimes called ‘the Indonesia lobby’, also utilised such arguments to criticise the ‘insensitivity’ to Indonesia’s unique cultural perspectives and challenges. Richard Robison has rightly argued that such rhetoric betrayed the continuing influence of ‘Orientalism’ on Western elites, tempting them to reduce eastern societies to ‘timeless’ caricatures in contrast with a ‘complex’, ‘political’ and ‘dynamic’ West. Essentialist images of Asian character – as valuing harmony, respect for leadership and indirect communication over conflict and dissent – flow from these explanations.\textsuperscript{33} Yet this fails to explain either why Indonesians themselves promoted them so strongly, or their reappearance in a morally relativising rhetoric of ‘Asian values’. Instead we have to look at the general political utility of such images, along with the way in which both societies, whatever their differences, may share both discursive and material elements of a more general experience of modernity. Crucial in this regard is the modern drive to totalise particularities and differences into an irreducible unity of culture, economy, nation and state.

To the extent that the 1986 crisis was a product of strategic political manoeuvre, culture was deployed to efface its political character. Culture was thought as a harmonious totality that exceeds more artificial vehicles of unity like nation-building and ideology, even as it captures them within its sweep – all of them now organic and binding expressions of being. The political force of this move cannot be underestimated. To challenge or refute the protocols of culture is thus not only politically risky but a seeming denial of one’s own being – or, if external to it, of respect for another’s being. Culture here has a terrible ontological force even if, as Robison says, it is confused with the ‘specific ideological expression of the social, political and economic interests of the ruling group of military and civilian bureaucrats’.\textsuperscript{34} What is most effaced is the long history of conflict and diversity in Indonesia, which continually threatened to overflow the ideological boundaries of ‘unity in diversity’ and rupture the New Order’s repressive depoliticisation of public life.

By 1989, when the Timor Gap Zone of Co-operation Agreement was signed, the tensions of 1986 seemed a memory. New foreign minister Gareth Evans boasted that the agreement – effectively a combined act of
theft from the Timorese – would add much needed ‘ballast’ to the relationship and ‘illustrates eloquently how differences between the two systems can be overcome for our mutual benefit’. Yet it only deepened the basic contradictions that had led to the rift of 1986. Australia had worsened the compromise of its own declared values, and provided Indonesia with both a potential economic windfall and renewed recognition of ‘the sovereign reality’ of its annexation, in defiance of Australian public opinion. Portugal, still recognised by the UN as the legitimate administering power in East Timor, vowed to prosecute Australia in the International Court of Justice.

Rebuilding amid massacre

These divisions re-emerged in November 1991, after Indonesian soldiers massacred up to 300 Timorese during a funeral march at Dili’s Santa Cruz cemetery. Captured on smuggled videotape and beamed around the world, the killings provoked an unprecedented wave of global outrage. Australian Prime Minister Bob Hawke called the killings ‘an appalling tragedy’ and urged Indonesia to negotiate a settlement with the Timorese – including the Resistance – and threatened to call off his planned 1992 visit to Indonesia. Other sections of the Australian Labor Party (ALP) called for defence co-operation to be suspended and a wider review of the relationship, while Indonesia’s Admiral Sudomo threatened to withdraw diplomats from Australia because of the protests at embassies and consulates. Sent to Jakarta to deliver a personal protest, Evans failed to obtain an audience with Suharto.

However, new Prime Minister Paul Keating went ahead with the scheduled visit in April 1992, where the rhetoric of ‘strange neighbours’ was again deployed to manage the contradictions exposed by the killings: at the banquet held in his honour Keating said that ‘at a time of rapid economic and strategic change, Indonesia and Australia have more in common than our different histories and cultures suggest’. The two nations shared a common destiny – ‘to participate fully in the rapid economic growth of the Asia-Pacific region’ – along with ‘fundamental interests in the stability and security of our region’. In this vision of growing sameness, played out in a ‘shared future’, Keating saw a reconciliation of otherwise substantial differences: ‘We are different – culturally, historically, politically – but we can handle the difference . . . The Asia-Pacific, as well as Indonesia, can achieve unity in diversity.’

The economics of strangeness

What were equally strong motives for Keating were the larger regional economic ambitions betrayed by his vision of the two nations’ ‘joined destinies’. Appropriating the metaphor that had governed the Indonesian
politics of sameness and order through half a century, he had claimed the whole Asia-Pacific could achieve ‘unity in diversity’ – especially in economic terms. Here the larger, regional politics of strangeness was revealed: despite the vast differences in levels of development and economic structure in the countries lining the Pacific Rim, let alone their internal divisions and struggles, the region could achieve a common destiny in the search for prosperity through trade and investment liberalisation. Keating saw Suharto as crucial to the success of the Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation forum, at that time only just getting off the ground, and the Australia-Indonesia relationship as a paradigm for the resolution of differences which might otherwise hold back a more cohesive ‘Asia-Pacific Community’.

The totalising pretensions inherent in this vision of unity were breathtaking, and by the end of 1998 would be under enormous pressure, with Keating and other commentators asserting that the Asian crisis had put the whole idea of ‘Pacific community’ at risk. Others were pointing to the enormous differences in economic structure and power which made uniform investment and policy strategies – such as those imposed by the IMF – so inappropriate. The contradictions inherent in this larger management of strangeness were visible in 1993 when Keating urged the Clinton administration to moderate its criticism of Indonesia and China over human and labour rights fearing that APEC’s cohesion and momentum might falter.38

This economic drive for sameness had long been a key element in the bilateral relationship and cleared with elite views of how the regional and global economies should be transformed. While the New Order’s embrace of transnational capital was applauded by global elites, its residual economic nationalism, particularly as Indonesia enjoyed the boom in oil prices during the 1970s, was quietly resented and was the target of criticism from the World Bank. In 1976, Malcom Fraser lectured the Indonesian Parliament to ignore the push by the Group of 77 for a New International Economic Order, saying that ‘the essential elements of the present economic system hold the best hope for economic progress’, while during the 1990s Australia applauded Indonesian moves to deregulate its financial system, capital markets and increase foreign investment approvals.39

Apart from embodying a neo-imperial drive to thwart a profound Third World challenge to the rules of the post-war global economy, such Australian rhetoric may also have generated some disturbing misjudgements about the extent of the ‘mutual interests’ shared by both nations’ elites. Richard Robison has suggested that ‘a contempt for laissez-faire capitalism’ had been an important strand in Indonesia’s post-independence thinking and fed into the estrangements of 1986. Such suspicions were central to the corporatist, state-capitalist ideas which underpinned the New Order, and flowed into some significant political struggles both within
Indonesia and externally over the correct paths to development. One view, associated with former President Habibie and Industry Minister Ginanjar, sought to develop domestic capital through state-led industrialisation, while other technocrats emphasised comparative advantage and the utilisation of transnational capital. Ironically both approaches bear some responsibility for Indonesia’s current travail, which was worsened by the clash of politico-economic interests developed around them.

In such a context, Australian free-market mantras were at once self-serving, myopic and naive. Deleuze and Guattari make a revealing point here, when they discuss how the globalisation of capitalism generates elite expectations of greater cultural and political homogenisation (the end-of-history thesis). Yet they emphasise that capitalism is in fact isomorphic with a range of political forms – homogenisation is not its inevitable outcome, whatever its partial tendencies to it in the generation of common forms of bourgeois desire. In the case of Australia and the Indonesian New Order, the drive to accelerate the isomorphy of capital demanded a political accommodation that was expressed in a language of sameness and common destiny. However, as we have seen, such rhetorics were in fact highly tactical efforts to manage, exploit and control both internal and external ‘differences’, while sameness was often more expressive of inter-elite agreement than domestic harmony.

Yet to the last, Australian foreign policy elites claimed to be able to efface such contradictions. When speaking of Australia’s engagement with Asia in 1992 Paul Keating had assured his audience that ‘Australia’s democratic institutions and traditions are non-negotiable’, while the Howard Government’s 1997 Foreign Policy White Paper argued that the ‘pursuit of Australia’s interests in the Asia Pacific region does not require a surrendering of Australia’s core values’.

Strangeness after Suharto

In many ways the crises in East Timor, Indonesia and Southeast Asia have produced some welcome reassessments. In Australia, a very critical eye was cast over the terms of a previous Australian engagement with the region and with Suharto’s New Order in particular. Australia’s failure to use persuasion and diplomacy to avert the Timor tragedy convinced many that the attempts to forge a close relationship were wrong. Not that the desire for good working relations was corrupt, but that the terms upon which it was built – a hagiographic approach to Suharto, close military-to-military relations, and a willing blind eye to routine violations of human rights – were. For so long dominated by an amoral calculus of self-interest, a growing body of opinion began to argue that foreign policy should be based around efforts to promote (not enforce) democratisation, social justice and human rights.

Strangers without strangeness
The advent of democracy in Indonesia has liberated a substantial reassessment of ‘Indonesian’ culture and values from the previously hegemonic understandings cultivated by the New Order. As the army’s sinister attempt to prevent the secession of East Timor showed, this is a dangerous process and has opened up complex cleavages in Indonesian society. The people of Aceh began to call for independence, and had the sympathy of many Muslims in doing so, while democratic nationalists like Megawati (head of the Indonesian Democracy Party of Struggle (PDI-P) and President between 2001 and 2004) were closer to the army’s insistence on the perseverance of the unitary state. Others called for a dramatic devolution of political and economic authority to the regions that could eventually take the form of a federation. Legal investigations into the Suharto family’s wealth, and by the National Human Rights Commission into atrocities in Aceh and East Timor, indicate a determination to right past wrongs and bring the claims of the dispossessed into focus.  

However, the power of the military remains strong and has been one factor in the subterranean struggle to control Indonesia’s future direction, which has in turn been complicated by Indonesia’s economic weakness. Technical economic recovery took many years to achieve, and it will take decades to recover even the very limited prosperity that existed before the crisis. In this context, ‘strange neighbours’ is even less viable a metaphor for the transnational encounter between Australia and Indonesia. While elements of the corporatist New Order structure remain, it is under enormous stress and may be in the process of dissolution. A whole series of ideological, economic, cultural and political assumptions underpinning the New Order politics of sameness have been put under question – along with the ontological unity of the Indonesian state. While others recognised this, they were less optimistic about where it would lead. Benedict Anderson emphasised the historical weight of the New Order’s extraordinarily violent past, which saw the deaths of 750,000 people, and must be addressed at both the national and community levels if the ‘common project’ that is Indonesia is to survive. Rather like Kristeva, he suggested ‘this project requires self-sacrifice, not the sacrificing of others’.  

Whatever the reassessment in Australia, it is also worth considering how Australian policy, in clinging to disappearing ontological certitudes, may also have contributed to the disaster in Timor. The Howard government signalled its reluctant acceptance of an independent East Timor, yet repeatedly said it would prefer it to remain an autonomous region within Indonesia – this, along with its continuation of defence co-operation and scorn of the need for peacekeeping forces in East Timor until September, did much to help the TNI feel that it could kill with impunity. It is particularly ironic that, after being complicit with the subjugation of the Timorese for so long, Australia was forced to make a massive
commitment of force, aid and prestige to the new nation. What is positive is that this was made without a corresponding hardening of attitudes to the travails of Indonesians – to whom channels of communication and sympathy must remain open. In this, the Australian government has followed the example of community-based efforts by aid and religious workers, activists, trade unionists and parliamentarians. Such efforts could potentially be a precursor to a broader ethical reassessment that would see relations structured, not on the basis of ‘mutual interests’ between disparate and contained identities, but on a recognition of historical, economic and ontological interdependence and responsibility – one that resonates with Kristeva’s call to cultivate the strangeness within ourselves.

However, this is far from achieved: many of the most fundamental categories of modern statecraft and international relations, such as sovereignty and the national interest, stand in the way. I have two concerns here. The first is the way in which the Prime Minister and others portrayed a new concern for humanitarianism in foreign policy as a reflection of ‘our values’. While this may seem uncontroversial, it has a less welcome role in the larger cultural politics with which Howard has sought to distinguish ‘Australia’ from ‘Asia’ on the basis of its European traditions, values and cultural roots. As he pointedly said on his first official tour of Asia in 1996, ‘We do not claim to be Asian . . . Australia does not need to choose between its history and its geography’. Such a claim also maintains the ontological fiction of ‘strange neighbours’: ‘Our relationships are most productive,’ he said at the height of the Timor crisis, ‘when they are realistic, concentrating on mutual interests . . . openly recognising, where they exist, differences in values and political systems.’ Yet Australia can hardly lay exclusive claim to such values, which many Asians share, and where its own record in defending these values is mixed. Australia remains a nation that refuses to incorporate basic human rights guarantees in its constitution, and in which the legacy of colonial dispossession and the White Australia policy remain strong – as the legislative restriction of native title and the pursuit of a draconian and inhumane refugee policy demonstrates.

The second concern is Australia’s economic diplomacy – here Australia’s drive for sameness is most intransigent. True to its radical neoliberalism, the Howard government continues to maintain that orthodox economic solutions will solve Indonesia’s problems – with the only exceptions being to press for a softening of IMF conditions in 1997 to prevent social upheaval threatening Suharto, and to back tighter regulation of short-term capital movements. Yet as Walden Bello and others have maintained, what is under question now is an entire model of development that suppressed Third World capital formation and industrialisation in favour of huge inflows of foreign investment. A return to such models will only further postpone a social recovery and could exacerbate dangerous
religious and economic divisions. Instead, the international community should be willing to fund much needed physical and social infrastructure, and allow Indonesians to define trade and investment rules so that wealth is more widely and fairly distributed. Until that occurs, Indonesians will be justly suspicious of even well-meaning international interventions.

As memories of 1999 began to fade, bilateral relations slowly improved but old patterns also reasserted themselves, and a subtle and deep-seated estrangement continued at a subsurface level. A kind of ‘ethical spring’ seemed possible during the presidency of respected Muslim leader Abdurrahman Wahid (‘Gus Dur’), who travelled to East Timor, sought to promote greater autonomy and dialogue as a basis for the resolution of the conflicts in Aceh and West Papua, and pressed for far-reaching reform of the powerful armed forces. Yet his efforts to visit Australia were repeatedly blocked by his political enemies, and his position was undermined by an opportunistically coalition of parliamentarians, TNI officers and Megawati Sukarnoputri, who engineered a constitutional coup that removed him from office. Sukarnoputri quickly acquiesced in a new military offensive in Aceh and moves to undermine the new autonomy agreement in Papua, while her relations with Australia were markedly cool – a situation exacerbated by bullying demands from the Howard government that Indonesia accept the asylum seekers stranded on the *Tampa* by the SAS, and public rebuke of her criticism of the US invasion of Afghanistan.

Only the tragedy of the October 2002 Bali bombing, which saw 202 people (including 88 Australians) killed by Jemaah Islamiyyah terrorists, brought sustained new efforts to achieve bilateral friendship and cooperation. However, these were not motivated by a new kind of ethics, but by traditional interests in regime stability and national security, and they exposed a very dangerous estrangement with a large group of extremist Muslims for whom Australia – as an aggressive Western ally of the United States – represented decadence, immorality and imperialism. The Howard Government learned nothing from these attacks – instead it joined the US invasion of Iraq, spoke rashly of a willingness to launch pre-emptive strikes into the region against terrorists, and argued that Australians were targets not because of their government’s actions, but ‘because of the values [they] represent’. Proof positive that nothing had been learnt was evident when Australian officials began to talk up the possibility of resuming joint training with the *Kopassus* special forces, even as the violence in Aceh reached new heights; firm plans to resume the programme – focused on counter-terrorism – were announced in 2005 even though *Kopassus* has previous links with Islamic extremists.

The terrible disaster of the Tsunami, which hit soon after former TNI General Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono assumed the presidency, seemed to elicit a new phenomenon of cross-cultural generosity, given the enormous commitments of aid from both Australian citizens and government. But yet again this was built upon shallow and shifting sands: many Australians
asked for their donations to Tsunami relief appeals to be returned after
the questionable conviction of Queenslander Schapelle Corby on drugs
charges, and (notwithstanding the valuable efforts of many Australian
officials, aid workers and defence personnel in Aceh) the Australian
government’s $1 billion aid package was motivated as much by Indonesia’s
perceived strategic importance, domestic electoral imperatives and a sadly
familiar politics of identity. As Suvendrini Perera summed up Howard’s
Address to the Nation (during which he bragged that ‘Australians were
the first foreigners on the ground’ and that ‘the spontaneous outpouring
of generosity . . . should be a source of pride to us all . . . a great expres-
sion of the decency and good heart of the people of our nation’):\(^5\)

In Howard’s comments, Australians’ empathetic response to the
tsunami is repeatedly reworked to solidify distance and restage differ-
ence. It serves as another opportunity for national self-definition . . .
decency and goodness acquire an almost ontological status as the focus
shifts from the suffering of the dispossessed and bereaved to a cele-
bration of Australianness.\(^5\)

In the face of this history and the political imperatives that have driven
it, enacting a genuinely just and sensitive ethics for international policy
will be a difficult task. Yet this is not merely a utopian hope, but must
be the only legitimate and prudent response to the challenge the Asian
crisis represents to dominant models of economic, political and strategic
life. The rhetoric of ‘strange neighbours’, for all its appearance of sensi-
tivity to difference, has simply masked the operation of a system that has
systematically sought to repress and police difference. Breaking down the
political force of these categories means accepting Kristeva’s challenge to
look for the ‘strangeness within ourselves’ – to accept that a truly ethical
relation between cultures and peoples can no longer be thought in terms
of the fixed images of identity inherent in the idea of ‘strange neighbours’,
in which pan-Asianism and a nostalgia for Europe form a neat Janus-face.
Such fixed identities are destructive political fictions, and do not deserve
our allegiance or describe our being. A better reality will come through
recognition of the myriad differences and conflicts that perpetually cut
through these identities and cry out, again and again, for some kind of
justice.
The perverse perseverance of sovereignty

It’s a familiar story: the withering away of the state under globalisation, or if not so much the state, the withering away of a certain idea and formation of sovereignty. A sovereignty that no longer possesses the fullness and power of its Westphalian ideal: a bounded territorial realm in which national authority is absolute, and that provides a representative and political principle through which states and their people can manage and control the forces that affect their lives. With the increasing globalisation of capital and trade, the growth of supranational regimes of economic governance such as the WTO, the interventionist zeal of the World Bank and the IMF, and the might and influence of the transnational corporation, sovereignty appears to be a thing of the past – the nostalgic ghost of a world transformed.

Such views, with more or less sophistication, are visible across the political continuum. We can recall The Economist’s shocking headline of 1986, ‘The nation-state is dead’, or point to the respected critical scholar of globalisation, Jan Aart Scholte, who maintains that, even while ‘the state apparatus survives’ and ‘is more intrusive in social life than before . . . the core Westphalian norm of sovereignty is no longer operative’. Even one of the most intriguing and profound discussions of globalisation in recent years, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri’s Empire (2000) falls prey to this logic. ‘The passage to Empire,’ they write, ‘emerges from the twilight of modern sovereignty.’

Their words appeared at the turn of a millennium, the end of a century that had fulfilled, ended and hollowed out modernity beyond all possible dreams, all nightmares, all utopias and all dystopias. The fate of sovereignty, it seems, is bound up with all these dark fates. Yet I am uncomfortable with these resolute metaphors of temporal passage. We might recall that the full title of the famous Economist editorial was ‘The Nation-State is dead. Long live the nation-state’, and we might also focus.
on a key contention of Hardt and Negri’s, that ‘the decline in sovereignty of nation states . . . does not mean that sovereignty as such has declined’. They portray sovereignty not so much in absolute decline as in passage and transformation, from the bounded national territories of modernity to ‘Empire . . . a decentred, deterritorialising apparatus of rule that progressively incorporates the entire global realm within its open, expanding frontiers’.3

Hardt and Negri thus make a paradoxical contribution to this debate. They echo the view that sovereignty, as it was imagined within modernity, and tied to the bounded territorial authority of the nation-state, is in decline, but then insist on the emergence of a new – supranational and deterritorialising – form of sovereignty, which is still repressive and disabling, like its nostalgic echo, but which forms the terrain of a new mode of critical and revolutionary action – the terrain of ‘Empire’ and the revolution of the ‘multitude’. Yet they go further, to argue that what they call ‘modern sovereignty’ – a closed, egoistic mode of national identity, intolerant and repressive of otherness – is in fact passing; that not even this survives the loss of economic authority and the difference-harnessing capitalist machine of ‘Empire’.4

In the face of this, a number of questions arise. Why is there this persistence of the idea of modern territorial sovereignty as passing away in the face of economic globalisation, neo-liberal ascendancy, the transnational corporation and so on? What other complexities and understandings does this obscure and occlude? Why does this idea of temporal passage coexist, in Empire, with Hardt and Negri’s very suggestive account of a new global apparatus of rule? Is it possible and indeed crucial to argue that sovereignty still exists in a complex (and in many ways enabling or ideal) relation to the new imperial space under construction? Are there violences and struggles whose names still need to be heard from beneath the ongoing wreckage of modern sovereignty?

This chapter thus sets out two critical tasks. First, is a critique of the image of sovereignty’s passage presented by Scholte and also by Hardt and Negri. It argues that, whatever the loss of economic autonomy experienced under globalisation, sovereignty is not passing away: it forms, instead, a complex and malign articulation of law, power, possibility and force that thwarts a totalising image of decline and irrelevance. Second, it is also a critique of the essentialist image of sovereignty at work in The Economist and in writers such as Scholte,5 which closes off an understanding of the ways sovereignty is performed, imagined and conjured via a founding and illegitimate violence. By focusing on an obvious loss of national economic authority the ‘paradoxical’ constitution of sovereignty is assumed, closing out a deeper understanding of the discursive process by which sovereignty – and its exclusionary and subjectifying violence – was brought into being.6
For my purposes, it is Emmanuel Levinas who offers the most profound warning against assuming sovereignty’s passage. In *Ethics as First Philosophy* he invites us to consider not the twilight of modern sovereignty but its *persistence* – the persistence of its malign, suffocating ontology, and its intimate connection to violent images of truth and being, with the instrumentalisation of knowledge, the technologisation of morality, the arrogance of identity and the death of love. ‘Modern man persists in his being as a sovereign who is merely concerned to maintain the powers of his sovereignty,’ he warns. ‘All that is possible is permitted . . . a miracle of modern Western freedom unhindered by any memory or remorse.’

So it is between these two idioms, between passage and persistence, that I wish to place my thoughts on the ‘fate’ of sovereignty under globalisation. I do so in part to counter the relentless rhetorical force of *Empire* which, while brilliant and suggestive, I suspect of a subtle colonisation of critical thought and thus of emancipatory politics. It is for this reason that I insist on the relevance of Levinas – and the ethical, deconstructive tradition he helped to engender – in opposition to arguments that too quickly dismiss its continuing importance. Hardt and Negri have spoken too soon when they declare the ‘deconstructive phase of critical thought’ to be a ‘closed parenthesis’ that will fade away in favour of a liberatory fable of cyborgs amid the ‘plastic’ terrain of new productive technologies. This is not only to close out a still fruitful and urgent stream of critical theory, but to obscure the continuing, horrifying patterns of violence and politics that such work helps us to critique and overcome.

Tied up with these perspectives are important questions of political priority and practice, which may be enabled or hampered by particular modes of analysis. Do we identify a ‘deterritorialising’ capitalist globalisation as the major political task at this time, and name this enemy and field of struggle ‘Empire’? Or do we still view the ‘State’ – with its monopoly on violence and definitions of public danger, and its technologies of subjectification and authority, often in synergy with sections of capital – as a still important locus of energy and struggle? Once we make such decisions, do we then develop the right images of political solidarity, struggle and subjectivity that will allow us to pursue a concern for justice?

When I first drafted this chapter more than six months after the 11 September attacks in the United States, the country continued to fight in Afghanistan and rattled the sabre against Iraq, Israel pulled back its forces from the vicious destruction of ‘Operation defensive shield’, having killed almost 500 Palestinians in two weeks, and the Indonesian military pursued a vicious war of counter-insurgency in the oil-rich province of Aceh (where Exxon-Mobil is a major investor). The Venezuelan military had staged a coup, with tacit US backing, only to reinstate the elected left-wing president after the Organization of American States condemned their actions and local support evaporated. Dominant public obsessions
were with security and its violent, exclusivist, ontologising technologies: counter-terror, border protection, deterrence, ‘homeland security’, the ‘necessary’ erosion of civil liberties and the rule of law.

In such contexts we see perverse connections of tactics and ideology. A free market US administration demonises its enemies in the starkest terms of self and other, freedom and terror; links such representations with a global military and diplomatic campaign; yet also accelerates the very forces of globalising capital which are interpreted as hastening the dissolution of the territorial state. There is something more complex at work, which cannot be reduced to a new Zeitgeist, to a new, seductive and totalising narrative of historical inevitability. Alongside (and in counterpoint to) an analysis of ‘Empire’ we need to understand something less heartening, but still necessary: the perverse perseverance of sovereignty.

By examining a range of contemporary examples – the Asian financial crisis and post-Suharto Indonesia, Israel’s war against the Palestinian Intifada, the post-9/11 ‘war on terror’, and the new xenophobia directed against migrants and refugees in the developed West – this chapter argues that we need to consider the complex coexistence of imperial sovereignty with modern sovereignty. This generates a political task that must at once be deconstructive and reproductive: first, turned towards a critique of the exclusionary repression of sovereignty, and second, towards the creation of an ethical cross-border solidarity of the multitude.

The founding violence of sovereignty

First, however, we must talk about sovereignty – the understanding of sovereignty that transcendent accounts of globalisation occlude and that Hardt and Negri develop, but only to announce its imminent passage.

What is ‘modern sovereignty’? In developing this concept, Hardt and Negri echo a powerful critique of sovereignty that refutes its basic essentialising claim: that sovereignty forms an unproblematic and legitimate site of authority and legal violence based on its status as a representative signifier for the nation, ‘the people’. This is a form of ontological magic first visible in Thomas Hobbes’s Leviathan, where he posits humanity moving on a journey from a mythical ‘state of nature’ to the ‘body-politick’, ‘a multitude united in One Person’. Based on this suffocating image of ‘many wills’ reduced to one, Westphalian sovereignty was made (via Machiavelli) into the basic structural and normative principle for International Relations: the rule of law and morality within the state; the rule of anarchy and amorality outside it, driven by states’ eternal competition and struggle for power.

It is from this essentialism too that the state under globalisation is understood to be losing authority, without a question as to whether the state had ever deserved authority or been genuinely representative of its
‘people’. Yet long ago, in a fragment of *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, Nietzsche had declared the sovereign state to be ‘the coldest of cold monsters’:

Coldly it tells lies too, and this lie crawls out of its mouth: ‘I the state, am the people’ . . . it is annihilators who set traps for the many and call them State; they hang a sword and a hundred appetites over them . . . State I call it where all drink poison, the good and the wicked; State, where all lose themselves, the good and the wicked; State, where the slow suicide of all is called ‘life’.11

More recently a range of writers have shown that the essentialist image of sovereignty effaces the violence and illegitimacy of its own founding. William Connolly, in *The Ethos of Pluralization*, draws on a spectacular aporia in Rousseau’s *Social Contract* to argue that sovereignty does this by presuming itself to authorise and precede the very act of its coming into existence. ‘It is a difficulty that deserves attention,’ wrote Rousseau, ‘in order that a newly formed nation might approve sound maxims of politics . . . it would be necessary that the effect should become cause; the social spirit, which should be the work of the institution, should preside over the institution itself; and men should be, prior to the laws, what they ought to become by means of them.’12

Connolly calls this the ‘paradox of political founding’ and argues, following Paul Ricoeur, that it is ‘a paradox of politics as such’; no political act ever conforms to its self-image as a pure reflection of prior consent and sovereign authority. Every political act, says Connolly, always ‘lacks full legitimacy at the moment of its enactment. Sovereignty always occurs after the moment it claims to occupy’.13 Hardt and Negri similarly point to the work of Jean Bodin, who admitted that ‘force and violence create the sovereign’.14 In his turn Derrida asks of the US founding fathers: who authorised their signatures on the US Declaration of Independence, other than a popular sovereignty that did not yet exist? Derrida calls the Declaration an ‘act of faith, a hypocrisy indispensable to any political, military or economic coup de force’. The appeal to God as the document’s ‘final legitimising instance’ only magnifies the conceit at the centre of the United States’ sovereign foundations; a conceit that not only conjures popular representative power for an elite but, as Connolly suggests, effaces an enabling juridical and strategic violence against the continent’s indigenous peoples.15

In a way that both Nietzsche and Levinas do, Connolly thus warns of the ongoing violence implicit in the perpetuation of such ontological illusions of sovereignty:

The appearance of a pure general will (which must be common and singular) requires the concealment of impurities. Such a strategy succeeds if violence in the founding is treated by the hegemonic
political identity to have no continuing effects ... the paradox of sovereignty dissolves into the politics of forgetting.\textsuperscript{16}

It is only through such a politics of forgetting that George W. Bush can claim, in his post-9/11 address to Congress, that America is historically innocent (‘a new world that became a friend and liberator of the old ... a slave-holding society that became a servant of freedom ... a power that went into the world to protect but not to possess ...’), obscuring the long history of dispossession and warfare, from the seventeenth century until 1890, that cleared the North American continent of its owners and destroyed many proud indigenous civilisations.\textsuperscript{17} Furthermore, as Connolly suggests, the (erased) violence of founding has ongoing effects. The gesture of forgetting is invoked as Bush rallies Americans for a war on terror, and it is with a similar discourse of forgetting that Australian leaders silence live questions of Aboriginal land ownership and reconciliation in the same breath that they proclaim a right to exclude asylum seekers on the basis of their ‘sovereign rights’. Yet as the Gungalidda elder Wadjularbinna writes, ‘this is not John Howard’s country, it has been stolen ... The refugees were coming here, to OUR country, which we as Aboriginal people have a spiritual connection to ... Our Spirit Creator and our ancient law and culture would not stand for how these refugees are being treated.’\textsuperscript{18}

Secure sovereignty: two genealogies

There is a further way of exposing the paradoxical and violent constitution of sovereignty: through genealogy. Genealogy aims to understand the ‘conditions of possibility’ of modern sovereignty: the political, cultural and discursive space in which it could emerge, and the space it would in turn enable and continue to transform. It also aims to understand how, out of and against its limits, we can imagine a new form of politics.

Hardt and Negri pursue such a genealogy of sovereignty in two stunning chapters of \textit{Empire}, where they develop their concept of ‘modern sovereignty’; we can also see the contours of such a genealogy emerging in Foucault’s \textit{Discipline and Punish} and his lectures on security, population and governmentality. This is to pursue a genealogy of modern sovereignty via the promise that has always been linked umbilically to it: security.

In Hobbes’s \textit{Leviathan} and Locke’s \textit{Second Treatise on Government} the figure of the sovereign was imagined via a founding exchange of freedom for security: one that fused the individual and sovereign subjects (state and citizen) into a single existential figure that now seems impossible to break apart. This secure modern subject was further imagined as endangered, as primally estranged from the Other of the Criminal, the Socialist, the Aboriginal or the ethnic minority. This entrenched a powerful image of sovereign identity as perpetually under threat, and as intolerant.
and repressive of difference; thus in pursuit of its own survival, that sovereign subject is always entitled to deploy violence. As Hobbes wrote, the Sovereignty (sic) has right ‘to do whatsoever he think necessary to be done . . . for the preserving of Peace and Security’. 19

Furthermore, sovereignty was not just a juridical figure. It was a political technology that simultaneously reached into the heart of the citizen and the most obscure reaches of the social world, and enabled new forms of governmental power that underpinned and accelerated new forms of technological and economic modernity. 20 In this way, the utilitarian philosopher Jeremy Bentham saw security as essential to the progressive imagination of liberal modernity. Security would safeguard an ‘expectation’ of the future in which economic gain can be pursued without interruption either by social disorder or socialist redistribution; a security that rested not merely on totalising deployments of police or military violence but on desire, discipline and self government. Hegel, concerned with similar threats, developed a powerful narrative of economic and social progress in which state and civil society would be fused via an antagonism to the Other, which is to be either expelled or effaced within the higher unity of the One. Such images of progressive Western subjectivity would in turn justify an imperialism to which ‘the civil society is driven’ in its search for new markets, the ‘passion for gain which involves risk . . . the element of danger, flux and destruction’. 21

Yet Hegel, in a way relevant to Hardt and Negri’s own account, also sought to tame the potentially revolutionary powers of modernity (of which Marxism and socialism were an alternative vision) through a vision of order in which progress takes the form, not of a violent convulsion that smashes the past as it comes into existence, but a slow and rational design. As I argued in Chapter 1, in Bentham and Hegel’s thought (which has since formed a template for powerful forms of utilitarian liberalism) sovereignty, security, economic prosperity and a central, organising racism powerfully coalesce. This analysis has echoes in Empire, but it may also help to complicate Hardt and Negri’s view of a radical temporal shift from ‘modern’ to ‘imperial’ sovereignty. It could be argued that Hegel’s thought transcended mercantilism and helps us to understand the coexistence of strong images of the nation-state with globalising capital; certainly in Francis Fukuyama’s neo-Hegelian account of the post-Cold War ‘end of history’ (1992), which celebrates a conjunction of neo-liberal democratic governance and globalising capitalism, this is true. 22 Yet Fukuyama’s account is virtually missing from Empire.

**Modern sovereignty: two modernities**

The great insight of Hardt and Negri’s account of modern sovereignty is that modernity is not a singular process but is profoundly *split* between ‘a radical revolutionary process’ and an ordering ‘counter-revolution’ that ‘sought to dominate and expropriate the force of the emerging movements
and dynamics'. In the first, which they call ‘the discovery of the plane of immanence’, humans seize the powers of creation from the heavens to create a radical new consciousness of freedom, scientific possibility and democratic politics; a consciousness they see visible in Dante, Spinoza, Thomas More and the Protestant Sects. The second begins with the Renaissance, is taken up by the Catholic Church and a reaction within the Reformation, and finally becomes a dominant theme of the Enlightenment (in the thought of Descartes, Kant and Hegel).

The democratic possibility of the ‘multitude’ that was freed when the medieval divine order was swept away, is thwarted by the reassertion of ‘ideologies of command and authority’, by ‘the deployment of a new transcendent power [that plays] on the anxiety and fear of the masses, their desire to reduce the uncertainty of life and increase security’. By the time Hegel has transformed ‘the pallid constitutive function of Kant’s transcendental critique into a solid ontological figure’ this counter-revolutionary project has crystallised: in this modernity ‘the liberation of modern humanity could only be a function of its domination . . . the immanent goal of the multitude is transformed into the necessary and transcendent power of the state’.

Hardt and Negri also make two crucial linkages that echo other accounts. They understand that Hegel’s ‘philosophical recuperation of the Other within Absolute Spirit’ and his universal history were linked with the ‘very real violence of European conquest and colonialism’ and thus were ‘a negation of non-European desire’. They also, in a gesture to Foucault’s accounts of governmentality and the political double-bind, understand sovereignty as ‘a political machine that rules across the entire society’ – a machine that is disciplinary and bio-political.

What I would emphasise is that such power, exercised through economic regulation, disciplinary apparatuses, coercion and desire, is still ultimately organised around the final authority (and emotional appeal) of the state. In the construction of national identities, all too often in fearful and repressive relation to internal and external Others, we ultimately find the link between individualising and totalising power; between the state and the citizen as linked formations of subjectivity. This closes off democratic possibility and freedom and, as Hardt and Negri write, establishes a ‘new equilibrium . . . between the processes of capital accumulation and the structures of power’. It makes an ordered ‘people’ out of the revolutionary and open set of relations which is the multitude. There is ‘no longer anything that strives, desires, or loves; the content of potentiality is blocked, controlled, hegemonized by finality’.

**From modernity to empire?**

This, then, is ‘modern sovereignty’: not simply an abstract locus of juridical authority that forms the basis for Westphalian international law and order, but a complex disciplinary and ontological machinery of enormous depth
and force; one whose ultimate aim is to harness and control the possibility of freedom within capitalist modernity. In this way, Hardt and Negri’s view is a brilliant and suggestive analysis that resists essentialism and builds powerfully on an extended body of prior and contemporary theory. The problems, in my view, begin when they assert that ‘the end of colonialism and the declining powers of the nation are indicative of general passage from the paradigm of modern sovereignty toward the paradigm of imperial sovereignty’. In the hope of foreseeing a renewed conflict between the revolutionary and repressive possibilities of modernity they assert a radical, irreversible passage from modernity to Empire:

As modernity declines, a new season is opened, and here we find again that dramatic antithesis that was at the origins and basis of modernity . . . The synthesis between the development of productive forces and relations of domination seems once again precarious and improbable. The desires of the multitude and its antagonism to every form of domination drive it to divest itself once again of the processes of legitimation that support the sovereign power . . . Is this the coming of a new human power?

We can hardly mock their desire or fail to share their hope – but to do so is not always to share their optimism. I worry that projecting the emergence of the multitude as a new historical phenomenon – in teleological terms – may be to downplay the very real challenges in forming it into being and generating truly transformative potential from its disparate (and divided) sites and spaces of struggle.

Even more disturbing is the wanton act of theoretical (and analytical) closure they perform amid this hope. This comes with their suspicion that ‘postmodernist and postcolonialist theories may end up in a dead end because they fail to recognise adequately the contemporary object of critique, that is, they mistake today’s real enemy’:

What if the modern forms of power these critics (and we ourselves) have taken such pains to describe and contest no longer hold sway in our society? . . . In short, what if a new paradigm and power, a postmodern sovereignty, has come to replace the modern paradigm of rule through differential hierarchies of the hybrid and fragmentary subjectivities that these theorists celebrate? In this case, modern forms of sovereignty would no longer be at issue, and the postmodernist and postcolonialist strategies that appear to be liberatory would not challenge but in fact coincide with or even unwittingly reinforce the new strategies of rule!

These are fighting words, with a terrible critical and analytical finality. There appears to be no question: modern sovereignty, in all its repression
and horror, is passing away; and the critical paradigms that grappled with it so gamely are now at best passé and at worst complicit with the new hybrid flexible formations of capitalist Empire. This occurs because the world market ‘tends to deconstruct the boundaries of the nation-state’ and with them the stable orders and hierarchies of modern sovereignty.32 ‘Postmodernists,’ they say, ‘are still waging battle against the shadows of their old enemies: the Enlightenment, or really modern forms of sovereignty and its binary reduction of difference and multiplicity to a single alternative between Same and Other’:

The affirmation of hybridities and the free play of differences across boundaries, however, is liberatory only in a context where power poses hierarchy exclusively through essential identities, binary divisions, and stable oppositions. The structures and logics of power in the contemporary world are entirely immune to the ‘liberatory’ weapons of the postmodernist politics of difference. In fact, Empire too is bent on doing away with those modern forms of sovereignty and on setting differences to play across boundaries.33

There is much that is profound about their account of imperial globalisation as generating and capitalising on difference; and their warning that simple anti-racism or celebrations of hybridity fail to work as critical tools against the exploitation of disciplinary, biopolitical capital does need to be heeded. But their assertion that Empire is bent on doing away with modern sovereignty, as such, is overdetermined and misleading.

