

The Empiric Image – Imperialism, Propaganda and the War on Iraq

Paul Cochrane

Center for Arabic and Middle Eastern Studies

Beirut, Lebanon

e-mail CochranePaul@hotmail.com

INTRODUCTION

The imperial image in its current guise is still present everywhere. What we can now identify as the days of outright, overtly imperialist images – particularly of the Orientalist and racist variety from the 19th century – have by and large gone. But as with the term imperialism, the image and the policy are still very much in contemporary usage.

As Edward Said comments in *Culture and Imperialism*, ‘Imperialism did not end, did not suddenly become ‘past,’ once decolonisation had set in motion the dismantling of the classical empires.’¹

Imperialist activities, whether economic, militant, cultural or other, require justification by the instigators – the government and interested groups – for the general public to legitimize and support such acts. Justification is divided into internal and external aspects, albeit the two often merge together, on the national and international scene. National justification is the immediate prerequisite for an imperialistic activity, as by definition imperialism is external to national boundaries, but instigated centrally. Without the support of a country’s citizens – whether tacit, ambiguous, apparent or otherwise – the veneer of imperialism is stripped away.

Internationally the action, in this paper’s case what Said termed ‘the illegal and unsanctioned imperial invasion and occupation of Iraq by Britain and the USA,’ must garner support, whether from certain nations, preferably the powerful – the ‘coalition of the willing’ - or from international bodies such as the United Nations (UN). Justification consequently has to assume two guises, but the national masquerade has to be stronger – a manufactured consent through propaganda.²

In terms of the imperial image, and inspired by Hardt and Negri’s discourse in their book *Empire*, the image of justification can be termed the *empiric image*. This empiric image encompasses all forms of media justification and propaganda for not only war, but also the current system of economic domination and globalization.

To discuss the empiric image in its current manifestation in contemporary British and American propaganda, three mediums will be analyzed: Queen Elizabeth II of Great Britain’s televised Christmas day message 2003; US President G.W. Bush’s speech on the USS Abraham Lincoln declaring the end of the war on Iraq, May 1, 2003; and Time magazine’s Dec. 29-Jan. 5 2004 edition, a special on the Person of the Year: The American Soldier.



Fig 1: The politically correct front cover of Time magazine’s Person of the Year: The American Soldier, New Year 2004

IMPERIALISM AND THE EMPIRIC IMAGE

Imperialism is a problematic term. It has been interpreted in different ways historically and politically, and is often used interchangeably with colonialism, empire and, in more recent times, globalization. Imperialism ‘derives from the Latin word *imperator*, which connotated autocratic power and centralized government,’ and is a process that reaches back to classical empires.³ This form of imperialism, of ‘dominating another country or group of people in ways that benefit the former usually at the expense of the latter,’ took different forms under mercantile imperialism in the 1500-1700s, and with the advent of industrialization, capitalist imperialism through colonization.⁴

Certain nations in history have been overtly and unashamedly imperialist, such as France and Britain. With decolonisation and the ‘granting’ of independence to colonies in the twentieth century, direct control of other lands and peoples ended, but was only to be replaced by indirect control of countries, utilizing local elites linked to the ‘former’ imperial powers (such as through the British Commonwealth and the French Francophonie). Through loans from imperial powers to states, monopolistic control and imbalanced trade, an imperial relation of continued dominance developed, aided by, or via the manipulation of, international organizations such as the UN, World Trade Organization and the International Monetary Fund. Vladimir Lenin refers to this as ‘dependent countries which, politically, are formally independent, but in fact, are enmeshed in the net of financial and diplomatic dependence – as the semi colony, or commercial colony.’⁵

¹ Said, E. *Culture and Imperialism*. (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1993: 282).

² Said, E. *Orientalism*, 3rd Ed. (London: Penguin, 2003: xiii).

³ Chilcote, R. (Ed.), *The Political Economy of Imperialism* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000: 2).

⁴ *Ibid*

⁵ Lenin, V.I. *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1966:79).

