

## THE PERFECT STORM

### *A Tale of Two Elites*

**Perfect storm:** A situation where a calamity is caused by the convergence and amplifying interaction of a number of factors (Wiktionary)

The years 1990 through 2014 saw four US presidents: George H. W. Bush (Bush I, 1989–1993); William J. Clinton (1993–2001); George W. Bush (Bush II, 2001–2009); and finally Barack Hussein Obama (2009–2017). Bob Dylan had said the times were changing. The following three chapters relate the consequences of these changes during the time of the four presidents. The present chapter shows how the cyclical and systemic economic contradictions further intensified and coalesced with an intensifying dominator/dominated imperial contradiction, provoking a perfect storm—an unprecedented coalescence and intensification of contradiction. These contradictions proved impervious to peaceful reproductive fixes. This led to the emergence in the 1990s of two security elites both situationally and experimentally fixated upon oil and terror, and violent fixes.

The chapter is organized as follows. It first presents the new Security Elites 3.0. It then describes the storm of contradictions battering the New American Empire and how attempts to fix them failed; and evaluates the security elites' responses to the fixless fixes. They are revealed to have developed into two factions—Republican Vulcans and democratic liberal hawks—both disposed to violently fix the vulnerabilities of their empire. Finally, Vulcans and Hawks are shown to have become fixated upon oil and terror. The chapter's tale is that of two elites—one economic, frozen into “uncertainty”; the other, the Vulcan and Hawk security factions, out to fix the vulnerabilities produced by the perfect storm with global war. Attention turns to the tale's central actors, the Security Elites 3.0.

### **Security Elites 3.0**

Women, blacks, Italians, Orientals, gays, and Hispanics had been denied elite security status in the times of the Security Elites 1.0 and 2.0. This changed, starting in the 1990s. Gone, for the most part, were the old boys, except for the low-lying Bushes. But even they were not classic old boys. They did have a compound in Maine (where certain locals considered them “summer folk”), but Poppy (Bush I’s nickname) had moved the family to Texas. There they worked in the oil business, and in the case of Dubya (Bush II’s nickname) possessed signs of (wealthy) Texan culture. Dubya could manage a credible Texan drawl; had a ranch, so he could be home on the range; and at one time owned a Texas baseball club. As a young man he had been a party-hearty carouser who reportedly sought “commercial opportunity” while at Yale “selling ounce bags of cocaine” (St. Clair 2013b). He had reformed, found Jesus, and become a devout born-again Christian (something not unheard of for Anglo-Texans).<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, by 2012 multiculturalism and feminism were significant ideologies, helping minorities and women to nestle in the highest government ranks.

Though these elites were not old boys, a number hailed from wealthy circumstances. Bush I’s Secretary of State James Baker’s father was a partner in a flourishing Houston law firm. John Negroponte, Bush II’s Director of National Intelligence, might not have been a WASP, but he was the son of a Greek shipping magnate. First Lady, US Senator, and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, the daughter of a “successful” tradesperson, grew up living a “privileged life-style in Park Ridge,” a Chicago suburb (Bernstein 2007: 19, 15).

More of the new security elites came from modest backgrounds, however. Brent Scowcroft, Bush I’s NSA, was a grocer’s son from Ogden, Utah. Hillary’s marriage was hypogamous. Her husband, Bill Clinton, was the Arkansas son of a traveling salesman who died before his son’s birth. The future president grew up in Hope, Arkansas, in his mother’s extended family, people of “modest means,” so much so that “they couldn’t afford vacation, rarely if ever went to the movies, and didn’t get television until the mid-to-late 1950s. They went out a few times a year—to the country fair, the watermelon festival, the occasional square dance or gospel singing” (Clinton 2005: 14). Warren Christopher, Clinton’s first Secretary of State, was criticized as wooden, perhaps because he had “survived a difficult childhood in the Dakotas during the depression” (Halberstam 2001: 172). Clinton’s second NSA Sandy Berger’s parents ran an Army-Navy store in Connecticut. George Tenet, CIA director in both Clinton and Bush II’s administrations, was the son of Greek and Albanian migrants, and grew up in Queens, New York, working as a busboy in his parents’ diner. Bush II’s