True, neo-liberal globalisation ‘tends to deconstruct the boundaries of the nation-state’, but not its ontology. Consider the genesis of Empire after the Second World War. Rigid, fear-soaked ontologies of Cold War anti-communism, combined with massive military expenditures, levels of strategic confrontation and internal repression, were central to the vast movement of US, European and Asian accumulation from 1950 to 1989. A rigid and coercive division between ‘democracy’ and ‘communism’, between Self and Other, was then fed into a Hegelian discourse of development and progress where the Other ideally dissolved into the Same.34 Such ontologies continued in Southeast Asia beyond that, through to the Cambodian settlement and the fall of Suharto, when they were partially dismantled through the (very limited) liberalisation of Indonesian politics and the normalisation of relations with Vietnam (which did admittedly occur in tandem with new ‘imperial’ movements of foreign capital into the socialist markets of Vietnam and China).

For a period, which we can date from the early 1990s until 11 September 2001, a global binary confrontation fractured into more local and regional confrontations: the Persian Gulf War, the Balkans, Chechnya, the first Intifada, civil war in Cambodia and Burma, repression of the Kurds and Tibetans, East Timor and Aceh, the 1998 riots in Indonesia. Surely these
conflicts were proof that modern sovereignty and its vicious, security-obsessed ontology was not passing. Nor was modern sovereignty unrelated to the continuing reliance of capital on strong states for ‘stability’, the control of labour, and the security of mines and oil fields. Now, the great binary confrontation has returned – between ‘freedom’ and ‘terror’, ‘civilisation’ and ‘evil’ – which draws in wider and wider sections of the global polity and reinforces modern sovereignty in the worst way.

Hardt and Negri’s analysis here rests, I suspect, on having swallowed the ‘democratic peace’ theory whole, refracted via Fukuyama’s ‘end of history’: ‘sovereign power’, they assert, ‘will no longer confront its Other and no longer face its outside, but rather will progressively expand its boundaries to envelop the entire globe as its domain’. Where Fukuyama divided the world between the developed ‘post-historical’ world (where democratic peace would reign) and the ‘historical’ world (where war and conflict continue), Hardt and Negri describe a world of ‘minor and internal conflicts’. The ‘history of imperialist, inter-imperialist and anti-imperialist wars is over’ they say; there are only civil wars, police actions, a ‘proliferation of minor and indefinite crises . . . an omni-crisis’.

This tends to diminish the destructive power of the ‘minor and indefinite crises’ they cite, both in terms of scale, loss of life and political importance, and with them the theoretical trajectories that are most able to challenge them. While they do briefly acknowledge the import of ‘post-modern’ theorising in the discipline of IR, they still (mistakenly) regard it as trapped in a death-struggle with modern sovereignty, despite their earlier admission that such scholarship ‘strive[s] to challenge the sovereignty of states by deconstructing the boundaries of the ruling powers, highlighting irregular and uncontrolled international movements and flows, and thus fracturing stable unities and oppositions’. National Deconstruction, David Campbell’s study of the interpenetration of sovereignty and conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina, for example, starkly illustrates the dangers of assuming sovereignty’s passage or irrelevance. There he shows how purist discourses of sovereignty and territorial identity both drove ethnic cleansing and crippled international responses. In turn, his attempts to critically rethink sovereignty and democracy, via Derridean deconstruction and Levinasian ethics, provide invaluable tools for preventing such a disaster from ever reoccurring. Two-hundred thousand dead, UN humiliation, instability in Yugoslavia and the Kosovo war were the legacies of the very violent, and thoroughly contemporary, perseverance of sovereignty in a crisis that was far from ‘minor’.

The theoretical double-movement that asserts the disappearance of modern sovereignty from reality, and the obsolescence of anti-modernist thought as a political guidepost, has two effects that must be interrogated. First, it imagines a new kind of political subject, the ‘multitude’, which can hopefully mimic and subvert the same deterritorialising movement of
capital without succumbing to it; and, second, it enforces the new description of rule, ‘Empire’, as the most pressing political task.

Yet we can reasonably ask whether this subject is so ripe for fruition, or whether the continued operation of modern technologies of sovereignty and identity might not be in danger of crippling its emergence; likewise we can ask whether in order to liberate the multitude we need to continue to critique and fight modern sovereignty, to fight its hold on subjectivity, its violence, and its complex enabling relationship with global capital. Only then can we begin to grapple with the irony William Connolly identifies: ‘the more global capital becomes, the more aggressive the state is with respect to citizen allegiances and actions’. In short, the teleological metaphor is the wrong one. We need instead to think in terms of a strategic coexistence of imperial and modern ontology whose objectives are somatic and spatial: the control and production of bodies, land and space as a necessary (but not always umbilical) adjunct to the flow and exploitation of capital.

**Tactical sovereignty: post-Suharto Indonesia**

Contemporary Indonesia certainly provides one of the most stark examples of the work of Empire, but it is also an example of the contemporary perseverance of sovereignty. Pressed to open its capital markets during the 1990s, and long influenced by the liberal development advice of the World Bank (which chaired the aid consortium the Consultative Group on Indonesia), tens of billions of short-term capital flooded in during the 1990s, much of which was channelled into property and sharemarket speculation and the corrupt business practices of the Suharto family and other cronies. Such capital account liberalisation, with its complex interrelationship with currency speculation, corruption and political crisis, was a major factor in the terrible financial crash of 1997–8.

In the wake of this ‘Asian’ crisis, the IMF grossly infringed the sovereignty of the Indonesian state with detailed programmes that amount to indirect control of its entire economic policy. We could be forgiven, in the face of this, for thinking sovereignty was passing. The IMF simultaneously demanded and utilised that same sovereignty as it forced the Indonesian state to bail out insolvent private banks – assuming liability for their bad loans, the often worthless piles of assets and the crippling responsibilities of debt service. Such debts – incurred through IMF ‘bail-out’ packages and the issue of bonds to insolvent banks – now reached US$154 billion, and required 51 per cent of the national budget in servicing amid forced reductions in subsidies and spending on health and education. The bailout also helped Indonesia’s corrupt elite by socialising their burden of debt, and quarantining assets in the Indonesian Bank Restructuring Authority (IBRA) which has since been the subject of an unseemly struggle to
prevent assets being sold in the hope that they can be shifted – minus the
debt they originally secured – back to their former owners. Needless
to say, this has caused enormous hardship and misery, and further disenfranchised an already marginalised population.

We may wonder whether sovereignty in such contexts is less a secure ontological container, or a stable site of political agency and authority, than a strategic handhold for power – abrogated here, incited there, deployed, evaded and reinvented within a struggle over who can seize and shape its myriad administrative, economic, cultural, spatial and political potentials. Here is a symptom of the loss of economic autonomy and authority that was assumed to attach to sovereignty, but also of its continuity as an enabling juridical structure for both domestic and transnational capital; sovereignty as a site of tactical contest not only between classes and social groups, but between corporations and sectors of capital itself.

The imperial ‘sovereignty’ exercised by the IMF on behalf of Western banks and investors depends on the modern sovereignty of states, which continues to perform a significant channelling, policing and legalising function both of capital and labour. This has been recognised by scholars of ‘international political economy’, who emphasise the enabling role of the state in the creation of that most profound symptom of Empire, the liberalisation of global finance. Susan Strange argues that ‘markets exist under the authority and permission of the state’, while Jeffrey Frieden tellingly reminds us that ‘political consent made the global financial integration of the past thirty years possible’.

Indonesia is also an example of a central paradox of the contemporary crisis of sovereignty: the way in which the (often wilful) loss of economic autonomy is matched by an insistence on repressive, territorial images of national integrity, security and identity. As Connolly argues, ‘while political movements, economic transactions, environmental dangers, security risks, cultural communications, tourist travel, and disease transmission increasingly acquire global dimensions, the state retains a tight grip over public definitions of danger, security, collective identification and democratic accountability’.

Even through its ‘democratic’ transition, Indonesia still plays out a politics of security directed against a variety of threatening Others who in the past have taken myriad forms: the Chinese victims of the 1998 riots, the ‘ungrateful’ Catholics of East Timor, the Christians of Maluku, the West Papuans or the Acehnese. While there have been, admittedly, laudable efforts to promote greater autonomy for some regions, the harsh ‘security approach’ of the Indonesian military (TNI) still perseveres. The TNI’s sponsorship of militia violence in East Timor led to massive destruction and international intervention; nearly 1,000 civilians have died in Aceh since 1999, and the military has even been implicated in the religious
violence in Maluku. This ironic situation was starkly demonstrated by two events in late 2001: within two weeks the Indonesian parliament passed a new autonomy law for West Papua and the indigenous leader Theys Eluay was killed by the Indonesian special forces command, Kopassus. In August 2002, repeating the political double-take of the year before, the Indonesian military issued an ultimatum for the Acehnese resistance movement to accept an autonomy package and abandon independence or risk ‘firmer’ military action. Their deadline? The 7 December anniversary of the invasion of East Timor.

Indonesia, the state that haemorrhages its sovereignty to the global market, simultaneously asserts its ‘national integrity’ with increasing harshness. As it does so it performs, more and more abjectly, its failure to imagine a different form of politics, a different form of coexistence, a different model of identity than that which must always ‘appropriate and grasp the otherness of the unknown’. As Levinas asks: ‘My being-in-the-world or my ‘place in the sun’ . . . have these not also been the usurpation of spaces belonging to the other man who I have already oppressed or starved . . . are they not acts of repulsing, excluding, exiling, stripping, killing?’ This, for me, raises an issue of political priority. What is more dangerous, the fluid grasp of capital or the violent ontology of modernity? Could they not form a common and intertwined danger?

Neoliberal sovereignty: security and the refugee

The coercive reassertion of sovereignty amid its imperial corrosion is not confined to Third World national security states recently emerging from dictatorship; it is visible, in not unconnected ways, in developed states as well. At the beginning of the twenty-first century this has most clearly emerged in the travail of the asylum seeker. Attitudes and policies towards asylum seekers have been hardening for over a decade, in Britain, continental Europe and the United States. Anxieties over the integrity of physical borders (when borders to capital have been all but removed) are increasing, and policy is moving to match such anxieties in the face of a long-standing body of international law and new regional institutions like the European Convention on Human Rights.

This has been most pronounced in Australia, where a neo-liberal government has been championing economic globalisation while instituting ever more repressive policies of mandatory detention, restrictions to legal process, and military operations to repel boats. Australia’s policy became world news in August 2001 with the crisis over the Norwegian ship the Tampa, which CNN compared with the Voyage of the Damned; however, controversy over beatings, protests, self-mutilation, suicide and psychological trauma in many detention centres had been developing for some time. At the general election in November 2001, the Howard
government also drew on historical and racial anxieties about fears of invasion and Anglo-Celtic cultural integrity to retain office. Its policies drew on and developed those previously deployed by the United States against Cuban and Haitian refugees. Flows of asylum seekers became militarised and securitised, ‘transformed into a threat not only to the state but to the security and identity of the host society’.50

The demonisation of the Other, the Stranger, and their incarceration and punishment for simply being non-citizens, is part of the general apparatus of governmentality and biopower intrinsic to modern sovereignty; but one deployed now as a way of managing resentful publics and controlling global flows. If, as McKenzie Wark argues, ‘migration is globalisation from below’, its repressive securitisation aims to preserve the privileges of globalisation from above.51

The repressive reassertion of sovereignty against the refugee is utterly bound up with the dissolution of sovereignty in neo-liberal economic restructuring, and its insistence on permanent mass unemployment; a perfect way for neo-liberal governments to evade responsibility for the palpable hardship and insecurity experienced by the losers of globalisation at home and abroad. This is a wilful displacement of the ‘permanent and irreducible’ postmodern uncertainty analysed by Zygmunt Bauman, for which neo-liberalism bears so much responsibility: the troubled context for John Howard’s promises to provide Australians with a sense of security and ‘home’, a repressive and futile panacea for the globalisation-induced upheaval he deems so necessary.52

This, to me, contradicts Hardt and Negri’s insistence that ‘the transcendence of modern sovereignty ... conflicts with the immanence of capital’, and questions their traditionally Marxian insistence on capitalist power as the major focus for resistance and political action. (Their insistence on the primacy of the ‘terrain of production’ and the development of ‘posthuman’ forms of labour power is a kind of postmodern echo of the statement in the Communist Manifesto that ‘the history of all society up to now is the history of class struggles’.)53 Rather I would insist on the historical interrelationship of modernity, bio-power, sovereignty and capital (as Foucault suggested more than once); on their interrelationship as problems, and on modernity’s important status as a unique focus for critical politics. Modernity not as a ‘time’ but as a political formation which brings not just the repression and alienation of labour but detention centres, prisons, death camps, ethnic cleansing, counter-insurgency, nuclear weapons and killing at a distance.54

I write here from a ‘disciplinary’ situation. For the critical international theorist, sovereignty as a political problem occurs not merely through its abrogation or its passage towards Empire, but through the persistence of its central normative status in international relations. This is not merely nostalgia – in strategy and statecraft sovereignty remains associated with inherently violent images of security and identity that draw constant
sustenance from the poisonous soil of modern ontology. Such facts underlie, for example, Jim George’s appeal ‘for serious critical reflection upon the fundamental philosophical premises of western modernity’. Just as neoliberal states collude in the construction of Empire, they continue to insist on the ontological primacy of the state and its monopoly on the legitimate use of force, a ‘monopoly’ which variously imprisons and expels refugees, incarcerates African-Americans, dispossesses indigenous people and runs ‘counter-insurgency’ operations against that most sinister threat to the nation – the movement for secession. A malign contemporary force to Hobbes’s founding conditions for the survival of the State: ‘Concord, Health; Sedition, Sickness; and Civill war, Death’.

As I have argued throughout this book, in such a context, security ironically rests on the necessity of the insecurity and suffering of the Other. Warfare, killing and conflict are often driven less by the imperatives of capitalism (present though they often are) than by the logic of an ontology that refuses to coexist with otherness and seeks an absolute solution to the threat of its existence. This is as true of the Howard government’s ‘deterrence’ of asylum seekers through detention and military expulsion, as it is of the more openly violent strategy of the Israeli state when faced with Palestinian violence and demands for justice.

Such images of security weld together ontological necessity, positivist epistemology, ‘realist’ morality and an instrumental image of technology in the hope of realising the modern dream of what Levinas called the absolute ‘correlation between knowledge and being’. This time has not passed, it is not in twilight; it enables and coexists with Empire, thwarts its temporal pull, and generates its own political urgency that is both a part of and additional to the necessary work against capital’s global sovereignty.

**War of sovereignty: Israel and Palestine**

A final example – modern Israel – which is testament to the non-passage of sovereignty. In particular, the drawn out death-struggle between Israel and Palestine has been marked by the perseverance of sovereignty’s ontology in the fusion of violence, religious and territorial identity, and the national security state. Following the election of the hard-line Ariel Sharon (shadowed by the even harder-line Likud pretender Benjamin Netanyahu) the conflict’s worst features were reignited, with suicide bombings, assassinations, and ferocious IDF operations aimed at disabling the Palestinian authority itself. As I argue in Chapter 3, these culminated in April 2002 with ‘Operation Defensive Shield’, the invasion of Palestinian sovereign areas by the IDF, which saw the shelling of towns and refugee camps, mass arrests, torture, summary executions of Palestinian ‘militants’, shootings and the systematic destruction of houses. In Nablus, Jenin and Ramallah this caused hundreds of deaths, with little impact – until
the construction of the separation wall – on the ability of suicide bombers to shatter innocent Israeli lives.\textsuperscript{58}

The needs of imperial capital have little purchase in this conflict, bar a remote and confused link with US geo-strategy. This is a struggle over identity, sovereignty and territory: one carried out not only between Arab and Jew, but between Jews themselves, and between conflicting images of Zionism and Israeli identity. Twisting through the events of this conflict are ongoing questions: How do Jews and Arabs fit into Israeli citizenship and identity? What is a ‘Jew’? What are the borders of Israel, and can Israel’s existence accommodate the existence of a Palestinian state or indeed Palestinians themselves?\textsuperscript{59}

In short, at the heart of this conflict lies a profound anxiety about the existential security, integrity and unity of Israel, and we may fear that in the wake of the violence right-wing constructions of Israeli identity are becoming more powerful. As a major conference on Israeli security in 2000, attended by a wide range of powerbrokers on the centre and right, set out: ‘Israel must confront directly developments that manifest existential dangers. Failure in this confrontation or an attempt to avert it are liable to lead to the demise of the Zionist enterprise’. The Herzliya Conference manifested acute anxiety about Arab birth rates and advocated the containment of such ‘geo-demographic’ threats through increased Jewish emigration to Israel and a settlement of the Palestinian conflict that will ‘preserve’ a ‘Jewish majority’, i.e. little or no ‘right of return’ for dispossessed Palestinians, the annexation of Jewish settlements beyond the ‘green line’, and ‘the encouragement of Jewish settlement in demographically problematic regions’ such as the Galilee, the Jezreel Valley and the Negev ‘to prevent a contiguous Arab majority that would bisect Israel’.\textsuperscript{60}

The most viable political resolution to the conflict – the ‘two state solution’ – still resides in modern sovereignty, but we face a fundamental question of how rigid and ontologically intransigent such a solution might be. How can it accommodate difference, provide some measure of justice, and promote coexistence?\textsuperscript{61} The ideal is that Palestinian territory might be released from the ontological grasp of the dream of a Greater Israel, but the Herzliya conference also suggested deep division within Israel as to whether a Palestinian state should be permitted or, if it was to be established, sought ways to permanently annex some Palestinian territory to secure Israel against the ‘demographic threat’.\textsuperscript{62} The Palestinians are most unlikely to accept such a settlement, while in May 2002 the Likud voted never to accept a Palestinian state of any kind, and thus the conflict was set to continue. Peace could be a pyrrhic accommodation: while the irre- dentist desire for Greater Israel may one day be defeated at the negotiating table or in an Israeli election, we can worry that the exclusivist ontological image of the Zionist state will persevere, (in)secure behind its ‘iron wall’, while the Palestinian nation is born into a cauldron of hatred and injustice.\textsuperscript{63}
An ethics for the ‘multitude’: crossing sovereignty

All of these examples – 9/11, the Indonesian crisis, the securitisation of refugees and the Israeli–Palestinian war – raise not only a diagnosis of the interrelationship of sovereignty and capital, but questions about how sovereignty’s political and subjectifying power can be dissolved and moderated to counter both its own violence and its enabling relationship with imperial exploitation. This is where Hardt and Negri’s notion of the ‘multitude’ could be usefully brought together with postmodern ethics.

In many ways their vision of the multitude – a vast co-operative movement of humanity that is ‘separated from every residue of sovereign power, every “long arm” of Empire’, an ‘uncontainable force and an excess of value with respect to every form of right and law’ – is the political intimation of a desire rather than a reality, albeit one whose possibilities are visible in many sites and struggles. As I argue here, the multitude must not only be formed and struggle against capitalist forms of exploitation but statist ones as well: generating a non-violent transnational politics of solidarity with refugees and asylum seekers, indigenous peoples, and ethnic, cultural and religious minorities. There is genuine hope and possibility here, and they are to be commended for imagining a new global subjectivity that evades the tension between the problematic universalist claims of cosmopolitanism and the restrictive moral community of the nation (or nationally-focused socialism). Yet Hardt and Negri may have spoken too soon when they hope that this non-territorial, transnational human colossus already possesses the means to create a truly global structure of resistance to Empire.

They do admit that Empire utilises repressive mechanisms in an attempt to control flows of labour and migration, and forms of allegiance and sympathy. However, they play down the malign force of these operations with a weak hope: ‘attempts at repressing the multitude are really paradoxical, inverted manifestations of its strength’. My fear is that the very possibility of the multitude is thwarted by the politics of sovereignty, identity and segregation which, in so many sites and conflicts, breaks and scatters it into a chaotic and hate-filled dispersion. This politics divides the exploited from each other, fosters instability which the state can order and control, and helps to police both worker and middle-class subjectivities to sustain the dynamic structure of consent through which neo-liberal patterns of governance (at both the national and international levels) are maintained and secured.

If a ‘new cartography’ of the multitude, based on ‘global citizenship’, is to effectively come into being, it has to challenge the ontological force of existing politics of identity, incarceration, sovereignty and violence wherever they emerge. This is where postmodern ethics, derived from the deconstructive tradition of Heidegger, Derrida and Levinas, must be one element of the solution. The plight of refugees, the violence in Palestine,
ethnic cleansing, terror and counterterror, the desire to punish and divide – none of these situations can be resolved without a deep transformation of the ways we think about, narrate and deploy identity. All these conflicts need to be rethought in terms of the call to ethics and the love of the Other. This is the new structure of Being I attempted to imagine in Chapter 3 of this book.

Such thinkers call for a relation of reconciliation and coexistence based not on negotiations between contained, hostile identities, charged by resentment, but on what Julia Kristeva calls an acceptance of the ‘strangeness within ourselves’,\textsuperscript{67} and Levinas ‘the question of my right to be which is already my responsibility for the death of the Other, interrupting the care-free spontaneity of my naïve perseverence’.\textsuperscript{68} Consider the extraordinary case of Palestinian Mazen Joulani, who in June 2001 was shot dead in Jerusalem and whose organs were subsequently donated by his family to the Israeli transplant system. His heart now beats inside the body of a Jewish man.\textsuperscript{69} After such generosity – which has also many times flowed the other way – who is a Jew and who is Arab? Who can afford to hate or be separate from the Other? How does security connect with life? Levinas himself, a problematic interlocutor of this conflict, could not have scripted a more hopeful demonstration of his ethics. Ironic that this great Jewish philosopher could never properly accept Zionism’s ethical obligation towards the Palestinians, never accept them as his ‘other’; his thought has never been more necessary.\textsuperscript{70}

None of the cases I have discussed here exhaust this imperative. Lebanon, Chechnya, Bosnia, Kosovo, East Timor, Rwanda, Cambodia, Tibet, the Kurds, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Iraq and the list goes on – these are just a few more of the horrors that modern sovereignty, in its obsession with militarism, violence, certainty and unity, continues to bring us. This is why ethics and deconstruction are still so important: they have given us a profound critical idiom with which to understand, resist and transform the perverse perseverance of sovereignty.
6 Just war or ethical peace?
Morality and strategic violence after 9/11

War as a social phenomenon involves individuals, communities and states and any attempt to uncover its genesis must incorporate the discursive and institutional continuities which render violent conflict a legitimate and widely accepted mode of human conduct.

Vivienne Jabri

In 1973 the strategist and by now estranged member of the ‘nuclear priesthood’ Bernard Brodie wrote in his *War and Politics*:

the morality or immorality of acts of war is not a popular subject among the military and their civilian associates, nor for that matter among writers on strategy. It makes the military uneasy and defensive, ready to dismiss the troubling issue whenever it arises, either by asserting its irrelevancy or by falling back on some convenient sophistry.

This sad observation is hardly news, but we would be wrong to infer from it that a discourse on morality is entirely missing from questions of strategy and war. Brodie hints at this when he goes on to point out that the training of soldiers in the ‘conviction that the all-important goal is to win’ does have a moral quality; in the general’s view: ‘whatever contributes to his overall victory usually diminishes overall casualties, especially his own. It is therefore self-evident to him that any device or tactic that hastens victory represents the highest morality.’

For those who assume that the application of morality to foreign policy or war making implies a radical critique of strategic violence – one that seeks to abolish it or at least to control its use – it may be surprising that moral convictions can be placed in its service. Yet in the wake of the attacks of 11 September 2001, and the development of the cybernetically controlled, mediated and ‘limited’ forms of violence that James Der Derian has termed ‘virtuous war’, we are faced with a prospect of morality being deployed, imagined and evaded in the process of planning and waging the war on terror. In however bizarre and unsatisfactory a fashion, moral
Discourses and judgements permeate the war on terror, many of them in its justification. In the light of this experience we may be forced to conclude that ‘amorality’ does embody powerful moral assumptions; that in the view of many, strategic violence is and can be ‘moral’; that we must see a moral position implicit in George Kennan’s self-consciously amoral view that ‘the interests of the national society for which government has to concern itself are basically those of its military security, the integrity of its political life, and the well-being of its people’.

Moral discourses and justifications permeated the sense of outrage and violation felt by Americans after 9/11, soaked its media coverage and public debate, and were smoothly deployed to justify military action against Afghanistan. Rhetorics of justice and injustice, humanity and inhumanity, civilisation and barbarism, were repeatedly invoked by US officials in the tragedy’s wake. Moral discourses have been used to brush aside concerns about the disproportionately high level of civilian casualties incurred during US and Northern Alliance operations against the Taliban and al-Qaeda, as they were similarly used to play down the casualties of the war against Iraq. Moral arguments – including incredibly, ‘just war’ arguments – have even been used to support waging war against Iraq.

In their wake, we face the sobering realisation that moral discourses are part of the warrior’s political armoury; they are part of war’s machinery, not a rod in its wheels. As Vivienne Jabri has written, ‘strategic and normative (just war) discourses . . . constitute together the structuring language of war’ because they ‘share that element of destruction which is the defining characteristic of war’. In short, moral rules about war’s justification, process and restraint may function not so much as limitations on war as tools for its liberation.

Moral trouble/moral war

My argument is not that moral discourses on war do not often work to limit strategic violence, particularly when they have been codified in the law of war and internalised in military operations. However, it is arguable that the law of war is flawed and extremely difficult to enforce – which throws the focus back on to its voluntary observance by governments and militaries, which nonetheless remain largely unaccountable for violations. We can point to a large number of possible violations of the laws of war (and other important international human rights laws) by the United States and its allies in the course of the war on terror, few if any of which can be prosecuted and all of which the internalisation of legal or moral rules sadly failed to prevent.

The failure to observe and enforce existing international law does not exhaust the problem of strategic morality that I want to address here. The computer and satellite-driven ‘revolution in military affairs’ (RMA), which has enabled potentially greater levels of accuracy in targeting to be achieved and drastically shortened wars (at least against weak Third World
armies), has both emboldened policy-makers contemplating the use of force and armed them with claims about the humane and civilised character of that force. Freed from the Cold War constraint of the balance of terror, and equipped with the new precision-guided weapons and real-time surveillance of the battlefield, American armed forces became newly usable as an instrument of policy. However, as it liberates the use of force so the RMA also raises the ethical stakes, by enhancing the ability of technologically advanced and amply funded militaries (such as those of the United States, Britain, Israel and Australia) to wage war with a degree of impunity.

Citing the unprecedented statistic that NATO won the Kosovo war against Yugoslavia without a single combat fatality, Michael Ignatieff argues that ‘from an ethical standpoint, it transforms the expectations that govern the morality of war . . . a war ceases to be just when it becomes a turkey-shoot . . . NATO could only preserve its sense of moral advantage by observing especially strict rules of engagement’. In a similar vein, James Der Derian describes the new paradigm as a ‘virtual revolution’, led by the United States, in which technology is put ‘in the service of virtue’. This, he suggests, generates a morally troubling form of power:

Unlike other forms of warfare, virtuous war has an unsurpassed power to commute death, to keep it out of sight, out of mind. Herein lies its most morally dubious danger. In simulated preparations and virtual executions of war, there is a high risk that one learns how to kill but not to take responsibility for it.

Death can be commuted not only through technological distancing, media spin and military jargon, but also in theory – which works to control its ethical disturbance through the creation of abstract moral and political rules that claim to fix truth, enable justice and provide a sure guide for policy. ‘Just war’ theory now plays this role, especially as a way of controlling and managing the question of responsibility raised by Der Derian. The moralising of just war advocates has come into renewed prominence since 9/11 as a legitimising framework for the war on terror, in terms of providing both justifications for military action (jus ad bellum) and moral limits on its conduct (jus in bello).

The resurgence of just war doctrine presents a unique set of problems: its relation to both realist doctrines of ‘reason of state’ and liberal emphases on self-defence and international law is ambivalent and shifting, and to these it adds a potent religious/metaphysical layer of justification. On the one hand, just war arguments generally map out no essential role for international law and have often been deployed to justify its evasion, preferring instead their own (strikingly malleable) criteria for the waging and conduct of war. On the other hand, in the recent writings of Jean Bethke Elshtain, just war doctrine blurs into and in fact sanctifies ‘reason of state’ as she simultaneously lays claim to a ‘Christian tradition [that]
tells us government is instituted by God’ and ‘an Augustinian realism that resists sentimentalism and insists on ethical restraint’. This is symptomatic of a more general phenomenon: that more conventionally ‘realist’ arguments for war based on national integrity and survival draw on and deploy moral discourses, even as we think of realists being governed more by instrumental concerns with interests, utility and effectiveness. Michael Walzer makes a significant point in his recent admission that ‘there are now reasons of state for fighting justly’ – even if I see it as a problem and he as a potential virtue.

In the face of this interweaving and proliferation of moral discourses in favour of strategic violence, a number of important questions arise. Are our moral discourses – whether they are couched in realist, ‘just war’ or liberal/legal terms – adequate to the problem and phenomenon of war, and especially war against terror? Where they set out rules, criteria and restraints, are those provisions observed and enforced? Are they adequate as moral standards in themselves, or can they be criticised in these terms? Do they adequately understand either war or terror, and will war against terror ever succeed in eliminating either from our world? Do they unfairly colonise the possible space of discourse about morality, ethics and strategic violence – and what alternative ways of thinking might be possible were we to shake off their constraints?

I will address these questions with a particular focus on ‘just war’ rhetoric and theory as they have been mobilised in the United States after 9/11. My exploration arises out of what I had originally thought of as a tangential project examining the influence of instrumental reason on strategic discourse and war – until it became clear that moral discourses are closely intertwined with instrumental/rational processes of strategic calculation, even as their result might be forms of violence many consider to be morally unacceptable. The no-man’s-land that joins these discourses and processes is my analytical terrain; a land where, as the phrase suggests, morally acceptable slaughter, suffering and chaos are described as ‘regrettable’, ‘unintentional’, ‘collateral’ or ‘necessary’. Is an international community based on modern liberal principles really willing to treat this as morally acceptable, and leave its theories, laws and systems of enforcement untouched? One of my conclusions is that moral discourses of strategic violence have, in the post-Enlightenment period, internalised the instrumental (Clausewitzian) assumption that war is both a normal and a rational pursuit of political ends. This is what unites and underpins the various moral discourses of war – realist, liberal and neo-Augustinian: the conviction that has made war such a pervasive modern phenomenon, that war ‘is a mere continuation of policy by other means’.

Following this, another important conclusion underpins the argument of this chapter. If war is seen as policy, we must do what so many just war thinkers fail to do: treat war as part of an historical and policy continuum, rather than an isolated event limited to the conduct of high-
intensity military operations whose impact can somehow be limited in
time, scope and spatial reach. This continuum must include mechan-
isms such as diplomacy, covert operations, sanctions, coups, economic
relationships, foreign aid and international law enforcement, and moral
responsibility must extend across the entire gamut of social, political and
humanitarian circumstances that precede, generate, shape and follow
conflict. Given the complex array of interconnected threats, processes and
conflicts tied into the 9/11 attacks and the war on terror – among them
the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon and
the involvement of Iran and Syria there, the mujahedin war against Soviet
forces in Afghanistan, the development of radical Islamist movements in
Egypt and other African and Middle Eastern states, and Iraq’s war against
Iran and its aftermath in the invasion of Kuwait, Operation Desert Storm,
UN sanctions and CIA covert operations – we need a moral and analyt-
cal framework that can deal much better with historical and geopolitical
complexity.

Chapter 6 concludes by speculating that our frameworks for the moral
justification (and limitation) of strategic violence have failed us; and, more-
over, that they have failed at a cost of thousands of innocent lives and
at the risk of creating a future in which we are not free of terror but
condemned to its permanent presence. It shifts the normative ideal from
just war to ethical peace, an ethics that eschews abstract moral theory in
favour of a context-sensitive ethical orientation that is concerned with the
outcomes of decisions and the avoidance of suffering. While strategic
violence will be difficult to eliminate, and may be necessary in strictly
limited situations before the achievement of ethical peace, its acceptance
can only be conditional, and under conditions far more stringent, enforce-
able and morally consistent than have so far been provided by either
realism, just war theory or international law. Against the claustrophobic
and divided moral communities imagined by both realism and just war
theory, ethical peace imagines a universal moral community in which no
ethical obligation can be traded away in times of emergency, and no
humans can be put in mortal danger so that others may be safe.

Moralising the ‘war on terror’

American anger in the wake of 11 September was expressed in two inter-
woven languages: morality and war. As Jean Bethke Elshtain describes
it: ‘from George W. Bush to the average man and woman on the street,
Americans since 11 September have invoked the language of justice to
characterise their collective response to the despicable deeds perpetrated
against innocent men, women and children.’ George W. Bush told Congress
that on 11 September ‘enemies of freedom committed an act of war against
our country’ and promised that ‘whether we bring our enemies to justice,
or bring justice to our enemies, justice will be done’. He claimed that
the war against terror was ‘the fight of all who believe in progress and pluralism, tolerance and freedom’, and that ‘we are in a fight for our principles, and our first responsibility is to live by them. No one should be singled out for unfair treatment or unkind words because of their ethnic background or religious faith’.¹⁴

This, unmistakably, is a language of morality allied to a declaration and promise of war: a declaration of the immorality of the attacks and their perpetrators, of the tolerance, fairness and purity of the United States and its allies, and of its moral duty to seek and live by principles of justice through military and other counterterrorist action. It is a language that creates an irrevocably divided moral universe, in which all virtue lies with the United States and all iniquity with ‘the terrorists’, set out starkly in the President’s description of al-Qaeda and the Taliban as ‘the heirs of all the murderous ideologies of the twentieth century . . . fascism, and Nazism, and totalitarianism’.¹⁵ It is a language that sees force not merely as a rational response to a threat to American national security, but as a moral response to an act of injustice – a response that it is moral to make, and which he implies should also be made in a moral way. In short, Bush’s address to Congress imagines a martial universe and a moral universe, and then unites them. What are the implications of doing so? How does it drive or enable policy, and what expectations might we have of that policy once it is couched in these terms?

The answers are complex and disturbing. Elshtain’s argument is that, by invoking the language of justice, Americans ‘tap into a complex tradition called “just war”’. In her view the war on terror is both a just cause and being fought according to just war principles:

> When a wound as grievous as that of September 11 has been inflicted on a body-politic, it would be the height of irresponsibility – a dereliction of duty, a flight from the serious vocation of politics – to fail to respond. . . . A political ethic is an ethic of responsibility. The just war tradition gives us a way of exercising that responsibility.’¹⁶

Elshtain is firm in her belief that the war on terror – even extended to Iraq – measures up to the standards of ‘just war’, in both its justification and its execution. Her argument is a discursively significant one, even though it can be challenged on a number of grounds, such as the reluctance of the United States to explore alternatives to a war against Afghanistan, the conduct of US operations, and the naivety of her belief that the just war framework is the one actually being applied by the Bush administration.

As Nicholas Wheeler notes, the administration tapped into more than the just war ‘tradition’ both in designing and in justifying its response; just war, he argues, jostled for space with ‘alternative moral theories that challenge the idea of restraint in war’ such as the ‘realist doctrine of neces-
sity’, and the ‘supreme emergency’ and ‘war is hell’ arguments discussed by just war theorist Michael Walzer. Bush’s own rhetoric betrays this ambiguity, as when he stated in his address to Congress: ‘whether we bring our enemies to justice, or bring justice to our enemies, justice will be done.’ ‘Bringing our enemies to justice’ implies using legal processes and neutral/universal standards of judgement; ‘bringing justice to our enemies’ suggests the use of extra-legal means both to deal with a threat and to achieve ‘justice’. They are not the same, and the latter suggests that the use of extra-legal violence or coercion (killing at a distance on the basis of minimal evidence or suspect intelligence, highly coercive interrogation techniques, and the long-term detention of suspects outside domestic or international law) may be both morally necessary and morally legitimate. The United States has put great emphasis on this approach, as shown by the indefinite detention of prisoners at Camp Delta and Camp X-Ray, the creation of special military tribunals to try terrorist suspects in the United States (rather than either using its own civil courts or creating an international one), the bombing of Taliban and Al Qaeda hideouts and positions, and the use of an unmanned Predator drone armed with Hellfire missiles to assassinate six al-Qaeda ‘leaders’ in Yemen.

On the other hand, as Wheeler suggests, the United States did employ some restraints on its bombing and targeting during Operation Enduring Freedom – even if, as I will suggest shortly, these failed to prevent a disturbingly high number of civilian casualties and other potential violations of the laws of war. He argues that: ‘as in the Gulf War and Kosovo, collateral damage concerns were an integral part of the targeting process. Lawyers in the Pentagon and at the Combined Air Operations Centre at Prince Sultan Air Base in Saudi Arabia scrutinised targets for their legality under international humanitarian law.’ This no doubt saved many lives, but we can reasonably suggest that comparisons with Operation Allied Force in Kosovo are misleading. As a Project on Defense Alternatives study (discussed below) shows, both total casualty rates and casualty rates per sortie were much higher in Afghanistan.

The conduct of US and allied forces in Afghanistan and Iraq is analysed in detail below. What becomes clear from this examination is that ‘bringing justice to our enemies’ was the administration’s and the Pentagon’s primary response; a response characterised by Michael Byers as part of an evolving pattern in which the United States ‘is attempting to create new, exceptional rules for itself alone’ and by Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na’im as an ‘institutional and procedural failure of international legality’ that ‘promotes the cause of militant Islamic fundamentalism and undermines prospects of support for international peace and universal human rights in Islamic societies’. Such a disregard for international law is built upon a particularly claustrophobic idea of moral community; a bifurcated moral universe that casts the United States and its allies as virtuous and its enemies as ineradicably threatening and evil. As Wheeler points out,
the administration’s rhetoric equating al-Qaeda and the Taliban with Nazism suggested that they were being constructed as such a threat to human values, as did Vice-President Cheney’s statement that ‘We cannot deal with terror . . . the struggle can only end with their complete and permanent destruction’. 23

Who may we bomb?