The United States of America currently denies that it has any imperial ambitions. 'We have no desire to dominate, no ambitions of empire' said President George W. Bush in the 2004 State of the Union address.⁶ Despite this statement, a New York Times article reported that Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld ordered "a study of ancient empires – Macedonia, Rome, the Mongols – to figure out how they maintained dominance" in the summer of 2001.⁷

This new type of imperialism can be said of Britain today. Robert Cooper, a Foreign Office official close to British Prime Minister Tony Blair wrote in 2002: 'All the conditions for imperialism are there, but both the supply and demand for imperialism have dried up. And yet the weak still need the strong and the strong still need an orderly world. A world in which the efficient and well-governed export stability and liberty, and which is open to investment and growth – all of this seems eminently desirable. What is needed then is a new kind of imperialism, one acceptable to a world of human rights and cosmopolitan values. We can already discern its outline: an imperialism which brings order and organization, but which rests today on the voluntary principle.'⁸

Imperialism is no longer identified by one single nation exploiting another, as it frequently involves more than one nation and numerous companies, many of which are multinationals, to profit from imperial domination. As Chilcote states, 'What is new today is that the world economy is fully capitalist' and no longer divided up, the ideological and economic barriers brought down through economic interdependence and globalization.⁹ Samir Amin substitutes the term globalization for imperialism, arguing that globalization 'is an ideological discourse used to legitimize the strategies of imperialist capital.'¹⁰ His theory of capitalist globalization 'makes globalization synonymous with imperialism. Imperialism is therefore not a phase – be it the supreme phase – of capitalism; it is its permanent feature.'¹¹

With globalization and imperialism seemingly intertwined, and the decline in the sovereignty of nation-states, we have what Hardt and Negri hypothesize in their work *Empire*, as the late stages of imperialism manifesting itself as a (capitalist) empire. 'In contrast to imperialism, empire establishes no territorial center of power and does not rely on fixed boundaries or barriers. It is a *decentered* and *detritorializing* apparatus of rule that progressively incorporates the entire global realm within its open, expanding frontiers. Empire manages hybrid identities, flexible hierarchies, and plural exchanges through modulating networks of command. The distinct national color of the imperialist map of the world have merged and blended in the imperial global rainbow.'¹²

⁶ Bush, G.W. State of the Union address, *The Guardian* 21/1/04 – www.guardian.co.uk

⁷ Dowd, M. "Remus, Romulus...and Rumsfeld?", *New York Times Service/Salt Lake Tribune* (9/3/03). www.sltrib.com/2003/Mar/03092003/comment/36326.asp (12/1/04)

⁸ Callinicos, A. *An Anti-capitalist manifesto* (London: Polity Press, 2003:53)

⁹ Chilcote, R. (Ed.). *The Political Economy of Imperialism* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000:6).

¹⁰ *Ibid.* 13

¹¹ *Ibid.* 161.

¹² Hardt and Negri. *Empire* (Harvard University Press, 2000: xii).

This empire of global capitalism aims for what Francis Fukuyama claimed in *The End of History and the Last Man*, that the fall of communism marked 'the end of history as such: that is, the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government.'¹³

Yet we are not at this stage of empire as of yet (or the end of history), as capitalist imperialism, and indeed globalization, is still centrally dominated by certain nations imposing their power on periphery nations.

The empire is an assimilationist enterprise that creates the very world it inhabits and seeks to directly rule over human nature.¹⁴ As Chilcote remarks, 'Debate around the idea of globalization has directed attention away from imperialism and left the general impression that the rapidly advancing capitalist world is emerging unified and harmonious.'¹⁵

LEGITIMIZING IMPERIALISM

Legitimizing imperialism, persuading certain groups that certain actions, indeed a way of life, is in the best interests of society and the world, requires an extensive system of propaganda. Although imperialism is beneficial to the imperialist nation and its citizens, it is the elite few who gain the most in terms of economic accumulation and power. These elites are not only closely connected with governments, but crucially dominate the means of distributing information through the media which shape how reality is perceived.