first secretary of state, Colin Powell, was born to Jamaican parents in Harlem and grew up in the South Bronx, where he worked in a Jewish store, a *schwarz knabe* (“black kid”) selling baby buggies (C. Powell 1995: 18). Dubya’s first NSA and second Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, grew up in racist, segregated Birmingham, Alabama, in a middle-class family determined “to maintain their dignity despite the degrading circumstances of Birmingham” (Rice 2010: 14). Her mother, a teacher, had taught Willie Mays (Rice 2010: 21). Obama’s Kenyan father, like Clinton’s, died early, leaving his son in a single-parent family. When Obama’s mother went off to get her anthropology doctorate and work in development, he was raised within her extended family.

Though the old boys had largely disappeared, the educational establishments that had made them flourish, practicing the alchemy of enculturating elite culture. Exeter, Andover, Groton, Harvard, Yale, Princeton, and the like still took the dross lead of teenagers and transmuted them into the gold of masters and commanders in the US Leviathan. Tenet went from his parents’ diner to Georgetown and Columbia Universities. Clinton started poor, but he too went to Georgetown, Yale Law School, and as a Rhodes Scholar to Oxford, where met Sandy Berger, who had gone from an Army-Navy store to Cornell, Harvard, and on to Oxford, likewise as a Rhodes Scholar. Obama graduated from Columbia and went on to a degree at Harvard Law School.

The Security Elites 3.0 were something of a closed shop in the sense that they tended to have been mentored by earlier, older security elites. Brent Scowcroft (Bush I’s NSA) had been deputy NSA under Kissinger. Albright (Clinton’s UN representative and secretary of state) had been a pupil of Brzezinski at Columbia, though he belittled her as “hardly” a special student” (Dobbs 1999: 197). Nevertheless he had hired her for the NSC. Susan Rice, Assistant Secretary of State in Clinton’s administration, and NSA in Obama’s, “grew up with ... privilege and superior social connections,” which came in good measure because “Albright watched Rice grow up with her daughters—hanging out at backyard barbecues, languishing poolside or lunching at McDonalds” (Parker 1998). Colin Powell (NSA under Reagan, chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff under Clinton, secretary of state under Bush II) had worked for Frank Carlucci (secretary of defense under Reagan), who was something of a protégé of Donald Rumsfeld during the Nixon administration. Condoleezza Rice (Bush II’s NSA and later secretary of state) had been a student of Albright’s father at the University of Denver and a protégée of Brent Scowcroft. Anthony Lake (Clinton’s first NSA) had been a Kissinger aid; Stephen Hadley (NSA in Bush II’s administration following Rice) had worked with Kissinger in the NSC. Otherwise put, networks counted: you had to “know somebody” to become a Security Elite 3.0.

Security Elites 3.0 became affluent once they achieved the principal level, regardless of their backgrounds. As prosperous people, they lost touch with ordinary folk. Condoleezza Rice said that when she was at Stanford University she had had very little contact with the poor people of color who lived in East Palo Alto. She acknowledged, “I ... realized that I knew very little of the poverty and lack of opportunity just a few blocks from my house.” She further confessed, “I avoided any real contact with East Palo Alto” (Rice 2010: 277). The case of Condoleezza Rice is not unique. Security Elites 3.0 might have been more diverse than their predecessors, but they led lives sealed into elite networks and out of those of ordinary persons.

Certain old boys had come from Wall Street. These ties remained—Treasury secretaries Robert Rubin under Clinton and Hank Paulson under Bush II both came from the investment giant Goldman Sachs. However, a surprising number of Security Elites 3.0, especially in the two Bush administrations, were in some way involved with energy industries. Sandy Berger, Clinton’s second NSA, owned a fair amount of Amoco Oil Company stock. Bush I worked for Dressler Industries, which manufactured oil and gas field machinery. James Baker, Bush I’s secretary of state, had been a lawyer whose firm did business with big oil; Baker was described by one journalist as “a lobbyist for the oil industry” (Palast 2004). Bush II founded Arbusto Energy, an unsuccessful business largely devoted to oil exploration and said to have links with the Bin Laden family (Rodríguez 2006). Vice President Cheney had been CEO of Halliburton Oil, a firm providing a wide variety of oil field services. Condoleezza Rice had been a director at Chevron Oil and had the distinction of having an oil tanker named after her. Rumsfeld enjoyed investments in energy-related firms. A number of the security elites were women, and it is to them that attention now turns.