As is clear from Bush’s speeches, and much of the conduct in the war on terror, the observance of, and accountability to, international law has been easily overridden by judgements about operational and political necessity. Central to this was the imagination of a bifurcated moral universe which casts the United States and its allies as virtuous and its enemies as ineradically threatening and evil. Any comforting delusions that such views might be restricted to a set of extremely hawkish policymakers have since been dispelled by the evidence of similar views in some of the International Relations’ discipline’s most senior figures. We perhaps could have expected Edward Luttwak’s characteristically inflammatory view that, by failing to hand over Al Qaeda suspects, the Taliban had acquired ‘the right to be destroyed’ ,24 but Barry Buzan’s argument for the legitimising of civilian targets, in an essay entitled ‘Who may we bomb?’, was more unsettling. 25 In what may be one of the most morally irresponsible pieces of writing by an international relations scholar in recent memory, Buzan argued that ‘the idea that in war, peoples and their governments should be treated separately has recently become something of a Western fetish, a way of asserting the West’s claim to be civilised’. Even though this distinction ‘has solid and valuable legal standing in the Geneva conventions’, he continued, it ‘should not lead to the assumption, now becoming a centrepiece of the western way in war, that all civilians are innocent and that only evil leaderships are the enemy’. He approvingly cites Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak’s comment that ‘those who carry out terrorist attacks have no human rights’, but then maps this disturbing rhetoric onto entire populations by arguing that the moral distinction between military and civilian must weaken where ‘terrorists hide in, and draw support from, civilian populations’. He laments that the RMA ‘has generated unrealistic expectations of precision in the use of force’ and that ‘any collateral damage (sic) is used by western critics, and even by target regimes, to cast moral doubt on military action’. 26

The entire force of his argument is to undermine and dismantle what limited restraints on military force currently exist, and in turn to generate a new system of moral judgement; but we may wonder how he intends to make judgements about which citizens, and in which circumstances, can legitimately be exposed to the danger of murder from the air. His answer is that we should ask: ‘Do people get the governments they
deserve?’ On this basis it is possible to spare ‘peoples under occupation’ (Eastern Europe during the Cold War, Tibet, the Kurds) and citizens suffering under ‘blatant tyrannies’ (Iraq, Syria, Burma), but citizens of democracies or authoritarian regimes with varying degrees of mass support may emerge as legitimate military targets.\textsuperscript{27} This classification would make citizens of many so-called ‘rogue states’ or strategic competitors to the West (Cuba, Iran, Vietnam and China) vulnerable to the righteous destruction of the B52. He does discuss a range of cases where it is harder to make distinctions, such as North Korea and Afghanistan, or countries with split loyalties or strong structures of tribe or clan, but incredulity in the face of this bizarre pop anthropology (whatever its façade of logic and reason) quickly sets in. However, its significance lies in his use of it to generate a new moral taxonomy that, in his view, can usefully be applied to judgements about the use of strategic violence against ‘terrorism’. Whatever the ambiguities he acknowledges to exist in his strange and idiosyncratic system of moral classification, they do not prevent him from generating new moral certainties about the legitimacy of aerial homicide:

If people do deserve their government, and yet only the government is targeted, the country as a whole remains politically unreconstructed and thus a continuing danger to itself and the international community . . . to delink people from their governments, when they are in fact closely linked, is to undermine the political point of going to war in the first place. In the end, war is about changing people’s minds about the kind of government they want.\textsuperscript{28}

This is not far from Kissinger’s view that ‘if you have people by the balls, their hearts and minds will follow’, and in the hands of both men it is a callous and unthinking paean to coercive behaviourism – as if fear and horror will bend others to your will.\textsuperscript{29} It is Clausewitzian thinking run amok – to think that bombing is synonymous with nation-building, that the horror it produces might not in turn generate new threats or so traumatisse and embitter a community that peace and harmony is its least likely aftermath. Buzan simplistically cites post-1945 Germany and Japan in support of his argument, but we could just as rightly cite post-1974 Cambodia, post-1999 Yugoslavia or post-1982 Lebanon as counter-examples. The US bombing of Cambodia, as Ben Kiernan has argued, helped bring about the rise to power of the genocidal regime of Pol Pot; the bombing of Yugoslavia helped unite Serbs around Milosovic and arguably delayed opposition mobilising against him; and the Israeli invasion of Lebanon not only killed more than 11,000 Lebanese and Palestinians, but re-ignited a brutal civil war, which took the lives of tens of thousands more.\textsuperscript{30}
Buzan’s argument is disturbing on other levels. As a system of moral reasoning, its similarity to terrorist justifications for the targeting of civilians is striking. As such it undermines the moral case against non-state actors targeting civilians even as it attempts to generate a moral case for states being able to do so. Groups such as Hamas or Islamic Jihad justify targeting Israeli civilians with suicide bombers with the argument that, by voting for politicians who sanction the killing and dispossession of Palestinians, individual Jews have become indistinguishable from the Israeli state; similarly the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) feel that they are justified in conducting operations that kill innocents or amount to collective punishment because many Palestinians appear to support the suicide attacks. Such a logic can only lead to a spiral of suffering, conflict and murder without end, one that is not only politically irrational (from a Clausewitzian perspective) but undermines the prospect of ever attaining the security both Israelis and Palestinians deserve. Consider also Osama bin Laden’s justifications, made to an ABC television journalist in 1998, for targeting Americans and Jews in the ‘fatwa’ that led inevitably to the atrocity of 9/11:

American history does not distinguish between civilians and military, and not even women and children. They are ones who used the bombs against Nagasaki. Can these bombs distinguish between infants and military? . . . The only way for us to fend off these assaults is to use similar means . . . We do not differentiate between those dressed in military uniforms and civilians; they are all targets in this fatwa.31

The force of Buzan’s argument, a scholarly pastiche of bin Laden’s, is to undermine moral differentiations ‘between those dressed in military uniforms and civilians; they are all targets’; here ‘strategic’ necessity and moral justification converge. They also converged, in a slightly different way, when US Vice-President Richard Cheney was asked by a BBC journalist about the human toll of Operation Enduring Freedom. He replied:

Any loss of life, of innocent life, is to be regretted, and certainly we’re sorry if that happened. But consider how this started . . . with nearly 5,000 people . . . being murdered on September 11th . . . in the long run, I think there will be far less loss of life in the world as a result of us taking this military action. And that’s why we feel it’s justified and why we did what we had to do.32

Both bin Laden and Cheney invoke self-defence as a justification, along with emotive arguments that their enemies lack restraint or scruple, and that their actions are justifiable in the resulting state of emergency. While Cheney importantly speaks for a force that did not specifically intend to kill civilians, unlike al-Qaeda, the civilian death toll of Operation Enduring Freedom – especially if much of it was avoidable – ought to
give us significant moral pause, along with the unsubtle hint in Cheney’s comments that victimhood reduces moral accountability for unnecessary suffering.

Cheney’s comments betray reasoning that morally justifies the lifting of restraints on strategic violence, either by blaming the enemy for its initiation or invoking a claim of what Michael Walzer calls ‘supreme emergency’ – ‘a threat to human values that is so horrifying in its nature and so imminent in terms of the danger it poses that any means can be employed to defeat it’.33 As Nicholas Wheeler points out, the administration’s rhetoric equating al-Qaeda and the Taliban with Nazism suggested they were constructing them as such a threat to human values, as did Cheney’s statement: ‘We cannot deal with terror . . . the struggle can only end with their complete and permanent destruction’.34 If this did not lead to the abandonment of all restraint, it was invoked as a moral ‘get out of jail free’ card for the death and injury that was incurred. For example, Wheeler remarks on another, more violent ‘discourse of responsibility’ at work in the argument of Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld that: ‘We did not start this war. So understand, responsibility for every single casualty in this war, they’re innocent Afghans or innocent Americans, rests at the feet of Al Qaeda and the Taliban’. Wheeler sees this rhetoric as an example of the ‘war is hell’ doctrine Walzer traces to General Sherman as he burned Atlanta, blaming his army’s violence on the enemy; and he suggests that this doctrine was at work in the US air force’s lack of concern for civilians located close to Taliban and Al Qaeda targets, a targeting strategy that arguably violates both ‘just war’ principles and international humanitarian law. Wheeler reminds us that even if military personnel or forces have taken shelter in civilian areas, ‘combatants are not relieved of their responsibility to honour the principle of civilian immunity’; however, ‘Rumsfeld [and Generals] Myers and Franks have interpreted what is militarily justified in the context of Bush’s declaration that the war against terrorism is a supreme emergency that pits civilization against evil’.36

Just war: moderating realism?

In such a context, the just war tradition is presented by its advocates as a moderating influence – one that enables force to be used if necessary and justifiable, and that can police the use of that force so that it conforms with moral principles that do not undermine the community it is being used to defend.37 The just war tradition traces its origins to St Augustine’s break with the long tradition of Christian pacifism to defend, ‘with regret, the possibility that war may be just if it is waged in defense of a common good and to protect the innocent from certain destruction’.38 To the ‘pacific ontology’ of the New Testament’s Christian narrative, Augustine contrasts an ontology based on the occasional need to employ limited violence in
a search for justice rather than peace (which, in his view, could just as well mean the preservation of an unjust status quo).\textsuperscript{39}

In my view, the efforts of just war advocates to distinguish their ‘tradition’ from realism (which it charges with being amoral) and pacifism (which it charges with being unrealistic and therefore immoral) are problematic, as are their efforts to draw partial legitimacy from each. Walzer distinguishes just war principles strongly from realism – from the ‘limitless’ application of strategic violence Clausewitz imagined as central to ‘absolute war’, and from the ‘cool and tough-minded’ ‘modern Machiavellis’ of the 1950s and 1960s who ‘taught the [US] princes . . . how to get results through the calculated application of force’.\textsuperscript{40} However, it is the pacifist ideal and eschatology that most consistently get short shrift from just war advocates. Johnson argues that in circumstances where ‘the use of force, at appropriate levels and discriminatingly directed, may be the morally preferable means for the protection and preservation of values . . . those who would reject such use of force are in fact choosing a less moral course’, and in the immediate wake of 9/11 Elshtain indignantly suggested that ‘it would be the height of irresponsibility . . . to fail to respond’.\textsuperscript{41}

While just war theory does work to critique rationalist realism and inject questions of ‘justice’ into a space where utility and prudence are moral values in themselves, it is still fixed in a realist ontological bedrock. Realist presuppositions about the essentially anarchic and dangerous nature of world politics are echoed by just war advocates, who see the world reflected in Augustine’s image of an ‘earthly city . . . never free from the dangers of bloodshed, sedition and civil war’, one in which ‘human beings are permanently estranged’. Upon these foundations Elshtain builds an argument that just war is a ‘conditional acceptance of collective violence’ that:

resituated pacifism as a partly submerged doctrine . . . the fighter is reborn in the image of the Just Warrior who takes up arms reluctantly and only if he must to prevent a greater wrong or protect the innocent from certain harm. His tragic task is made necessary because the dream and hope of peace on earth has been indefinitely postponed.\textsuperscript{42}

The result of this strategic ambiguity is to generate for the just war tradition an extraordinary set of claims about its relevance and legitimacy in relation to competing discourses. Elshtain argues that just war theory ‘draws on a set of assumptions which are neither “realist” nor “pacifist” but partake of both’ and is ‘in its full elaboration . . . a theory of international and domestic politics’. Walzer similarly argues that it is only ‘the language of just war’ that, in the wake of Vietnam, could serve as a ‘common moral language’. In short, just war theory has colonised
the space of moral discourse in relation to war and strategy – so much so that Walzer is now warning of the dangers of its ‘success’. Are we forever to remain unconcerned that its effect has been to legitimate war, discredit peace and collapse justice into violence? In the wake of 9/11, the war in Afghanistan and the invasion of Iraq, these are problems that cannot be wished away with some neatly argued (but dangerously abstract) moral theory.

This line of thinking underpins my desire to describe just war as a ‘theory’ more than a tradition; a set of arguments that, whatever its venerable historical roots, works now as a formal model of moral reasoning that aims to generate political and epistemological certainty by providing a model that is universalisable across cases. The call to tradition, rather than evoking historical complexity and contingency, is used to anchor a thoroughly modernist epistemological strategy. (Nicholas Rengger intriguingly argues that this ‘theoretical’ impulse is an unwelcome departure from the ‘casuistical, particularist and case-based’ character of medieval and early modern just war thinking; that just war thinking has ‘been forced into an intellectual framework ill-suited to its intellectual style and most effective mode of being’. Furthermore, while just war theory aims to set its norm in a bedrock of historical truth, the norm it creates, in contrast to the UN Charter and Kantian liberalism, is the norm of war. This chapter, therefore, aims to work in the spirit of R. B. J. Walker’s recent argument that 11 September ‘draws us into some very difficult questions about the grounds on which we now make political judgements, or have our judgments made for us’.

The test we must set for just war advocates in the wake of 9/11 is twofold. First, we must ask how their claims about just war and its rules stand up to the experience of Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom, within the context of the other ethical and geopolitical questions raised by the 9/11 attacks and the war on terror; and, second, we must ask whether just war’s system of limitations and judgement, as such and in the light of this experience, is an adequate one for societies that wish to defend and enhance the legitimacy of their moral discourse.

**Just war, before and after 9/11**

Just war theory claims to limit and control strategic violence in two ways: by limiting the circumstances under which one can resort to war (jus ad bellum), and by limiting the ways it can be fought (jus in bello). These roughly correspond with similar categories in international law (as laid out in the UN Charter and the Geneva Conventions) but cannot be reduced to them; furthermore, just war advocates do not require that states be accountable to international law. In her book *Women and War*, Elshtain sets out the moral tests of just war as follows:
(1) that a war be the last resort to be used only after all other means have been exhausted; (2) that a war be clearly an act of redress of rights actually violated or defense against unjust demands backed by the threat of force; (3) that war be openly and legally declared by properly constituted governments; (4) that there be a reasonable prospect of victory; (5) that the means be proportionate to the ends; (6) that a war be waged in such a way as to distinguish between combatants and non-combatants; (7) that the victorious nation not require the utter humiliation of the vanquished.46

Just war advocates oppose force being used aggressively, for the purposes of national aggrandisement or imperialism; they oppose the preventative use of force, but are ambiguous about pre-emptive strikes; they advocate the use of peaceful efforts to deal with threats before war is tried; and they advocate the principles of ‘proportionality’ and ‘non-combatant immunity’ to limit the impact of war on civilians.

It is these last principles that, for me, are most controversial. Proportionality and non-combatant immunity are welcome brakes on the limitless application of force, but they are also beset with problems. First, the demand that means be matched to ends exposes a Clausewitzian instrumentalism hiding in the interstices of just war theory, which accepts that (under more limited circumstances) war is a rational and controllable means to a political ends. Second, the principle of non-combatant immunity is qualified by a judgement that ‘non-combatants must not be the intended targets of violence’.47 There is enormous scope for abuse here, compounded by an implicit assumption that decisions and acts of war are limited in space and time – that moral judgements about particular circumstances can be quarantined from the history preceding, or a future beyond, the cessation of high-intensity military operations. Once we begin to question these assumptions, morally neat arguments about the justice of strategic violence begin to unravel.

We can begin to test just war theory by examining the judgements its advocates have made about the legitimacy of armed force in the conflicts that have surrounded, preceded and followed the tragedy of 9/11: the Arab–Israeli conflict; the war against Soviet forces in Afghanistan; Operation Desert Storm; the sanctions and weapons inspection regime imposed on Iraq after 1990; and the post-9/11 wars against Afghanistan and Iraq.

Focusing on two of the most influential theorists (Walzer and Elshtain), however, it is difficult to find a just war position that is consistent either between them, across examples or through time. For example, of Iraq, Walzer argues that much of the 1991 bombing was unjust: that ‘shielding civilians would certainly have excluded the destruction of electricity networks and water purification plants’.48 In 1995 Elshtain argued that just war principles should have governed the post-war situation in Iraq as well,
and that the imposition of sanctions that were causing enormous suffering was not ‘ethically pristine . . . the rush to use embargoes and sanctions that target whole populations, harming the least powerful first, requires more justification than it has received from past and current policymakers’. Yet, by 2003, she was marshalling just war arguments in support of the Bush administration’s plans for war in Iraq, parroting administration propaganda that Iraq possessed a large arsenal of threatening weapons of mass destruction and also supported al-Qaeda, arguing further that: ‘when a state destroys or is prepared to destroy its own citizens and propels its violence outside its own borders, it becomes a criminal entity’.

Elshtain’s argument came with the usual *jus in bello* caveats about ‘proportionality’ and ‘non-combatant immunity’, but Walzer differed from her by asserting that there was no justification (*jus ad bellum*) for war with Iraq by 2003. Even though he supported immediately the pre-emptive attack in the case of Israel’s 1967 war, he suggested that ‘the [Iraq] war that is being discussed is preventive, not pre-emptive – it is designed to respond to a more distant threat’. Elshtain countered that ‘imminent threat does not necessarily mean one that is just around the corner’ but refers ‘to murderous capabilities that an outlaw regime is in the process of developing’. Walzer argues that the restoration of the weapons inspections is the best way to deal with such concerns, and that it is superior to preventive war ‘because the dangers to which it alludes are not only distant but speculative, whereas the costs of a preventative war are near, certain and usually terrible’. To this prospect Elshtain offers a kind of sincere shrug of the shoulders: ‘in any conflict non-combatants will fall in harm’s way. But it is forbidden to knowingly and maliciously target them.’

The arguments of both here are replete with problems, at both the *jus in bello* and *jus ad bellum* levels. In relation to *jus ad bellum*, Elshtain stands on disappearing ground: after exhaustive searching, no weapons of mass destruction were found, and no links to Al Qaeda proven. Then there is the pile of documentary and anecdotal evidence, dating back to a presidential finding signed by George Bush senior in 1992, that successive US governments had really been driven by an overriding policy aim to remove Saddam Hussein from power. Larger strategic objectives for control of the Middle East dating back to 1975 – the establishment of military bases in the Persian Gulf and Central Asia, removal of regimes in Iran and Syria, the strengthening of Israel and the control of Gulf oil supplies – also rank as plausible motives for the invasion of Iraq. These facts undermine both Elshtain’s argument for the enforcement of UN resolutions with war in 2003, and Walzer’s view that:

there was a just and necessary war waiting to be fought back in the 1990s when Saddam was playing hide-and-seek with the inspectors . . . an internationalist war, a war of enforcement, and its justice would
have derived, first, from the justice of the system it was enforcing and, second, from its likely outcome: the strengthening of the UN and the global legal order.\textsuperscript{55}

Not only are their analyses wilfully naive about the cynical realism of US and European foreign policy with regard to Iraq – the double standard of states that had helped create Iraq’s WMD capability before 1990 demanding compliance in its removal, while remaining unwilling to disarm themselves – but they are silent about the crime against humanity perpetrated by the powers on the UN Security Council as they claimed to be enforcing its resolutions. Just war talk of ‘proportionality’, ‘non-combatant immunity’ and ‘the protection of innocents’ is worth recalling here, when against the fear of Iraq’s future use of WMD is balanced the death of at least 200,000 Iraqi citizens as a result of sanctions which US officials, contrary to UN Resolutions 661 and 687, insisted should stay in place until Saddam Hussein was removed from power.\textsuperscript{56} This was the ‘justice of the system it was enforcing’: a crime against humanity perpetrated by the UN itself – an image of ‘justice’ angrily purloined by Osama bin Laden in his 1998 interview with ABC and then directed, with terrifying intensity, into the heart of the United States three years later.\textsuperscript{57} The continuing spectacle of Western assumptions of moral superiority in relation to Iraq is deeply unsettling, when what would be more appropriate is the kind of soul-searching that accompanied post-war revelations of the Nazi Holocaust.

We are not to know whether or not Elshtain and Walzer believe that the impact of the sanctions amounted to a major international crime, but they have both used arguments that the death of civilians cannot be criminal if \textit{jus ad bellum} conditions are met and the killing was unintentional. Indeed, in a combative 2003 \textit{Public Interest} article Elshtain cites Walzer’s attack on critics of the war against Afghanistan to press home this point. Against what he describes as ‘leftist’ claims that the similarity of the death tolls on 11 September and in Afghanistan undermines the justice of the war, Walzer counters that this ‘denies one of the most basic and best understood moral distinctions between premeditated murder and unintentional killing’. Even if we were to accept this distinction (which seems to me to be a stunning evasion of responsibility), it is not as if the United States were willing to make its armed forces accountable for their targeting decisions, having refused to place its forces under the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court (ICC), which is currently the only international body able to prosecute violations of the laws of war. In the absence of that accountability we are forced to rely on national governments and the arbitrary judgements of just war intellectuals, of whom Elshtain is convinced that ‘no group in the US pays more attention to ethical restraint on the use of force than does the US military’ and that
'the real dissenters in American intellectual life are likely to be those who, at least in part, defend the foreign policy of the United States'.

Justice and ‘proportionality’: killing civilians in Afghanistan and Iraq

The distinction between intentional and unintentional killing is enshrined both in just war theory and in the Geneva Conventions as the ‘proportionality’ rule. Article 51(5)(b) of Protocol 1 to the Conventions prohibits operations that ‘may be expected to cause incidental loss of civilian life, injury to civilians, damage to civilian objects, or a combination thereof, which would be excessive in relation to the concrete and direct military advantage anticipated’. Nicholas Wheeler criticises international humanitarian law for being imprecise about what ‘constitutes “excessive” civilian casualties or “concrete and direct military advantage” in specific cases’; this imprecision, he argues, leaves ‘the door . . . sufficiently wide open under Protocol 1 that states can justify the killing of innocent civilians as an unintended consequence of attacks against legitimate military targets’ – a problem compounded by the fact that these provisions have rarely been tested in a court. In this light, I can only agree with Wheeler’s conclusion that ‘the proportionality rule is the Achilles heel of just war theory’.

Contrary to Elshtain’s defensive protestations about the ‘ethical restraint’ of the US military, its war-fighting strategies in Afghanistan and Iraq have both tested the (legal) limits of the proportionality rule and exposed its utter ethical inadequacy. The study conducted of Operation Enduring Freedom by the Project on Defense Alternatives (PDA), for example, conclusively refutes claims that the United States fought with exaggerated care to avoid harming civilians. Using deliberately conservative figures, its author Carl Conetta concluded that despite the US navy and air force flying 64 per cent fewer sorties over Afghanistan than NATO in the Kosovo war, it caused two to three times more direct civilian deaths – the respective sortie/casualty ratios being approximately 4,700/1,000–1,300 in Afghanistan versus 13,000/500 in Yugoslavia (i.e. a civilian was killed every 26 sorties in Yugoslavia and every three or four sorties in Afghanistan).

In the first half of 2002, New York Times reporters visited eleven locations where civilians were said to have been killed in US airstrikes, verifying the killing of nearly 400 people and the wounding of many more. These episodes included six massacres in which 50 or more were killed – including the death of 52 people in Niazi Qala in December 2001 after US planes bombed an ammunition dump moved there by Taliban forces, and the killing of 65 people at a mosque in Khost in November 2001, when a bomb aimed at a residence containing a Taliban leader went off
course. Reporters who visited Niazi Khala wrote of seeing ‘bloodied children’s shoes and shirts’, ‘the scalp of a woman with braided grey hair’, and the ‘severed shoe’ of a child. In another atrocity a US AC-130 gunship attacked four villages near Kakrak in July 2002, killing 54 and wounding 120, during an operation aimed at hunting down and killing al-Qaeda and Taliban leaders. Afterwards, ‘American soldiers found villagers gathering up the limbs of their neighbours’.61 Other events that ought to trouble both war advocates and those concerned with US observance of international law include the targeting of civilian infrastructure, the deliberate bombing of the Al-Jazeera bureau in Kabul, the execution and mistreatment of prisoners in Northern Alliance hands, the enormous death and suffering attributable to the broader impact of US military operations, and the state of instability and crisis that was allowed to develop in Afghanistan following the fall of the Taliban.

Numerous reports attest to the killing and mistreatment of as many as 800 Taliban prisoners of war by Northern Alliance militias, including the execution of approximately 600 prisoners at Mazar-i-Sharif, many of them suffocated in sealed shipping containers.62 US forces destroyed or damaged the main telephone exchange in Kabul, the electrical grid in Kandahar and the hydro-electric power station near the Kajaki dam, which would have exacerbated an already difficult humanitarian situation.63 The PDA estimated that from mid-September 2001 to mid-January 2002, between 8,000 and 18,000 Afghans died from starvation, injuries sustained as they fled combat zones, or exposure and associated illnesses. Of these 40 per cent (between 3,200 and 7,200) ‘are attributable to the effects of the crisis and war’. At the outset of the war the UN estimated that 1.5 million people were at extreme risk; the military operations exacerbated this crisis by generating some 560,000 refugees, disrupting national-level food deliveries by 40 per cent in October 2001, and completely interrupting local food and aid deliveries for two to three months (and sometimes longer) in many places. At a time of enormously increased and desperate humanitarian need, this ‘more than doubled the size of the gap between the supply of aid and the need for it’.64

How are these awful facts to be treated by the advocates of just war, given their concern for the proportional use of force, and the injunction that innocent life not be taken or maimed intentionally? Both Walzer and Elshtain have given Operation Enduring Freedom the imprimatur of a ‘just war’ and aggressively challenged its critics. The allied forces, apparently, are guilty of no crimes – the death they caused was unintentional. Is carelessness really a defence? Carelessness, when civilians are killed in the course of aerial assassination operations based on poor intelligence and extra-legal principles, prosecuted in such an indiscriminate way as to leave entire villages filled with the dead and wounded? Carelessness, when an ammunition dump is seen as such a threat to allied troops as to justify its detonation, from the air, in the midst of a densely populated area?
Carelessness, when it was highly predictable that thousands of vulnerable people would die fleeing areas where force was being deployed in such an indiscriminate manner and supplies of desperately needed aid disrupted? A more genuine test for the just warriors, and international law, would be that avoidable death and suffering be condemned and prosecuted – a test they refuse to accept, perhaps because it would undermine the sovereign prerogative of states to use force; it might begin genuinely to constrain war rather than liberate it.

Another profound flaw in just war theory is exposed by the suffering and instability faced by the people of Afghanistan following the fall of the Taliban. Afghanistan was left with an enormous humanitarian crisis, damaged and deteriorated infrastructure, a vacuum of legitimate authority outside Kabul that was filled by warlords (many allied with the United States), and a large-scale resumption of opium production. While the Bonn Agreement on a new democratic framework for Afghanistan was welcomed, it was undermined by the precarious nature of the interim government’s authority and by the reluctance of the United States and Russia to encourage the creation of a nationwide peacekeeping force that might challenge warlord power. The 4,500 troops of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) were a shadow of the 30,000 the PDA estimated would be needed to have ‘mitigated the challenges faced by the interim government, dampened the potential for internecine violence, and facilitated humanitarian relief efforts’. Such a force could also have ‘served to support disarmament efforts and train a new national army’, which along with a large civilian police force is seen as essential to re-establishing security; but observers now say that ‘it will take a number of years for a fully functional national army and police force to be developed’. Peter Marsden rightly insists that ‘security is regarded by all as the absolute prerequisite for a successful reconstruction process’, but by making deals with warlords to enable continued military operations against al-Qaeda and the Taliban to take place, the United States appeared (in a typically realist fashion) to have valued its own security over that of the Afghan people.66

While the adoption of a new constitution in late 2003 and the elections of 2004 were extremely positive developments, continuing warlord power and a resurgence of Taliban attacks raised fears that the basic stability necessary to secure Afghanistan’s political future may never be achieved.67 Security failures were matched by a failure to provide adequate aid: even though a joint study prepared for the January 2002 meeting of donors in Tokyo estimated that reconstruction costs would range from $14.6 billion to $18.1 billion over ten years, donors pledged only $5.2 billion, one-third of the per capita amount allocated to the Balkans, Palestine and East Timor after recent emergencies. As at 25 September 2002 only $960 million had been disbursed, in comparison with an estimated $3.8 billion for the first three months of US military operations.68 No one could plausibly deny that by waging war against Afghanistan in its own interests the
West did not also contract a responsibility for the country’s future; yet such a failure of responsibility and justice is of little matter to just war theory because it limits its moral system, in time and space, to high-intensity war. Walzer did appear troubled by this, advocating the development of a theory of ‘justice-in-endings’ and saying that ‘once we have acted in ways that have significant negative consequences for other people (even if there were positive consequences) we cannot just walk away . . . the work of the virtuous is never finished’. He criticised the United States for abandoning Afghanistan after the defeat of the Soviet-backed regime, and in a Ha’aretz interview said that US post-Taliban policy was ‘shameful . . . if you fight such a war, you have a responsibility to create a minimum of law and order in the country which you have invaded’.69

The war in Iraq, which began 18 months after the 11 September attacks, raises the same problems for just war theory and international law, but more intensely so. There are similar problems of violation of jus in bello rules and post-war instability, compounded by a globally accepted view that the war was illegal under international law (and thus an act of aggression) and also failed to satisfy just war’s jus ad bellum criteria. As such, the death of every single Iraqi combatant, not merely those of ‘innocent’ civilians, must be considered a crime. Iraqi military deaths, while hard to assess, were estimated by Jonathon Steele at between 3 and 10 per cent of functioning units, or between 13,500 and 45,000 individuals; completely outmatched by US technology, Iraqi troops died under volleys of cluster rockets, helicopter gunship fire and carpets of bombs from B-52s.70 The civilian death toll is also extremely high, and climbing. At the time of writing, in November 2005, the website ‘Iraq Body Count’ estimated a minimum civilian death toll attributable to the invasion, subsequent counter-insurgency operations and insurgent attacks of 26,797 up to a maximum of 30,163.71 Another casualty tracking project by the PDA did not compile total estimates, but cited a number of incidents and surveys which make very disturbing reading.72

A Knight Ridder newspaper survey of 19 Baghdad hospitals after the fall of the city estimated that at least 1,101 civilians and another 1,255 who were ‘probably civilians’ were killed after the war began on 19 March, while a Los Angeles Times survey of 27 hospitals concluded that at least 1,700 were killed and 8,000 injured, not counting ‘hundreds’ of ‘undocumented civilian deaths’ reported by ‘Islamic burial societies and humanitarian groups that are trying to trace those missing in the conflict’, and ‘dozens of deaths that doctors indirectly attributed to the conflict . . . pregnant women who died of complications while giving birth at home . . . and chronically ill people, such as cardiac or dialysis patients, who were unable to obtain needed care while fighting raged’. High numbers of civilian (and some military) deaths were reported by hospitals in other cities, such as Basra (400), Hilla (250), Najaf (378) and Nasiriyah (250). When these totals are added to the Knight Ridder survey of hospitals in
Baghdad, the death toll is approximately 3,634, the vast majority of them
dead civilians. The PDA also cites another 37 reports of mid-war inci-
dents in which at least 650 civilians were killed, a report from Najaf
cemetery suggesting 2,000 excess burials during the fighting, and, follow-
ing the liberation, 200 deaths from unexploded ordnance and 34 civilians
killed by US forces during protests and civil disturbances.\textsuperscript{73}

These shockingly high casualty figures were incurred during bombing,
missile strikes, artillery, mortar and small arms fire, cluster bombing,
and attacks from helicopter gunships – all in the face of claims in State
Department documents about the ‘strategic imperative’ of the US air force
paying close attention to the law of armed conflict using technologies such
as laser-guided bombs and collateral damage assessment software. In the
vast majority of the incidents, allied forces used indiscriminate force
against targets which were civilian in nature or were close to heavily popu-
lated civilian areas. The humanitarian crisis provoked by the war was
compounded by airstrikes against electricity generators and telephone
exchanges, and widespread looting after the liberation (which US troops
stood by and watched, while ensuring the Iraqi oil ministry was secure).
Some hospitals were forced to close, or could not gain access to power
or water, while patients were deterred from seeking help because of the
general insecurity. Some of the more notorious incidents included jittery
US troops shooting child weapons collectors and firing on vehicles
approaching checkpoints, and airstrikes on the Al-Shaab and Al-Nasser
marketplaces in Baghdad that killed 76 and injured 77. Journalists were
also murdered in a US airstrike on the Al-Jazeera office and by tank fire
on the Palestine Hotel: clear and chilling violations of the laws of war.\textsuperscript{74}

Nothing in the Iraq experience justifies the faith that Elshtain and others
have placed in the US military’s responsibility and restraint; indeed, as
in Afghanistan, that experience reveals the just warriors’ excuse that the
killing was ‘unintentional’ to be little more than a moral smokescreen for
the indiscriminate application of strategic violence. Likewise, the idea that
‘proportionality’ would suffice to balance the suffering, instability and
chaos caused by the invasion against some greater ‘social good’ drives
just war theory ‘ perilously close to moral incoherence’, as Wheeler
remarked of its faith in such a ‘double effect’.\textsuperscript{75} Ironic, then, that in justi-
fiying the war Elshtain wrote that ‘it is better to put one’s own combatants
in danger than stand by as the innocent are slaughtered’ – this, when
a US soldier at Kerbala was quoted as saying: ‘I think they thought we
wouldn’t shoot kids. But we showed them that we don’t care. We are
going to do what we have to do to stay alive and keep ourselves safe.’\textsuperscript{76}

In her June 2002 \textit{Boston Globe} article and the November 2002 \textit{Statement
of Principles} on Iraq, published by the Institute for American Values (also
signed by Francis Fukuyama, Robert Putnam and Theda Skocpol), Elshtain
relied on the enforcement of UN resolutions to justify war against Iraq.\textsuperscript{77}
However, by May 2003, confronted with the moral incoherence of the
‘double effect’, she had shifted register to focus on the liberation of Iraqis from the brutal Hussein regime: ‘Are we just going to provide iodine and band aids or might it be necessary, as Bonhoeffer put it, to “cut off the head of the snake”?78 We could ask why, if it was so genuinely concerned by the suffering of the Iraqi people, the United States supported Hussein through his gassing of Kurds and Iranian troops; why it helped cause the death of so many Iraqis through sanctions while claiming to be so opposed to their oppressor; and why it does not support the ICC and the indictment of terrorists and torturers everywhere?

This new, ‘humanitarian’ justification for the war also raises another question of the advocates who have stolen the robes of the judge: who gets to wage just war? Does every sufferer of harm and injustice, or merely those who have the power and the means, and who can turn their justifications into truth? Surely, if the just warriors are right, the Palestinian people had a right to wage just war on Israel after its 1982 invasion of Lebanon and the massacres in Sabra and Shatila, which the IDF helped to organise and enable?79 Surely the Palestinians had the right to invade Israel, remove its government and impose one which would create a just peace and right the historic wrong imposed on them after 1948? Surely, as Elshtain says of Iraq, they had a ‘claim to have coercive force deployed on their behalf to stop the Lions before they crush and devour all the Lambs’?80 However, such an argument would rightly disturb those who, whatever its flaws, wish to support Israeli democracy and halt the awful cycle of violence and retribution that has driven this conflict for decades, and who believe that the conflict must be resolved with a measure of security and justice for both peoples. In short, the weak do not get to wage just war. Their ‘innocence’ goes undefended.

Again and again we are forced to ask what really distinguishes just war from the mainstream traditions of realism and strategic thought over which it claims such universal moral superiority, and against which its system of justification and constraint seem to provide so little protection. Just war’s injunction that means must be ‘proportional’ to ends reveals a shared system of instrumental, means–ends rationality in which war, in Clausewitz’s terms, is viewed as a ‘political instrument . . . a mere continuation of policy by other means’. Indeed, by (weakly) insisting on discrimination in targeting, just warriors collude with Clausewitz’s rationalist view that war is ‘a pulsation of violent force . . . subject to the will of a guiding intelligence’, and with those soldiers who think that the RMA liberated American force from its Cold War straitjacket.81

Ethical peace

The manifest failures of just war theory, of current systems of international law relating to armed conflict, and of operational military restraint, demand the imagination of alternatives that better reflect the near-universal view
that the use of force should be subject to moral restraint. I outline these alternatives here under a set of principles I term ‘ethical peace’. I do this with a respectful refusal of Nicholas Rengger’s appeal against abandoning the just war tradition, preferring instead to pick up his challenge to ‘start afresh and think our own ideas on how to legitimate and justify force’. I will, however, try to build upon his anxiety about the way in which the context-based ‘casuistical’ mode of practical reasoning represented by the earlier just war tradition was reified into a modernist (scientistic) theory ‘to be used as a kind of moral slide rule from which legitimate instances of the use of force can be read off whenever necessary’.82

Ethical peace differs from ‘just war’ by rejecting the latter’s prima facie acceptance of the legitimacy of strategic violence, and by making peace – however complex, difficult and delayed – its central normative goal. Ethical peace refuses to provide legitimacy to strategic policy and strategic violence, even as it accepts that the prevalence of such violence means that it cannot be quickly eliminated. Important questions of national security and strategic stability necessitate a coordinated and gradual approach to the elimination of force from international life, accompanied by sustained and imaginative efforts to promote disarmament and resolve conflict. In this respect, the appalling double standards over weapons of mass destruction – in which it is illegitimate for North Korea, Iran or Iraq to possess them but acceptable for the United States, Israel, Russia, France, the UK and China – must be eliminated.83 Ethical peace also accepts that humanitarian intervention may be necessary and valuable at times, but that continuous debate over the conditions, experience and practice of such intervention is needed, given the very problematic experiences of recent years in Somalia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, East Timor, Rwanda, Kosovo and Cambodia.84 The use of humanitarian arguments for an imperialist war against Iraq, and the subversion of effective peacekeeping in post-Taliban Afghanistan by US priorities, have muddied these waters even further.

Ethical peace assumes that if the short- to medium-term existence of strategic violence is to be accepted, it must only be conditional, and used only under conditions far more stringent, enforceable and morally consistent than have so far been provided by either just war theory or international law. The first step is to ensure that the international legal frameworks provided by the United Nations Charter, the law of armed conflict and the covenants on human rights form the starting point for decisions about coercion and the use of armed force (while also acknowledging that decisions of the UN Security Council are sometimes tainted by power play, and that its voting structures and membership need reform). Embodied in international law are important liberal and humanitarian principles that forbid armed aggression and the abuse of human rights, legitimate the resort to force only after all other alternatives have been exhausted, and impose legal restraints on the use of that force. The UN
also provides frameworks that allow for the creation of enforcement and judicial bodies, both on a permanent basis (such as the ICC) and on an ad hoc basis (such as the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia).85 If the United States had asked the Security Council to create an international criminal tribunal to try the perpetrators of the African embassy bombings and the 9/11 attacks, it might have set in motion the creation of an enduring, impartial legal framework to punish, deter and delegitimise the very lethal forms of terrorism that have emerged in recent years. Instead, just warriors find themselves defending violent, extra-legal approaches that undermine international humanitarian law and create a level of global anger that cannot fail to manifest itself in future atrocities.

Ethical peace would also demand that action be taken to ensure that existing international law relating to human rights and armed conflict was consistently enforced – that resources be devoted to the ICC to enable it to prosecute violations, that the UN Human Rights Commission be reformed and given the ability to launch investigations and prosecutions, and that UN member states agree to make their policy-makers and soldiers accountable to international law. The Geneva Conventions also need reforming – not to remove constraints on armed forces, but to tighten them.86 The principles of ‘proportionality’ and ‘unintentional’ killing, which have created loopholes that have cost thousands of civilian lives in recent conflicts, need to be abandoned in favour of a principle that declares the illegality of avoidable harm. Provisions in the 1977 Geneva Convention Protocols that undermine enforcement and accountability, and have led Geoffrey Robertson to describe them as ‘badly drafted exercises in cynical diplomacy’, should also be changed.87 With the scandal of Iraq fresh in its mind, the international community also needs to define the crime of ‘aggression’ in the Rome Statute of the ICC in a credible way, and then enforce it.

The capricious attitude of just war theorists to international law – enforce it here, ignore or undermine it there – mirrors that of the most cynical realists, and is particularly egregious given their claim to provide a universal moral theory of force. Too often, just warriors seek to enshrine their isolated and partisan advocacy as moral truth, to steal for themselves the ‘tragic vocation of the judge’ rather than submit the decisions they exonerate from blame to international structures of judgement that can be debated, scrutinised and enforced. There is a moral sleight-of-hand at work in just war theory, which makes powerful claims to universality based on abstract rules, but then interprets those rules capriciously and implicitly accepts merely voluntary adherence to them. With its concepts of ‘proportionality’ and the ‘double effect’, the theory fatally undermines its own normative integrity by creating rules that harm rather than protect the innocent. In opposition to this, ethical peace seeks to develop a moral and ethical discourse on strategic violence that is sensitive to David Campbell and Michael Shapiro’s ‘suspicion that those preoccupied with theories of
ethics end up eliding the ethical relation... that a striving for the rules
and principles of justice... effects injustice’. 88 What is so dangerous
about just war theory is not so much its striving for justice but its absolute
certainty that justice has been found, that its rules are clear, and that war
will bring it closer rather than scatter it to the winds.