Herman and Chomsky's description of the mass media in their seminal work *Manufacturing Consent*, provides a useful definition of the propaganda apparent in Britain and the USA, which I go on to analyze. The mass media's 'function is to amuse, entertain, and inform, and to inculcate individuals with the values, beliefs, and codes of behavior that will integrate them into the institutional structures of the larger society. In a world of concentrated wealth and major conflicts of class interest, to fulfill this role requires systematic propaganda.'¹⁶

Imperialism can therefore be seen as inculcated into individuals through the media, into what sociologist Pierre Bourdieu terms *habitus*, the everyday habitual practices and assumptions of a particular environment. People are at once the product of, and the creators of, their particular *habitus*, which can be manipulated via certain social processes, such as through the media and the educational system.¹⁷

According to Herman and Chomsky it is 'difficult to see a propaganda system at work where the media are private and formal censorship is absent. This is especially true where the media actively compete, periodically attack and expose corporate and governmental malfeasance, and aggressively portray

¹³ Rampton R & Stauber, J. *Weapons of Mass Deception* (New York: Penguin, 2003:47).

¹⁴ Hardt and Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge Mass: Harvard University Press, 2000: XV)

¹⁵ Chilcote, R. (Ed.). *The Political Economy of Imperialism* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000:13).

¹⁶ Herman E.S & Chomsky N. *Manufacturing Consent* (New York: Pantheon, 1988:1).

¹⁷ Bilton T et al., *Introductory Sociology*, 3rd Ed. (London: Macmillan, 1996: 660).

themselves as spokesmen for free speech and the general community interest.¹⁸

They contend that the mass media acts in an artificial manner, that there is a 'naturalness of these processes, with inconvenient facts allowed sparingly and within the proper framework of assumptions, and fundamental dissent virtually excluded from the mass media (but permitted in a marginalized press). This makes for a propaganda system that is far more credible and effective in putting over a patriotic [or imperialist] agenda than one with official censorship.'¹⁹

A recent survey carried out by the University of Maryland's Program on International Policy Attitudes (IPA) reinforces Herman and Chomsky's analysis. Between June and September 2003 the IPA carried out several surveys around the USA and found that 48 percent of the public believe US troops found evidence of close pre-war links between Iraq and al-Qaeda terrorist group; 22 percent thought troops found weapons of mass destruction in Iraq; and 25 percent believed that world public opinion favored Washington's going to war with Iraq. All three are misperceptions.

Of the major news channels, 45% of Fox television news viewers believed all three misconceptions, while the other commercial networks scored between 12 and 16 percent. Only nine percent of readers believed all three, while only four percent of the (independently funded) National Public Radio/Public Broadcasting Service audience did.²⁰

As Jowett and O'Donnell have commented, 'the cumulative effect of filmic propaganda is greater than any individual film' and 'consistent exposure to a specific point of view when the audience has none of its own stands a good chance of making some impact.'²¹

Mass media propaganda is abetted and justified through state propaganda disseminated from official sources and departments. As Peter Mandelson remarked when he became a British minister, 'of course we want to use the media, but the media will be our tools, our servants; we are no longer content to let them be our persecutors.'²²

In July 2002 the White House set up the Office of Global Communications (OGC) to "co-ordinate the administration's foreign policy message and supervise America's image abroad."²³ The Times of London reported that the OGC 'would spend \$200 million for a 'public relations blitz against Saddam Hussein' aimed 'at American and foreign audiences, particularly in Arab nations skeptical of US policy in the region.'²⁴

In the 2004, State of the Union address George W. Bush declared war on Arabic media. 'To cut through the barriers of hateful *propaganda*, the Voice of America and other broadcast services are expanding their programming in Arabic and Per-

sian – and soon, a new television service [al-Hurra, 'The Free One'] will begin providing *reliable news and information* across the region.'²⁵

Although no statistics were uncovered concerning Britain, the British Ministry of Defence (MoD) does have a new name for state propaganda. It used to call it 'psychological operations' but New Labour gave it an Orwellian twist by renaming it 'information support.' 'But,' the House of Commons Defence Committee has said, 'the concept has changed little from the traditional objective of influencing the perceptions of selected target audiences.' The aim of these operations in Britain, is 'to mobilize and sustain support for a particular policy and interpretations of events.'²⁶