*Women as Security Elites:* Some have hoped that the inclusion of women into politics, with their “maternal thinking” (Ruddick 1995), might make for a more peaceful world. Certainly feminists have for a long time—at least since 441 BC, if Aristophanes’ *Lysistrata* is to be believed—struggled for peace. Liberal feminist theory (Tong 2008), on the other hand, has advocated inclusion of women in all organizations on the grounds that they will perform just as well as males: if warriors are needed, women warriors will do just fine. The inclusion of six women at the highest levels—Secretaries of State Madeleine Albright and Hillary Clinton; NSA Condoleezza Rice; UN Representative Susan Rice, ultimately President Obama’s NSA in his second term; Head of the Office of Multilateral Affairs and Human Rights Samantha Power, who replaced Susan Rice as Obama’s UN

representative; and Anne-Marie Slaughter, Director of Policy Planning in Obama's administration—provide evidence bearing on this disagreement.

Reflect first that Hillary Clinton has been described by one source “as Barack Obama's most prominent hawk” (Lavelle 2011). She pushed her husband to intervene in the Balkans, voted with Dubya to invade Iraq, and insisted upon Gaddafi's 2011 elimination. Hillary's husband had appointed Albright first to the post of UN ambassador and then to secretary of state. Albright, in her memoirs, reminisced about a time when she had reprimanded General Colin Powell for his reticence to exercise military power, admonishing him, “What's the point of you having this superb military you're always talking about, Colin, if we can't use it” (in Dobbs 1999: 360). Powell's hesitancy concerning warring may have had to do with his Vietnam combat experience. Contemplate a second instance of Albright's violent disposition.

At the US's and UK's insistence, the UN Security Council imposed sweeping economic sanctions on Iraq, embargoing everything from foods to medicines to infrastructure, immediately following the 1990 Gulf War. These constituted a blockade that denied Iraq the goods needed for its inhabitants' well-being. By the mid 1990s there was evidence that the sanctions were killing large numbers of civilians, especially children and the elderly. US security elites knew this, but refused to remove of the blockade. In May of 1996, the TV journalist Lesley Stahl interviewed Albright about the civilian deaths:

Lesley Stahl: We have heard that a half a million children have died. I mean, that's more children than died in Hiroshima. And, you know, is the price worth it?

Madeleine Albright: I think this is a very hard choice, but the price—we think the price is worth it. (In Herman and Peterson 2010: 32)

Dennis Halliday, a UN humanitarian official in Iraq at the time, resigned over the regime of sanctions, calling them “genocidal” (ibid.: 30). If this was genocide, Albright thought it was “worth it.”

Condoleezza Rice, known as the “Warrior Princess” while heading Bush II's NSC (Serafin 2005), was involved in planning and implementing his military adventures, and was equally implicated in the administration's torture policy (Kessler 2009).<sup>2</sup> The other Rice, Susan, was an Obama administration “liberal interventionist,” since the 1990s a prevalent term for a person who believes it is appropriate to go to war in the defense of human rights. During the Clinton administration, Ambassador Rice encouraged Rwanda's 1996 invasion of Congo (which the US covertly aided) to overthrow longtime Congolese President Mobutu (whom the US had overtly supported).<sup>3</sup> More recently, she pressed officials at the UN and in the

Obama regime to violently overthrow Gaddafi on the grounds that he was feeding Viagra to his troops to pep them up for “mass rapes” (MacAskill 2011). No less an authority than “US military and intelligence officials” said “that there is no basis for Rice’s claims” (Garris 2011).