Instead we should seek an ethics that can be open to the moral danger,
and extreme pressures for decision, of the extraordinary moment. 89 As
John D. Caputo suggests, ‘the most responsible decision of all takes place
precisely at those moments when principles are not in play and we find
ourselves face to face with the singular demand of a concrete situation.
We are at our best, or ought to be, when we don’t know what to do.’90
Hannah Arendt perhaps had the best understanding of this, when in *The
Life of the Mind* she reflected that those Germans (and Jews) best able to
resist collaboration with the Nazis ‘were the only ones who were able to
judge by themselves’:

> they were capable of doing so not because they had a better system
of values or because the old systems of values were implanted in their
conscience ... but because their conscience did not function in an,
as it were, automatic way – as though we had a set of learned innate
rules which we then apply to a particular case as it arises ... Their
criterion, I think, was a different one; they asked themselves to what
extent they would still be able to live in peace with themselves ... the presupposition for this kind of judging is not a highly developed
intelligence or sophistication in moral matters, but merely the habit
of living together explicitly with oneself, that is, of being engaged in
that silent dialogue between me and myself which since Socrates and
Plato we usually call thinking. 91

It is not my view that Arendt was saying rules and guidelines were
worthless or should be jettisoned; rather she was concerned with the danger
of morality becoming a habit, a stable system of truths which paradoxi-
cally suspends the difficulties of judgement and lends itself uncritically to
political action. Elsewhere she advocated the value of ‘the faculty to judge
particulars without subsuming them under those general rules which can
be taught and learned until they grow into habits that can be replaced by
other habits and rules’. 92 Therefore, the challenge is to create and nurture
a permanent space of critique within moral reasoning and doctrine so that
politics is never moralised or purified, but is always put to the test of an
ethics which is permanently fissured by uncertainty.

The formal rigidity of just war theory, which allows it to tolerate the
killing of innocents provided it is done within its rules, fetishises procedure
over complexity and ‘intentions’ over effects. Just war theory avoids the
complexity of events by quarantining its system of moral judgement within
a temporal space limited to the planning and conduct of high-intensity
military operations. It ignores their aftermath, the larger causal consequences of conflict, and the long history of foreign policy and geopolitical manipulation that breeds and precedes conflict. In contrast, ethical peace is not a rule-bound normative theory but a context-sensitive ethical orientation concerned with the likely outcomes of decisions and actions. Rules and principles — such as avoidable harm — will be important, but they must not be fetishised to a point where the intention of the theory becomes corrupted. In this way, ethical peace can make no claims to be a universal political or ethical theory, but would be driven by a view that the protection of innocent life is a universally applicable principle — unlike just war theory which, even as it asserts that it has universal moral validity, uses concepts like ‘proportionality’ and the ‘double effect’ to remove thousands of people from the space of moral concern.

Just war theory is particularly dangerous because, even as it claims universal moral validity, it avoids the ultimate moral test of universality: in this case, the imperative that innocents everywhere affected by a strategic action or process be protected. In the hands of Elshtain, it makes humanitarian arguments for war against Iraq to protect the innocent, but allows for the Iraqi innocent, military and civilian, to be slaughtered; it rightly condemns the ‘despicable deeds’ of the 9/11 terrorists, but says nothing about the Bush administration’s suspension of international norms at Guantanamo Bay or the long list of Faustian pacts (for bases, cooperation and military aid) struck with abusive regimes in Russia, Algeria, China, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan as an integral part of the ‘just war against terror’. Ethical peace, in contrast, holds that such compromises are intolerable; that, as Ken Booth and Tim Dunne argue after Gandhi, ‘ends and means amount to the same thing’; that ‘a daily victory over terror’ can be won by ‘employing the means . . . that are the moral equivalent of the ends we seek’.

Ethical peace aims to create a genuinely universal moral community, rather than the selective and restricted one imagined by both realist and just war theorists. Just war theory colludes with realism by basing its doctrines on the fiction of the liberal body politic, built on a ‘social contract’, which simultaneously submerges individual identity into the state and divides people from each other through their membership of states, creating a claustrophobic apartheid of moral obligation. The security of such a ‘body politic’, as it was imagined by Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Bentham and Hegel, is always purchased with the insecurity of others, and just war theory entrenches this relativistic ethic even as it claims to moderate its destructive implications. At its worst, the social contract is reduced to an ontology of violence, of secure communities embodied and sustained by violence; and when married to the cynical, instrumental imperatives of the modern war machine, it promises not freedom from terror but a future lived within its bloody walls.
Ethical peace refuses to channel its ethical obligations solely through the state, or rely on it to protect us violently, because in doing so the state may well violently endanger us and everyone whom its actions affect. Ethical peace seeks to create an ethical relation that cannot be limited to or controlled by the state; it channels its ethical obligations above, below and beyond the state; it makes the ethical responsibility to the Other not a gift or indulgence of the state that can be forsaken in emergencies, but a condition of human existence prior to any community or state. This is the image of justice harboured and nurtured by ethical peace, one that is never content to seek justice with war, to fight terror with a terror tamed and moralised, to risk a future emptied of fairness and hope. Ethical peace struggles against terror lawfully, ethically, example by difficult example, dreaming of a future in which justice, strategy and war will be forever strangers.
Part III

Violence
7 Violence and reason on the shoals of Vietnam

‘Tell me, pray,’ said I, ‘who is this Mr Kurtz?’
‘The chief of the Inner Station,’ he answered in a short tone, looking away.
‘He is a prodigy . . . He is an emissary of pity, and science, and progress,
and devil knows what else. We want . . . for the guidance of the cause
entrusted us by Europe, so to speak, higher intelligence, wider sympathies,
a singleness of purpose . . . and so he comes here, a special being . . .’
Joseph Conrad, Heart of Darkness

It is ironic, perhaps, that we begin with the words of Henry Kissinger –
Harvard academic, international relations theorist, member of the Trilateral
Commission, and of the boards of American Express, R. H. Macy, CBS,
Revlon, Freeport-McMoRan, and former US National Security Advisor
and Secretary of State – who writes that ‘Vietnam is still with us’. Of
course Kissinger, placed so powerfully at the locus of several influential
discourses of world order in the post-war age, had his own axe to grind.
He went on to say: ‘[Vietnam] has created doubts about American judg-
ment, about American credibility, about American power – not only at
home, but throughout the world. It has poisoned our domestic debate. So
we paid an exorbitant price for the decisions that were made in good faith
and for good purpose.’\(^2\)

The crisis to which he alludes would be viewed and characterised differ-
ently by the victims and opponents of the war on one hand, and on another,
by the elites to whom ‘Vietnam’ stands as a signifier of defeat, failure,
crisis and further paranoia. The sociologist Daniel Bell has written that
the ‘American Century’ – heralded by Life publisher Henry Luce in 1941
– ‘foundered on the shoals of Vietnam’.\(^3\) What is happening here? I suspect
a new story of the West, an ironic metanarrative, that seems to appear
everywhere: a long journey, a great sea voyage, a shipwreck. Or as Jean
François Lyotard has written: ‘The narrative function is losing . . . its great
hero, its great dangers, its great voyages, its great goal.’\(^4\)

Perhaps these men overstate the setback that the defeat in Vietnam
represented for American global interests, but their views are no less
significant for that. Their words acknowledge a certain challenge to their
power, and in turn the power of the institutions, structures and systems to which they devote themselves and their thought. It is a challenge that both arises out of the United States’ (and broader Western) experience in Vietnam, and coalesces around it. Other markers include the 1973 oil price shocks and other Third World attempts to assert control over vital commodity markets and prices, as well as the global economic stagnation and inflationary spirals that the war helped provoke. Further ongoing crises in the project of Western economic expansion and ‘modernisation’ have been provided by the economic nationalism of Third World elites, and the struggles of millions for decolonisation, human and civil rights, democracy and economic and political self-determination. In such a context, ‘Vietnam’ then becomes both a complex and problematic historical ‘event’, and a tableau, a stage upon which further related crises and problems – mythological, epistemological, political, cultural and economic – are played out.

This chapter thus takes as its object some of the more influential, and paradigmatic, historiographic texts of the war: Stanley Karnow’s *Vietnam, A History*, a companion to the PBS television series; Neil Sheehan’s *A Bright Shining Lie*; Robert McNamara’s *In Retrospect*; and Francis Ford Coppola’s prize-winning film *Apocalypse Now*. While there is an immediately ‘political’ question of their power as vehicles of a certain historical ‘reality’ of the war, there are also questions about the very fact of their appearance in our culture. In *The Perfect War*, James William Gibson argues that during the 1970s and early 1980s the war was ‘abolished’ in America, ‘progressively displaced and repressed at the same time it was written about’; yet by 1983–4, it had suddenly become ‘a major cultural topic . . . as if a legendary monster or unholy beast had finally been captured and was now on a nationwide tour’.5

It is an element of this paradox that motivates me here. My interest in these particular texts arises because while they form their narrations in relation to the vast array of ‘events’ which are assumed to collectively constitute the war, they also do so in relation to a series of broader cultural narratives, conflicts and myths which reach into the very bedrock and possibility of our modernity. This chapter takes up the theme of politics and violence through the way reason (as a form of state power, an index of civilisational achievement, and a movement of historical progress) has been problematised within these texts. I make no claim that they are the most representative of the vast memorial literature on the American war in Vietnam; likewise it must be acknowledged that there are many texts that contest their apologetics for the war, in many different ways, from films like *Born On the Fourth of July* and *Full Metal Jacket*, to the memoirs of servicemen and books like Michael Herr’s *Dispatches*.6 What I want to suggest is that these texts provide a revealing cross-section of some of the key themes of the post-Vietnam literature as they relate to a related crisis in US foreign policy and national identity; and that, as such,
they are also riven with internal contradictions, which derive from the cultural contradictions they attempt, and fail, to reconcile.

Specifically, they attempt to reconcile two antithetical impulses: the first opens up a vast aporia within modernity’s (and America’s) claims to reason and culmination, an event Lyotard characterised as an abyss within enlightenment thought, and to which Jürgen Habermas’s work is also addressed; the second, more sinister, seeks recuperation. Here no such aporia is acknowledged, and reason becomes an apologia for the violence of the war and the discursive architecture that drove its execution. The violence and self-certainty of the Cartesian paradigm is retained, and reason’s function as a promise of historical perfection is revived through a vast act of forgetting in the writing of Francis Fukuyama. The chapter concludes that the invention of formal models of non-coercive reason, while laudable, cannot be a substitute for a relentless suspicion of the concrete historical effects of such metaphysical claims to liberation.

McNamara’s war

If there was an event which proved that ‘Vietnam is still with us’, it was the 1995 publication of former US Secretary of Defense, Robert S. McNamara’s memoir In Retrospect: The Tragedy and Lessons of Vietnam. McNamara had been recruited to his position in 1960 by John F. Kennedy from the Ford Motor Corporation where, not long before, he had been appointed its youngest ever president. He served the Kennedy and Johnson administrations until 1968 when he was moved to the World Bank, disillusioned with the war from which he now advocated America’s withdrawal; yet he had become so closely identified with it that it became known as ‘McNamara’s war’. Now, after 16 years, he had broken his silence and declared the war a mistake.

The book’s brief opening sets out the war’s epistemological and strategic significance for Western elites, the narrative strategy he would pursue in an attempt to contain and recuperate its loss, and perhaps unwittingly, the aporias that would remain:

We of the Kennedy and Johnson administrations who participated in the decisions on Vietnam acted according to what we thought were the principles and traditions of this nation. We made our decisions in light of those values.

Yet we were wrong, terribly wrong. We owe it to future generations to explain why.

I truly believe that we made an error not of values and intentions but of judgement and capabilities. I say this warily, since I know that if my comments appear to justify or rationalise what I and others did, they will lack credibility and only increase people’s cynicism. It is
cynicism that makes Americans reluctant to support their leaders in the actions necessary to confront and solve our problems at home and abroad.

I want Americans to understand why we made the mistakes we did, and to learn from them . . . That is the only way our nation can hope to leave the past behind.7

Here, in McNamara’s slip from ‘principles and traditions’ to ‘values and intentions’, we see a rhetorical sleight-of-hand that frames an event that saw as many as 3,000,000 people killed, millions more wounded, and immense and lasting damage to the environmental and genetic order. With it came the moral quarantine that would partition ‘judgement and capabilities’ from the beliefs that underlay them, in the hope that this event could finally recede from memory. But can ‘we’ really leave ‘the past’ behind in this way, obscure its legacy and its continual irruption into the present? What would be its consequences? In this narrative the essential ‘values’ that form the core of the modern American identity remain untainted, except for their application; the broad project of American foreign policy and mission remains, all delivered in the rousing tones and generalities of a presidential inauguration speech. In a formulation that mirrors much of the other historiography of the war, McNamara’s framing text makes a concerted effort to contain the war’s corrosive power and turn its ‘lessons’ to future use. Or to put it another way, we are witness to a modern-day Descartes contemplating the awesome consequences of the wrong method. Reason still seeks its own return.8

Both Neil Sheehan and Stanley Karnow open their histories in similar ways. Karnow’s book opens with the November 1982 dedication of Washington’s Vietnam memorial, ‘an angle of polished black stone’ upon which are engraved the names of over 58,000 Americans killed or missing in action during the 20 years of direct American involvement there. These names, Karnow writes,

record more than lives lost in battle: they represent a sacrifice to a failed crusade, however noble or illusory its motives. In a larger sense they symbolise a faded hope – or perhaps the birth of a new awareness. They bear witness to the end of America’s absolute confidence in its moral exclusivity, its military invincibility, its manifest destiny. They are the price, paid in blood and sorrow, for America’s awakening to maturity, to the recognition of its limitations. With the young men who died in Vietnam died the dream of an ‘American century’.9

This passage casts the war in terms of a great rift, a break which sets the possibility of something redeeming (‘a new awareness’, a ‘recognition of limitations’) against a panorama of loss. Karnow’s words here – particularly
their reference to the doctrine of manifest destiny and the post-war vision of Henry Luce – also owe a great deal to Daniel Bell’s *Public Interest* essay ‘The End of American Exceptionalism’, published a few months after the fall of Phnom Penh and Saigon in April 1975.

Sheehan’s opening section is simply titled, ‘The Funeral’. Although it commemorates the death of a single American soldier, this event also announces the death of a great deal more. A state funeral, it is accompanied by all the mythological trappings of the American nation, signs that refer to its earliest origins and the decisive battles that brought it into being:

Six gray horses were hitched to a caisson that would carry the coffin to the grave. A marching band was ready. An honor guard from the Army’s oldest regiment, the regiment whose rolls reached back to the Revolution, was also formed in ranks before the white Georgian portico of the chapel. The soldiers were in full dress, dark blue trimmed with gold, the colors of the Union Army, which had safeguarded the integrity of the nation.10

The funeral itself, held at Arlington cemetery on 16 June 1972, was for John Paul Vann, around whose larger-than-life figure Sheehan organises much of the moral and political drama of his book. Vann had risen, despite many long-running conflicts with his superiors, from a position as American adviser to the South Vietnamese army in 1962, to in 1971 wielding so much influence within the US civil-military bureaucracy and the Saigon government structure that he was ‘the most important American in the country after the Ambassador and the commanding general in Saigon’. His role is so decisive, or emblematic, that he was for Sheehan, ‘the soldier of the war in Vietnam’:

In this war without heroes, this man had been the one compelling figure. The intensity and distinctiveness of his character and the courage and drama of his life had seemed to sum up so many of the qualities Americans seemed to admire in themselves as a people. By an obsession, by an unyielding dedication to the war, he had come to personify the American endeavor in Vietnam. He had exemplified it in his illusions, in his good intentions gone awry, in his pride, in his will to win. Where others had become defeated or discouraged over the years, or had become disenchanted and turned against the war, he had been undeterred in his crusade to find a way to redeem the unredeemable, to lay hold of victory in this doomed enterprise.11

A failed ‘crusade’, ‘a doomed enterprise’: we can see that into the very buttresses of their American Vietnam stories, these writers encode an
ambivalence: an event disputed, a nation divided and traumatised, a healing shadowed by the destruction and horror of times past. They will strike out in search of narrative unity, but find it continually thwarts them. Karnow’s introduction concludes with an attempt at recuperation, which focuses on the November 1982 march to dedicate the memorial:

From afar, the crowds resembled the demonstrators who had stormed the capital during the Vietnam war to denounce the conflict. But past controversies were conspicuously absent this weekend. Now Americans appeared to be redeeming a debt to the men who had fought and died – saluting their contribution, expiating their suffering. The faces, the words of dedication, and the monument itself seemed to heal wounds.¹²

This is plausible enough in isolation, but when followed by the sobering argument of Bell’s essay, the troubles of veterans, and the bitterness and frustration of policymakers, the gesture seems weak. Karnow’s subsequent attempt at synthesis resolves little, and is accompanied by no small disingenuity, clouding the responsibility of the United States for the violence and the disproportionate toll on Vietnamese society: ‘In human terms at least, the war in Vietnam was a war that nobody won – a struggle between victims. Its origins were complex, its lessons disputed, its legacy still to be assessed by future generations. But whether a valid venture or misguided endeavor, it was a tragedy of epic dimensions.’¹³ Sheehan seems less convinced, saying: ‘some of those who had assembled at Arlington wondered if they were burying with [Vann] more than the war and the decade of Vietnam. They wondered if they were also burying with him this vision and this faith in an ever-innocent America.’¹⁴

Crisis, modernity and American exceptionalism

Beneath their surface performance of American identity and strategic crisis, these texts are traversed by a deeper set of problems involving a broader structure of Western legitimacy and self-identity. Allied with the direct strategic, economic and mythological crisis of American power is a crisis of what Lyotard has called ‘metanarratives’ – the narratives of progress, freedom, justice and reason, which have formed the silent philosophical buttresses of the vast cultural, economic, political, scientific and technological transformations that modernity names. Robert Pippin has called this ‘the modernity problem’, a problem of the moral and ethical value of modernity, of its ‘legitimacy’ – its ability to ground itself, its project and its normativity.¹⁵ Edward Said in turn links this phenomenon to the process in which a Western cultural identity was simultaneously constructed and destabilised through the historical experience of
imperialism. Reproving Lyotard for not suggesting why the metanarratives came into question, he suggests they went into decline largely as a result of the ‘crisis of modernism, which . . . was frozen in contemplative irony for various reasons, of which one was the disturbing appearance in Europe of various Others, whose provenance was the imperial domain . . . Europe and the West, in short, were being asked to take the Other seriously’.16

I would argue that we must treat the linkage of these themes, directly played out in Apocalypse Now, as a significant cultural effect; the result of the enormous historical sweep and deployment of the mythology that posed the United States as ‘the exception’, a new Europe in an untouched space, the newest societal embodiment of reason and progress. In particular Daniel Bell’s essay The End of American Exceptionalism traces out this process.17 There he developed a revealing description of the ideals of ‘the American dream’, the construction of a distinctively American (meta)narrative of identity and progress in terms of the Hegelian ‘project of a total history’, which seeks to ‘reconstitute the overall form of a civilisation’ according to ‘the continuous chronology of reason’.18 But Hegel’s ‘Universal History’, and America’s shimmering place in its teleology, was not the only philosophical idea at issue here. In this description of ‘exceptionalism’ (and in Hegel’s view of America as ‘a land of desire for all those who are weary of the historical lumber room of old Europe’) was a sense that the United States was developing as a political and geographic space where Europe could re-invent itself and its project. By virtue of its youth, its seemingly boundless tracts of land, and its liberal ideals, America would escape the ‘signs of disintegration’ represented by the writings of Marx, Nietzsche and Freud and by a polity marked by poverty, misery and class warfare.19 It was as if, by getting off ‘scot-free’, America could escape the ‘postmodern’ moment of its modernism, and initiate a pure, consensual modernity that would provide the foundations of future world hegemony and stand as a beacon for the civilised West.20

It would be ‘Vietnam’ that provided the great blow to this arrogance, to America’s ‘world-historical’ mantle, bringing into its culture all the ‘postmodern’ contradictions long experienced by other Western societies. Using a revealing metaphor, Bell wrote that ‘The American century lasted scarcely 30 years. It foundered on the shoals of Vietnam’.21 However, traumatic as the Vietnam defeat may have been for American elites, in Bell’s essay its effect was not isolated to questions of ‘credibility’ and the narrowing of foreign policy options; the war became a stage for a number of related concerns about the health of the American polity, the structure of consensus, and the long term survival of America’s economic supremacy. ‘Can,’ he asked in a sentiment worthy of McNamara, ‘we escape the fate of internal discord and disintegration that have marked every other society in human history? What can we learn from the distinctive ideological and
institutional patterns that have, so far, shaped a unique American society and given it distinctive continuity in 200 years of existence? 22

(Post)modern echoes: Apocalypse Now

Apocalypse Now plays out such themes, in turn linking them with the deeper malaise Lyotard and Said identified. The film’s title signifies these preoccupations: not only the war’s status as barely thinkable horror, but also as an event that precipitates ‘the end of the world’, of ‘civilisation as we know it’ – the ‘end’ of metanarratives, the war as a moral and cultural disaster of major order.

In a gesture at once curious and apt, the film’s structuring narrative teleology is appropriated from Conrad’s classic modernist novel, Heart of Darkness (1902). Coppola’s is one of the few Vietnam films, of the torrent that have appeared, to rework a Western literary classic in this way, placing the war (notwithstanding the revealing prologue to Oliver Stone’s Platoon: ‘hell is the absence of reason’) squarely within a philosophical problematic that dates to modernity’s earliest self-awareness. The Marlow character, Captain Willard (Martin Sheen), is an assassin sent by a shadowy command to terminate the activities of the Special Forces’ ‘Colonel Walter E.’ Kurtz, who is running operations without licence from a base just inside the Cambodian border on the Mekong river. He has been charged by a military court with murder, having ordered the execution of some South Vietnamese whom he considered to be ‘double agents’ working from his camp. Marlow’s movement between the various ‘stations’ of the novel, towards the ‘heart of darkness’, provides Coppola with both a stage for a number of rather surreal narrative episodes, and a temporal space in which a more overtly political rhetoric can develop. Willard introduces his journey by saying: ‘I was going to the worst place in the world, and I didn’t even know it yet . . . weeks away and hundreds of miles up a river that snaked through the war like a main circuit cable, plugged straight into Kurtz . . .’. During the briefing for his mission, Willard is played a tape of Kurtz’s voice: ‘I watched a snail crawl across the edge of a straight razor – that’s my dream, my nightmare . . . crawling across the edge of a straight razor, and surviving . . . we must kill them, pig after pig, cow after cow, village after village, army after army and they call me an assassin, what do you call it when the assassins accuse the assassins . . .?’. Kurtz is described by the briefing general as ‘one of the most outstanding officers this country has ever had’ but he has somehow gone bad, his ‘ideas, his methods, became unsound’.

In a brief monologue, the general prefigures both the film’s political problematic, and much of its moral and philosophic scope: ‘Y’know Willard, in this war things get confused out there . . . power, morality and practical military necessity . . . out there with these natives it must be a temptation to . . . be God . . . because there is a conflict in every human
heart, between the rational and the irrational, between good and evil, and
good does not always triumph . . . sometimes the dark side overcomes
what Lincoln called “the better angels of our nature”.’ Coppola’s Kurtz
is a hybrid figure who, like his precursor in Conrad, emerges slowly, an
object of desire, speculation and awe, providing the journey upriver with
direction, significance and mystery. Existing as he does, at the very
‘heart of darkness’, he functions as a space in which the film combines
its broader moral/philosophic concerns with two countervailing rhetorics
of the war.

Simplifying a little, these rhetorics divide on the morality of the war
and the question of America’s failure. One, closer to the novel, can be
read in many of the film’s visual sequences (especially the helicopter
attack on the Mekong Delta village commanded by Colonel Kilgore)
and in some of the more isolated narrative episodes, and presents the war
as a horrific and meaningless event where, in the words of Coppola,
modern technology was used to perpetrate genocide.23 The other, which
is developed via the figure of Kurtz and in Willard’s ruminations on his
mission, is deeply at odds with this reading. This rhetoric seems to suggest
that Kurtz is less a monster acting ‘beyond the pale of any acceptable
human conduct’, than a harassed and strangely prophetic figure who
truly understood the reserves of brutality and discipline that would have
to be harnessed if America was going to prevail. In short, it repeats the
crude argument that America fought the war with one hand tied behind
its back.

This reading is suggested by an interpretation of Kurtz’s remarks
on the tape played to Willard – the ‘snail’ is the Vietnamese enemy, the
‘straight razor’ it crawls across, and survives, is the American military
machine. And early in the film Willard remarks – referring to his mission
– that ‘charging a man with murder in this place was like handing out
speeding tickets at the Indy 500’, while as he reads Kurtz’s file on the
journey, his admiration increases:

October 1967 on special assignment in Kontum Province 2 Corps,
Kurtz staged ‘Operation Archangel’ with combined local forces. Rated
a major success. He received no official clearance. He just thought it
up and did it. What balls! They were gonna nail his ass to the floor-
boards for that one, but after the press got hold of it, they promoted
him to full Colonel instead. Oh man, the bullshit piled up so fast in
Vietnam you needed wings to step out of it.

Similarly, Willard reads a letter Kurtz had addressed to his son, in
which Kurtz expounds his philosophy on the morality and use of force:

In a war there are many moments for compassion and tender action. There are many moments for ruthless action. What is often called
ruthless, what may in many circumstances be only clarity, seeing clearly what there is to be done and doing it . . . directly, quickly, awake, looking at it. As for the charges against me, I am unconcerned. I am beyond their timid, lying morality. You have all my faith, your loving father . . .

Reason is not a stable value here, a space that an audience reading the film will automatically assume Kurtz exists outside. Certainly he has been denounced as ‘insane’, his methods ‘unsound’, but such definitions are countered by as many valorisations of his approach. I am not sure these tensions are ever resolved, but the point is that at issue here is a notion of reason whose morality is pliable and uncertain, a question of what reason allows, what it may find necessary or just, that it may, in this instance, allow and require a Kurtz.

**Political reason and history**

I am not arguing here against reason as such, as if it could be easily abandoned – as Derrida reminds us, metaphysical thought supplies the very languages and terms with which we seek to question it. However I am suggesting that any use of reason, even mine, must acknowledge its problematic status; its features then must be differentiated, and its deployment into particular historical and institutional contexts be critically analysed. This view bypasses Habermas’s efforts, for instance, to reconstitute a universal rationality free from its past coercive implications – whatever its normative value – instead taking its cues from a poststructuralism, which, in Robert Young’s words, ‘reanalyses the operations of reason as such’.24

While I have sympathies with Habermas’s broad political impulse, I am uncomfortable with a strategy that seeks to preserve the sovereignty (and metaphysical claims) of a transcendental concept rather than interrogate the specific forms of rationality that produce and enable events like Vietnam. A metaphysics that differentiates between reason and unreason to apply political and moral value is no longer viable, and has in fact been undermined by the experience of the war. As I also suggest in Chapter 8, we need to think of such events as ‘rational’, in one way or another: to jettison the emotive and superior value we place upon an idea such as ‘rationality’, defining it more neutrally as the operation of specific deployments of power that utilise a range of institutional, legal, economic and technical frameworks for strategic purposes.25

Of course, the problem of reason relates to more than simply political efficiency: in these histories reason is further at issue both in terms of the moral and ethical values that have been imputed to it, and in terms of its place at the intersection of the broader exercise of political power and the life of individual subjects: how they are governed, how they govern themselves, and the values and ideals with which they do so.
Reason as a measure of the efficacy of political power was a problem central to the seventeenth-century doctrines of ‘reason of state’, which Foucault discusses in his 1979 lectures published as ‘Politics and Reason’. Here the problem was not the link between the prince and the state, as it was in Machiavelli, but to reinforce, expand and strengthen the state itself. Reason of state, says Foucault, was a search for ‘a rationality specific to the art of government’.

In the philosophy of history, reason also had an added temporal function. In Kant’s 1784 essay *Idea for a Universal History*, reason was the ‘guiding thread’ that supplied history with direction, but was also a powerful political technology: ‘a faculty of widening the rules and purposes of the use of all its powers far beyond natural instinct’. Hegel further elevated reason into a virtual law of historical development, which bound together the state and the individual subject in an inevitable and ideal embrace. The state was ‘the material in which the Ideal of Reason is wrought out’; individuals realised their ‘essential being’ in ‘the union of the subjective with the rational will . . . the moral Whole, the State’. The possession of reason was also a measure of historical progress among peoples: history could only be taken up ‘where Rationality begins to manifest itself in the actual conduct of the World’s affairs (not merely as an undeveloped potentiality)’. Thus it was in *Reason in History* that reason of state and teleology became united: their concerns for the strength of states and mechanisms of government, the rationality of historical change, and the union of personal and national identity, of individual freedom with the state and its destiny.

**Failures of reason**

Both McNamara’s and Sheehan’s books take as their central themes this problematic of ‘rationality’, in particular the post-war search by American policymakers for an effective rationality of global power, a ‘rationality’ that would forge an ideal combination of strategic assumptions, political strategies and administrative, diplomatic and military techniques with realistic and legitimate goals. This in turn was linked with the larger historical movement of reason of which the United States was seen as a vehicle – with the effect of obscuring this reason’s practical techniques and consequences within an emotive metaphysical smoke. In this John Paul Vann and McNamara appear as paradigmatic figures: McNamara the figure, par excellence, of the Cartesian, mathematical policymaker, who until 1967 believed that the gradual and massive application of superior force would prevail, and who drew up fantastical assessments of troop numbers, casualty rates and time frames for victory; Vann the idealistic citizen, courageous warrior, and fierce anti-communist with an enormous organisational, tactical and administrative ability, the soldier-archetype.
McNamara was a paradigm case of a thinker whose craving for certainty, and almost unshakable belief in science and rationality and its power to control reality, so contributed to the destruction of the war; however, this was consistent with what James William Gibson describes as a ‘deeply mechanistic world view’ which took hold in the post-war policy elites of the United States. He cites Kissinger as writing, without irony, that after 1945 American foreign policy had been based ‘on the assumption that technology plus managerial skills gave us the ability to reshape the international system and to bring about domestic transformations in emerging countries’. This ‘scientific revolution’ had ‘for all practical purposes, removed technical limits from the exercise of power in foreign policy’. Gibson suggests that, in such a system, the defeat of the United States by ‘a nation of peasants with bicycles’ was literally unthinkable.29

Seeing this hubris so starkly laid out allows us to understand the dual crisis of technical and philosophical reason that the defeat engendered. There is a strong sense in both Sheehan and McNamara’s books that the crisis of these strategies and capabilities had an added historical force that brought the whole metaphysic of the American century (and its self-conscious echoes of exceptionalism and manifest destiny) into question. In particular Vann’s figure dramatises a conflict – within the nation, the government and the US army – over the merits and prosecution of the war. His appeal for Sheehan is played out in two narrative streams: his military biography, which in recounting his constant battles with higher authority dramatises his ‘candor’, ‘moral heroism’ and ‘truth telling’; and personal biography that in more psychologising terms presents his character, torn between ‘a duality of personal compulsions and deceits that would not bear light and a professional honesty that was rigorous and incorruptible’, as a metaphor for the unhappy mix of idealism and ‘dark compulsions’ at the heart of the American dream.30

While Vann conducted a principled campaign against the corruption of the Saigon regime, the brutality and slaughter of the air war, and the ruthlessness of many soldiers, he did so out of a fundamental belief that the war was fundamentally just and that the range of politico-military strategies brought to bear had to be changed. Even after the Tet Offensive of January 1968, after which so many others advocated withdrawal – including McNamara – Vann remained a fervent proponent and became a major source of inspiration for Nixon’s ‘Vietnamisation’ strategy. In this way, Vann functioned as a touchstone, a quasi-ideal locus of rationality by which other actors and institutions could be measured. Also, inasmuch as the book traced his commitment to the state and his passionate refusal to lose faith in the war, he functioned to illustrate the limits of this rationality; thus the book oscillates between an immersion in the rhetoric that Vann’s story forms, and a more detached and principled critique of his actions and thinking. Sheehan’s writing, for instance, does allow the reader to question the limits to Vann’s outrage that, in the story, lay at the core of his reputation for ‘moral heroism’. In 1968 Vann had encour-
aged CIA station chief William Colby in his efforts to have Thieu support the ‘Phoenix’ programme, which aimed to capture or assassinate the cadres of the NLF’s clandestine government. Colby estimated in 1971 that 28,000 people had been captured and another 20,000 killed under the programme, which was in reality a gross and systematic violation of human and civil rights, the imprimatur of a military dictatorship its only legal justification.

Reason then, as a moral value, ultimately became a measure of necessity and discretion in killing, a discretion moderated and controlled by the requirements of political and military efficiency. Sheehan had written:

Vann had no moral qualms about killing Vietnamese Communists and those who fought for them, nor was he troubled by the fact that he would be getting Vietnamese who sided with the United States killed to achieve American aims in Vietnam . . . he assumed that he and his fellow Americans in Vietnam had a right to take life and to spend it, as long as they did so with discretion, whenever killing and dying were necessary in their struggle.

In his introduction, Sheehan had explained that Vann opposed the air war because ‘he considered it morally wrong and stupid to wreak unnecessary violence on the innocent’. Vann’s convictions brought him common cause with Senator Edward Kennedy, who had attempted to alleviate the suffering of the civilian war wounded and the refugees, and, wrote Sheehan, ‘had shared Vann’s concern for the anguish of the Vietnamese peasantry and had, like Vann, attempted to persuade the US government to wage war with reason and restraint’ (emphasis added). The form of words here is crucial, highlighting as it does the limits to this morality, which refuses to question the United States’ claimed right to intervene, and ultimately subsumes its denunciation of the violence beneath the pragmatics of the war’s continued prosecution. This attenuated morality united both men like George Kennan, who argued for Vietnam’s essential strategic irrelevance to the United States, and men like Vann who, wrote Sheehan, while concerned with reducing pain and suffering as much as possible, ‘believed with equal firmness that there was no choice but to sacrifice the Vietnamese peasants to the higher strategic needs of the United States’. McNamara’s final chapter is entitled ‘The Lessons of Vietnam’, and turns around a list of the major causes for American failure. These included a misjudgement of Vietnam’s ‘geopolitical intentions’ and of ‘the power of nationalism to motivate a people’; an ignorance of Vietnamese culture and history; a failure ‘to recognise the limitations of modern, high-technology equipment, forces and doctrine’; a failure to ‘draw Congress and the American people into a full and frank discussion’; and a failure to ‘recognize that neither our people nor our leaders are omniscient . . . We do not have the god-given right to shape every nation in our own image or as we choose’. What is particularly interesting here is the
important (almost revolutionary) shift in McNamara’s self-image as the epitome of the rational, controlled, mathematical policy-maker: a Cartesian psychological and administrative formation that exalts problem solving and strives for certitude and mastery. This insight is suggested to me by writers such as Elizabeth Grosz and Christine Sylvester, who challenge the gendered ‘normativity of sex’ in international relations that aligns maleness, order, reason and intellect in opposition to passion, disorder, and the body – values constructed as perpetually threatening, irrational, backward and disruptive. A mechanistic world-view is here also revealed as self-consciously masculine. McNamara makes an interesting comment as his tenth ‘cause’:

We failed to recognise that in international affairs, as in other aspects of life, there may be problems for which there are no immediate solutions. For one whose life has been dedicated to the belief and practice of problem solving, this is particularly hard to admit. But at times, we may have to live with an imperfect, untidy world.33

He almost finds the understanding, but his shift is attenuated and partial. Because it is there, in that final metaphor of an ‘imperfect, untidy world’, we see the flaw in his recuperation. While he has discarded the geopolitical baggage of an earlier period, he retains just as much. Lapsing into the propaganda of the time, he says: ‘the United States of America fought in Vietnam . . . for what I believe to be good and honest reasons . . . to protect our security, prevent the spread of totalitarian Communism, and promote individual freedom and political democracy.’ Thus, it was not the fundamental strategic rationale that was wrong, or the metaphysical historical abstractions – exceptionalism plus containment – that underpinned the policy, but simply its field and application. He argues that the ‘South Vietnamese . . . had to win the war themselves . . . external military force cannot substitute for the political order and stability that must be forged by a people for themselves’.34

With this mantra of ‘stability’ McNamara betrays a refusal to acknowledge that the South Vietnamese state was and always had been a lie; nor was it ever democratic and nor did the United States ever seriously encourage an open political system that would have had to include the NLF. He refuses to acknowledge, other than in the most oblique way, that the loss in Vietnam was determined by politics, not force, and that the intervention was fundamentally unjust from the outset. Nor does he acknowledge the immense human destruction caused by the 20-year US war and the responsibility – equalling that of post-war Japan or Germany – that needed to be borne. I suspect that he remains committed to the idea of ‘rational’ judgement and decision, along with the American dream in all its metaphysical fullness. He mourns perhaps the optimism and certitude with which it once was applied, tempers the hubris a little, and hopes finally to heal and improve the interlinked system of ideals, belief and
administration the war so damaged. Much like George Bush Sr rejoicing after the Gulf War at the defeat of the ‘Vietnam syndrome’, the aim is to enlarge the possible field of rationality and intensify its nuances, rather than to interrogate its very grounds or legitimacy. The American century, holed in the bow, can be refloated with the tide and resume its grand imperial voyage.

Aporias: *Apocalypse Now* concludes

The final scenes of the film *Apocalypse Now* demonstrate most clearly the moral aporias central to this body of historiography, in turn relating them to the broader problematic of Western civilisational identity that structures *Heart of Darkness*. While being the closest in the film to any one scene in the novel, they circle around the question of the exact nature, and moral value, of the rationality Kurtz represents. After many viewings and much thought I still find the rhetorical outcomes from this climactic sequence, and thus the film as a whole, deeply ambiguous. It opens as Willard’s boat approaches Kurtz’s camp, which is guarded by local Montangard tribesmen who stand silently, their bodies painted white, a still assembly of latent threat. The compound is festooned with stakes topped by skulls and severed heads, and Willard is imprisoned for a time in a kind of ‘tiger cage’ where Kurtz, his face painted like some demon, tortures and torments him. In the novel, Kurtz was dying when Marlow got to him, his ruthlessness, power and efficiency by that time a memory. Still, this section of the film presents the Kurtz of the novel, a Kurtz who ‘lacked restraint in the gratification of his various lusts’, in whom ‘there was something wanting’:

> Whether he knew of this deficiency himself I can’t say. I think the knowledge came to him at last – only at the very last. But the wilderness had found him out early, and had taken on him a terrible vengeance for the fantastic invasion. I think it had whispered to him things about himself which he did not know, things of which he had no conception till he took counsel with this great solitude – and the whisper had proved irresistably fascinating. It echoed loudly within him because he was hollow at the core . . . .