Mark Leonard, part of the New Labour think tank Foreign Policy Centre, wrote in Foreign Affairs that 'propaganda will not persuade populations in reluctant countries to support war, but perceptions of Western motivations as imperial or self-interested can damage the chances of success.' So, diplomats 'must transform themselves from reporters and lobbyists who react to issues into shapers of public debate around the world. The challenge for governments is to move from supplying information to capturing the imagination.'²⁷

Propaganda has been used to perpetuate cultural imperialism, 'the aggressive promotion of Western culture, based on the assumption that its value system is superior and preferable to those of non-Western cultures'.²⁸

Where cultural imperialism is not working – the 'compassionate conservative' and neo-liberal approach to peacefully establishing imperial capitalism through ideology, economics, culture and education (what Johann Galtung calls *cultural violence*) – war is, as the supposed Clauswitzian last means of diplomacy, the only remaining choice. This has been reflected in the past decade through Anglo-American violence in the former Yugoslavia, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Afghanistan and Iraq. As Time magazine reports, 'Americans are serving [militarily] in 146 countries, from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe.'²⁹

'A recent MoD paper called 'The future strategic context for defense' notes that '*we need to be aware of the ways in which public attitudes might shape and constrain military activities*. Increasing emotional attachment to the outside world, fuelled by immediate and graphic media coverage, and a public desire to see the UK act as a force for good, is likely to lead to public support, and possibly public demand, for operations prompted by humanitarian motives.' Therefore, 'public support will be vital to the conduct of military interventions.' In future, 'more effort will be required to ensure that such public debate is properly informed.'³⁰

In essence, British state propaganda is telling the public that it is acting from humanitarian motives, out of morality, and will use the media in these imperialist endeavors.

¹⁸ Herman E.S & Chomsky N, *Manufacturing Consent* (New York: Pantheon, 1988:1)

¹⁹ *Ibid*, XIV

²⁰ Lobe J., "The Hazards of Watching Fox News", 3/10/2003 www.alternet.org (19/10/03)

²¹ Jowett, G.S. and O'Donnell V.: *Propaganda and Persuasion*, 3rd Edition (California: Sage Publications, 1999:127).

²² Curtis, M., *Web of Deceit* (London: Vintage, 2003:20)

²³ DeYoung, K. "Bush to Create Formal Office to Shape U.S. Image Abroad," *The Washington Post* 30/07/02 www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn/A18822-2002Jul29

²⁴ Rampton R & Stauber, J. *Weapons of Mass Deception* (New York: Penguin, 2003:38)

²⁵ Bush, G.W. State of the Union address, *The Guardian* 21/1/04 – www.guardian.co.uk My italics.

²⁶ Curtis, M. *Web of Deceit* (London: Vintage, 2003:21)

²⁷ *Ibid*, 22

²⁸ Bilton T et al., *Introductory Sociology*, 3rd Ed. (London: Macmillan, 1996:656)

²⁹ Gibbs, N. "Person of the Year: the American Soldier," *Time* Dec.29/03-Jan. 5/2004:42

³⁰ Curtis, M. *Web of Deceit* (London: Vintage, 2003:18) Italics added

As during the Cold War, many of the arguments used to legitimize war stem from America envisioning itself as 'the champion of a universal empire of the spirit and way of life, the empire of modernity.' President George W. Bush repeatedly emphasizes these points in his speeches.³¹

Orientalism is also a tool of imperialism, and although the images selected are not Orientalist as such, the rhetoric behind the war, and consequently the continued justification, is riddled with ethnocentric implications of superiority.

As Edward Said wrote in the preface to the last edition of Orientalism about the American mainstream media in the lead up to the war on Iraq, 'Without a well-organized sense that these people over there were not like "us" and didn't appreciate "our" values – the very core of traditional Orientalist dogma as I describe its creation and the circulation in this book – there would have been no war.'³²

Just as the colonialists and imperialists of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were portrayed as bearing the "white man's burden," of bringing civilization to the colonized Other, the same argument is being articulated in contemporary rhetoric – the need to bring 'democracy and freedom'.