Samantha Power self-reports herself to be a “genocide chick” (Roig-Franzia 2014). Her book, *A Problem from Hell* (2003), which condemned the US for ignoring genocides, caught Obama’s eye and eventually led to her replacing Susan Rice at the UN. She has been a prominent advocate of humanitarian interventionism, arguing that violence in the name of violated human rights, especially of the gravest sort (like genocide), is good. She was one of Obama’s foreign policy advisers during his first presidential campaign and authored the memo “Conventional Washington versus the Change We Need,” announcing that “Barack Obama’s judgment is right; the conventional wisdom is wrong. We need a new era of tough, principled and engaged American diplomacy to deal with 21st century challenges” (Power 2007). The operative word in this memorandum is “tough.” The “genocide chick” channeled the Kennedys in wanting a “tough” America.

Anne-Marie Slaughter, another humanitarian interventionist, has been a strong advocate of “R2P” or Responsibility to Protect—the norm adopted by the United Nations in 2005 specifying that states have the duty, under certain conditions, to violently intervene in other states that grossly violate human rights (G. Evans 2008). Slaughter insisted upon Dubya’s intervention in Iraq and Obama’s intervention in Libya. Writing immediately after the pre-emptive invasion of Iraq, she opined that “the biggest problem with the Bush pre-emption strategy may be that it does not go far enough” (in Slaughter and Feinstein 2004: 136).

It thus appears that women who shattered the glass ceiling in the US security establishment made just as good warriors as their male counterparts—as liberal feminist theory knew all along they would. After all, as Eleanor Smeal, a president of NOW and a liberal feminist, reported, “Peace is not a feminist issue” (in Feinman 2000: 139).

For the most part, the masters and commanders of the New American Empire’s security after 1990 came from a broader, humbler social base than those in the 1.0 cohort. During the course of their lives, they participated in what might be termed “strings of elevation,” whose logic was to pursue rapid upward class mobility, accomplished by attending elite schools, acquiring wealth, and benefiting from mentors drawn from earlier cohorts of security elites. But whether men or women, minorities or old boys, the security elites in the years following 1990 were just as disposed to do their “duty” as were their predecessors, though this time their “duty” was performed in an increasingly turbulent contradictory storm. The following

section explores those contradictions and the reproductive fixes engineered to relax them. At the end of the section, God makes an appearance.

## **A Perfect Storm: Contradictions and Fixless Fixes**

We are in a chaotic situation. . . . We can have a system better than capitalism or we can have a system that is worse than capitalism. Only thing we can't have is a capitalist system. (Wallerstein 2009)

Surely Professor Wallerstein jests. Capitalism has been around a long time and is a tough nut to crack. Then again, global economic elites at the 2012 Davos World Economic Forum insisted that capitalism was “somehow broken” (Frederick 2012), and things that are broken can go kaput. This section examines what happened to have Wallerstein and the capitalist elites so worried about the fate of capitalism. Attention is first focused upon economic contradictions.

### *Cyclical Contradictions*

It will be recalled that neoliberalism was proposed as a fix for capitalism's cyclical problems, and elites had begun its implementation starting in the late 1970s. The high point of the neoliberal fix was in the decade of 1990s. What materialized?

What happened was

a downward shift in the real growth rate of the US economy, which was lower in the 1970s than in the 1960s; lower in the 1980s and 1990s than in the 1970s; and lower in 2000–2007 than in the 1980s and 1990s. Since 2007 the economy has declined further, in the deepest crisis since the Great Depression. (Foster and McChesney 2009: 9)

Manufacturing was especially harmed. In the decade from 2000 to 2010, the US lost a third of its manufacturing jobs. These closings followed on those that had turned a good portion of the US into the Rust Belt in the 1980s. Manufacturing as a percentage of total US GDP dropped from 23 percent in 1970 to 11 percent in 2009 (Smil 2011). As industry declined, so did high-paying jobs. Between 2000 and 2010 the US lost 5.7 million manufacturing jobs and created only 4.9 million service jobs, most of them low-paying (Smil 2011). Consequently, wage levels for the average US worker were over 50 percent less in 2009 than forty years earlier, “down to the same levels as during the Great Depression” (Nielson 2012).