Here the film appropriates Conrad’s moral sleight of hand which, while viewing Kurtz as a destructive emissary of ‘progress’, ultimately projects his violence back onto the jungle, as if the colonial enterprise he represents had been contaminated by the ‘primeval’ land it raped. The Montangards function as symbols of darkness and death; a projection that in turn activates a long tradition of Western fears of paganism, ritual and cannibalism. Once again, the figure of the ‘savage’ becomes the repository of the guilt and fear associated with imperial control, and the isolated figure of a man who has lost his reason stands in for the systemic violence of the European enterprise.
Yet while Coppola makes this (somewhat attenuated) denunciation, I also see another rhetoric available from this scene, one that seeks to expand the space of reason to encompass a necessary and intensified level of violence. This moment comes with a long monologue spoken by Kurtz, which is accompanied by none of the censure that surrounds his figure in the novel. Saying that Willard has ‘a right to call me a murderer . . . but you have no right to judge me’ and that ‘horror has a face and you must make a friend of horror, horror and moral terror are your friends if they are not then they are enemies to be feared’, Kurtz recounts a story of how, after his Special Forces unit had been inoculating children in a village, the Viet Cong came through and ‘hacked off every inoculated arm’. Kurtz describes how he first wept, and then realised

the genius of that, the genius to do that . . . I realised they were stronger than we because they could stand it . . . If I had ten divisions of those men our troubles here would be over very quickly . . . you have to have men who are more and at the same time who are able to utilise their primordial instincts to kill without feeling without passion without judgement . . . without judgement . . . because it is judgement that defeats us . . .

The Viet Cong atrocity was pure fiction; but leaving that aside, what is interesting here is the morality of this argument, a firmly contemporary nuance with no parallels in the novel. Simon During has commented that having chosen for his story ‘an old mythic narrative: the voyage to the underground and back’ (one with other ‘Western’ antecedents, such as Dante’s Inferno), Conrad was confident ‘that the culture [could] narrativise its own reneging on enlightenment’. I sense that Coppola, having recognised how bound the Vietnam war was with that American enlightenment narrative, felt no such confidence. The myth was gone, wrecked on the ‘shoals’ of this war; no return could be made. At the film’s end Kurtz is killed, hacked to death by Willard to the strains of The Doors’ The End. However violent this scene, it ultimately seems meaningless, a climax without narrative significance, the plot’s attempt to conclude and solidify a logic that here founders on a chaotic diffusion of signs, falling and scattering like mercury. All that is left is Kurtz’s wish, like the America for which he is a metaphor, to escape ‘judgement’, and a pathetic and chilling vision that could only intensify a rationality that so clearly, and terribly, had failed.

The abyss of reason

So why now, an abyss? What is this space towards which these texts lead us? At a time when other prophets spoke of ‘the end of History’, of the imminent culmination of human reason and endeavour, the realisation of an imagined, utopian space that our ideals, our system and our masters
have always been creating for us. A space that admits no abyss, other
than as an already-resolved contradiction, a loss without memory. Many
will recognise Francis Fukuyama’s neo-Hegelian historico-philosophical
claim, one I treat with the utmost seriousness, given that its broad contours
mirror increasingly powerful global discourses of economic and cultural
integration. Fewer perhaps would recognise how, in the 1992 book that
expanded his original essay, a broad cultural phenomenon of ‘deep histor-
cal pessimism’ was posed as one of the fundamental challenges to his
project. This was a symptom of ‘truly terrible events’ like the Holocaust,
the two World Wars or Stalin’s Soviet Union, events ‘in which modern
technology and modern political organisation’ were put ‘to the service of
evil’. True to his claim and his reading of Hegel, these problems are
then subsumed beneath a new ‘dialectical’ optimism that takes the fall of
‘strong states’ and the global spread of ‘economic and political liberalism’
as its final proof. Like McNamara, the past is allowed to recede so
recuperation can begin.

It is Lyotard who reminds us that there can never be an easy resolution
of such contradictions. In *The Sign of History*, he argued that Auschwitz
was a ‘proper name’, which:

places modern historical or political commentary in abeyance . . .
Adorno pointed out that Auschwitz is an abyss in which the philo-
sophical genre of Hegelian speculative discourse seems to disappear,
because the name “Auschwitz” invalidates the presuppositions of that
genre, namely that all that is real is rational, and all that is rational
is real.

Such events thus produce an immense ‘fission’ affecting the unity of
the great discourses of modernity’. In my view, the French and American
wars in Indo-China are just such an event: one that should, and does,
produce a serious ethical and historic rupture in the value we place upon
‘modernity’ and a philosophical rhetoric of historical progress. In parti-
cular, this event produces a ‘fission’ in a particular historical experience
of modernity in which the United States has been seen as a beacon and
in which it has acted as a hegemonic and universalising force. Nor are
these the only such events in American history: we could consider the
destruction of Indian tribes, the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki,
and more recent events like the support for the Indonesian killings of
1965–6, or the wars against Nicaragua, Panama or Iraq. And most Western
nations, through their roles as colonisers or as post-war geopolitical and
economic actors, share such stains. My arguments in Chapter 2 about the
need to acknowledge the *jaggedness* of twentieth-century practices of
security, their investment in repression and terror, reflect the same concerns.

This, however, does not amount to a wholesale polemic against ‘the
enlightenment’ which, as both Foucault and Derrida have argued, still
provides valuable tools for its own critique and continues to shape the
languages in which we frame our thought, however critical. Rather, as I have tried to do here through this localised cultural history of ‘reason’, it forces us to differentiate its elements and to analyse its historical formation and deployment into particular systems of rationality. Many understandably worry that poststructuralist critiques such as Lyotard’s deny us the ability to distinguish between good and bad uses of reason, between destructive and ideal deployments of truth and power, and rob us of the idealist core of the enlightenment project. While accepting the importance of such concerns, I don’t necessarily agree. This chapter, for instance, has implied that the forms of reason deployed by the anti-war movement or the NLF had superior claims to those of the American war and foreign policy machines. Broadly speaking they did; however criticism ought to be made of the NLF’s frequent resort to brutality and terrorism (and the failure of sections of the anti-war movement to acknowledge this) and of its perversion into Stalinist repression as the form of the post-1975 Vietnamese state solidified.

In answer to such problems I suggest that we cannot be happy with a reason that retains its metaphysical gloss at the expense of a permanent and restless activity of self-critique. This is the insight I take from Lyotard and from deconstruction, and for which I believe Habermas to have been arguing in his own way. The normatively progressive impetus can be retained, as long as we are also able to question the ways in which the universalising and teleological claims of such metadiscourses, whomever deploys them, too often attempt to close off moral and political contradictions and limit the scope of the possible. In the Western context, such claims to reassessment or democratic culmination retain deeply misogynist and ethnocentric assumptions that legitimate a continued geopolitical economy of violence, along with neo-colonial patterns of economic power and fundamental privilege. Above all, it forces us to ponder a grave cultural problem, present in almost all these texts: the contemporary recuperation of a global metanarrative that refuses to properly acknowledge its own historical abyss. As we would see later in Iraq, this is a very lethal story.
The trial by force is the test of the real. But violence does not consist so much in injuring and annihilating persons as in interrupting their continuity, making them play roles in which they no longer recognise themselves, making them betray not only commitments but their own substance, making them carry out actions that will destroy every possibility for action. Not only modern war but every war employs arms that turn against those that wield them.

Emmanuel Levinas

Wherever you go, you carry a message of hope. In the words of the Prophet Isaiah, ‘To the captives, “come out”, and to those in darkness, “be free”.’

George W. Bush

Just over a year before the Cuban missile crisis, the physicist and civilian leader of the Manhattan Project, J. Robert Oppenheimer, gave a speech at the University of Puerto Rico. Perhaps, a little removed from American soil, he felt freer to express his thoughts – profound, untimely and all the more remarkable thoughts, coming from a man who had spent many years close to the US military establishment, and who was so imbued with the positivist and instrumental traditions of post-Newtonian science. He had helped to create the most fearsome weapons known to humanity, had tried to prevent the development of the even more fearsome thermo-nuclear weapons, and it was their role in American nuclear strategy and political culture that now weighed on his mind. He complained that ‘there has been no ethical discourse of any excellence or nobility of weight, dealing with how one should handle, how one should regard . . . atomic weapons’:

What are we to make of a civilization which has always thought of ethical questions as quite essential in human life, and which has always had a deep, articulate, fervent conviction, probably never a majority conviction but always there, that the returning of good for evil was the right way to behave, what are we to think of such a
civilization which has not been able to talk about the prospect of killing everybody, or almost everybody, except in terms of calculation and prudence?\(^4\)

Oppenheimer spoke of a hypothetical – if still alarmingly possible – future in which the survival of humanity seemed to be at stake; if for us the stakes appear a little lower, the outcomes are more concrete. A ‘war on terror’ has been initiated against Afghanistan and then Iraq, with the certainty that many thousands are dead, amid intense debate about whether the wars have enhanced global security or merely given greater impetus to future instability and terror. The dead in Afghanistan and Iraq, and the thousands more wounded, maimed and terrorised – what discourse governed their fate? Calculation and prudence. Oppenheimer’s words resonate well beyond 1960.

What is so remarkable about the speech is that Oppenheimer had not only questioned US strategy and the weapons themselves (this he had been doing since 1949) but brought into question the silence that had surrounded them, that constrained debate about their existence and potential use. Oppenheimer had raised questions far more profound than those contained within a policy debate, or even a debate about the merits or dangers of a particular weapons system – he had asked questions that brought that debate itself into question. He had questioned an entire system of thinking and understanding whose purpose was to constrain the activity of thought itself – and which, in particular, constrained the possibility of thinking ethically about the use and politics of force, outside the iron walls of calculation and prudence.\(^5\) He had raised questions about the boundaries of an entire discourse, even if he only poorly understood its origins, and was groping blindly for a way to challenge and escape it.

Our challenge is to understand the origins and depth of this discourse – an instrumental discourse linking war, politics and technology that we know as strategy – and to understand how it forms a matrix of common assumptions and cultural truth beneath the apparently profound disagreements over the legitimacy and prosecution of the 2003 Gulf War. These disagreements have taken many forms – whether or not it should have been authorised by a UN resolution, whether it met the criteria for ‘just war’, whether it was a prudent or ‘necessary’ use of US power and resources in the war on terror – and I do not wish to belittle their importance or value. However, what does need to be questioned is the assumption underlying them that, under varying circumstances, war is necessary and right – that war is a rational mechanism for the pursuit of policy goals, that it has a place in modern politics and that it can be waged with discretion and control. This, following Anatole Rapoport,\(^6\) I will call the ‘political’ theory of war, which derives from Carl von Clausewitz’s argument that war ‘is a mere continuation of policy by other means’. War, he famously wrote, was ‘not merely a political act, but also a real political instrument, a continuation of political commerce, a carrying out of the
same by other means’. War is not an extraordinary event in the life of a state, but part of its lifeblood; it is not a terrible and dangerous escalation of violence, difficult to predict and control, but is rather ‘a pulsation of violent force . . . subject to the will of a guiding intelligence’.7

The claim to war’s rationality here, however disturbing, must be taken seriously. It is a marker of strategy’s embedding in a deeper system of modern political and technological reason. Michael Howard makes an important point when he argues, in The Causes of Wars, that the conflicts:

which have usually led to war have normally arisen, not from any irrational or emotive drives, but from almost a superabundance of analytic rationality. . . . Men have fought during the last two hundred years not because they are aggressive nor because they are acquisitive animals, but because they are reasoning ones.8

In his Postmodern War, Chris Hables Gray rightly challenges the value judgement implicit in Howard’s argument – ‘if this is truly so’, he writes, ‘we should start to worry that maybe something is wrong with rationality . . . it is only the most shallow rationality that is used to justify wars, especially in the modern era’ – but by doing so perhaps Gray devalues the power both of the claim to rationality and the larger system of instrumental reason that provides Clausewitzian strategy with such depth and ongoing force.9 While the emotive and superior connotations of rationality certainly act as a powerful form of justification, we need to shift analytical frames to understand its true power. ‘Rationality’ can then be thought of in more neutral terms as the operation of specific political and cultural deployments of power that combine discursive, institutional, legal, economic, technological and scientific frameworks in a strategic fashion, according to primarily utilitarian criteria of effectiveness and efficiency. As Michel Foucault argues, in the exercise of political power it ‘is not “reason in general” which is implemented, but always a very specific type of rationality’.10 At the same time, it is also possible to identify a particularly sweeping and dominant form of instrumental reason at work in strategic thought and policy. Its claims and features, and its continuing power over Western policy towards Iraq, is the subject of this chapter.

While there are a variety of definitions for ‘strategy’, virtually all remain centred around Clausewitz’s effort to match military means to political ends in a calculated and rational way. For example, Richard Betts defines it as ‘a plan for using military means to achieve political ends . . . a rational scheme to achieve an objective through combat or the threat of it’; and Clark Murdock, extending this definition to national security strategy, writes that strategy is ‘a plan for using the means of national power (economic, military, diplomatic, law enforcement, cultural, etc.) to achieve political ends’.11 My use of the term echoes this wider definition, because an interrogation of modern strategic reason cannot be confined to war. Modern strategy is a machinery that also relies on the use of coercive and
tactical mechanisms short of high-intensity war: as Edward Mead Earle wrote in a 1940 article that had great influence on US strategic thinking:

[S]trategy . . . is not merely a concept of wartime but an inseparable element of statecraft at all time . . . [it] is the art of controlling and utilising the resources of a nation – or a coalition of nations – including the armed forces, to the end that its vital interests shall be effectively promoted and secured against enemies, actual, potential, or merely presumed.12

Given the continuity of war and politics in Clausewitzian strategy, high-intensity war must be placed on a continuum of policy approaches – trade, intelligence, diplomacy, spying, foreign aid, war by proxy, sanctions, covert operations, coups and more. What links them is their tactical combination towards the same ends in which levels of pressure, force and violence can seemingly be manipulated and controlled in pursuit of some policy objective. Clausewitzian thinking has been influential in the development of these shadowlands of war, which fall short of high-intensity war’s threshold but often replicate its destructive power, its loss of life and its traumatic impact – while always threatening to escalate into more intense conflict.13 In this way strategy blurs into geopolitics. Iraq is a particularly tragic example, having been the subject of not only UN efforts at coercive disarmament – backed by sanctions that have been little more than a mechanism of slow-motion slaughter – but also more than a decade of botched US covert intervention aimed at destabilising and overthrowing the Hussein regime. This longer history thus raises an important question: what larger structure of political and technological reason, disavowed and subterranean, shapes, enables, valorises and governs these policies?

A tacit acceptance of the rationalist ‘political’ theory of war united both supporters and many opponents of the 2003 Gulf War, whether they considered the war illegal or irrational or both. Against the arguments of those who considered the war illegitimate because the United States defied the United Nations Security Council to launch it, I will ask whether it would have been legitimate and just even if the UN had done so; against the arguments of those who view the war as an ‘irrational’, ideological perversion of strategic policymaking, I will argue that the line between rationality and irrationality in modern strategy is a thin (and perhaps imaginary) one indeed; and against the arguments of those who raised a confusing blizzard of justifications for the war, I will argue the potential moral and political disaster that lies within every operation of the ‘rational’ theory of war as a ‘continuation of policy by other means’. Across all these positions calculation and prudence are strongly present, modified by varying concerns over international process, legality, priority and effectiveness. All three views are united by this stubborn founding discourse of the political utility of force, bringing about an uncanny situation where the
apparently untranslatable languages of preventive war, deterrence and collective security speak suddenly from a single face.

One name for that face is Carl von Clausewitz – but we should not blame a single thinker, however influential. Another name for the face is Homo faber, modernist ‘man’, the ‘lord and master of all nature’ freed by technology and reason from the necessity and contingency of life.\textsuperscript{14} As Martin van Creveld has argued, one of the reasons Clausewitz was so influential was that his ‘ideas seemed to have chimed in with the rationalistic, scientific, and technological outlook associated with the industrial revolution’.\textsuperscript{15} Clausewitz is thus a pivotal figure in the development of this modernist system of human action, statecraft and warfare that Hubert Dreyfus calls, after Heidegger, the ‘technological understanding of being’.\textsuperscript{16} Such an understanding has formed the discursive matrix for Western strategic policy towards Iraq since 1980, playing out a system of utilitarian reason that draws on earlier thinkers such as Newton, Bacon and Descartes.\textsuperscript{17} This system demands that everything (even humans) become a tool, a means for the achievement of some end that in turn becomes means for further ends – a narcissistic, self-defeating chain in which strategy becomes an end in itself, an illusory promise of political power, certainty and reassurance. This is the malign cultural force that Oppenheimer struggled with, and that has produced the human, social and geopolitical tragedy that is Iraq. Until it is understood, no ‘ethic’ will ever stand a chance.

**Three faces of Clausewitz**

We can identify four international public discourses circulating prior to the war in Iraq. One, pacifism, is by nature suspicious of (or utterly opposed to) the use of force, and is thus deeply sceptical of the belief, central to Clausewitzian strategy, that the wisely planned and deployed use of force will result in the noiseless translation of political desire into political reality. This discourse was strongly present on the streets during the enormous global demonstrations against the war during February 2003, but it has had very little influence on policy. The other three – liberal internationalism, realist deterrence theory and preventive war – have significant policy influence and, whatever their profound differences, common roots in Clausewitzian strategy and the political theory of war.

The first Iraq-turned face of Clausewitz is provided by the Bush doctrine of pre-emptive action. The Bush administration could be said to have the most simplistic and aggressive belief in strategy, in the utility of force for the pursuit of American national security and other more shadowy imperialist goals. This belief is shared with traditionalist realism, but rejects its emphasis on deterrence and its concern that US resources are limited and war may damage US interests. As Bush said in his June 2002 speech at the West Point Military Academy, and repeated in the US National Security Strategy published three months later:
Deterrence... means nothing against shadowy terrorist networks with no nation or citizens to defend. Containment is not possible when unbalanced dictators with weapons of mass destruction can deliver those weapons on missiles or secretly provide them to terrorist allies... the war on terror will not be won on the defensive. We must take the battle to the enemy, disrupt his plans, and confront the worst threats before they emerge. In the world we have entered, the only path to safety is the path of action. And this nation will act.18

Earlier the 2001 Quadrennial Defense Review had promised ‘an increase in the reach and effectiveness of America’s deterrent and war fighting power’,19 and Bush affirmed that force would be central to the new doctrine: ‘America has, and intends to keep, military strengths beyond challenge... our security will require transforming the military you lead – a military that must be ready to strike at a moment’s notice in any dark corner of the world.’20 By sending US forces into Iraq, Bush and his colleagues Richard Cheney, Condoleezza Rice and Donald Rumsfeld demonstrated their confidence that US war-fighting power could prevail in battle, find and destroy any remaining weapons of mass destruction, remove the Baathist regime, successfully reconstruct the country as a stable and unified democratic state and secure a range of strategic objectives such as the control of Iraq’s oil production, the establishment of permanent military bases, the protection of Israel and an eventual reordering of the Middle East region that might bring regime change in Syria and Iran.21

Such hubris has been strongly criticised by a number of realist scholars and former policy-makers including Brent Scowcroft, James Baker, Zbigniew Brzezinski, Barry Posen, Joseph Nye, Stephen Walt, John Mearsheimer and Stephen Van Evera.22 Such thinkers together form the second face of Clausewitz. In a Foreign Policy article, Walt and Mearsheimer declared that, if the United States goes to war with Iraq, ‘Americans should understand that a compelling strategic rationale is absent’. Strategy still makes sense to them as a concept, but it will not be served by preventive war against Iraq. Instead they advocated ‘vigilant containment... regardless of whether Iraq complies with UN inspections or what the inspectors find, the campaign to wage war against Iraq rests on a flimsy foundation’ – the view that ‘Saddam must be toppled because he cannot be deterred from using weapons of mass destruction... [that his] past behaviour proves he is too reckless, relentless and aggressive to be allowed to possess WMD’. Against this view they developed a plausible argument, based on a close analysis of Iraq’s past behaviour, that ‘shows that Saddam, though cruel and calculating, is eminently deterrable’.23

In the New Yorker, Stephen Van Evera was quoted as saying that there should have been no ‘war on terror at all’, but merely a war on al Qaeda: ‘Don’t take your eye off the ball... it leads to a loss of focus. Al Qaeda escapes through the cracks. And you make enemies of the people you need against al Qaeda. There are large risks in a war against Iraq. There
could be a lengthy, televised public slaughter of Muslims by Americans. A wide imperial rampage through the Middle East – what do you do after you win?’ In a prophetic speech, Walt was even sceptical of the utility of force against terrorism:

Military power is not necessary to wiping out al Qaeda. It’s a crude instrument, and almost always has effects you can’t anticipate. We’re seeing that now. We didn’t get Mullah Omar and Osama bin Laden. We’re killing civilians . . . this is a battle for the hearts and minds of people around the world . . . But imagine going into Iraq. If things go badly, we end up there for a long time. There’s a point where the costs start adding up. It will generate higher and higher levels of resentment . . . I have limited confidence in our ability to run countries we don’t understand. Why, in the middle of pursuing Al Qaeda, would you decide, ‘Oh, let’s take a big country and invade it and create a giant political mess there!’ We’ve seen people attempting this in the Middle East before, and it hasn’t worked. You never know how these operations will go. History is not on the side of the advocates here.

In Foreign Policy, Mearsheimer and Walt summed up their opposition to war with Iraq in utilitarian, interest-based terms:

[T]his war would be one the Bush Administration chose to fight but did not have to fight. Even if such a war goes well and has positive long range consequences, it will still have been unnecessary. And if it goes badly – whether in the form of high US casualties, significant civilian deaths, a heightened risk of terrorism, or increased hatred of the United States in the Arab and Islamic world – then its architects will have even more to answer for.

Their argument here, that Bush has chosen to fight without needing to, was similar to that of another New Yorker columnist, Hendrik Hertzberg, who argued in August 2002 that ‘the Bush Administration has produced plenty of plans for war in Iraq . . . but it has not yet produced a rationale’. Earlier, commenting on the 2002 State of the Union address, he argued that in contrast to a war on Iraq that ‘would be long, bloody and fraught with unanticipated and unpleasant consequences’, the ‘war against terrorism was and is unsought, unavoidable, and existential. It is a war of necessity’.

Finally, we must consider the most apparently principled of the positions: that the war will create a dangerous precedent for the illegal and pre-emptive use of force outside the constraints and structures of international law and collective security. This is the third, liberal face of Clausewitz. French Foreign Minister Dominique de Villepin set out this view when he spoke at the International Institute of Strategic Studies in London, saying: ‘We do not oppose the use of force. We are only warning
against the use of pre-emptive strikes as a doctrine. What example are we setting for other countries? . . . let us not open Pandora’s box.’ Such a view was widely held in elite circles in Europe, and echoed by German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer in the course of co-ordinating a common German position with France and Russia in the Security Council. De Villepin’s views were also closely echoed in the policy of the New Zealand (Labour) government and the Australian Labor opposition of Simon Crean (in stark contrast to the eventual unilateralism of British Labour’s Tony Blair).

These internationalist positions gave support to the UN Security Council’s policy in seeking the selective disarmament by Iraq of any capability to deploy or produce weapons of mass destruction – including the imposition of punitive sanctions against the Iraqi people as a coercive measure – and also stated support for the use of force should the resumed inspections process fail. As de Villepin argued before the Security Council on 14 February 2003, Resolution 1441 affirmed a ‘two-stage approach’: ‘[the] choice of disarmament through inspections and, should this strategy eventually fail, consideration by the Security Council of all the options, including the recourse to force. It was clearly in the event that the inspections failed and only in that scenario that a second resolution could be justified.’ Thus, he stated that France had concluded ‘the use of force is not justified at this time’. Implicit in the positions of France, New Zealand, Russia, Germany and the ALP was a view that, were the inspections process wilfully frustrated by Iraq again, war would have been both justified and rational. This is arguably an assumption that is implicit in the UN Charter and in the Security Council’s exercise of its powers against Iraq since the invasion of Kuwait in 1990 – that, if it is judged necessary for the protection of international peace and security, force is both legitimate and effective as a ‘continuation of policy by other means’. In this sense it may be that while liberals are willing to consider the dangers and costs of using force, they are ultimately unable to escape the ‘common sense’ of the strategic paradigm – and are indeed at times seduced by it as a mechanism of international law enforcement. They have, therefore, chosen merely to corral its excesses within procedural and legalistic structures.

In this light it is interesting that the smooth surface of de Villepin’s Clausewitzian legalism began to crack as he pushed further into his speech. He argued that the legally sanctioned use of force against Iraq ‘would be so fraught with risks for people, for the region and for international stability that it should only be envisioned as a last resort’. War, he said, ‘is always the sanction of failure’ and ‘such intervention could have incalculable consequences for the stability of this scarred and fragile region. It would compound the sense of injustice, increase tensions and risk paving the way to other conflicts’. Nevertheless, he oscillated between questioning and endorsing the underlying concept of strategy, asking the Council:
To what extent do the nature and extent of the threat justify the immediate recourse to force? How do we ensure that the considerable risks of such intervention can actually be kept under control? In any case, in such an eventuality, it is the unity of the international community that would guarantee its effectiveness.31

It might be objected that it is misleading in particular to characterise liberal internationalism as a ‘face’ of Clausewitz, given his notorious summary dismissal of the law of war.32 However, the emergence of robust international law enforcement in Kuwait, Bosnia, Kosovo and East Timor – either pursuant to UN resolutions or (arguably) in the ‘spirit’ of international law – and the growing normative force of the law of war has forced Clausewitzian strategy to adjust to and (sometimes serve) such goals. At the same time, statist and strategic imperatives have also infected international law enforcement, most obviously in the case of Iraq, where UN disarmament efforts were corrupted by United States and British ‘regime change’ policy. Liberals might protest that legitimate war is one that is waged on the basis of legal principles not policy preferences, but in practice the two often blur (which is not an argument against pursuing more normatively consistent and credible applications of liberal principles). Hence my view that even if a UN resolution had authorised the war it would still have been illegitimate, because it would have been a product of this history of geopolitical meddling. At the same time, prudential judgements about the chaotic impact of invading Iraq (on Iraq itself, on US interests and on broader global security) militate against liberal confidence in forceful law enforcement in this case.

In this light de Villepin’s speech stands out, amid the deluge of rhetoric preceding the war with Iraq, as enormously significant in a discursive and historical sense: here was a leading European power, a permanent member of the Security Council, questioning the underlying strategic concept beneath the liberal politics of collective security as it applied to Saddam’s Iraq. His words were echoed by the realist Walt, who admits that military force is ‘a crude instrument, and almost always has effects you can’t anticipate’. A profound rift, however momentary, had been opened in the post-Clausewitzian structure of common sense that force was a rational means for the pursuit of political ends; and from within this rift a critical inquiry about the origins and legacy of strategy could emerge. It is the space of this rift that this chapter inhabits and seeks to enlarge.

Three faces, three masks

The realist and internationalist criticisms of the Bush doctrine and the administration’s plans for Iraq are in many ways welcome and profound, and I do not wish to downplay their value. However, I do wish to argue that our understanding of the 2003 war, and of US and UN policy towards
Iraq since 1979, should not remain quarantined within their paradigms. However valuable, the realist argument with the Bush doctrine is merely a claustrophobic dispute over what constitutes rational US war-making – a dispute between strategic judgements rather than one that interrogates the very basis of strategy as a concept. Likewise, liberals who wished to delay military action until ‘the unity of the international community’ could be assembled to ‘guarantee its effectiveness’ still believed, however ambivalently, in the utility of strategy – a strategy that could be made not merely effective, but legal and just. It is my suspicion that the roots of the all-too-rapid extension of counter-terrorist action against al Qaeda into a global ‘war on terror’ that included Iraq can be found in the ‘political’ theory of war. It is this ‘rational’ theory of war, and its relation to other deeply rooted modernist discourses of order, certainty and identity, which needs to be put into question.

Such discourses of rationality, order and identity are implicit in Hertzberg’s comment that the war against terrorism (but not Iraq) is ‘existential ... a war of necessity’, and there are only the flimsiest curtains of logic separating it from Bush’s argument, to the West Pointers, that ‘the gravest danger to freedom lies at the crossroads of radicalism and technology ... the only path to safety is the path of action’.33 Both are representations of insecure being and existential necessity, differing only in their view of the right occasion for the nation’s violent defence. Similarly Walt’s view that war is a ‘crude instrument’ betrays a desire for states to have possession of refined instruments, perhaps even for force to somehow become one; opening a space for breathless spruikers of the RMA-driven ‘new American way of war’ like Max Boot to claim, however ridiculously, that the United States has already answered such potential criticism with its ‘transformational’ strategy and tactics in Iraq.34 In this sense, the arguments of realists, liberals and just warriors against the war all run the risk of being undermined by their underlying ontology, which assumes that security – national and global, physical and existential – requires either the threat or use of armed force.

Violent reason, strategic man

The arguments of liberals and realists against the 2003 war on Iraq have been weakened by the fact that, at important political and epistemological levels, they share the assumptions of the preventative warriors. They accept that the United States and the West have important strategic interests in the Persian Gulf, that strategy often works, and they generally condone (or in many cases have been the makers of) previous UN and US policies towards Iraq. They accept strategy as a paradigm, and accept that it has been moral and legitimate to apply it to the population of Iraq.
In the remainder of this chapter, I will explore what this ‘strategy’ is and does; I will argue that strategy is embedded in a larger system of reason that combines invention, knowledge, organisation and technology into a drive for geopolitical certainty (‘security’), one that has its roots in the thought of Hobbes, Machiavelli, Bacon and Descartes.35

By the time Clausewitz had written his philosophy of war, and Hegel his philosophies of being and history, three crucial social-political ‘regimes of truth’ that define and limit strategic reason had been set in place. The first is based on the conviction that war is rational; it is a means to an end based on estimates of ‘costs and gains’. The second, is that war is not merely an ‘instrument of national policy’ but may be an existential necessity.36 (As Michael Shapiro argues, Clausewitz is at one with Hegel in seeing war ‘as an ontological investment in both individual and national completion . . . war is a major aspect of being’.37) The third, which I particularly wish to explore here, remains concealed beneath the positivist ideology that asserts strategy is merely a ‘neutral tool’.38 However strategy is not merely a tool of policy, but takes it over; and strategy does not merely employ technology, but constitutes a powerful political technology in its own right – pushing beyond the utilisation of technology as a tool to make the technological into a governing image of social and political existence. As a modernist machinery of coercive order and control, strategy is not merely an ‘instrument’ of policy but engenders an image of the world in which everything it touches becomes an instrument, including humans. In the ‘strategic’ vision of the earth, human beings are less living things than things that happen to be living, and are therefore useful; like animals and nature before them, humans are so many tools, so much mass or substance that must be controlled, evaded, utilised or destroyed. This is the story of contemporary Iraq.

We are back with Oppenheimer, agonising about why the debate over (thermonuclear) strategy could only be conducted in the terms of ‘calculation’ and ‘prudence’ – except that now we worry that the debate over Iraq is reduced to one about the existence of a ‘compelling strategic rationale’. Yet Oppenheimer could not understand why ethics had been banished in favour of calculation, and how science and policy had been reduced to something so instrumental, so morally indifferent. We, however, face an obligation to understand how deeply planted the values of calculation are in our culture – how, in many important areas, they have in fact come to define it in terms of machinic systems of mathematical, political, technological and strategic reason.

Such a system of reason began to emerge as a possibility in the thought of Galileo, Newton, Hobbes, Bacon and Descartes, and combined a hunger for political and ontological certainty, a positivist epistemology and a naïve faith in the goodness of invention. Bacon sought to create certainty and order, and with it a new human power over the world, through a new empirical methodology based on a harmonious combination of experiment,
the senses and the understanding. With this method, he argued, we can ‘derive hope from a purer alliance of the faculties (the experimental and rational) than has yet been attempted’. In a similar move, Descartes sought to conjure certainty from uncertainty through the application of a new method that moved progressively out from a few basic certainties (the existence of God, the certitude of individual consciousness and a divinely granted faculty of judgement) in a search for pure fixed truths. Mathematics formed the ideal image of this method, with its strict logical reasoning, its quantifiable results and its uncanny insights into the hidden structure of the cosmos. Earlier, Galileo had argued that scientists should privilege ‘objective’, quantifiable qualities over ‘merely perceptible’ ones; that ‘only by means of an exclusively quantitative analysis could science attain certain knowledge of the world’.

This then cleared the way for a fantastic new hubris in which modern man could steal a new fire from the heavens and displace God as the ruler and shaper of nature. In Bacon’s thought, this would result in nothing less than a reversal of the original fall of Adam: ‘For man, by the fall, lost at once his state of innocence, and his empire over creation, both of which can be partially recovered even in this life, the first by religion and faith, the second by the arts and sciences.’ Technological reason displaces God: Bacon argued that inventions are ‘new creations and imitations of divine works . . . the introduction of great inventions [is] the most distinguished of human actions . . . inventions are a blessing and a benefit without injuring or afflicting any’.

I am not seeking to argue that the scientific method, and the modern rationalism it underpinned, has no value – indeed it has brought advances that have cured diseases, fed the hungry and enriched human culture with new forms of political practice, communication and artistic endeavour. However, its legacy has been ambivalent, and rarely more so than in its translation into modern strategy, weapons and warfare. Empirical claims to truth and certainty, while they may partially hold for many areas of natural science, have been mapped onto social reality and thus deny its irrefutable status as a construct of human power and thought. Furthermore, as Arendt suggested, the scientific method is nested in an instrumental, utilitarian attitude that ‘degrade[s] nature and the world into mere means, robbing both of their independent dignity’, importing these values into human action in a way that has disturbing (and unpredictable) political and ethical consequences.

Even though he could not predict it, and can hardly be blamed, Bacon’s technological hubris emerges in the language and ontology of the modern strategist in the form of Henry Kissinger’s 1969 argument that post-war US foreign policy had been based ‘on the assumption that technology plus managerial skills gave us the ability to reshape the international system and to bring about domestic transformations in emerging countries’. This ‘scientific revolution’ had ‘for all practical purposes, removed technical
limits from the exercise of power in foreign policy’. At the same time, Kissinger clung to the view that the West is ‘deeply committed to the notion that the real world is external to the observer, that knowledge consists of recording and classifying data – the more accurately the better’. This, he claimed, has since the Renaissance set the West apart from an ‘undeveloped’ world that contains ‘cultures that have escaped the early impact of Newtonian thinking’ and remain wedded to the ‘essentially pre-Newtonian view that the real world is almost entirely internal to the observer’.45 Two implications flow from this – first, that the instrumental policymaker seeks to alter and shape the world to their will, but refuses to accept (ethical) responsibility for doing so; and, second, it provides a licence for Western intervention into the developing world because, as James William Gibson writes, by doing so the West believes itself to be ‘bring[ing] reality to the Third World’.46

Such convictions draw on Orientalist discourses that justified colonial and imperial control by appeal to the West’s civilising mission, technological advancement and martial power. In Orientalism, Edward Said places Kissinger on an imperial continuum with Arthur Balfour and the former British governor of Egypt, Lord Cromer: is not Kissinger’s hunger for international order, he asks, ‘similar to Cromer’s vision of a harmoniously working machine designed ultimately to benefit some central authority, which opposes the developing world’?47 In this view, as Aaron Beers Sampson writes, rationality, civilisation and modernity are opposed to less developed societies whose actions are seen as ‘products of passionate reflexes’. Early anthropology and social theory, strongly embedded in Orientalist traditions, portrayed such societies as ‘decentralised, disorganised and anarchic’, which the West then naturally had a role to organise and control. Sampson shows how such divisions were internalised by modern international relations theory, especially Realism, which draws on British social anthropology and the functional sociology of Emile Durkheim to portray the international system as a ‘primitive’ form of ‘tropical anarchy’. Influential American realist Kenneth Waltz identified this as a justification for America’s ordering mission during the Cold War: the dangers of international anarchy can be moderated by ‘transforming an anarchic system into a hierarchic one’. He wrote that just as Imperial Britain claimed the ‘white man’s burden’ and Imperial France her mission civilisatrice, ‘we, in like spirit ... say that we act to make and maintain world order’. While Waltz took the view that nakedly imperial ‘global burden bear[ing]’ would be detrimental to American interests, his preferred solution, ‘the detached management of world affairs’, nonetheless betrayed the same mechanistic confidence central to Kissinger’s vision of US power.48

This matrix of cultural and epistemological assumptions is central to both modern strategy and US foreign policy towards the Middle East, one played out as a ruthless Cartesian search for geopolitical certainty, order
and control. Immediately following his hubristic boast that ‘technology plus managerial skills gave us the ability to reshape the international system’ Kissinger was to write: ‘this direct “operational” concept of international order has proved too simple. Political multipolarity makes it impossible to impose an American design. Our deepest challenge will be to evoke the creativity of a pluralistic world, to base order on political multipolarity even though overwhelming military strength will remain with the two superpowers.’49 Kissinger’s frustration was later visible when in 1975, using the pseudonym ‘Miles Ignotus’, he published an article in Harper’s entitled ‘Seizing Arab Oil’. This argued that ‘we could solve all our economic and political problems by taking over the Arab oilfields [and] bringing in Texans and Oklahomans to operate them’. In the same year he told Business Week that the United States could bring oil prices down though ‘massive political warfare against countries like Saudi Arabia and Iran to make them risk their political stability and maybe their security if they did not co-operate’.50 Now, it seems not accidentally, Americans are indeed running Iraqi oilfields.51 Kissinger’s article helped father the policy now pursued by the Bush administration and began the process of deepening US intervention in the Persian Gulf through the creation of the Rapid Deployment Force and Central Command (CENTCOM) in Florida, and the forward deployment of troops to Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Qatar.52 In short, despite writing that a direct ‘operational’ concept of order was ‘too simple’, Kissinger could not let go of it. Visible here is a vicious, historic irony played out two decades later in Iraq: a desire to utilise and control nature, technology, society and human beings that is continually frustrated, but never abandoned or rethought.