IMAGE ANALYSIS

The public broadcasts by the heads of state of the United States and Great Britain provide a patriotic message in support of what might be described as the imperialist occupation of Iraq. The two speeches have been chosen as they show that both heads of state indicate their support of the war by congratulating and focusing on the merits of those responsible for making the invasion practically possible, the armed forces. Although both countries had opponents of the war, the acknowledgement of a state institution of significance in terms of employment in and outside of the armed forces, and more specifically as a national symbol abroad, allows for many ways of manufacturing consent to emerge.

The speeches by the heads of state are but the tip of the iceberg of justifying the present system, which inculcates through what Guy Debord called *the society of the spectacle*. The spectacle is 'the oldest specialization, the specialization of power...which speaks for all the others [specializations]'. The spectacle is not confined to the televised image, and is 'not a collection of images, but a social relation among people, mediated by images...the spectacle presents itself simultaneously as all of society, as part of society, and as *instrument of unification*'.³³ As for the whole of the "iceberg", the spectacle 'in all its specific forms, as information or propaganda, as advertisement or direct entertainment consumption, is the present model of socially dominant life. It is the omnipresent affirmation of the choice *already made* in production and its corollary consumption. The spectacle's form and content are identically the total justification of the existing system's conditions and goals.'³⁴

The invasion of Iraq required months of rhetoric, vilifying, propaganda and attempted legitimacy to commence, and once begun and 'won,' as US president George W. Bush erroneously declared, the occupation required further justification – contin-

ual justification – particularly as casualties and violence against the occupiers escalated.

The Queen's speech differs from that of Bush, other than in only being given twice a year (Christmas and the opening of Parliament), in two central ways. Firstly, that the Queen does not need to consolidate her position politically, as Bush has to in face of re-election; and secondly, the Queen is not the main spokesperson for the war. The Queen does however need to acknowledge the actions of men and women who fight in her name, as the head of state.

The royal family has their own press office, separate from that of Downing Street, whereas the US president is the 'Commander in Chief,' with numerous media resources directly under his control.

Every year on Christmas day the Queen gives a pre-recorded televised message on BBC (the state-run television channel) and on the independent television station ITV, of about fifteen minutes in length to Britain and the Commonwealth. 2003's holiday message differed from the past several years in its focus on British army troops in Afghanistan, Kosovo and particularly Iraq, and from the unusual location of the Household Cavalry barracks in Windsor.³⁵ Traditionally, the Queen's message is recorded at one of her palaces.



Fig 2: Queen Elizabeth II talks to British troops during her Christmas day message

Although the Queen is the head of state, her political position is one of non-alignment with parliament. The Queen opens the Houses of Parliament at the beginning of each political year, officially ratifies the elected Prime Minister and, as the official head of the armed forces, supports the parliament's decision to go to war. That the Queen's message this year focused on British troops was to be expected, with around 10,000 troops based in the Gulf and ten million Britons watching the broadcast.³⁶

The headline the CNN network chose on their website, 'Queen pays holiday tribute to British troops,' shows how internationally the Queen's message was interpreted, as a militaristic one.

"I think we all have very good reasons for feeling proud of their [the British army's] achievements – both in war, and as they help to build a lasting peace in trouble spots across the globe," the Queen said, flanked by tanks. A militaristic image is seemingly *de rigeur* in terms of public relations, regularly used by President Bush. He was represented for instance in a photograph in the magazine *Granta*, giving a speech surrounded by tanks in Lima, Ohio early last year at the government-owned Lima Army Tank Plant.³⁷ The image of the head of state or a political leader surrounded by military hardware is however probably one of the earliest depictions of an organized military society.

³¹ Ninkovich, F. *The United States and Imperialism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001:246).

³² Said, E. *Orientalism*, 3rd Ed. (London: Penguin, 2003:xv).

³³ Debord, G., *The Society of the Spectacle*. (Detroit: Black and Red, 1983:3).

³⁴ *Ibid*, 6

³⁵ Queen pays holiday tribute to British troops, CNN, 25/12/03 www.cnn.com/2003/WORLD/europe/12/25/queen.christmas.roops.ap/ (13/1/03)

³⁶ *Ibid*

³⁷ Suau, A. "The Home Front", *Granta*, #84, 129-159, Winter 2003.