Alex Callinicos (2010: 68) has suggested that the year 1997 was the “turning point for the US and the world economy” because of a double

collapse—the 2001 dot-com crash followed by the 2002 telecom crash, when the US stock market plummeted following major failures of US Internet and telecommunication firms. Approximately \$5 trillion of the market value of technology companies was lost between 2000 and 2002, and around 50 percent of the dot-coms failed (Gaither and Chmielewski 2006). Then, in 2007, unsettling developments emerged in the financial sector, especially as it pertained to US housing.

Neoliberal ideology, it will be recalled, prioritized growth of the financial sector, where profits appeared to beckon. Starting in the 1980s, US banks and other lending institutions began offering mortgage loans that allowed the less affluent to buy houses. Such lending is called “subprime” because it is risky—the recipients have few financial resources. This lending was not done out of solicitude for the impoverished, but as a way of opening new markets for investment in housing. On Wall Street this meant that

the drive was to take advantage of cheap credit conditions to build up leverage as high as possible and thereby to maximize profits. Credit derivatives—above all, collateralized debt obligations ... played a key role getting lending off banks’ balance sheets by selling the loans on in as high a volume as possible. The global market for derivatives rose from \$41 trillion to \$677 trillion in 1997–2007. Loans to less safe debtors—for example, subprime mortgages—were particularly attractive, because the higher the risk, the higher the interest and fees that would be charged. (Callinicos 2010: 74)

Many of the subprime mortgages came with variable rates, where mortgage payments would initially be lower and later balloon to higher amounts. Approximately 80 percent of US mortgages issued to subprime borrowers in the 1990s and 2000s were adjustable-rate mortgages. When the higher rates began in 2006–2007, mortgage defaults rapidly increased. Soon,

the entire speculative house of cards erected by the banks and their partners in the shadow banking system began to fall apart. ... The crisis in the subprime sector undermined the market for market-backed securities, and thereby hauled down the prices of the CDOs into which these securities had been bundled. But, since CDOs—and the credit default swaps (CDSs) used to insure against default—had been taken up throughout the entire financial system ... the entire system seized up. (Callinicos 2010: 81)

The financial wizards had put their money in subprime lending and tripped down the yellow brick road of hazardous finance into the Great Recession. Reflecting on this situation, a group of French economists issued the *Manifesto of the Appalled Economists* in 2010, which—according to its authors—stated the “obvious”: Neoliberalism had “obvious failures” (2010: 2). Why did this happen? One answer opts for overaccumulation.



*Overaccumulation and the Long Downturn*: The tendency toward overaccumulation as the result of an intra-capitalist contradiction was part of Marx's explanation of reproductive vulnerabilities intrinsic to capitalist systems. Harvey (2001: 79–80) refreshes memories of how this contradiction provokes overaccumulation in the following quotation:

A contradiction arises within the capitalist class because individual capitalists, each acting in his or her own self-interest in a context of competitive profit seeking, produce a result which is antagonistic to their own class interest. Marx's analyses suggest that this contradiction creates a persistent tendency toward "over-accumulation," which is defined as a condition in which too much capital is produced relative to the opportunities to find profitable employment for that capital.

Two major sorts of evidence indicate that overaccumulation has, or is, occurring. The first of these is "overproduction" (which conventional economists term "overcapacity"), that is, "surplus of capital relative to opportunities to employ that capital" (Harvey [1982] 2006: 192). An example is the situation where car companies have the ability to produce 40 million cars but have purchasers for only 30 million of them. The second indicator of overaccumulation is reduced, or declining, rates of profitability.