Martin Heidegger shows us both why it was so difficult for Kissinger to rethink his Cartesian investment in technology and order, and why Oppenheimer’s anguish about the imperviousness of calculation to ethics continues to haunt us. In The Question Concerning Technology, Heidegger’s startling argument is that in the modernising West technology is not merely a tool, a ‘means to an end’ (that we assume humans might be easily able to control and subordinate to other values like ‘ethics’). Instead technology has become a governing image of the modern universe, one that has come to order, limit and define human existence as a ‘calculable coherence of forces’ and a ‘standing reserve’ of energy. ‘Everywhere we remain unfree and chained to technology,’ Heidegger writes, ‘whether we passionately affirm or deny it. But we are delivered over to it in the worst possible way when we regard it as something neutral.’53 (How revealing then that the influential strategist Colin Gray argues that ‘strategy is, and can only be, a value-neutral tool’.)54 Technology is not a neutral instrument subordinate to humans, but has become the very definition of humanity. This derives not merely from scientific discovery and invention, but from a larger structure of thinking which defines humanity’s relation to itself and to the world in a new and instrumental way, and
for which the work of Newton, Bacon and Descartes formed a prophetic
template. This is a sobering realisation: as Heidegger writes, ‘the threat
to man does not come in the first instance from the potentially lethal
machines and apparatus of technology. The actual threat has already
affected man in his essence.\textsuperscript{55}

Heidegger describes the modern technological existence as only possible
within a form of ‘revealing’ which is now also ‘challenging’ – one that
‘puts to nature the unreasonable demand that it supply energy that can be
extracted and stored [for use] as such’. He contrasts the modern ‘chal-
lenging’ of nature with an older form of revealing which resulted in a
‘bringing-forth’ or ‘unconcealment’ of things – of the kind achieved by
the craftsman, the artist or the peasant tilling a field in order to ‘take care
of and maintain’ the soil and nurture its possibilities for growth. He argues
that in this earlier form of revealing, the craftsman or farmer was simulta-
neously ‘responsible and indebted’ to and for what they had brought
forth, and that this is how we must think about causality: as not merely
a ‘result’ or ‘effect’. We should not think of technology as simply a tool
or a means to an end, without thinking morally and responsibly about the
entire creative process (scientific, social, political, ecological) that brought
it about and into which it enters. Heidegger laments that ‘today we are
too easily inclined to understand being responsible or indebted moralistic-
ally as a lapse’.\textsuperscript{56}

Yet under the technological understanding of being humankind has
become obsessed with the \textit{causa efficiens} – the end result – and no longer
‘takes care’ of the earth but ‘has come under the grip of a different
kind of setting-in-order which \textit{sets} upon nature … in the sense of chal-
lenging it’:

Agriculture is now the mechanised food industry. Air is now set upon
to yield nitrogen, the earth to yield ore, ore to yield uranium; uranium
is set up to yield atomic energy, which can be released either for
destruction or atomic use.\textsuperscript{57}

Heidegger argues that this in turn becomes paradigmatic for modern
science, whose ‘way of representing pursues and entraps nature … as the
chief storehouse of the standing energy reserve’. This process Heidegger
calls ‘enframing’ and through it the scientific mind demands that ‘nature
reports itself in some way or other that is identifiable through calculation
and remains orderable as a system of information’. This is Oppenheimer’s
problem: an ‘ethical’, questioning relation to technology and strategy
cannot challenge prudence and calculation because the enframing tech-
nological mode of being ‘has already claimed man and has done so so
decisively that he can only be man at any given time as the one so
claimed’.\textsuperscript{58} Man is not a being who makes and uses machines as means,
choosing and limiting their impact on the world for his ends; rather, man
has imagined the world as a machine and humanity everywhere becomes trapped within its logic. This is what is at stake when strategy is assumed, when debate takes place only within its frame. Man becomes not only unable to think outside enframing and calculation, as a user and controller of nature, but becomes an orderable resource itself:

[Man] comes to the very brink of a precipitous fall . . . where he himself will have to be taken as standing-reserve. Meanwhile Man, precisely as the one so threatened, exalts himself to the posture of lord of the earth. In this way the impression comes to prevail that everything man encounters exists only in so far as it is his construct.\(^59\)

Technological man not only becomes the name for a project of lordship and mastery over the earth, but incorporates humanity within this project as a calculable resource: matter to be mined, ordered, enhanced, driven, destroyed. In strategy and geopolitics human bodies, actions and aspirations are caught, transformed and perverted by such calculating, enframing reason: humans are made ‘citizens’, patriots and soldiers; desires for freedom or self-determination become weapons to be directed at enemies, or ‘threats’ to be managed or eliminated; resistance and protest become ‘instability’ to be stabilised; human lives become tools, obstacles, useful or obstinate matter.

Michel Foucault’s and Giorgio Agamben’s analyses of ‘biopower’ have analogies to Heidegger’s insights here. In an incisive analysis Julian Reid shows that Foucault saw biopower as a ‘life-administering power’ that developed at the same time as a ‘strategic’ formation of tactical and productive power began to spread through Western societies. Biopower, argued Foucault, sought to ‘incite, reinforce, control, monitor, optimise and organise the forces under it . . . distributing the living in the domain of value and utility’.\(^60\) Agamben, while he did not specifically refer to strategy and war, identified in the emergence of ‘biopolitics’ a disturbing convergence between democratic and totalitarian power. Biopolitics simultaneously makes all life ‘political’ and reduces some to ‘bare life’ that ‘may be killed and yet not sacrificed’. While Agamben argued that the ‘camp’\(^61\) was the paradigmatic space of this transformation, I would also argue that such a form of power in which ‘human life is included in the juridical order solely in the form of its exclusion (that is, of its capacity to be killed)’ is operating in any space where the ‘exception’ is put into play (the border, the war zone, the geopolitical zone of ‘containment’), where the rule of law and prohibitions on suffering and murder are suspended or qualified.\(^62\) (In this sense the US prisons at Abu Ghraiib and Guantanamo Bay are not only disturbing evidence of a new extra-legal norm in US security policy; they form a natural continuity with the callous attitude to ‘life’ typical of modern war.)
Reid also refers to a humanistic protest against such power visible in Paul Virilio’s view that the rationalising war–politics relation disrupts the ‘essential values of the human disposition, turning all human beings into nodes within the logistic networks of war preparation’.63 This certainly evokes the experience of Iraq, as do Foucault’s bitter remarks in his essay ‘The Right to Death and Power over Life’: ‘wars are no longer waged in the name of a sovereign who must be defended; they are waged on behalf of the existence of everyone; entire populations are mobilised for the purpose of wholesale slaughter in the name of life necessity: massacres have become vital’.64

**Utilising Iraq**

It is only in the wake of these insights that we can begin to think about the experience of Iraq within Western strategic policy and collective security since 1979, when the Iranian revolution turned American eyes towards Saddam’s regime as a strategic counterweight to the newly militant Islamic state. By this time the enframing, instrumentalising grasp of US foreign policy was well developed, having been put to use with disastrous results in Indo-China, Indonesia, South and Central America, and in the Middle East with the Pentagon and CIA’s support of the Shah of Iran and the decisive tilt towards Israel after the 1967 Six-Day War.65 These policies were disastrous both in human and in political terms, causing the destruction of millions of human lives and providing shocking examples of hubris and policy failure. In the 1960s and early 1970s the overarching strategic framework in the Persian Gulf was containment of communism; after the fall of the Shah and the oil price shocks, however, anxiety about Western control of Gulf oil and its price became dominant. In spite of the earlier disasters – ‘Miles Ignotus’ published his plan to seize Arab oil the same year Saigon and Phnom Penh fell to communism – the enframing pursuit of strategic reason as a geopolitical panacea would continue. The ‘Kissinger Plan’ and its animating ontological machinery was grinding into operation.

As unbelievable as it now seems, the first tool in this strategy was Saddam Hussein himself – who, it must be said, shared the Western powers’ disastrous investment in strategic reason, as he developed an oppressive system of intelligence services, invaded Iran, slaughtered Kurds with chemical weapons, invaded Kuwait and played chicken with the UN as he sought to protect his WMD capabilities, all the while incurring tens of billions in debt that would hang like a noose around the necks of his own people. Indeed, until 1990 he did so with the active support of the West, becoming the secret recipient of arms, intelligence, technology, loan guarantees and diplomatic support from 1981 until just prior to the August 1990 invasion of Kuwait.66
Central to the concerns of the United States, its NATO allies Italy and the United Kingdom, and Arab states like Egypt and Jordan, were the military setbacks Iraq was experiencing after its invasion of Iran. Then Secretary of State George W. Schultz set out the rationale for US support in the harsh language of diplomacy: ‘under present circumstances in which Iraq is clearly on the defensive and Iran is in little danger of defeat . . . our interest is in maintaining a strategic balance between the belligerents in the interest of regional stability’. They wanted to keep Iran from victory, and for both sides to bleed. The United States provided Iraq with satellite photos showing Iran’s order of battle and US air force pilots were tasked to work with the Iraqi air force. Strategic advice from Vice-President Bush (via Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak) led Iraq to escalate its bombing of Iranian oilfields and shipping facilities in the Gulf and, according to Alan Friedman, ‘triggered an Iranian response that led both sides to target civilian centres over the next two years, contributing mightily to the resulting blood-bath’.

Iraq also used a fearsome cocktail of chemical weapons against Iranian troops and towns, killing as many as 50,000, and later against Kurdish civilians. The most notorious attack, the killing of over 5,000 Kurds in half an hour on 16 March 1988 in the city of Halabja, was only one of hundreds – part of a massive 1987–8 offensive that took the lives of more than 100,000 Kurds, included systematic depopulation and ethnic cleansing, and eventually took on genocidal dimensions. Despite the US Senate passing a bill to impose sanctions on Iraq for the atrocities, the Reagan administration pressured the House of Representatives to block the bill and in 1989, a year after the attacks, doubled its annual Commodity Credit Corporation aid to more than US$1 billion. The meaning of Kurdish suffering in the enframing strategic paradigm that governed US policy was coldly visible in the report of a Senate Foreign Relations Committee staffer who saw the Iraqi campaign up close in 1987, writing that the Kurdish problem ‘might prove the Achilles heel of Iraq’s defense [against Iran]’. In Samantha Power’s paraphrase, ‘the pressing concern was that Iraq’s Kurdish nuisance was then drawing some 150,000 Iraqi troops away from the Iranian front. Iraq was facing a war of attrition from both the south (Iran) and the north (Iran plus Iranian-backed Kurds). This was deemed bad for the United States.’

The US government also knew of Iraqi efforts to build nuclear weapons and turned a blind eye to the export of sophisticated machine tools by US-based corporations and an invitation by the Department of Energy to Iraqi nuclear scientists to attend a US symposium run by the Los Alamos and Lawrence Livermore nuclear laboratories. They knew that US-guaranteed loans were being used to purchase nuclear and chemical weapons and missile technology, and approved some 771 exports to Iraq of dual-use items (including botulism, anthrax, salmonella, E. coli and praloxidine) that could be used to create biological weapons and nerve gases.
When Iraq invaded Kuwait in August 1990, US policy towards Saddam’s regime was to do an abrupt about-face – over an utterly unchanged bedrock of enframing strategic reason. American strategic interests in oil meant that Iraq’s potential control of two-thirds of global reserves was a threat, along with the vast military forces Saddam had built up over the past few years with the help of the West. A desire to destroy much of this military power may have motivated the Bush administration’s desire to rush to war, despite indications that diplomacy might work and despite significant misgivings on Capitol Hill.74

Iraqi deaths during the Gulf War are estimated at about 60,000 (including approximately 32,000 from the bombing campaign and 25,000 as US air force, army and marines slaughtered retreating Iraqis on the road from Kuwait), but the most devastating impact was to come later. In the course of over 110,000 sorties, allied air forces used between 100,000 and 140,000 tons of explosives, killing thousands of civilians and striking crucial infrastructure such as power stations, with flow-on effects such as breakdowns in hospital services, health care and sewage treatment. Combined with the effects of the draconian sanctions imposed by the UN Security Council in August 1990, the war had, in the words of Andrew and Patrick Cockburn, ‘thrust Baghdad and its 3.5 million inhabitants abruptly back into the third world’. Dilip Hiro described the impact as ‘reducing Iraq to a pre-industrial state’.75 The Cockburns relate how, just six months after the end of the war, a US Catholic Relief Services worker ‘cast a professional eye over the breakdown in the health system, food supplies, and the overall effect of sanctions on the economy and soberly forecast to us that, as a result, no less than 175,000 Iraqi children would inevitably die’.76

UN Security Council Resolution 687 specified that the sanctions should remain in force until Iraq had dismantled its weapons of mass destruction and was co-operating with ongoing monitoring and verification (as set out in paragraphs 8–13 of the resolution).77 However, the United States and its allies had other ideas: three months after the war ended President Bush signed a secret ‘finding’ authorising the CIA to mount a covert operation to ‘create the conditions for the removal of Saddam Hussein from power’.78 Speaking after the vote that authorised Resolution 687, the UK permanent representative David Hannay calmly stated that ‘my government believes that it will in fact prove impossible for Iraq to rejoin the community of civilised nations while Saddam Hussein remains in power’. The US Deputy National Security Advisor Robert Gates put the US position most clearly in May 1991, when he said that Saddam’s ‘leadership will never be accepted by the world community and, therefore, Iraqis will pay the price while he remains in power. All possible sanctions will be maintained while he is gone. Any easing of sanctions will be considered only when there is a new Government’.79 This policy was later restated by President Clinton’s Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, and National
Security Advisor, Sandy Berger (in March and November 1997), and by George W. Bush’s Secretary of State, Colin Powell (in February 2002). 80

US Gulf policy after the end of the Gulf War took the form of ‘dual containment’ of Iraq and Iran, which Clinton’s National Security Advisor, Anthony Lake, described as being based on the ‘strategic principle . . . to establish a favorable balance of power, one that will protect critical American interests in the security of our friends and in the free flow of oil at stable prices’. In this 1994 *Foreign Affairs* article, Lake criticised as ‘disastrous’ the previous US policies of supporting the Iranian Shah and building up Iraq’s military capability, only to then replay the same cruel and unthinking hubris. He described Iran and Iraq as ‘a complex strategic puzzle that has confounded the policies of three previous American administrations’, and wrote that, ‘as the sole superpower, the United States has a special responsibility for developing a strategy to neutralize, contain and, through selective pressure, perhaps eventually transform these backlash states into constructive members of the international community’. 81

United States foreign policy in this way hijacked both the UN Security Council and the people of Iraq, grossly distorting international law enforcement and causing enormous human suffering. The people of Iraq were not seen as people, but as pieces in a ‘strategic puzzle’, and they were to realise that, as Lake wrote, ‘there is a price to pay for their [regime’s] recalcitrant commitment to remain on the wrong side of history’. 82 All elements of US policy, even humanitarian elements, were to be subordinated to the goal of removing Saddam. The Kurdish ‘safe haven’ established in Iraq’s north (after a global outcry at the refugee crisis following the 1991 uprising) was used as a base for Iraqi exile groups and CIA covert operations, while the ‘no fly zone’ in the south did nothing to prevent Iraqi ground forces repressing Shia Muslims but was, as Hiro suggests: ‘strategically valuable to Washington. The Pentagon perceived it as a means of denying Baghdad the opportunity to train its pilots in the Southern Iraqi airspace and as a source of intelligence input in its early warning system.’ The zones also gave the United States and UK an excuse to strike Iraqi targets without reference to the UN: in just eight months in 1999 the United States fired 1,100 missiles at 359 targets, more than three times the number during 1998’s Operation Desert Fox. 83

United States coup-making efforts were also a dismal failure: in 1994–5 the CIA-backed Iraqi National Accord (INA) killed as many as 100 civilians in a series of terrorist bombings in Baghdad (with little political effect), and coup attempts in March 1995 and June 1996 were decisively crushed by the regime. The 1996 attempt – thwarted after Iraqi intelligence secretly seized CIA-supplied communications equipment from Iraqi exiles and proceeded to eavesdrop on the planning of the coup – saw the arrest and execution of over 800 people from the army, Republican Guard and security services, and was described by the Cockburns as ‘one of the
most colossal failures in the history of the CIA, deserving comparison with the far more famous Bay of Pigs Operation in 1961. Not only did the US–UK regime-change policy fly directly in the face of Resolution 687, but the United States sabotaged the operations of the UN Special Commission in Iraq (UNSCOM) by placing its own agents in the organisation, who led inspections of highly sensitive sites such as Republican Guard headquarters, security services offices and military academies. While Iraq had certainly been attempting to conceal the extent of its programs from UNSCOM, the US regime-change policy gravely muddied the waters and gave Iraq every motive not to comply. This was a key element in both Iraq’s demand for US inspectors to leave Iraq in 1997 and the total breakdown in co-operation with UNSCOM by 1998, which precipitated Operation Desert Fox and ensured that sanctions would remain in force for years to come.

Meanwhile the sanctions continued, reducing Iraq to appalling levels of poverty and undermining its economy and its education, health and cultural systems – at the same time as they strengthened the regime. The rationing system established by the regime made Iraqis more rather than less dependent on the regime, and the undiscriminating harshness of the sanctions led Iraqis to blame the West more than the folly and venality of President Saddam Hussein. This underlines both the immorality and stupidity of US strategy. The blockade slashed Iraqi oil exports by US$13 billion, forced a 2,000 per cent increase in food prices in a single year, caused enormous unemployment and slashed real incomes (by 90 per cent in the first year of sanctions and a further 40 per cent over the next five years). War damage to infrastructure and bans on ‘dual-use’ imports such as chlorine meant that water and sewage treatment plants could not be repaired. The end result was malnutrition and disease – especially gastroenteritis and cholera – which saw infant mortality rates rise from one-in-thirty to one-in-eight in 1997. With a lack of clean water, reduced power supplies and an inability to import medicines and equipment, Iraq’s hospital system crumbled at a time of its greatest ever need.

US policymakers sometimes cite the ‘oil-for-food’ programme (which Saddam rejected until 1996) as evidence that Iraq’s suffering was the regime’s fault. In the context of the United States use of the UN as a vehicle for regime change, this is a serious misrepresentation – not only did the UN sanctions committee refuse approval for the import of items such as tyres, spare parts for ambulances and lead pencils, but the amount offered to Iraq (US$4 billion a year, minus 28 per cent for UN costs and reparations to Kuwait) failed to cover its annual food import needs and did nothing to assist Iraq to rebuild its shattered health, power, water and education systems. Even when the Security Council further raised the ceiling to US$10 billion a year in 1998, the run-down state of the Iraqi oil infrastructure meant that it could not pump enough oil to generate that much income (which was still miniscule compared with the import
levels of comparably sized countries). These policies were in turn wors-
ened by the appalling corruption of Iraqi and UN officials and international
businesses dealing with the regime under the programme.89

By 1995, the human impact of the sanctions regime had taken on the
proportions of a major international crime: the UN Food and Agriculture
Organization estimated that as many as 576,000 children had died as a
direct result, and the World Health Organization (WHO) estimated that
90,000 Iraqis annually were dying in Iraq’s public hospitals ‘above and
beyond the number who would have expired in a “normal” situation’. In
August 1999 the Executive Director of UNICEF said that had the reduced
child mortality rates recorded before 1990 continued into the sanctions
period, ‘there would have been half a million fewer deaths of children
under five in the country as a whole during the period 1991 to 1998’. The
sanctions continued until 2003, and the Cockburns argue that ‘the number
of Iraqis of all ages who have died because of sanctions is probably closer
to one million’. More conservative estimates by the Joan B. Kroc Institute
of International Peace Studies (for child mortality only) estimated that
between 106,000 and 227,000 children under five had died by 1999, still
an appalling total.90

What was the purpose of all this suffering? How does it have meaning
within the enframing deployment of strategic reason that governs Iraq’s
fate? A former CIA official associated with the Iraq operation has said
that senior US policymakers ‘really believed that the sanctions policy
might encourage a coup’, and in 2002 Colin Powell was still saying that
‘sanctions and the pressure of sanctions are part of a strategy of regime
change, support for the opposition, and reviewing additional options that
might be available of a unilateral or multilateral nature’.91 The function,
the utility of the Iraqi people in this strategy was of course crystal clear
back in 1991, when Robert Gates warned that ‘Iraqis will pay the price
while Saddam Hussein remains in power’. So many people who might
have lived, but now do not; mass, slow-motion slaughter in the service
of ‘life’; in Heidegger’s terms, the people of Iraq were made into ‘standing
reserve’, their suffering was a resource.

**Strategy’s burnt offering**

The sanctions were finally lifted by the United Nations on 22 May 2003,
following the illegal US-led invasion of Iraq with its toll of more than 7,000
Iraqi civilian (and 14,000 thousand military) dead, and more than 19,000
civilian wounded. By the time of writing, in November 2005, more than
2,000 American soldiers had been killed and over 18,000 wounded in a
complex drawn-out guerrilla war that the United States appeared to be los-
ing. Estimates of overall Iraqi dead ranged up to 100,000, with more con-
servative estimates of civilian deaths ranging from 26,000 to 30,000.92 The
first phase of the war cost the United States and Iraq some US$45 billion,
further damaged crucial infrastructure such as oil and electricity, saw the widespread looting of schools, universities, museums, government buildings and hospitals, and general lawlessness and insecurity. It created enormous anger and bitterness across the Arab world, leading Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak to warn that ‘if there is one bin Laden now, there will be one hundred bin Ladens afterward’.93 The war has weakened the cause of moderation in the Muslim world and hastened the convergence of (formerly hostile) secular and fundamentalist radicals, potentially providing them with new sanctuaries, new operational linkages and strengthened capabilities. Beyond Iraq, the war is likely to provoke global increases in military spending, lower the threshold for the use of force, damage the credibility of international arms control and verification efforts, encourage the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and undermine global security.94

Two years of occupation have cost the United States upwards of US$150 billion and deeply polarised the US electorate. US occupation policy (characterised by a chaotic mix of goodwill, viciousness and ham-fisted efforts to quickly impose US favourites, enrich US corporations, secure long-term strategic objectives and restructure the economy along neoliberal lines) is deeply resented by Iraqis.95 Much of it also now lies in ruins. The Bush administration’s failure to plan for the occupation and reconstruction is by now well known, but its management of the occupation has also been disastrous. Decisions to deliberately exclude the United Nations, to detain thousands of people in prisons such as Abu Ghraib, to disband the Iraqi armed forces and sack thousands of bureaucrats and teachers, and to privatise Iraqi state corporations and give the bulk of the reconstruction work to American companies are all blamed for the alienation of Sunni sheikhs and poor Shia, who have supported (or become involved in) armed resistance against the United States and its allies.96 Counter-insurgency operations, such as those in Fallujah, Baghdad and Najaf, have been ineffective, caused enormous civilian death and displacement (some 200,000 people left Falluja during the November 2004 offensive) and further alienated Iraqis.97 The war has given al Qaeda a new theatre in which to fight the United States and a powerful series of propaganda images – not the least of which are those from the prison at Abu Ghraib. The brutal hostage-taking and executions of officials, journalists and aid workers by anti-coalition militants have also evoked images of the chaos in Lebanon following Israel’s 1982 invasion, and further hampered reconstruction. Even the welcome image of Iraqis voting in free elections was marred by widespread violence, which rapidly resumed its intensity once extra security measures were relaxed.98 Furthermore, even if US planning and occupation policy had been better, it is likely that substantial armed resistance and the damage to infrastructure would still have hampered the restoration of stability, given what is now known of the Hussein regime’s elaborate plans for a guerrilla struggle prior to the war.99
In the wake of this failure, it is intriguing to observe how US analysts are seeking to grapple with the situation and salvage some kind of strategic benefit from it. In a 2004 study an influential strategist at Washington’s Center for Strategic and International Studies, Anthony Cordesman, hoped that ‘the United States may still be able to achieve some sort of victory in Iraq if it persists, commits the necessary resources, and accepts the real-world limits on what it can do’. While he recommended that the United States should ‘stay the military course’ and ‘develop Iraqi security forces as quickly as possible’, with ‘at least a five year period of continued US engagement after full Iraqi sovereignty’ – approaches broadly in line with administration policy – his analysis concluded that central US strategic goals have either been mistaken or would not be achievable. In particular, future Iraqi governments may not be sympathetic to the United States and plans to reconstruct the economy along neoliberal lines and control its oil industry should cease.100

Yet however radical, Cordesman’s analysis was silent on scandals such as Abu Ghraib and the impact of counter-insurgency operations on civilians (along with their perverse political results), and underestimated the enormous challenge of involving the international community and bringing genuine stability to Iraq. In contrast, progressive think-tanks like the Institute for Policy Studies were advocating a total withdrawal of all American troops as a crucial step in restoring Iraq’s sovereignty, bringing greater legitimacy to an elected Iraqi government and removing a major focus for attacks.101 While credibly suggesting that this will see a reduction in insurgent violence, their analysis may likewise have underestimated the dangers of civil war, human rights abuses by Iraqi security forces, or more general state breakdown after a withdrawal. Journalist Paul McGeough gloomily suggested in a 2004 study that ‘the prospect is that Iraq will become Beirut writ large’.102 Two years into the occupation, Iraq’s future appeared to be little more than a long series of Sophie’s choices.

After the 11 September attacks, George W. Bush told Americans that even though ‘this conflict was begun on the timing and terms of others’ it ‘will end in a way, and at an hour, of our choosing’. He told them that ‘the course of this conflict is not known, yet its outcome is certain’. Like a latter-day Francis Bacon, Bush voiced his conviction that the use of force against terror would provide America with ‘fitting certainty’.103 Thus, while the US strategy in Iraq has been unravelling on its own terms, the enframing machinery of strategic reason grinds on in all its unreflective, calculating arrogance, endlessly demanding that power have no limits, that everything be made useful, that no ethical framework be permitted to slow its progress. The endlessness of it is what is most frightening, bound so deeply into the ontological bedrock of modern industrial civilisation as to appear like a second law of nature and a new meaning of being. Calculation, hegemony, utility: this, for strategic man, is meaning.
Yet Hannah Arendt, in *The Human Condition*, had already sounded a warning – pointing to the emptiness of a utilitarianism that gets caught in an ‘unending chain of means and ends’ in which ‘all ends are bound to be of short duration and to be transformed into means for some further ends’. This perfectly describes the rolling disaster of the United States’ policy towards Iraq, from the time the Reagan administration decided to make of Saddam a ‘strategic asset’, then sought his removal through a decade of failed and ever more destructive policy, until only the invasion and occupation of the country could seemingly achieve US goals. It perfectly describes the geopolitical panic and ambition of the Bush neoconservatives, who have sought to build one illusory strategic ‘victory’ on another (Afghanistan, Iraq, then ...) without consideration of what counts as victory, its manifest failures and its unbearable human, economic and political costs. Strategy, seeking one proliferating end after another, becomes an end in itself and the ultimate, narcissistic source of meaning. To use Arendt’s words, it ‘defies questioning about its own use . . . utility established as meaning generates meaninglessness’.

When will it stop? When will Oppenheimer’s ethical plea – made only a year before John F. Kennedy warned that the ‘fruits of victory would be ashes in our mouth’ – ever be heard and acted upon? Heidegger warned that within modern instrumental reason lay a double tragedy: that as man turned himself into a resource, into ‘standing reserve’, he would simultaneously ‘exalt himself to the posture of lord of the earth’. This, he warned, ‘in turn gives rise to one final delusion: It seems as though man everywhere and always encounters only himself.’ Bacon did say that scientific man would recover ‘his empire over creation’ that was lost at the Fall, affirming his ‘power over nature’ with ‘new creations and imitations of divine works’ until ‘man may be said to be a god unto man’. So what of Iraq, the land where, with the words of Isaiah, George W. Bush triumphantly informed the world on 1 May 2003 that ‘the United States and its allies have prevailed’? Man the vengeful god: Iraq is this god’s plaything, strategic man’s burnt offering to himself, this ever useful death, ashes in the President’s mouth.
Freedom’s freedom
American enlightenment and permanent war

They hate our freedoms.
George W. Bush

Freedom conquers.
Agnes Heller

America’s autobiography begins with the love of freedom. This paraphrase of Agnes Heller’s wry comment on the self-image of European modernity seems particularly apt in the wake of 11 September 2001 – a paraphrase in which the sign ‘America’ replaces ‘Europe’. Since then we have been reminded how the United States of America sought to replace Europe in the grand narrative of western enlightenment, recasting it as American ‘exceptionalism’, ‘manifest destiny’ and ‘the American century’; of how it then replaced Europe as a global power and Idea after 1945; and of how it continues to struggle with Europe to be a hegemonic maker of twenty-first-century global order. What are we to make of America’s relentless autobiography in the wake of 9/11, its obsession with narrating its own story as freedom? Warrior autobiography, where war on terror is named ‘enduring freedom’, war on Saddam Hussein ‘Iraqi freedom’, where attacks on buildings and bodies are named attacks on freedom, where freedom is an ‘operation’ and justice is ‘just war’? ‘America’ replaces ‘Europe’. What are we to make of European enlightenment made American, of American enlightenment made permanent war?

We have, I suspect, three choices. The first is to accept this narrative without question, to assume that we know what freedom is, that ‘America’ stands for it, that freedom is at risk from a terror that is utterly alien to it, as if it had acid for blood and evil in its heart. We can accept that freedom is self-evident and pure, that it has an acceptable ‘price’, that we must bring it to others as we defend it for ourselves, that freedom must be waged.

The second is also to assume that we know what freedom is, but to conclude that this is definitely not it – a ruthless, lawless and vengeful
‘freedom’, contaminated by prior agendas, imperial ambition and militaristic passion. In this view, Bush’s freedom is a dark and bitter perversion of freedom: a Janus-face for power, an Orwellian paradox, freedom in slavery’s grey uniform. I have many sympathies with this perspective, and it is one that informs this chapter. However, it also presents a barrier to understanding the very dangerous implications of the way in which ‘freedom’ – as a rhetoric, a value and an ontology – is being mobilised by the US administration of George W. Bush.

In both these views, radical and conservative, freedom exists in a frame without questions: it is a profound form of social truth that animates an enlightenment we understand and know how to live. Freedom is comforting in its certainty – if only it were not so threatened, or so perverted and elusive. Is it a problem, then, that each view refers to a different planet? What if both perspectives were partially true, in ways that neither recognises? What if Bush’s freedom is perverted by power, contaminated by guilt, sullied by unfreedom, but possessed of a cultural force and vitality – a hegemony – that is suicidal to dismiss out of hand? What if, in a powerful political, cultural and ontological sense, globe-spanning in its implications, Bush’s freedom is freedom? How, after that, might we re-imagine a freedom worthy of the name?

The third option, then, is less sanguine: it refuses to dismiss the Bush administration’s rhetoric so quickly, as if we can easily cut through to the darker politics it obscures. Rather, it accepts that Bush’s freedom has depth and force – it is force, armed force, a force that crushes other desires with its own; restless, imperial and paranoid. Bush’s freedom is not an aberration, either in terms of American history or the Western enlightenment, but mobilises a conception and politics of freedom reaching into the centre of our modernity – into our images of progress, knowledge, community, certainty, security and being. While it does not exhaust them (and these traditions do offer positive alternatives) it dominates, and not merely through an historical accident that might pass as quickly as it arrived.

This chapter thus takes as its point of departure a phrase in Emmanuel Levinas’s ‘Ethics as First Philosophy’, the essay which critiques the egoistic cultural force of Hegelian historicism and ontology, of the enlightenment liberal Spirit shaping world history as ‘the progress of the consciousness of Freedom’.7 Levinas feared that such an image of progress and freedom was contaminated by power, by a will to control, destroy or subsume the other in an image of national and civilisational self-regard that was at best indifferent, at worst murderous:

Since Hegel, any goal considered alien to the disinterested acquisition of knowledge has been subordinated to the freedom of knowledge as a science; and within this freedom, being itself is understood as the active affirming of that same being, as the strength and strain of
being. Modern man persists in his being as a sovereign who is merely concerned to maintain the powers of his sovereignty. All that is possible is permitted . . . a miracle of modern Western freedom unhindered by any memory or remorse, and opening onto a glittering future where everything can be rectified.8

This is what the Bush phenomenon, and the foreign policy tradition his administration inherited and intensified, demands that we understand: ‘freedom unhindered’. Not freedom suppressed or threatened, but freedom unbound, unleashed and unaccountable, even if also paradoxically driven by fear of one day encountering its own limits and foundering there. While the 11 September attacks were certainly an awful tragedy, necessitating some kind of defensive and even armed response from the United States, it is widely acknowledged that the response mobilised by the Bush administration was self-serving, disproportionate, corrosive of democracy and international norms, and tainted by the neo-conservative agenda for which ‘freedom’ now stands as a potent signifier.

It is important to understand that here we are not primarily concerned with familiar liberal-humanist accounts of freedom as a series of freedoms (speech, labour, property ownership, suffrage) possessed by individuals that a democracy naturally embodies and seeks to preserve. While such freedoms are certainly valuable, and the US constitution is notable in generally preserving them, in Bush’s rhetoric they are often mere figures of ideology and are being structurally undermined by the response to 9/11. Rather we are considering the freedom possessed and wielded by sovereignty, as realised in and through the modern national security state and its partner, capital; the freedom unleashed by modern science, technology and organisational rationality and then transformed into enormous structures of security, government, surveillance and military force. We are concerned with the freedom, channelled and enabled in such ways, to do and to make . . . to imagine, alter, preserve or to destroy potentially everything that lives and exists. A freedom that ultimately disavows its own power and agency in favour of a historicist inevitability, the unfurling of necessity: to fight terror, remove rogue regimes, bring democracy and peace. As Bush said on 29 January 2002, in a speech that prefigured all the themes of his policy and exposed its underlying ontology, ‘History has called America and our allies to action, and it is both our responsibility and our privilege to fight freedom’s fight’.9

My concerns here have much in common with Isaiah Berlin, who in ‘Two Concepts of Liberty’ and Freedom and Its Betrayal exhibited profound suspicion of the ‘positive doctrine of liberation through reason’ visible in thinkers such as Rousseau, Hegel and Fichte, and which he saw as being ‘at the heart of many of the nationalist, communist, authoritarian, and totalitarian creeds of our day’. He objected to its assumptions that
‘humanity is the raw material upon which I impose my creative will; even though men suffer and die in the process, they are lifted by it to a height to which they could never have risen without my coercive – but creative – violation of their lives’. However, despite some intriguing hints in the text, Berlin never quite manages to connect this image to a vast administrative trans-historical project exercised over and above the ‘will’ of individuals, or to its deployment by liberal democracies in particular, and his solution remains merely a familiar liberal defence of ‘negative’ liberty.

Jacques Derrida outlines his own concerns with an ‘unlicensed’ image of freedom in his 2005 book *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason*, where he writes of Plato and Aristotle’s concerns about the consequences of a democracy that is founded upon both liberty and licence (*eleutheria* and *exousia*), that unites people and power (*demos* and *kratos*) in a practice of freedom that is ‘the faculty or power to do as one pleases, to decide, to choose, to determine one-self . . . to be master’. He writes: ‘It has always been hard to distinguish, with regard to free will, between the good of democratic freedom or liberty and the evil of democratic license. They are hardly different.’ As perceptive as this is, ancient texts cannot quite do the problem justice: we are now dealing with a demo-kratic freedom made greatly more powerful through the vastly expanded capacities of sovereignty, imperialism and modernity, powers made operative in the figure of the democratic-national Leviathan who nonetheless claims to embody a universal principle and will. In short, we are dealing with a freedom that is at once liberty, licence and instrumental power.

What can we say or think in the face of this – in the face of this central *aporia* of democracy and this unlicensed, instrumental and sovereign figure of freedom? For his part, Levinas wanted to put into question the ‘good conscience’ with which freedom operates. In the wake of 9/11, our critical task is not to help power seek out and destroy the ‘enemies of freedom’ (as Bush put it in his address to Congress of 20 September 2001) but to question how they were constructed as enemies of ‘freedom’; to put into question the very categories ‘enemies’ and ‘freedom’, so that we can ask about their meaning and effect. It is to wonder if we, the free, might already be enemies of freedom in the very process of imagining and defending it. Our task, then, is to question both freedom and its good conscience: to question ‘freedom’s’ freedom.

**Founding fathers, ambiguous freedom**

Freedom is certainly never far from the lips of an American president, but it has rarely been so invoked so often and with such intensity. It has been a central motif in virtually every speech that Bush makes, and its appearance at the locus of key events and discourses – the national crisis following the 9/11 attacks, the naming and rationale of wars in Afghanistan
and Iraq, the 2002 National Security Strategy, and the 2003 announcement of ‘a forward strategy of freedom in the Middle East’ – suggests that something is certainly afoot.

I say this in the face of a contrasting feeling that the incessant repetition of freedom has a numbing effect, leading us to wonder if Bush’s freedom is little more than an overdetermined, empty sign, desperately everywhere; all affect, no depth or reality. Alternatively, it may be tempting to think that the problem is directly related to the post-9/11 crisis and the emergence of a radically hawkish and unilateral neo-conservatism in US policy-making, and that this should be the limit of our concerns. As salient as these factors are (and without wishing to play down the serious problems created by the administration’s militant unilateralism), the problem of freedom that is now so visible runs much deeper, drawing on influential political and philosophical strands in Western modernity (Clausewitzian strategy, Hegelian teleology, post-Renaissance secularism) and importantly, in powerful metanarratives of US ‘exceptionalism’ and ‘destiny’.

Despite its thematic intensity for the Bush presidency, the ontology of freedom is deep-seated in the American polity and consciousness. The unique American calling to freedom is something that twentieth-century presidents – from Franklin Roosevelt on – have used to narrate their purpose: in his 1941 inaugural address Roosevelt recalled ‘the multitudes of those who came . . . to find freedom more freely’; in 1949 Truman promised that ‘what we have achieved in liberty, we will surpass in greater liberty’; in 1961 Kennedy spoke of the need to ‘defend freedom in its hour of maximum danger’; in 1985 Reagan promised an era when ‘American Revolution was reborn, when freedom gained new life’; and in 1993 Clinton said:

[W]e rededicate ourselves to the very idea of America . . . an idea born in revolution and renewed through two centuries of challenge . . . an idea infused with the conviction that America’s long, heroic journey must go forever upward.14

Perhaps even more tellingly, the bible of US Cold War strategy – the long-secret NSC68 memo authored by Paul Nitze in 1950 – placed the American identity as a ‘free society’ at the centre of its argument, starkly contrasting it with the Soviet Union, ‘the slave state’ whose ‘value system is so wholly irreconcilable with ours’.15 Like Bush much later, it argued that ‘the idea of freedom is the most contagious idea in history’ and that it imposed upon the United States the burden of ‘building a successfully functioning political and economic system in the free world’:

In a shrinking world, which now faces the threat of atomic warfare, it is not an adequate objective merely to seek to check the Kremlin design, for the absence of order among nations is becoming less and
less tolerable. This fact imposes on us, in our own interests, the respons-
sibility of world leadership. It demands that we make the attempt, and
accept the risks inherent in it, to bring about order and justice by
means consistent with the principles of freedom and democracy . . .
every consideration of devotion to our fundamental values and our
national security demands that we seek to achieve them by the strategy
of the cold war.16

All of them were working from a template laid down by Life publisher
Henry Luce who in 1941 exhorted the United States to abandon isolation-
ism and to ‘accept wholeheartedly our duty and our opportunity as
the most powerful and vital nation in the world’: ‘America as the dynamic
center of ever-widening spheres of enterprise, America as the training center
of the skillful servants of mankind . . . America as the powerhouse of
the ideals of Freedom and Justice’.17 In this light we must conclude that
while a subsequent democrat or (older-style) Republican administration
may conduct foreign policy with greater prudence, a profound sense
of America’s unbounded power, potential and right is deeply etched into
the American polity and will exert its thrall long after the Bush adminis-
tration has gone.

How are we to understand and think this freedom then, both in terms
of its continuity with past US policy and its intensification under Bush?
We can begin with one of the most revealing occasions for the incitement
of freedom in recent American public life, the National Security Strategy
of the United States (NSS), published on 17 September 2002, just over a
year after the 9/11 attacks and six months prior to the invasion of Iraq.
This document – infamous for setting out the ‘Bush doctrine’ of preven-
tive war – is framed and grounded by the call to freedom:

The great struggles of the twentieth century between liberty and total-
itarianism ended with a decisive victory for the forces of freedom –
and a single sustainable model for national success: freedom, democ-

cy, and free enterprise . . . These values of freedom are right and
true for every person, in every society – and the duty of protecting
these values against their enemies is the common calling of freedom-
loving people across the globe and across the ages.18

Clear from the outset is the stark ontological division repeated often
by Bush after 9/11: that between freedom and terror. As he said in the
address to Congress of 20 September, ‘enemies of freedom committed an
act of war against our country’. He told Americans, and through them
the world: ‘freedom and fear are at war. The advance of human freedom
– the great achievement of our time, and the great hope of every time –
now depends on us.’ Indeed he told the world: ‘what is at stake is not
just America’s freedom. This is the world’s fight. This is civilization’s
fight.’ It is a division, an ontological border, summed up in his curt answer to the question, ‘Why do they hate us?’: ‘they hate our freedoms’.