The images of the heads of state with the military espouses a sense of assurance and security, in contrast to the message of fear and suffering that war brings: *we are there to protect you and doing this to save you*, the speaker is saying through the weaponry.

“They have brought great credit to themselves and to our country as a whole,” the Queen continues in her message. “I had an opportunity recently at the barracks to meet some of those who played their part with such distinction in the Iraq operations. I was left with a deep sense of respect and admiration for their steadfast loyalty to each other and to our nation. I believe there is a lesson for us all here. It is that each of us can achieve much more if we work together as members of a team.”³⁸ The Queen’s emphasis is on unity, that the imperialist project, the hypothetical empire of Negri and Hardt, will materialize and be consolidated through coercive, unified support that every British subject should be participant in.

The images of the Queen – among stationary tanks, talking with soldiers – were orchestrated, clinical portrayals of war, without the violence and misery that is the reality of war. The image of soldiers, without injury and in full health, presents a perspective of militant imperialism different from real action and duty. The image implies a form of military revue, of standing by the troops, as does the image of Bush flying onto the USS Abraham Lincoln.



Fig 3: President Bush greets troops after landing in a jet on the deck of USS Abraham Lincoln.

On May 1, 2003, President Bush co-piloted a fighter jet onto an aircraft carrier off the coast of San Diego, California. Bush was dressed in a flight suit and holding a helmet under his arm when he approached the rostrum, cheered on by hundreds of sailors. “Mission Accomplished” was printed on a large banner behind him.³⁹ Bush then made a speech and declared a ‘turning of the tide’ in the ‘war against terrorism.’ ‘We have fought for the cause of liberty, and for the peace of the world,’ he said.⁴⁰

Bush had used similar rhetoric in his other speeches, such as to the National Endowment for Democracy in 2003 and in his State of the Union speech in 2004.⁴¹ Within Bush’s speeches there are also what Rampton and Stauber refer to as the “usual themes,” which the American media pick up on and embellish like a political laundry list: ‘Iraqi joy at being liberated, the evil nature of Saddam and his regime, the dangers of terrorism and weapons of mass destruction, the heroism of our troops, and the iron resolve of President Bush’.⁴²

³⁸ The Queen’s Christmas Broadcast ‘Each of us can achieve more if we work as a team’, *The Times of London*, 26/12/03

³⁹ Rampton R & Stauber, J. *Weapons of Mass Deception* (New York: Penguin, 2003:190).

⁴⁰ *Ibid*

⁴¹ National Endowment for Democracy speech 6/11/03, State of the Union speech 21/1/04

⁴² Rampton R & Stauber, J. *Weapons of Mass Deception* (New York: Penguin, 2003:176).

The *Top Gun* stunt that Bush pulled on the aircraft carrier was a carefully planned and well-orchestrated spectacle, estimated to have cost \$1 million, providing images that we were intended to stay in the minds of the American people. “It’s a great image,” said Michael Deaver, the former public relations man for former US President Ronald Reagan. “It shows American strength, victory. It shows a young president with the courage to do something like this,” he added. Washington Post TV critic Tom Shales read the event as ‘not just a speech but a patriotic spectacular, with the ship and its crew serving as crucial backdrops for Bush’s remarks, something to cheer the viewing nation. The address...was overwhelmed by the visual impact, pictures both vast and intimate.’⁴³

Bush’s costly event was to attract media attention to a triumphant end to the war on Iraq and inspire patriotism. It was reminiscent of the victorious generals of ancient Rome parading through the streets of the imperial capital to be presented with laurels. Such a spectacular event was aimed at temporarily overshadowing any negative coverage of the occupation of Iraq by the media, a potential sign of weakness. It focused rather on the strength that capitalist imperialism has brought America, visualized through military imagery.