One body of inquiry scrutinizes overproduction during the long downturn. M. K. Venu (2009) actually speaks of it as an "epidemic" since the 1980s. Walden Bello (2006a) documents overproduction in the US computer industry, as well as in automobiles, steel, and telecommunications. Bello (2006b) estimates that over 75 percent of China's industries were burdened by excess capacity at the beginning of the twenty-first century. The former General Electric CEO Jack Welch, speaking from the vantage of capitalist elites, announced recently that there was "excess capacity in almost every industry" (in Bello 2006a). If there is excess capacity in an industry, then supply exceeds demand, meaning profits decline.<sup>4</sup>

There are alternative explanations of the long downturn. Perhaps the most prevalent of these derive from different formulations of supply-side economics. However, a considerable body of research has come from conventional economists who challenge supply-side theory as "crackpot" (Chait 2008), especially when it was applied to the problem of explaining the long downturn (Krugman 1995). Additionally, some have attempted to explain the "Great Recession" purely as a result of problems in the financial sector. Brenner (2009) has vigorously critiqued this approach for ignoring the causes of the financial difficulties, which he lays at the door of overaccumulation.

Step back and contemplate the economic world revealed by this analysis, which takes us to the person known as the "Iron Lady": Baroness

Margaret Thatcher, the Tory prime minister (1979–1990) who introduced neoliberalism to the UK. The baroness declared “TINA”—“there is no alternative”—to neoliberal capitalism. So it was neoliberalism or bust, but here was the problem for since 1973 it has been a busy time: bust (1973–1974), bust (1981–1982), bust (early 1990s), bust (2001–2002), biggest bust (2007–2012). Maybe there *was* “no alternative,” but the alternative that existed was, as the Davos economic elites recognized, “broken.” Consequently, since the 1970s the New American Empire has experienced cyclical economic contradictions that reached a peak in the first decade of the twenty-first century. Next the subject turns to systemic contradictions.

### *Systemic Contradictions*

The systematic contradictions between 1990 and 2014 have been, if anything, even more menacing than the cyclical ones. Consider, first, global warming.

*Global Warming:* The previous chapter established that the CO<sub>2</sub> level in the atmosphere was at 354 ppm in 1989 and that no fix had succeeded in slowing its increase. It had been calculated that 350 ppm was the upper safe level of CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere. Currently, the level is rapidly increasing: it was 389.85 ppm in 2010; 391.63 ppm in 2011; 393.63 ppm in 2012; and 399.85 ppm in 2014 (CO2Now.org 2013, 2015). Recall that methane is a more potent agent of global warming than CO<sub>2</sub>. In 2011 “vast” plumes of methane were observed released as a result of retreating Arctic Ocean sea ice (Conner 2011). Large craters that began to appear in Siberia in 2014 are thought to be the result of methane escaping from the defrosting tundra (T. McCoy 2015).

Globally there are unusual and terrible hurricanes and typhoons, unusual and terrible droughts, unusual and terrible floods—and all the while the temperature extremes continue. The simple fact, according to NASA’s James Hansen (2012), is that “global warming isn’t a prediction. It is happening.” Given this reality, the respected climate journalist Gwyne Dyer (2008: xii) announced, “When you talk to people at the sharp end of the climate business, scientists and policy makers, there is an air of suppressed panic. . . . We are not going to get through this without taking a lot of casualties, if we get through it at all.”

Some might dismiss Dyer as a Jeremiah. But her jeremiads are reality-based. There is an accelerating rate of CO<sub>2</sub> accumulation in the atmosphere; “vast” plumes of methane *are* appearing in the Arctic Ocean; and there already *are* an estimated 300,000 plus global warming–related deaths

a year (Vidal 2009). All this points to an intensifying capital/land systemic contradiction. Next, look at peak oil.

*Peak Oil:* A crucial indicator of peak oil's arrival is that demand for oil exceeds supply, but supply cannot increase to meet demand. The US Energy Information Administration reported that global demand for oil rose from 63,849.7 thousand barrels per day in 1990 to 86,952.5 thousand barrels in 2010 (Index Mundi 2015). Oil production meanwhile rose from 60,399.4 thousand barrels per day in 1990 to 72,631.4 thousand barrels per day in 2010 (ibid.). Importantly, between 2005 and 2011 oil production appeared to level off to roughly 71.50 to 72.80 million barrels per day. Such data prompted certain scholars to conclude that peak oil had arrived. Kunstler (2006: 47), citing data from a number of sources, dated the arrival of the peak between 2000 and 2010. Hubbert (1956) had predicted the global peak oil would arrive between 1995 and 2000. His prediction, like that of the timing of the decline of US oil production, appeared pretty accurate.