Given the occasions of these texts – a declaration of war on terrorism, and a statement of the national security policies of the United States which laid the ground for the invasion of a Middle Eastern nation never implicated in the 9/11 attacks – we must identify the invocation of freedom with security, with war, and with power, at least power conceived in its most arid, instrumental terms. This is made clear in Bush’s preface to the National Security Strategy:

Today, the United States enjoys a position of unparalleled military strength and great economic and political influence. In keeping with our heritage and principles, we do not use our strength to press for unilateral advantage. We seek instead to create a balance of power that favors human freedom: conditions in which all nations and all societies can choose for themselves the rewards and challenges of political and economic liberty.

Freedom creates a balance of power that frees itself: a threat and a promise. What anxiety underpins this promise? While one factor in the emergence of the Bush doctrine at this time was the severe sense of uncertainty and insecurity occasioned by the 9/11 strikes, its roots in fact lie further in the administration’s past and, beyond that, in some of the fundamental desires of European modernity. The sinister promise to create a ‘balance of power that favours freedom’ first appeared in George W. Bush’s inaugural address, followed by declarations that the United States will ‘defend our allies and our interests’, ‘show purpose without arrogance’, and ‘meet aggression and bad faith with resolve and strength. And to all nations, [to] speak to the values that gave our nation birth’.

‘Freedom’, ‘security’, ‘resolve’, and the ‘values that gave our nation birth’: these are all potent signifiers of national natality, survival and power; windows onto an intense mythical landscape, the metanarratives of American historical innocence, exceptionalism and destiny. These, fittingly, frame the presidential inauguration, when Bush speaks of the place of Americans ‘in a long story’:

a story of a new world that became a friend and liberator of the old, a story of a slave-holding society that became a servant of freedom, the story of a power that went into the world to protect but not to possess, to defend but not to conquer. It is the American story – a story of a flawed and fallible people, united across the generations by grand and enduring ideals.

Spoken like this, at the birth of the Bush presidency, freedom is invoked as a foundation, a foundation that grounds the nation and its ‘long story’
of mythic birth and maturity. Bush evokes this story to ground his presidency and his politics, to ground it in a potent, but imaginary, system of cultural truth. The speech also sought to rewrite this ‘truth’, turning it to future use: the past made to serve the future, the future the past.

Freedom is thus a project, and a foundation. Freedom is a project that founds itself through myth. At this point Heller offers a salutory warning. ‘Freedom became the foundation of the modern world’, she writes in *A Theory of Modernity*, but ‘it is the foundation that grounds nothing’:

> Freedom is the foundation of the moderns, which means that every demonstration needs to have recourse to freedom, which on its part warrants the truth and goodness of the *demonstrandum*. Freedom is then taken for granted and constantly repeated as all traditions are, the *arche* at which all arguments stop, the limit that sets order and warrants certainty . . . the problem is however, that Freedom as the ultimate principle, as the *arche* of modernity, cannot perform one single task that an *arche* is supposed to perform . . . that freedom grounds means that everything is ungrounded . . . grounding starts anew every time. Every political act grounds itself; every life grounds itself . . .  

It may be, as Heller hints, that like the ‘moderns’ the Americans are ‘sitting on a paradox’, one that, in my view, becomes ever more paradoxical and dysfunctional as it is invoked and enacted in policy and action. It is also to build an endlessly repetitive structure of neurosis into the national culture, one that will recur and intensify with every crisis; that becomes the dominant narrative structure and psychological movement of the crisis and helps to drive its responses.

This is to play out, in both social and geopolitical terms, what Erich Fromm called an ‘ambiguity’ of freedom that dated from the Renaissance: that with modern man’s new strength, freedom and power came isolation, anxiety and insecurity. Similarly, Heller suggests that ‘modernity, grounded on freedom which does not ground, is left not only without certainties but also becomes unable to resist certainties, whatever their source’. In America’s modernity, force is one crutch for this certainty, but it too is illusory. Consider how, after 11 September, Bush repeatedly invoked and promised certainty as a promise (‘the course of this conflict is not known, yet its outcome is certain’) when nothing could have been more corrosive of the certainty promised in the Inauguration’s declaration that ‘we will build our defenses beyond challenge, less weakness invite challenge’. Even the most cursory readings of Bin Laden’s writings and interviews would underline the fact that it was America’s very strength that invited challenge, a challenge that would dramatically expose the Achilles heel of the vast military system upon which the United States bases its ‘security’.
At the heart of the new ‘asymmetric’ war is a profound and corrosive paradox: the stronger we are, the more vulnerable we may become.

The new American century

The paradox set out by Heller and Fromm was given a sharper edge after 9/11 by virtue of the fact that America’s version of enlightenment, exceptionalism, was premised on being able to escape and abolish the ambiguity of European freedom. The sociologist Daniel Bell argued this in a 1975 Public Interest article after the fall of Vietnam to communism (see Chapter 7), when he described American exceptionalism as:

the idea that, having been ‘born free’, America would, in the trials of history, get off ‘scott free’. Having common political faith from the start, it would escape the ideological vicissitudes and divisive passions of the European polity, and being an entirely middle class society, without aristocracy or boheme, it would not become ‘decadent’, as had every other society in history. As a liberal society providing individual opportunity, safeguarding liberties, and expanding the standard of living, it would escape the disaffections of the intelligentsia, the resentment of the poor, the frustrations of the young – which historically, had been the signs of disintegration, if not the beginnings of revolution, in other societies. In this view too, the United States, in becoming a world power, a paramount power, a hegemonic power, would, because it was democratic, be different in the exercise of that power than previous world empires.26

According to Bell, exceptionalism was the idea that grouped all the most powerful American concepts and myths together: manifest destiny, manifest mission and the American century. Central figures in the construction of these metanarratives included idealist philosopher and Anglican bishop George Berkeley (whose 1726 poem proclaimed ‘Westward the course of empire’); Hegel, who named America ‘the land of the future’ in his 1822 Philosophy of History; John O’Sullivan, Walt Whitman and Ralph Waldo Emerson, who espoused the United States’ ‘manifest destiny to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions’ – a doctrine used to justify the Louisiana Purchase, the acquisition of Florida and California, and the dispossession of Indian tribes; and Time-Life publisher Henry Luce, whose February 1941 Life editorial outlined his vision of a post-war ‘American century’:

[a] vision of America as a world power which is authentically American . . . America as the dynamic center of ever-widening spheres of enterprise, America as the training center of the skillful servants of mankind . . . America as the powerhouse of the ideals of Freedom and Justice.27
It is certainly no accident that much of the neo-conservative ideology driving the Bush administration’s policy (regime changes in ‘rogue states’, large increases in military spending, and the abrogation of the Kyoto Protocol, the ICC and the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty) was sourced from the Project for a New American Century (PNAC). This was a broad front organisation of intellectuals and former policymakers who wanted the United States to seize the potential of the ‘unipolar moment’ following the collapse of the Soviet Union – for the US to develop a ‘Reaganite policy of military strength and moral clarity’ that ‘is necessary if the United States is to build on the successes of this past century and to ensure [its] security and [its] greatness in the next’. The PNAC’s 1997 *Statement of Principles* set out four demands seen as crucial to developing ‘a strategic vision of America’s role in the world’: to modernize the US armed forces; to ‘strengthen ties to democratic allies’ and to ‘challenge regimes hostile to our interests and values’; to ‘promote the cause of political and economic freedom abroad’; and to ‘accept responsibility for America’s unique role in preserving and extending an international order friendly to our security, our prosperity, and our principles’. The statement was signed by twenty-four men and one woman, including *The End of History* author Francis Fukuyama, tycoon Steve Forbes, former Reagan administration figures Dan Quayle, Paul Wolfowitz, Donald Rumsfeld and Dick Cheney, and international relations professor Aaron Friedberg. They argued:

[A]s the twentieth century draws to a close, the United States stands as the world’s most pre-eminent power . . . If we shirk our responsibilities, we invite challenges to our fundamental interests. The history of the twentieth century should have taught us that it is important to shape circumstances before crises emerge, and to meet threats before they become dire.

The echoes of Henry Luce’s famous *Life* essay in the statement are uncanny. In 1941 Luce had attacked the isolationism of previous administrations by saying: ‘[W]hereas their nation became in the twentieth century the most powerful and the most vital nation in the world, nevertheless Americans were unable to accommodate themselves spiritually and practically to that fact . . .

Hence they have failed to play their part as a world power – a failure which has had disastrous consequences for themselves and for all mankind. And the cure is this: to accept wholeheartedly our duty and our opportunity as the most powerful and vital nation in the world and in consequence to exert upon the world the full impact of our influence, for such purpose as we see fit and by such means as we see fit.
It is significant that Luce was not a neo-conservative, but a Roosevellitean internationalist, albeit one with an extremely pragmatic, realist edge who would in the 1950s and 1960s become an unyielding Cold War hawk. This shows that whatever the important departures the ‘Neocons’ represent, they also draw on a longer US foreign policy tradition (dating at least to the 1890s, and felt most strongly after 1945) and beneath that, upon a nineteenth-century philosophical tradition that sought to read Western history as the reason-driven story of modernisation and ‘dialectical’ historical progress. Luce – a member of the influential Council on Foreign Relations, which had already initiated planning for a global post-war strategic and capitalist order dominated by the United States – mixed a rhetoric reminiscent of the German idealist philosophers with a hard-nosed pragmatism. Arguing that ‘the abundant life is predicated on Freedom . . . a vision of Freedom under Law’, he went on to say: ‘It is for America and for America alone to determine whether a system of free economic enterprise – an economic order compatible with freedom and progress – shall or shall not prevail in this century.’

The Idea of ‘freedom’ set out by Luce (and Bush after him) is strongly Hegelian, and could be said to have found its contemporary philosophical justification in the work of Francis Fukuyama (who was, not accidentally, a signatory to the 1997 PNAC statement of principles). Fukuyama’s 1992 book *The End of History and the Last Man* argued that liberal democracy and global free market capitalism had triumphed over their ideological competitors (fascism and communism) and were therefore ‘the end point of mankind’s ideological evolution . . . the end of history’. Fukuyama drew this argument from Hegel (via Alexandre Kojève), citing his argument that History effectively ended after the Battle of Jena in 1806, because the principles on which liberalism was based could not be surpassed. This image – refracted through Luce’s ‘American century’ essay – is repeated in the *National Security Strategy*, which begins by saying that the twentieth century’s ‘great struggle of ideas: destructive totalitarian visions versus freedom and equality . . . is over’:

The militant visions of class, nation and race which promised utopia and delivered misery have been defeated and discredited . . . we will work to translate this moment of influence into decades of peace, prosperity and liberty. The US national security strategy will be based on a distinctly American internationalism that reflects the union of our values and our national interests. (emphasis added)

The source for Fukuyama’s arguments is Hegel’s *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, which declared that History ‘travels from East To West, for Europe is absolutely the end of History, Asia the beginning’. Europe stood at the apex of civilisation and development, ahead of Asia,
which was at the ‘childhood of History’, and Africa, which is merely at the ‘threshold of the World’s History . . . still involved in the conditions of mere nature’.  

There are two crucial elements of this argument for the development of American exceptionalism. One is the special role of America in Hegel’s system, and the related image of the North American continent’s indigenous peoples; the second is the image of freedom and the state (the political ontology of freedom) that he develops and is later entrenched into the core of the US political imagination. Presaging and buttressing the later accounts of American exceptionalism, Hegel assigned America the most privileged and exalted space in History: ‘the land of the future’, a ‘land of desire for all those who are weary of the historical lumber room of old Europe’, where ‘the original nation having vanished, or nearly so . . . we witness a prosperous state of things, an increase of industry and population, civil order and firm freedom’, and where ‘the outlet of colonisation’ remains ‘constantly and widely open, and the multitudes are continually streaming into the plains of the Mississippi’. Here – bearing in mind Daniel Bell’s genealogy of exceptionalism – was a prophecy of the doctrine that would become manifest destiny, where Hegel’s praise for the ‘subjective unity’ of the republican constitution, the ‘universal protection for property’ and the ‘endeavour of the individual after acquisition, commercial profit, and gain’ mingled with descriptions of the ‘passionless disposition’, ‘want of spirit’, ‘crouching submissiveness’, and ‘inferiority in all respects’ of the ‘native Americans’. A more accurate account of what this meant, in human and historical terms, can be found in a letter written by Civil War General William Tecumsah Sherman to another hero of the American West, Buffalo Bill:

In my estimation there were around nine and a half million buffalo on the plains between the Missouri and the Rocky mountains in 1862. They have all disappeared, killed for their meat, hides and bones . . . At that time there were about 165,000 Pawnees, Sioux, Cheyenne, Kiowa and Apaches, who annually depended upon these buffalo for food. They’re also gone and have been replaced by two to three times that number of men and women of the white race, who have turned this land into a garden and who can be counted, taxed and governed according to the laws of nature and of civilization. This change has been beneficial and will be carried to the very end.

Bush’s Inauguration address, while briefly acknowledging the shameful history of slavery, said nothing about this enabling history of murder, dispossession and genocide without which Bush and the PNAC could not speak of American ‘greatness’ and ‘success’. Even Fukuyama, in the conclusion to his book, resorted to a naïvely chilling use of the Western
settler-conquest metaphor, saying that ‘mankind will come to seem like a long wagon train strung out along a road’: some wagons will be ‘pulling into town sharply and crisply’, others ‘stuck in ruts in the final pass over the mountains’, and still others, ‘attacked by Indians, will have been set aflame and abandoned along the way’. But despite these travails, all the wagons will eventually pull into town, and ‘history will vindicate its own rationality’.41

What makes Bush’s politics possible, and the neo-Hegelian triumphalism that is its intimate cousin, is the recycling of a birth myth based on forgetting . . . not merely of this history, but of more recent US moral and geopolitical failures such as the use of nuclear weapons against Japan or the Vietnam war. As I discussed in Chapter 7, Vietnam in particular was a conflict that occasioned a massive bout of national introspection. The overwhelming sense that the war had punctured American myths of innocence and exceptionalism was the dominant trope in major histories of the war: Stanley Karnow wrote ‘with the young men who died in Vietnam died the dream of an “American century”’, and Daniel Bell, in his Public Interest essay wrote: ‘there is no longer a manifest destiny or mission. We have not been immune to the corruption of power . . . Our mortality now lies before us.’42

Yet after 9/11 it was as if nothing had happened. Rather, for Bush, ‘it was as if our entire country looked into a mirror and saw our better selves’.43 This is certainly true of the heroism shown by Americans after the attacks, but was it right to imagine the entire nation and its history in such a way, and what kind of knowledge does it close off? Why could Osama bin Laden, in a 1998 ABC interview, attempt to justify his criminal targeting of Americans and Jews by saying: ‘American history does not distinguish between civilians and military, and not even women and children’? Citing the bombing of Nagasaki, the massacres of Palestinians in Lebanon, and the deaths of a million children (sic) in Iraq, he argued that ‘we believe that the biggest thieves in the world and the terrorists are the Americans. The only way for us to fend off these assaults is to use similar means’.44 As wrong as this is, it must be acknowledged that someone put this logic into the world. It did not spring fully formed from bin Laden’s head; it is, sad to say, not a new historical possibility. However, if there is to be a new American century, America must be innocent, and nothing is so dangerous as wounded innocence.

Freedom of the national security state

The Bush/PNAC/NSC68 vision of freedom enacts, in politics, Hegel’s philosophical unification of ‘reason in history’ with ‘reason of state’. It marries a teleological myth of American enlightenment to a universalising image of instrumental reason, political community and political action. In the Lectures on the Philosophy of History, Hegel argues:
the Universal is to be found in the State, in its laws, its universal and rational arrangements. The State is the Divine Idea as it exists on Earth. We have in it, therefore, the object of History in a more definite shape than before; that in which Freedom obtains objectivity, and lives in the enjoyment of this objectivity. For Law is the objectivity of spirit; volition in its true form. Only that will which obeys law, is free; for it obeys itself . . . When the State or our country constitutes a community of existence; when the subjective will of man submits to laws – the contradiction between Liberty and Necessity vanishes.\textsuperscript{45}

This, in philosophical terms, is where the American myth and its military power coincide, where the ‘unfolding American promise that everyone belongs’ announced by George W. Bush collides with the cold, instrumental ‘strategic vision of America’s role in the world’ advanced by the PNAC. It is where freedom and power coalesce – where freedom obtains its ‘objectivity’ and the nation becomes the ‘object of History’.

As I argued above, we are not dealing here with a series of liberal freedoms that individuals (or even nations) possess, but with a macro-social and trans-historical deployment of freedom as a power to do, make and act that assumes both unbounded power and historical inevitability. In the face of this, it is crucial that we problematise the images of nation, security and sovereignty that Bush links with freedom and presents as natural goals, goods and containers for political and ethical life. If America as a teleology of freedom is one metanarrative constitutive of the American state, so is its function as a provider of security – one that is, however, perpetually insecure. As I explained in Chapter 1, this image dates to Hobbes and Locke, who conceptualise the modern state as a body-politic which subsumes and incorporates its members into a single organic unity of will and being. The impact of this is to imagine the national (political/cultural) unity upon an exclusivist image of sameness that annihilates difference; one constituted through threat, set off against both Oriental and indigenous cultures, and against secessionist and subversive threats from within and without. By the time these themes have been further developed through the political philosophy of Bentham and Hegel, this constitutive image of insecure modern being has been folded into a movement of Western capitalist progress that would form the philosophical template for American exceptionalism.\textsuperscript{46}

In all these thinkers we find that security is, in the words of R. N. Berki, ‘not just an external (and therefore optional condition) for life and freedom but simply another word for life and freedom’.\textsuperscript{47} If freedom grounds the nation, security grounds (and thus limits and defines) freedom as sovereignty. The condition for freedom is a political and ontological membership of the state – politically through citizenship and ontologically through identity and consent. Identity secures through identification with the ‘long story’ (the metanarrative of birth and mission) and through
existential alienation from the nation’s enemies and Others. Citizenship secures biopolitically by mapping the physical border onto the body as its boundary, by ordering bodies through acceptance or deportation, and by constructing desire and subjectivity with the metaphysics of belonging that is evident in any US presidential speech. This is without digressing into the complex and pervasive apparatuses of discipline, governmentality and biopolitics operative in every state.48

From this flows two crucial, defining limits on freedom. First, freedom is militarised and insecure. Freedom is imagined and protected behind a wall of military force which the ‘cosmopolitan’ structures of the United Nations and international law have merely been able to limit and channel (but never put into absolute question on the way to some kind of post-Kantian ‘perpetual peace’). Freedom may seek to secure itself defensively through deterrence or, as the Bush administration has, through pre-emptive action to ‘take the battle to the enemy, disrupt his plans, and confront the worst threats before they emerge’.49 Without prejudicing the profundity of the break between doctrines of defensive and pre-emptive force – and its destabilising impact on global security relations – they are in fact points on a single continuum that ultimately secures sovereignty, physically and existentially, through violence against and alienation from the Other. Real and imaginary threats coalesce, and their worlds are inevitably drawn more starkly distinguished and opposed. This is how the obvious threat of terrorist violence to Americans and Westerners posed by al-Qaeda and its affiliates could be expanded into a threat to ‘civilisation’ and ‘freedom’ itself, how anti-terrorist action could be expanded into a theoretically limitless ‘war on terror’, and how the threat could be multiplied and given such urgency that the President must say: ‘We can’t stop short. If we stop now – leaving terror camps intact and terror states unchecked – our sense of security would be false and temporary.’50

Second, freedom is exclusive and self-regarding. While the space of freedom may be global and missionary, it is not cosmopolitan and not universal. Bush’s ‘internationalist’ rhetoric is deceptive here, for ultimately the existence and spread of freedom are functions of the exercise of American power and utterly self-referential. Freedom is something America brings to the world, for itself and from within itself. It is not a space in the world to which it submits, which binds it or presents any limits, moral, political or ethical. As Bush told the National Endowment for Democracy, when he announced the new ‘forward strategy of freedom’ in the Middle East:

The advance of freedom is the calling of our time; it is the calling of our country. From the Fourteen Points to the Four Freedoms, to the Speech at Westminster, America has put our power at the service of principle. We believe that liberty is the design of nature; we believe that liberty is the direction of history . . . Working for the spread of
freedom can be hard. Yet, America has accomplished hard tasks before . . . And as we meet the terror and violence of the world, we can be certain the author of freedom is not indifferent to the fate of freedom.51

Underpinning this is a subtle tragedy, which is that the teleological movement that became American exceptionalism derived initially from Immanuel Kant’s 1784 essay *Idea for a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Point of View* (a text which apparently inspired Hegel’s *Philosophy of History*, and which is also cited by the neo-conservative Fukuyama). Yet whereas Kant’s vision for the ultimate goal of history was a harmonious and ‘lawful external relation between states’ ultimately ‘directed to achieving the civic union of the human race’ (i.e. perpetual peace and the elimination of war from human society, which he saw as being ‘anchored in the innate human right to freedom’),52 in Hegelian liberalism and American exceptionalism the movement of history culminated not in humanity but in the state, and Kant’s cosmopolitan vision was bowdlerised and arrogated into what Luce called a ‘truly American internationalism . . . something as natural to us in our time as the airplane or the radio’.53

In a similarly tragic way, these discourses transformed the ‘bewildered regret and great diffidence with which Kant resigned himself to introducing a concept of history into his political philosophy’, as Arendt remarked in *Between Past and Future*, into a new metaphysics of confidence whose result could only be hubris and destruction, and in which there is no time, and no space, for even a moment’s bewilderment.54

‘Making’ history: divine, instrumental and eurocentric freedom

What would fuel this confidence, aside from an overwhelming sense of historical destiny? It was the United States’ vast stocks of capital, its command of science and technology, and its weapons and organisation: ‘the airplane and the radio’. Luce’s linkage here, between freedom and modernity, and freedom and technology, is very revealing – for they are umbilical. The sine qua non for the Bush administration and the PNAC is the maintenance of US hegemony, and the sine qua non of freedom is the freedom to act to extend and entrench that hegemony. Freedom is stripped back to its most unromantic, overwhelming quality: the unbounded freedom to act, to make, to control.

At the West Point Military Academy in 2002 Bush told the graduates: ‘in the world we have entered, the only path to safety is the path of action.’ To safeguard this freedom to act, the United States will keep ‘military strengths beyond challenge’.

The PNAC’s *Statement of Principles* argued that the United States was ‘in danger of squandering the opportunity’ of its unique position ‘as the world’s pre-eminent power’. It must ‘have the resolve to shape a new century favorable to American principles and
interests’ and ‘shape circumstances before crises emerge’. To do this conservatives must ‘fight for a defense budget that would maintain American security and advance American interests in the new century’.

Freedom and action here are instrumental, dominated by the categories of means and ends. The statement is obsessed by previous inattention to the ‘tools of statecraft’ and a failure to establish ‘agreement on strategic objectives’. Military power is seen as crucial to achieving those ‘strategic’ objectives, and it is through technological modernisation and overwhelming force dominance that its superiority will be maintained. The PNAC’s influential 2000 report, *Rebuilding America’s Defenses: Strategy, Forces and Resources for a New Century*, exhorts the US government to ‘maintain nuclear strategic superiority’, ‘control the new international “commons” of space and cyberspace’, ‘exploit the Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) to ensure the long-term superiority of US conventional forces’, ‘develop and deploy global missile defenses’ to ‘provide a secure basis for US power projection around the world’, and increase US defence budgets by up to $20 billion annually. All of these recommendations are now US policy.

In this vision, modern American freedom is instrumental, strategic and divine, all at once. Hegel wrote that ‘the state is the divine idea as it exists on earth’, and just war theorist Jean Elshtain more recently that, according to Christian tradition, ‘government is instituted by God . . . [it] is charged with a responsibility that has divine warrant’. Bush greeted ‘victory’ in Iraq (a war Elshtain supported) with the words of the Prophet Isaiah, after having ordered the troops in with a prayer to God to ‘bless this country and all who defend her’. At his inauguration he concluded by linking the myth of American natality with the divine: the American ‘story goes on’, he said, ‘and an angel still rides the whirlwind and directs this storm’.

I do not take this as evidence that American secularism is under threat, as if the boundary between the institutions of church and state was disappearing. Rather, it is a visible manifestation of the modern secularism under which man, having liberated modern science, capitalism and reason from the shackles of the medieval divine order, sought not to force religion into the background but to appropriate its access to the divine: to create a new unification of Reason and Divinity, Man and God, in the perverse hope that while modernity’s powers to create could be liberated, its foundations would not simultaneously disappear. In this way the uncertainty and danger that is endemic to making and creating new institutions, new technologies and new forms of social life – particularly given the transformative and risk-driven possibilities of capitalism, reason of state, imperialism and technology – would still be anchored in a promise of certainty and right. As I explained in Chapter 8, the seminal philosopher of science Francis Bacon, in fact, claimed that modern rationalism and science would reverse the fall of Adam, the primordial Judaeo-Christian
creation story under which man was flawed and humbled before God.\textsuperscript{61}

Somewhat later, Hegel argued in similar terms that it has been left ‘in the
main to our epoch to vindicate, at least in theory, the human ownership
of treasures formerly squandered on heaven; but what age will have the
strength to validate this right in practice and make itself their possessor?’\textsuperscript{62}

Such a modern, rationalised, court Christianity (now existing at a radical
distance from its ancient, pacifistic and unworldly roots\textsuperscript{63}) obviously brings
with it a number of dangers. It effaces the agency of political decision-
making (something it shares with teleological visions of historical progress
like exceptionalism) and with it the responsibility that should accompany
it: responsibility for what political action creates, for its impact on the
world, however queer and unpredictable. After all, how can we act wrongly
when our powers are gifts from heaven, and the state is its earthly vessel?

Commentators on the role of religion in Bush’s presidency, such as
Edward Said, have focused on the fear that religion (‘strange fundamen-
talist Christian sects’) might drive the administration’s actions, as if Bush
acts in the belief that they are somehow sanctioned and endorsed by
God.\textsuperscript{64} That is certainly a reasonable fear, but what I am pointing to here
is that the modern assumption of a god-like power to make new social
and political facts, and a consequent freedom from responsibility for them,
has long existed at the place where technology, instrumental reason, and
reason of state coincide.

Post-Renaissance Christianity was also implicated in the development
of newly instrumental forms of action and its devaluation of human life
into a means to an end. Fromm writes of the ambivalence of Martin
Luther, who at the same time as he broke the bonds between Church and
State ‘postulated submission to worldly authorities, the princes, in the most
drastic fashion’.\textsuperscript{65} Furthermore, in imagining the individual as absolutely
subordinate to God (rather than the Church) Luther paradoxically ‘paved
the way for a development in which man was not only to obey secular
authorities but had to subordinate his life to the ends of economic achieve-
ments’ – that is, to make their life into a means to an end. (This also
occurs in obvious tension with the New Testament’s denunciation of finan-
cial greed and ambition.)\textsuperscript{66} Perhaps ironically, this new reconciliation
of religion with instrumental rationality coexists with the new god-like
confidence of a certain class of humans for whom the world (its land,
its minerals, its animals, its people) is an instrument to be wielded at will,
a development Fromm saw emerging in the thinking of the new political
and capitalist class for whom ‘other individuals are looked on as “objects”
to be used and manipulated, or ruthlessly destroyed if it suited one’s
own ends’.\textsuperscript{67} Fromm here evokes the critique taken up by Heidegger of
the ‘enframing’ system of reason which simultaneously raises ‘Man’ to
‘the posture of lord of the earth’ and makes humans into instruments for
use and control.
This is the thinking at work when the PNAC and Bush officials speak of the need for ‘strategic objectives’ and renewed ‘attention to the tools of statecraft’, and then enact such logic as invasion, counter-insurgency and nation-building in Iraq. Hannah Arendt recognised this instrumental, utilitarian form of action in the modern dream of historical progress, particularly in the modern transformation of the ‘unknown and unknowable “higher aims”’ of history (which Kant, after Vico, had merely read backward into events) into future-directed, purposive action: ‘planned and willed intentions’. The result was that ‘meaning and meaningfulness were transformed into ends’:

this is what happened when Marx took the Hegelian meaning of all history – the progressive unfolding and actualisation of the idea of freedom – to be an end of human action, and when he furthermore, in accordance with tradition, viewed this ultimate ‘end’ as the end-product of a manufacturing process. . . .

In this version of deriving politics from history, or rather, political conscience from historical consciousness – by no means restricted to Marx in particular, or even pragmatism in general – we can easily detect the age-old attempt to escape from the frustrations and fragility of human action by construing it in the image of making. . . . he alone realised that if one takes history to be the object of a process of fabrication or making, there must be a moment when this object is completed, and that if one imagines that one can make history, one cannot escape the consequence that there will be an end to history. Whenever we hear of grandiose aims in politics, such as establishing a new society in which justice will be guaranteed forever, or fighting a war to end all wars or to make the whole world safe for democracy, we are moving in the realm of this kind of thinking.68

With hindsight, we can see that Marx was not the only thinker to understand or posit an end to history (Hegel and Kojève did, and Fukuyama after them) and the irony and tragedy is that this end should have been proclaimed in the defeat of socialism and the triumph of ‘liberal-democratic’ civilisation based on US example and leadership.69 This is the meaning of Fukuyama’s signature on the PNAC Statement of Principles, a document utterly infused with the ‘grandiose aims’ of an enframing technological reason masquerading as historical inevitability. Hence we can understand how George W. Bush could follow the invasion of Iraq with the announcement of a ‘forward strategy of freedom in the Middle East’, a strategy he asserted was in the tradition of Wilson’s fourteen points and Roosevelt’s four freedoms that ‘requires the same persistence and energy and idealism we have shown before. And it will yield the same results. As in Europe, as in Asia, as in every region of the world, the advance of freedom leads to peace’.70
This links with a further crucial feature of freedom in the American enlightenment: its Orientalist and Eurocentric nature. Freedom is something the East lacks, and it will be achieved not by the agency of its own people, or the upwelling of some genuinely universal human aspiration, but by the particular application of American pressure and force. The seeds of this view can be glimpsed in Aristotle’s distinction between Greece’s ‘love of freedom’ and Asia’s despotism, but it was given a distinctively racist and dialectical cast in Hegel’s system, which declared that Africa was at the ‘mere threshold’ of history, and China at its ‘childhood’, while Europe was at its end. Now America, history’s ‘future’ according to Hegel, is to bring the Middle East into history, the freedom that is ‘the direction of history’ and ‘the design of nature’.

Yet the first act in America’s ‘forward strategy of freedom’ was to invade and attempt to subjugate Iraq, suggesting that, if ‘peace’ is its object, its means is war: the engine of history is violence, on an enormous and tragic scale, and violence is ultimately its only meaning. This we can glimpse in ‘Toward a Pacific Union’, a deeply disingenuous chapter of Fukuyama’s *The End of History and the Last Man*. This text divides the earth between a ‘post-historical’ world of affluent developed democracies where ‘the old rules of power-politics have decreasing relevance’, and a world still ‘stuck in history’ and ‘riven with a variety of religious, national and ideological conflicts’. The two worlds will maintain ‘parallel but separate existences’ and interact only along axes of threat, disturbance and crucial strategic interest: oil, immigration, terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Because ‘the relationship between democracies and non-democracies will still be characterised by mutual distrust and fear’, writes Fukuyama, the ‘post-historical half must still make use of realist methods when dealing with the part still in history . . . force will still be the ultima ratio in their relations’. For all the book’s Kantian pretensions, Fukuyama naturalises war and coercion as the dominant mode of dealing with billions of people defined only through their lack of ‘development’ and ‘freedom’. Furthermore, in his advocacy of the ‘traditional moralism of American foreign policy’ and his dismissal of the United Nations in favour of a NATO-style ‘league of truly free states . . . capable of much more forceful action to protect its collective security against threats arising from the non-democratic part of the world’ we can see an early premonition of the historicist unilateralism of the Bush administration.

In this light, we can see the invasion of Iraq as continuing a long process of ‘world-historical’ violence that stretches back to Columbus’ discovery of the Americas, and the subsequent politics of genocide, warfare and dispossession through which the modern United States was created and then expanded – initially with the colonisation of the Philippines and coercive trade relationships with China and Japan, and eventually to the self-declared role Luce had argued so forcefully for: guarantor of global economic and strategic order after 1945. This role involved the hideous
destruction of Vietnam and Cambodia, ‘interventions’ in Chile, El Salvador, Panama, Nicaragua and Afghanistan (or an ever more destructive ‘strategic’ involvement in the Persian Gulf that saw the United States first building up Iraq as a formidable regional military power, and then punishing its people with a 14-year sanctions regime that caused the deaths of at least 200,000 people), all of which we are meant to accept as proof of America’s benign intentions, of America putting its ‘power at the service of principle’. They are merely history working itself out, the ‘design of nature’ writing its bliss on the world.73

The bliss ‘freedom’ offers us, however, is the bliss of the graveyard, stretching endlessly into a world marked not by historical perfection or democratic peace, but by the eternal recurrence of tragedy, as ends endlessly disappear in the means of permanent war and permanent terror. This is how we must understand both the prolonged trauma visited on the people of Iraq since 1990, and the inflammatory impact the US invasion will have on the new phenomenon of global anti-Western terrorism. American exceptionalism has deluded US policymakers into believing that they are the only actors who write history, who know where it is heading, and how it will play out, and that in its service it is they (and no-one else) who assume an unlimited freedom to act. As a senior adviser to Bush told a journalist in 2002: ‘We’re an empire now, and when we act, we create our own reality . . . We’re history’s actors.’74

Osama bin Laden and his many supporters do not accept the American narrative of power in the service of principle; they see merely power in the service of power, and derive from it a lesson that it is both necessary and legitimate to respond with a commensurate violence. As bin Laden said in his chilling 1998 interview with John Miller, who asked him if this ‘fatwa’ calling on all Muslims to kill Americans extended to all Americans:

We are surprised this question is coming from Americans. Each action will solicit a similar reaction. We must use such punishment to keep your evil away from Muslims . . . America does not have a religion that prevents it from destroying all people.

. . . The prophet said: ‘A woman entered hell because of a cat.’ She did not feed it and blocked it from finding food on its own. She is going to hell for blocking cat to death (sic), but [what do you] say to those who agreed and gave reason for the hundreds of thousands of troops to blockade millions of Muslims in Iraq?75

In this light the rhetoric of freedom and the liberal-democratic ‘way of life’ cannot but inflame the fundamentalist community that serves as a social and cultural basis for al-Qaeda and its associated organisations. It will do so, because it is read as a confirmation of the critique – found
in the philosophy of thinkers such as Sayyid Qutb – of the moral and ethical bankruptcy of Western rationalism and its imperialist agenda to dominate and destroy Islam, to perpetuate a state of modern jahiliyya, the ‘conscious usurpation of God’s authority ... [the] foundational transgression of human hubris’.

The narrative of freedom that Bush speaks of (and the US armed forces enact) has already been written and interpreted in fundamentalist thought, with a starkly different meaning from that Bush seeks to convey; one further transformed by every American action in Iraq and throughout the Middle East. The Bush administration’s April 2004 endorsement – in pointed defiance of countless UN resolutions on the issue – of the Israeli government’s unilateral plan under the guise of ‘disengagement’ to impose a grossly unjust ‘final settlement’ on the Palestinians, one that could undermine any possibility of meaningful self-determination, is just such an example of arrogance and hubris that will deepen Islamic hatred of the West and rebound upon it in new acts of terror. This US gesture, portrayed throughout the Arab world as a new ‘Balfour declaration’, is yet another example of the callous, ‘strategic’ use of instrumental reason that treats the Palestinian people as so much human cattle who can be contained and corralled, and whose destiny can be decided by a handful of men in Jerusalem and Washington.

The arguments of bin Laden and Bush have one important thing in common: they betray the same deluded commitment to the easy translation of means into ends, as if either of their policies could protect Muslims, ensure the security of Americans, or bring about the utterly irreconcilable ‘ends’ of history they seek (‘Freedom’ fights the ‘Caliphate’, like Punch and Judy dolls squabbling on the arms of history). Nothing has been more detrimental to the livelihood and future of Muslims than al-Qaeda’s campaign of terror, and nothing has been more detrimental to future global security than the invasion of Iraq, yet we are locked in a terrible hall of mirrors where each discourse makes the other meaningful, and each act precipitates the next (as the latter-day Isaac Newton says, ‘each action will solicit a similar reaction’). As we count the toll of dead and wounded in Iraq, and ponder the abyss of violence, frustration and insecurity into which it has slipped since the fall of Saddam Hussein, the times more than ever call for the insight of a Hannah Arendt. Violence is not power, she warns us, and ‘the very substance of violence is the means-end category, whose chief characteristic, if applied to human affairs, is that the end is always in danger of being overwhelmed by the means which it justifies and are needed to reach it’. We face a choice: between a terror ‘that comes into being when violence, having destroyed all power, does not abdicate’ and a hopeful effort to eliminate the ‘disastrous reduction of human affairs to the business of dominion’ so that they can ‘appear, or rather reappear, in their full diversity’.
A new freedom?

Can freedom ever reappear in its full diversity, in a way that jettisons the urge to dominate and control, that respects the plurality of human communities and projects, that can be representative of something we might one day call justice?

It may first be important to remind ourselves what freedom ought not to be. A new image of freedom needs to be utterly disentangled from the projects of national, imperial, civilisational and capitalist aggrandisement which have rendered it so meaningless and sinister; from the anonymous movement of a history in which no one acts and no one is responsible; and from the instrumental, utilitarian images of technological mastery which the powerful use to make tools and resources of the weak. Above all, even as it retains a critical faith with enlightenment, freedom must be disentangled from an ontological correspondence with ‘Europe’, ‘America’, ‘the West’. It must no longer be ‘autobiography’ written on the self, but dialogue written with the Other.81 If we are to grapple with the horror that is the new terrorism, and the profound challenge of the Islamist philosophy that (partially) supplies it with meaning, such a dialogue is crucial – within and between ‘Islam’ and the ‘West’, ‘Arabs’ and ‘Jews’, ‘Europe’ and ‘America’, ‘North’ and ‘South’ – a dialogue that interrogates the past as it opens the future to what the future is: new possibility.82 We must get beyond the idea that freedom is a secure tradition, fully realised, that can be mapped onto ever greater areas of the world at the whim of any passing visionary or statesman. Surely the world has had enough of a history of freedom that obsessively maps the past onto the future, especially when the mapmaker’s preferred tools are the US Cavalry, the B52 and the armoured corps. Mapping the past onto the future does not bring the future closer; it annihilates it.