I have selected Time magazine for analysis not only for its main feature on the American soldier as ‘Person of the Year,’ but because Time is one of the main weekly news magazines published in the United States (along with Newsweek), and is owned by one of the seven major global media giants, AOL-Time Warner. Aside from being a colossal corporation, AOL-Time Warner is also connected to the Bush administration. Current US Secretary of State Colin Powell was a board member of AOL before joining the White House staff, and when AOL merged with Time Warner, his stock rose in value by \$4 million.⁴⁴

‘They swept across Iraq and took Baghdad in 21 days. They stand guard on streets pot-holed with skepticism and rancor. They caught Saddam. They are the face of America, its might and good will, working to bring democracy to a chaotic place. The US G.I. is Time’s Person of the Year...’ so the cover page of Time magazine declares. The military image was adopted for Time magazine’s front cover and six page main article celebrating the American soldier, and other coverage includes a six page photo essay, a portrait of a platoon, and an article entitled Secretary of War, on Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld.

On the cover, against a black background with Person of the Year written at the top, stand from left to right, in true political correctness, a black sergeant, a female soldier, and a white sergeant dressed in full battle gear with M-16 automatic rifles. The image is immediately eye catching and the message it sends, of the personal face of the army, is a reminder of the supposed good the army has done for the American nation.

The article itself implies that the military success in Iraq, and specifically the capture of Saddam Hussein, has brought ‘the possibility of pulling an entire country out of the dark’, and is ‘good news’ like after breaking a long fast.⁴⁵ The article itself is jingoist, Orientalist, and outright ‘soft’ propaganda, acknowl-

⁴³ *Ibid*, 191

⁴⁴ Spiegel, P. “The Americas: All the US President’s Very Rich Men,” *The Financial Times*, 8/3/01.

Topo, G. “Stocks, Speeches Add to Powell Wealth,” *Associated Press*, 17/1/01.

⁴⁵ Gibbs, N. “Person of the Year: the American Soldier,” *Time* Dec.29/03-Jan. 5/2004, Vol. 162, No. 25: 40.

edging the problems in Iraq but certain that they can be overcome.

'The powerful images of soldiers on patrol in Baghdad's meanest streets' are merely powerful in their sterility, inwardness and even innocence. Compared to photographs available of the war on Iraq, even in mainstream (conservative) media such as The New York Times and The Daily Telegraph of London, these images reflect no danger, no difficult situations, no off-putting realities. The photographs reflect snap shots of a peaceful occupation – no 'insurgents,' dead or wounded depicted, no men hooded with hands tied behind their backs when troops search houses (merely two wary female residents).

One soldier is shown in a classic military pose smoking while manning a vehicle mounted heavy machine gun, while two others are shown in off duty poses – one emailing, the other playing his electric guitar. These private barrack images are reflected in the article, Portrait of a Platoon illustrated by a sergeant cleaning his gun, 'backed by beauties' (pictures of scantily clad women) on the wall; a Private drawing on his bedroom wall; a female soldier writing on her bunk, the caption reading, 'one plus to being female: her own room.'

The article on the platoon, entitled The Tomb Raiders' Neighborhood, makes the link to the popular computer game and motion pictures of the same name. The platoon 'chases insurgents down narrow streets' like the fictional hero Lara Croft tracks down lost archaeological wonders while dodging hordes of 'bad guys' in Tomb Raider. This draws the reader into a seemingly virtual reality, diminishing the seriousness of the platoon's operation and providing a populist connection with the army.

The images and the script read at points like an army recruitment brochure, another angle of selling the war on Iraq to the public. Yet this, one may cynically say, is to be expected of a company linked to the White House through a Secretary of State who was an army general.

The Time articles concern the everyday life of occupation seen through the blinkered eyes of the soldiers. They provide a seemingly direct link to the hardships of soldiers in their pursuit of supposed freedom for Iraq. The magazine is but a piece in the massive justification puzzle, further reinforcing the televised media.

In a period of global imperialism attempting to manifest itself as a capitalist empire, and an imperial occupation of Iraq currently underway, the empiric image is part of the media circus of justification. Heads of state are depicted militarily, and news magazines hail the soldier as person of the year. America denies imperialism, yet acts in an opposite way. Television viewers are fed misconceptions on reasons to go to war.

These empiric images justify such contradictions through the illusion of America fighting for freedom and that Iraq will be turned into a true (telos) democracy, but in reality laying the foundations of what is intended to become a viable market abiding by a capitalistic/neo-liberal way of life (through the society of the spectacle), as well as exploiting the obvious: oil.

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