Freedom can no longer be thought of as a thing, a possession, an infinite capacity to will, make, use, decide. It must be a freedom that is aware of ethical, social and physical limits, because without them it is not freedom but an attempt at domination. These limits cannot, as in the classical social contract theory, be supplied by the new physical and ontological power of the state as an exchange of freedom for security – that gesture is precisely what simultaneously subordinated men to the state and generated reason of state’s belief in its unbounded freedom to act. We thus need to preserve and radicalise Kant’s insight that Right is ‘the restriction of each individual’s freedom so that it harmonises with the freedom of everyone else’, while expanding its community of ‘hospitality’ and detaching it from nationalist ontology and sovereign authority.83

To get beyond its atomistic liberal formulation, however, Kant’s principle of balance and limitation must be extended to the operation of institutions, technologies and social formations.84 In the spirit of Levinas and Arendt – but perhaps also beyond them – I would argue that the limits
to freedom must come from nature, the world, the Other; from the infinite plurality and diversity of human society and aspiration, within the natural structures that contain them and interact with their social and technological processes so unpredictably. If freedom is to exist, if it is to have any kind of positive value, and if it is to be a measure of being, it must be rethought as relationship and responsibility. As Jean-Luc Nancy writes in *The Experience of Freedom*: "Freedom cannot be presented as the autonomy of a subjectivity in charge of itself and its decisions, evolving freely and in permanent independence from every obstacle. What would such an independence mean, if not the impossibility of entering into the slightest relation – and therefore of exercising the slightest freedom?" In short, freedom arises only in relationships of interconnection, mutual dependence and responsibility, not in separation, control or mastery.

Freedom, at its most naked and unborn, is a wish sent into a space of existence; a simplistic, childlike hunger growing in a space of complexity and life. It is this ‘space’ that is most important. Who lives there? What do we all want, in our tension and complexity? How do we adjudicate, mediate, and meet our diverse and so often conflicting claims? How is justice also to live there, in tension, in dialogue, in partnership with freedom? Here we encounter some difficult dilemmas. First, how do we promote human emancipation, and sustainable relationships with others and the environment, when human and/or natural claims and aspirations clash? Should freedom be plural and differentiated at the same time as it is universal? How is conflict to be mediated and resolved to work for freedom, a plural freedom, without being thought as a ‘contradiction’ that can be ‘dialectically’ resolved into a higher end or suffocating unity that contains the seeds of new conflict? Second, how can we think a limited freedom to act when modern action is, as Arendt argued, perpetually dangerous and unpredictable yet remains one of the ‘most decisive human experiences’ without which freedom cannot be possible?

In short, we must ask who and what lives and hopes in the space of freedom, how we interact, and how our actions affect how we might interact. Who lives there are other people, other animals, other forms of matter and life: the societies and ecosystems that sustain and limit us. Complexity and contingency, plural and contested meaning, inhabits and fissures this space, and we need a practice of freedom that can accept and learn from the uncertainty that comes with it. Arendt argues that modernity reduced action to ‘making’ in order to reduce its uncertainty and ‘save human affairs from their frailty’, yet cautioned that ‘action has no end’. We are not able to ‘undo or even control reliably any of the process we start through action’ – uncertainty is its product. She suggests that the traditional attempt to evade this ‘burden of irreversibility and unpredictability’ by identifying sovereignty with freedom is no answer, because ‘the result would not so much be sovereign domination of oneself as arbitrary domination of all others’. The result would be both unjust and
meaningless: ‘no man can be sovereign because not one man, but men, inhabit the earth’. Conversely, any ‘aspiration toward omnipotence always implies – apart from utopian hubris – the destruction of plurality’.88

In a profound meditation on power in *The Human Condition*, Arendt argues that plurality – ‘the living together of people’ – is the very condition of freedom, of ‘human power’. Plurality is its condition and ‘its only limitation’.89 It may be that Arendt thought of plurality more in classically republican terms, rather than something analogous to the multiple forms of ‘difference’ envisaged by postmodern, feminist and postcolonial theorists, but through it she provides a series of insights that can be built upon.90 In particular it is useful because, when placed alongside difference, it challenges us to find ways of enunciating and defending difference while also thinking connection, responsibility and community – the space of public discourse and collective action within and beyond the nation that was my specific concern in Chapter 3. Such a recognition of plurality – a plurality that I would expand from Arendt’s more limited definition to take in different people, genders, races, religions, nations, sexualities and cultures – points us towards profound ways of thinking freedom ethically. A recognition and imagination of plurality that must be further radicalised, in ways that Arendt could not quite conceive, beyond the human – so that it takes in animals, plants, oceans, ecosystems, so that our terrible ability to act into nature, to turn humans into nature, product and resource simultaneously, is matched by responsibility for that action and possibility.91

It is in this sense that the Bush administration’s rejection of the Kyoto Protocol, its doctrine of preventive force and fundamentalist belief in the transformative power of war, and its stunning disregard for the daily suffering of millions, are so paradigmatic of an irresponsible exercise of freedom thrown in the very face of creative efforts to recognise and limit the destructive character of modern action and global processes. It is not as if we do not possess the resources and ability to develop such understandings of responsible freedom and contingent action – in the spheres of the global environment, political economy and security, among others, existing discussions and efforts to organise show valuable evidence of the sensibility I am arguing for here. They need to be cultivated, refined and, most importantly, *mobilised* at the highest and most potentially destructive levels of politics and organisational power.

What this chapter has sought to suggest, above all, is that the problem for us does not merely lie with one group of men, one government, or one state. It lies with a particularly widespread and dangerous potential of our modernity – what Heller calls the ‘unholy matrimony of the historical and technological imagination’ – which other critical potentials in our modernity thankfully contain the power to mitigate.92 The disasters American exceptionalism may bring us are only those inherent in the larger hubris by which modern man has combined ever more powerful and
unpredictable forms of freedom with a discourse of historical inevitability that effaces all trace of its political authorship, its unequal beneficiaries, and its terrible human and natural costs. But we may wonder if this freedom’s advocates have their doubts, too: when George W. Bush was asked by Bob Woodward how history would judge the invasion of Iraq, he replied, with unwitting irony: ‘History. We won’t know. We’ll all be dead.’ To this the voiceless might say: History. We’re all dying.
Notes

Introduction


3 Richard Cheney, address to Republican National Convention, New York, 1 September 2004.


8 Ibid., pp. 26–7.

9 Ibid., p. 27.

10 Ibid., pp. 28, 33.


12 Ibid.


14 Schmitt, Political Theology, pp. 5, 12.

15 Ibid., p. 6.


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20 Agamben, State of Exception, p. 2.
21 Agamben, Homo Sacer, p. 142.
22 Ibid., p. 121.
24 Ibid., p. 22.
26 Agamben, State of Exception, p. 88.
31 My argument here has affinities with Achille Mbembe’s analysis of ‘necropolitics’, which almost alone among the many derivations of Schmitt and Agamben links their analyses to war and colonialism, and expands the space of the camp to analyse the creation of ‘death worlds’, new and unique forms of social existence in which vast populations are subjected to conditions of life conferring upon them the status of living dead’. However, like Dean, Butler and Agamben, Mbembe remains concerned with formations of coercive and life-denying power rather than identifying the bizarrely life-affirming system by which the Other’s suffering enables security, prosperity and happiness. Achille Mbembe, ‘Necropolitics’, Public Culture, Vol. 15 No. 1, 2003, p. 40. See also Pal Ahluwalia, ‘Empire or Imperialism: Implications for a “New” Politics of Resistance’, Social Identities, Vol. 10 No. 5, 2004.
40 Booth, Critical Security Studies and World Politics, p. 181.
1 Aporias of security


3 For a discussion of the term ‘ontopolitical’ see William E. Connolly, The Ethos of Pluralization (Minneapolis MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), pp. 1–5. There he suggests that ‘ontopolitical interpretation’ needs to critically revisit the founding (and often disavowed) claims of modern politics ‘about
the necessities and possibilities of human being’, to question how many ‘common presumptions of our time . . . contain dangerous demands and expectations within them’.

4 Connolly, The Ethos of Pluralization, p. 34.


6 For the Indonesian concepts of ‘resilience’ and ‘security’, see the Indonesian 1995 Defence White Paper, entitled The Policy of the State Defence and Security of the Republic of Indonesia, p. 12, which argues that the primary geopolitical concept known as Wawasan Nusantara (‘Archipelagic Principle’) requires: ‘the strengthening of national resilience, which is the integration of all forms of resilience existing in the political, economic, socio-cultural, security and defence fields. This resilience is aimed at guaranteeing national stability, which incorporates the stability in all these fields.’ See also Dewi Fortuna Anwar, Indonesia and the Security of Southeast Asia (Jakarta: Centre for Strategic and International Studies, 1992).


15 Derrida, Aporias, pp. 12–35.

16 Interesting work in this direction has been carried out by Costas Constantinou, who urges us to see security not as ‘a rescue from danger but a freedom from the care of danger . . . a continuous, spiritual, seafaring agon’, and Michael Dillon, who critically interrogates ‘the limits set by security to our modern political imagination . . . by showing how security, itself exceeding those limits, challenges us to out-live the modern’. Costas M. Constantinou, ‘Poetics of Security’, Alternatives, Vol. 25 No. 3, 2000, p. 292; Dillon, Politics of Security, p. 10.


18 Berki, Security and Society, pp. 32–3.


23 Ibid., p. 90.
27 Ibid., p. 93.
28 Ibid., p. 98.
29 Ibid., pp. 98–102.
33 Locke, _Two Treatises of Government_, pp. 342–3.
36 Ibid., p. 227.
37 Ibid., p. 81.
40 Locke, _Two Treatises of Government_, pp. 314–15
41 Ibid., pp. 305–9; emphasis added.
42 Ibid., p. 319.
44 Gordon, ‘Governmental Rationality’, pp. 11–16; emphasis added.
48 Ibid., p. 308.
49 Ibid., p. 304; emphasis added.
50 Ibid., p. 312.
54 Foucault outlined bio-power in ‘The Right of Death and Power Over Life’, the final chapter of _The History of Sexuality (Volume 1)_ . He characterises its emergence, from the seventeenth century, as a shift from the sovereign’s right to kill treasonous persons to ‘the calculated management of life’ focused around two poles: discipline and the body as machine, and the body of the species – all the opaque processes of public health and population. With it came a mutation in power, echoed in Bentham: ‘the growing importance assumed by
the action of the norm, at the expense of the juridical system of the law . . . a power whose task is to take charge of life requires continuous corrective and regulatory mechanisms. It is no longer a matter of bringing death into play in the field of sovereignty, but of distributing the living in the domain of value and utility.’ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: Volume One* (New York: Peregrine, 1987), p. 144.


65 Ibid.


70 Gatens, *Imaginary Bodies*, p. 25.

71 Christine Sylvester made this comment during a seminar at the ANU in 1995; her paper is reprinted as ‘Handmaid’s Tales of Washington Power: The Abject and the Real Kennedy White House’, *Feminist International Relations: An Unfinished Journey* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Tickner, *Gender in International Relations*, p. 6.

72 J. Ann Tickner cites Sandra Harding’s argument that an African worldview ‘in which the economic behaviour of individuals is embedded in a social order, is a communal orientation seen as “deviant” by neoclassical economic theory; yet it is one that represents a different type of economic behaviour specific to other cultures’. *Gender in International Relations*, p. 73.


74 Sylvester, *Feminist International Relations*, p. 62.

75 Dillon, *Politics of Security*, p. 16.


78 Tickner, *Gender in International Relations*, p. 9.
2 Poetry outside security


3 Ibid., p. 22.
8 Rabinow, The Foucault Reader, p. 22.
10 See the 1995 Indonesian Defence White Paper, The Policy of the State Defence and Security of the Republic of Indonesia (Jakarta: Department of Defence and Security), p. 12, which argues that their primary geopolitical concept known as Wawasan Nusantara (‘Archipelagic Principle’) requires ‘the strengthening of national resilience, which is the integration of all forms of resilience existing in the political, economic, socio-cultural, security and defence fields. This resilience is aimed at guaranteeing national stability, which incorporates the stability in all these fields’.
12 See A. Alvarez’s introduction to The New Poetry (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1962), for an argument along these lines, and for celebrated work which remains captured by and perpetuates such technologies of security and national identity see Les A. Murray’s T.S. Eliot prize-winning book Subhuman Redneck Poems (Potts Point NSW: Duffy & Snellgrove, 1996).
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15 Ryan, ‘For Katrina’, *Excavation*, p. 20.
19 Lowell, ‘For the Union Dead’, p. 72.
22 For an account of the killings and their significance, see Robert Cribb (ed.), *The Indonesian Killings: Studies from Java and Bali* (Clayton: Centre for Southeast Asian Studies Monash University, 1991). For comments about the strategic importance of the Suharto regime see Mark Ryan (ed.), *Advancing Australia: The Speeches of Paul Keating, Prime Minister* (Sydney: Big Picture Publications, 1995).
29 Ryan, ‘Disinformation’, *Excavation*, p. 64.
31 See Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

3 Security after security

4 Ze’ev Schiff, ‘Hamas selected Be’er Sheva because it was an easy target’, *Haaretz*, 1 September 2004.
5 See the petition initiated by Etienne Balibar that at the time of writing had attracted over 17,000 signatures. www.PetitionOnline.com/stw/petition.html.
8 Booth, ‘Security as Emancipation’.
9 Elon, A Blood-Dimmed Tide, p. 63.
17 Reinhart, Israel/Palestine, pp. 138–9.
19 See Dov Weisglass, ‘Remarks on Relations with the United States, Disengagement, the Road Map, and the Possibilities of a Palestinian State’, Journal of Palestine Studies, Vol. XXXIV No. 2 (Winter 2005), p. 203. Weisglass went on to say:

The disengagement plan makes it possible for Israel to park conveniently in an interim situation that distances us as far as possible from political pressure. It legitimates our contention that there is no negotiating with the Palestinians. There is a decision here to do the minimum possible in order to maintain our political situation. The decision is proving itself. It is making it possible for the Americans to go to the seething and simmering international community and say to them, “What do you want?” It also transfers the initiative to our hands. It compels the world to deal with our idea, with the scenario we wrote.

20 ‘Prime Minister Ariel Sharon’s Four Stage Disengagement Plan’, Haaretz.com, 18 July 2004, parts 1(c) and 1(d).
22 For a discussion of the Australian case, see Anthony Burke, In Fear of Security: Australia’s Invasion Anxiety (Sydney: Pluto Press Australia, 2001); David Day, Claiming a Continent: A History of Australia (Sydney: Angus and Robertson,


24 See also Yossi Alpher, *Israel–Palestine: The Clock is Ticking on a Two-state Solution* (Washington DC: American for Peace Now, 2004). www.peacenow.org/The Geneva Accords were published in October 2003, and were the product of bilateral negotiations between Israeli politicians and former security officials led by former Labour MK Yossi Beilin and a Palestinian group led by Yasser Abed Rabbo. They followed the inconclusive late negotiations between the PLO and Barak government at Taba in January 2001, and built upon concepts discussed at Camp David that year and upon a series of principles (or ‘parameters’) set out by President Clinton. Copies are available at www.haaretz.com and in Beilin, *The Path to Geneva*, pp. 326–62.


26 Interview with author, Tel Aviv, 24 August 2004.

27 Interview with author, Tel Aviv, 24 August 2004.


29 Ibid., p. 206.

30 Ibid., pp. 207–8.


37 Arendt’s profound meditation on statelessness and the aporias of the rights of man and citizen in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* was a corrosive early critique. See Chapter 9, ‘The Decline of the Nation-State and the End of the Rights of Man’, where she makes an explicit connection between the West’s lack of concern for the fate of stateless Jews under Nazi occupation and the Palestinian *Nakba*. She writes, heavy with irony, of how after the Holocaust the ‘solution of the Jewish question merely produced a new category of refugees, the Arabs, thereby increasing the number of the stateless and rightless by another 700,000 to 800,000 people’. Hence: ‘[the] Rights of Man, supposedly inalienable, proved to be unenforceable – even in countries whose constitutions were based upon them – whenever people appeared who were not citizens of any sovereign state.’ Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, 1968), pp. 290–3.


42 Connolly, *The Ethos of Pluralization*.


51 Levinas, *Ethics and Infinity*, p. 95.


68 Buber, I and Thou, pp. 89–90.

69 Ibid., pp. 96–7, 91, 97; Elon, A Blood-Dimmed Tide, p. 63.


71 Connolly, The Ethos of Pluralization, pp. 152, xxi–xxiii.

72 Ibid., pp. 152–3.

73 Ibid., p. 135.

74 Ibid., p. xviii.


76 Connolly, The Ethos of Pluralization, p. 155.

77 Ibid., pp. 100–4. I am indebted to him for correcting my analysis in an earlier draft, and insisting on a distinction between nation-state identities and a pluralistic ‘territorial state in which an ethos of engagement is negotiated between multiple constituencies differentiated on several dimensions’. Personal Communication, 4 August 2005.


79 A June 2005 article about dialogue between Jews and Arabs in Israel captured their dilemma profoundly. Following one Arab Israeli’s attempt to promote better co-existence, its authors wrote: ‘Ghazal’s ‘coexistence encounters’ sometimes read like an emblematic Middle East morality play and sometimes like a script from the theater of the absurd, the sort of exchanges encountered in a Beckett play’. In response to Jewish suspicions about the loyalty of Arab citizens to Israel, Ghazal replied: ‘It’s no easy predicament when your people confront your state and your state confronts your people. For the Arabs we’re not Arab enough, for the Israelis we’re not Israeli enough. That leaves our identity damaged, crippled.’ Jerrold Kessel and Pierre Klochendler, ‘Waiting For Equality’, Ha’aretz, 28 June 2005. www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/592497.html.


82 Levinas, Ethics and Infinity, p. 98.

83 Connolly, The Ethos of Pluralization, pp. xxi, 98.


85 Buber, I and Thou, pp. 82–3.

I am indebted to Dirk Moses for this insight.

Nimni, ‘From *Galut* to *T’futsoth*’, p. 120.

I am indebted to William Connolly for this point. He writes: ‘there are things to think and do, but that there is no guarantee that they will measure up to the scope of the problem and the forces ranged against us. Act anyway, thoughtfully and even against the probabilities’, personal communication, 4 August 2005.


The quote is a paraphrase of Yossi Beilin’s *The Path to Geneva*, p. 189.


In early 2000 a group of 120 Palestinian intellectuals and artists disseminated an unprecedented communiqué directed to ‘the Israeli and Jewish Public’, that stated ‘we are concerned that what is being contrived is not peace, but the seeds of future wars . . . we extend our hand to you to make a real and just peace, not the militarist peace of coercion, a general’s peace’. Hass, *Reporting from Ramallah*, pp. 44–9.


Zvi Bar’el, ‘Who wants to play with Abbas?’, *Ha’aretz*, 4 December 2005.


### 4 Strangers without strangeness


6 *Jakarta Post*, 17 October 1999.


16 Gatens, *Imaginary Bodies*.


20 Australian Foreign Affairs Record, 1973, p. 97.


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31 Australian Foreign Affairs Record, 1986, pp. 421, 790.


34 Ibid., p. 133.


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49 Bello, ‘Asia-Europe Relations’.

5 The perverse perseverance of sovereignty


3 Ibid., pp. xi–xii
4 Ibid., pp. 137–58.
7 Hand, The Levinas Reader, p. 78.
8 Hardt and Negri, Empire, pp. 217–18.
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14 Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, p. 98.


16 Ibid., p. 138.


24 Ibid., p. 73.

25 Ibid., p. 75.

26 Ibid., p. 82.

27 Ibid., p. 87.

28 Ibid., pp. 82, 96, 103.

29 Ibid., p. 137.

30 Ibid., p. 90.

31 Ibid., pp. 137–8.

32 Ibid., p. 150.

33 Ibid., p. 142.


37 Ibid., pp. 141–2.


44 Connolly, The Ethos of Pluralization, p. 135.


46 Don Greenlees, ‘Can Kopassus get away with murder?’, The Weekend Australian, 31 August–1 September 2002, p. 23.

47 Hand, The Levinas Reader, pp. 76, 82.


55 George, Discourses of Global Politics, p. 9.

56 Hobbes, Leviathan, p. 81.


58 Susan Goldenberg, ‘Hungry, cold and under siege, the Palestinian leader defies Israel in the ruins of his realm’, Guardian Weekly, 4–10 April 2002, p. 1; ‘Across the West Bank daily tragedies go unseen’, Guardian Weekly, 2–8 May 2002, p. 3; ‘A wasteland stinking of corpses and cordite that was
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62 Herzliya Conference.


64 See William Connolly’s argument about the need to endorse the normative force of cosmopolitanism whilst avoiding those ‘elements [within it] of a dogmatic western imperialism still in need of reconstruction’. William E. Connolly, Neuropolitics: Thinking, Culture, Speed (Minneapolis MN: Minnesota University Press, 2002), pp. 177–201.


66 Ibid., p. 399.


68 Hand, The Levinas Reader, pp. 86, 294.


70 Campbell, National Deconstruction, pp. 179–80.

6 Just war or ethical peace?


4 As David Campbell and Michael Shapiro suggest: ‘far from being a principle that keeps morality at bay, reason of state constitutes the realist problematic as a moral argument in which the claim is that “the reasons for overriding the constraints of ordinary morality in emergency situations are themselves moral”.’ David Campbell and Michael Shapiro (eds), Moral Spaces: Rethinking Ethics and World Politics (Minneapolis MN: Minnesota University Press, 1999), p. vii.
8 Ibid., pp. 161–6.
9 Der Derian, *Virtuous War*, p. xvi.
16 Elshtain, ‘How to Fight a Just War’, p. 264.
18 Bush, *Address to a Joint Session of Congress*.
26 Ibid., pp. 85–6.
27 Ibid., pp. 85–6.
28 Ibid., p. 90.
Wheeler notes that hiding military forces close to civilian areas is a contravention of the Geneva Conventions, but given the awesome threat posed to enemy forces by US air power, which removes any equality of risk between opposing forces, this clause is surely moot.


Jean Bethke Elshtain, ‘Reflections on War and Political Discourse: Realism, Just War and Feminism in a Nuclear Age’, in Elshtain, Just War Theory, p. 265.

40 Walzer, Just and Unjust Wars, p. 23 and ‘The Triumph of Just War Theory’, Part I.
46 Elshtain, Women and War, p. 150.
47 Elshtain, ‘How to Fight a Just War’, p. 263.
49 Elshtain, Women and War, p. 265.
50 Elshtain, ‘A Just War?’.
55 Walzer, ‘No Strikes-Inspectors Yes, War No’.
56 US Deputy National Security Advisor Robert Gates said in May 1991 that economic sanctions will remain in place and that ‘Iraqis will pay the price’ while Saddam remained in power. Cockburn and Cockburn, Saddam Hussein, p. 114.
57 Bin Laden specifically mentioned the sanctions toll in Iraq and claimed that US failure to distinguish between civilians and combatants justified Al Qaeda in targeting American and Jewish civilians: ‘We believe that the biggest thieves in the world and the terrorists are the Americans. The only way for us to fend


60 Conetta suggests a range of reasons for the change: the differing objectives of the operations (coercive diplomacy versus regime change and destruction of enemy personnel); a greater reliance on cluster bombs and GPS-guided bombs such as the Joint Direct Attack Munition (JDAM) as opposed to laser-guided weapons; a heavy reliance on bombers such as the B-1 and B-52 (rather than the B-2 in Yugoslavia), which resulted in 40 per cent of attacks being with unguided (‘dumb’) weapons and another 40 per cent with the less accurate GPS-guided weapons; bombing activity being concentrated in heavily populated areas where ‘the fronts of the ethnic war . . . tended to form’; the higher number of opportunistic attacks using dumb weapons based on real-time intelligence; and the reliance on suspect intelligence supplied by Northern Alliance militias, which saw US bombers being co-opted into murderous local rivalries. Conetta, Operation Enduring Freedom: Why a Higher Rate of Civilian Bombing Casualties?.


64 Conetta, Strange Victory.

65 I take this term from Andrew Linklater, who writes of the ‘challenge of ensuring that efforts to protect innocent civilians from terrorist attacks do not damage the moral ideal of freeing all human beings from unnecessary suffering . . . that the “civilising” process of eradicating indefensible violence does not have the paradoxical effect of creating “de-civilising processes” that cause many human beings avoidable distress and injury’. Andrew Linklater, ‘Unnecessary Suffering’, in Booth and Dunne, Worlds in Collision, p. 303.


73 Murphy and Connetta, *Civilian Casualties in the 2003 Iraq War*.


78 Elshtain, ‘Commentary: Thinking about War and Justice’.


80 Elshtain, ‘Commentary: Thinking about War and Justice’.


86 In the wake of the Iraq war, right-wing US law professors such as Alfred P. Rubin and Kenneth Anderson have been arguing that the Geneva Conventions are not ‘realistic’, especially in their assumption that ‘military planners can easily differentiate between civilians and combatants’. Susan Milligan and Ross
87 Robertson, Crimes Against Humanity, p. 183.
89 R. B. J. Walker writes that after 9/11 ‘politics was reduced to an awesome decisionism’: ‘War, terror, judgement’, p. 65.
94 Booth and Dunne (eds), Worlds in Collision, p. 21.

7 Violence and reason on the shoals of Vietnam

3 Daniel Bell, ‘The End of American Exceptionalism’, The Public Interest, No. 41, Fall 1975, p. 204.
6 For a survey of the veterans’ literature on the war see The Perfect War, pp. 462–76. Gibson comments that this literature ‘contradicts the war managers at virtually every level’ yet has ‘failed to influence the conventional assessments by both the “error in judgement” and the “self-imposed restraint” schools.
8 Paul Hendriks’s The Living and the Dead (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996), an intriguing personal and political biography of McNamara, is an important additional reference here. He discusses the layers of (self)deception and denial which shaped McNamara’s political career and his relationship to the war, and which re-emerged in his 1995 memoir. His devotion to science and mathematics, and its influence on his prosecution of the war, are also
traced, along with their slow and partial breakdown as he allowed the human tragedies of the war to affect him.


11 Ibid., p. 3.


13 Ibid., p. 11.


20 Here I am referring to Lyotard’s idea of the postmodern as both a dialogue of disillusionment with modernity, and existing contemporary with it, rather than being temporised as coming ‘after’ modernism or as synonymous with ‘late capitalism’. As he writes in *The Inhuman*: ‘neither modernity nor so-called postmodernity can be identified and defined as clearly circumscribed historical entities, of which the latter would always come “after” the former. Rather . . . the postmodern is always implied in the modern because of the fact that modernity, modern temporality, comprises in itself an impulsion to exceed itself into a state other than itself. And not only to exceed itself in that way, but to resolve itself into a sort of ultimate stability, such for example as is aimed at by the utopian project, but also by the straightforward political project implied in the grand narratives of emancipation. Modernity is constitutionally and ceaselessly pregnant with its postmodernity.’ Jean François Lyotard, *The Inhuman* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988), p. 25.


22 Ibid., p. 205.


26 Ibid., pp. 58–77.


31 Ibid., pp. 732–3.

32 Ibid., pp. 6, 12, 42, 535.

33 See Christine Sylvester, ‘Handmaid’s Tales of American Foreign Policy’, presentation to the Department of Political Science, ANU, 1995, reprinted as

34 Ibid., p. 333.
37 Former Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade Gareth Evans, for example, extolled the brilliance of Fukuyama’s thesis in a 1990 speech. Speculating upon its growing realisation in Asia, he cited the moves by the Chinese and Vietnamese towards market economies, the democratisation of Taiwan and South Korea, and the growing acceptance amongst regional leaders of the Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation (APEC) forum. He carefully avoided the questions of democracy in Singapore and Indonesia, and, given his hopes for a UN brokered settlement in Cambodia, would no doubt have questioned Fukuyama’s later myopic attitude to the UN. Senator Gareth Evans, ‘Change in Asia and the End of History’, Address to the Asia Society, New York, 27 September 1990.
38 Fukuyama, The End of History and The Last Man, pp. 3–12.
40 Derrida comments: ‘There is no sense in doing without the concepts of metaphysics in order to shake metaphysics. We have no language – no syntax and no lexicon – which is foreign to this history; we can pronounce not a single destructive proposition which has not already had to slip into the form, the logic and the implicit postulations of precisely what it seeks to contest.’ See Derrida ‘Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences’, p. 280.
41 For a profound presentation of such concerns see Jurgen Habermas’s essays in The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity, which, while presenting a strongly argued critique of much poststructuralism, shared much with those thinkers’ critiques of Hegelian forms of liberalism and classical marxism. A crucial essay here is Michel Foucault’s ‘What is Enlightenment?’, in Paul Rabinow, The Foucault Reader (New York: Pantheon, 1984).

8 Iraq: strategy’s burnt offering


2 George W. Bush, on the USS Abraham Lincoln announcing the end of war in Iraq, 1 May 2003.
5 I am conscious here that claims about ethics are not always unproblematic, given that a writer such as R. B. J. Walker rightly warns that ‘even those moments of international relations theory usually associated with the refusal of ethics are in fact made possible through certain ethical claims’. Oppenheimer’s use of the term ‘ethical’ contains a humanistic worldview and series of value judgements that contrast it with utilitarian and instrumental forms of reasoning, conceiving ethics as a space of thought in which they can be questioned or resisted. I use it here in that sense. R. B. J. Walker, *Inside/Outside: International Relations as Political Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 79.

15 Van Creveld continues: ‘Modern European man, his belief in God destroyed by the Enlightenment, took the world as his oyster. Its living beings – and its raw materials – were regarded as his to exploit and plunder, and indeed plundering and exploiting them constituted “progress”.’ Martin van Creveld, *The Transformation of War* (New York: Free Press, 1991), p. 64.
24 Quoted in Lehman, ‘Letter from Washington’.
25 Quoted in ibid.
29 In a statement to her parliament just prior to the outbreak of war, New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clark said that in February 2003 her government had ‘recognised the Security Council’s authority to authorise force as a last resort to uphold resolutions’ but that ‘we did not believe that such a decision would be justified at that time’. With the imminent use of force without Security Council authority, Clark feared, like de Villepin, that ‘a new and dangerous precedent is being set. It may be possible to justify one’s friends taking such action, but where then is our moral authority when other nations use the precedent which is being set?’ Helen Clark, ‘Statement to Parliament on the Iraq Crisis’, 18 March 2003; see also Speech by Federal Foreign Minister Fischer to the United Nations Security Council, New York, 19 March 2003; Simon Crean, Interview with Sunday Program, 16 March 2003, www.alp.org.au/media/0303.20003918.html
30 Speech by Dominique de Villepin at the UN Security Council, 14 February 2003.
31 de Villepin at the UN Security Council.
32 For an insightful critique of Clausewitz’s argument here, see van Creveld, The Transformation of War, pp. 63–94.
33 Hertzberg, ‘Comment: On to Iraq?’ and ‘Comment: Grinding axis’.
39 Bacon, Novum Organum, para. 95, book 1, p. 126.
41 Tarnas, The Passion of the Western Mind, p. 263.
44 Arendt, The Human Condition, p. 156.
49 Kissinger, American Foreign Policy, pp. 57–8.
50 Dreyfuss, ‘The Thirty-Year Itch’.
52 Dreyfuss, ‘The Thirty-Year Itch’.
56 Ibid., pp. 7, 8–9, 11.
57 Ibid., p. 15.
58 Ibid., pp. 18, 21–3.
59 Ibid., p. 28.
63 Reid, ‘Foucault on Clausewitz’, p. 23.
66 Conventional arms either supplied by the United States or whose purchase was facilitated by the CIA included cluster bombs (via Chile), 2000-pound MK-84 bombs (via Saudi Arabia), and artillery shells, fuses, trucks and mines (via the UK and Jordan). Alan Friedman, Spider’s Web: Bush, Saddam, Thatcher and the Decade of Deceit (London: Faber & Faber, 1993).
67 Friedman, Spider’s Web, p. 28.
68 Cockburn and Cockburn, Saddam Hussein, p. 81.
69 Friedman, Spider’s Web, p. 33.
71 Power, A Problem from Hell, p. 173; Friedman, Spider’s Web, p. 106.
72 The staffer, Peter Galbraith, later became a strong advocate for the Kurds in Washington and helped draft Senator Claiborne Pell’s Prevention of Genocide bill to impose sanctions on Iraq. Power, A Problem from Hell, p. 185.
74 David Campbell argues that US policy had early on precluded a diplomatic solution to the conflict. Even as late as February 1991, after the beginning of Operation Desert Storm, Soviet Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov gained Iraq’s agreement to an unconditional withdrawal, but earlier meetings with Margaret Thatcher convinced him she ‘had made up her mind to break the back of Iraq’s military and industrial capacity’ – a capacity she had, for the previous decade, helped to create. Campbell, Politics Without Principle, p. 63;


76 Cockburn and Cockburn, *Saddam Hussein*, p. 115.

77 UN Security Council Resolution No. 687 (1991). Paragraph 14 stated that ‘upon Council agreement that Iraq has completed all actions contemplated in paragraphs 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13 above, the prohibitions against the import of commodities and products originating in Iraq and the prohibitions against financial transactions related thereto contained in resolution 661 (1990) shall have no further force or effect’.


80 Glen Rangwala, ‘The myth that all Iraq needs to do to lift sanctions is comply with weapons inspectors’, www.middleeastreference.org.uk/mythoflifting.html


82 Lake, ‘Confronting Backlash States’.


86 See the statement made by Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz to UNSCOM chairman Rolf Ekeus, in which he directly raised concerns about the US/UK covert operations and the independence of the United Nations, along with comments reported by Scott Ritter of an Iraqi colonel who revealed that the regime had foiled the June 1996 coup plot, coordinated by the CIA, that had been timed to coincide with UNSCOM inspections. Ritter also discusses concerns he had about the role of CIA covert operations staff seconded to UNSCOM in 1992 and 1993. Ritter, *Endgame*, pp. 131–4, 140, 143–4.


88 Ibid., pp. 114–35.


91 Cockburn and Cockburn, *Saddam Hussein*, p. 44; Rangwala, ‘The myth that all Iraq needs’.


102 Of particular concern are the deliberate attacks by Sunni insurgents on Shia religious leaders and civilians; natural desires for revenge have only been held in check by the firm opposition of the Grand Ayatollah al-Sistani to anything that could spark civil war. This bitterness has been compounded by the military campaign against followers of Moqtada Al-Sadr. McGeough, ‘Mission Impossible’, pp. 46–7, 79.


104 Ibid., p. 154.

105 Ibid., p. 154.
‘We will not prematurely or unnecessarily risk the costs of worldwide nuclear war in which even the fruits of victory would be ashes in our mouth – but neither will we shrink from that risk at any time it must be faced.’ John F. Kennedy, *Address to the Nation*, 22 October 1962.


George W. Bush, Speech on the USS *Abraham Lincoln*.

## 9 Freedom’s freedom


4 The Hegelian Idea draws upon Kant’s metaphysical revival of a Platonic notion in which ideas are ‘concepts of reason’ that combine ‘pure and transcendentonal’ qualities with empirical ones. In Hegel’s usage, Ideas are ‘the full realisation or actualization of a concept . . . the true or TRUTH’ culminating in the ‘absolute Idea’, the ‘final phase of Logic’. Of relevance to my arguments is that Hegel sees the Idea fully realised in the ‘ethical life of the state’ which resolves all contradictions between individual and collective. Michael Inwood, *A Hegel Dictionary* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), pp. 123–5.


6 In various speeches and radio addresses before and after 9/11 Bush has said: ‘On September the eleventh, enemies of freedom committed an act of war against our country. Night fell on a different world, where freedom itself was under attack.’ ‘Freedom and fear are at war.’ ‘This is the fight of all who believe in progress and pluralism, tolerance and freedom.’ ‘While the price of freedom and security is high, it is never too high.’ ‘Our country will never forget the debt we owe Michael and all those who gave their lives for freedom.’ ‘So long as training camps operate, so long as nations harbour terrorists, freedom is at risk.’ ‘We seek to create a balance of power that favors human freedom.’ ‘Steadfast in our purpose, we now press on. We have known freedom’s price. We have shown freedom’s power. And in this great conflict, my fellow Americans, we will see freedom’s victory.’


Levinas, ‘Ethics as First Philosophy’, p. 78.


Ibid., p. 15.


Luce, ‘The American Century’.

Fukuyama, *The End of History and The Last Man*, p. xi.

Ibid., p. 64.

*National Security Strategy*, part 1. Emphasis added (this phrase is Luce’s).

Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, pp. 91–9, 104, 443.

Ibid., pp. 80–7.


PNAC, *Statement of Principles*.


49 George W. Bush, Remarks at the 2002 Graduation Exercise of the United States Military Academy, West Point, 1 June 2002.
51 George W. Bush, Remarks by the President at the 20th Anniversary of the National Endowment for Democracy, United States Chamber of Commerce, 6 November 2003, Washington DC.
55 Bush, Remarks, West Point, 1 June 2002.
59 George W. Bush, Remarks from the USS Abraham Lincoln, 1 May 2003; *Address to the Nation*, 19 March 2003.
60 François Flahault argues that secularism, while creating ‘an emancipation from the Church’s guardianship’, also produced a ‘deepening of Christianity. With its reference to man in a state of nature, Enlightenment philosophy prolongs the Christian vision of the original man made in the image of God’. While this ‘acknowledged something of the infinite in human beings . . . this limitlessness . . . is reduced to a legitimate kinship between divine perfection and human will and reason’. François Flahault, *Malice* (London: Verso, 2003), p. 27.
63 Heller writes: ‘the idea that men’s (society’s) power over nature and the creatures of nature is increasing – that there is a battle going on here – is completely alien to the texts of the Bible and to the Christian imagination.’ Heller, *A Theory of Modernity*, p. 287, note 41.

65 Fromm, Fear of Freedom, p. 70.
66 Ibid., p. 72.
67 Ibid., p. 41.
69 Fukuyama, The End of History and the Last Man.
70 Bush, Remarks at the National Endowment for Democracy, 6 November 2003.
72 Fukuyama, The End of History and the Last Man, pp. 276–84. In a recent article Brett Bowden refers to these arguments of Fukuyama’s, suggesting that it is here his thesis converges with Huntington’s clash of ‘civilisations’: ‘the pursuit of the former through the strict enforcement of a standard of civilisation almost inevitably risks leading to the latter’. Brett Bowden, ‘In the Name of Progress and Peace: The Standard of Civilisation and the Universalising Project’, Alternatives: Global, Local, Political, Vol. 29 No. 1, January–February 2004.
73 Quotes from Bush, Remarks at the National Endowment for Democracy, 6 November 2003.
79 Miller, ‘To Terror’s Source’.
84 Derrida expresses solidarity with Kant’s notion of hospitality, set out in Perpetual Peace, but sees it as too conditional (‘the right of invitation’) whereas he argues for a pure or unconditional hospitality that ‘opens or is in advance open to someone who is neither expected nor invited . . . wholly other’.


86 This issue has been the subject of great philosophical innovation and debate based around the problem of how incommensurable languages, cultures and claims can be brought into dialogue and justly resolved. Rather than lean exclusively towards one model, I would merely endorse the project. Profound and contending theoretical attempts to tackle this problem have come from Jürgen Habermas (see Borradori, *Philosophy in a Time of Terror*), Jean-François Lyotard (*The Differend: Phrases in Dispute*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), and Connolly (*The Ethos of Pluralization and Pluralism*). Efforts to grapple with this issue in the field of international relations include Andrew Linklater, *The Transformation of Political Community: Ethical Foundations of the Post-Westphalian Era* (Oxford: Polity, 1998), Richard Shapcott, *Justice, Community, and Dialogue in International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) and Campbell and Shapiro, *Moral Spaces*.


89 Ibid., p. 201.

90 I am grateful to Catherine Mills for pointing out to me the limitations and specificities of Arendt’s thought in this regard.


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