However, given the recent escalation in oil prices, oil companies have sought to increase supply by utilizing costly technologies to extract oil and gas from inaccessible environments where removal previously had been too expensive. These environments include tar sands, offshore deep-sea locations, and shale rock formations that trap both oil and gas. Klare (2012) calls such oil production "extreme" while others call it "tight" (Miller and Sorrell 2014), because the oil comes from habitats that are tremendously difficult to work in, presenting a likelihood of environmental damage. Remember that oil production from 2005 through 2011 appeared to have peaked around 71–72 million barrels per day (Index Mundi 2015). However, in 2012 it rose to 75.72 million barrels per day ("Global Oil Production Up" 2012). These figures suggest that oil production had surged above its peak, with the increase due to bringing tight oil into production.

Some commentators reckoned that tight oil production rendered peak oil a "myth" (Orszag 2012). This view is contested in a series of articles in an issue of the *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society A* (Miller and Sorrell 2014). One argument is that oil and gas output from shale rock formations declines very rapidly after the sites are put into production, and an overall decline from these sources is estimated to hit as early as 2016 or 2017 (Koch 2013). Additionally, James Hamilton (2013) notes,

If you leave out the growth in shale oil production from the U.S. and oil sands production from Canada, total field production of crude oil from the rest of the world actually decreased between 2005 and 2012. Given the increase from the U.S. and Canada global production managed to increase by 2 million barrels a day over the period, but that is less than the growth in consumption from the emerging economies and oil-producing countries over the same years.

Unsurprisingly, there is considerable concurrence with the distinguished environmental lawyer Nicolas Arguimbau's judgment that "the supply of the world's essential energy source is going off a cliff" (Arguimbau 2010: 1). The debate is over just how far away the cliff edge is. Moreover, just as in the case of global warming, the situation with peak oil indicates continued intensification of the capital/land contradiction between 1990 and 2012. Let us draw the threads of this section together.

The economic system that was supposed to accumulate value for the New American Empire sputtered starting in the 1970s. Arguably this was, at least in some measure, due to overaccumulation and intensification of cyclical contradictions that coalesced with intensification of capital/land systemic contradictions leading to global warming and peak oil. Adam Smith ([1776] 2003) had promised that if his economic vision were implemented, an "invisible hand" would guide humanity to higher and higher levels of capital accumulation. A century later Marx ([1867] 1909) warned that the contradictions involved in capital accumulation would destroy capitalism. Classical liberal, Keynesian, and neoliberal policies might be imagined as forms of experimental fixation to assist the invisible hand in doing its job. For roughly a century after Marx, capital accumulated and the "invisible hand," with help from its policy fixes, muddled through. Then, starting in the 1970s, something new began in the world of contradiction, something utterly novel. Cyclical and systemic contradictions *both* intensified and coalesced—and the "invisible hand" went "leadens." Further intensification of these contradictions coalescing with the cyclical ones could reach a point where they destroy human being, suggesting that Wallerstein might just have a point: we "can't have ... a capitalist system." It is time to contemplate economic elites' responses to these contradictory realities.

### A "Zone of Ignorance" and Malinowski

Religious faith ... fixes ... all valuable mental attitudes, such as ... courage and confidence in the struggle with difficulties. (Malinowski [1948] 1954: 89)

Starting in the late 1970s economic elites became involved in hermeneutic politics that relied on neoliberalism to fix the vulnerabilities provoked by the contradictions. The politics failed. Offshoring and financial fixes did not fix cyclical problems, and the specter of global warming caused "panic" while peak oil went "off a cliff." Here, then, were fixless fixes to hermeneutic puzzles whose solution concerned humanity's fate. The words of Malinowski will become relevant following consideration of important economic elites' perceptual understanding of this situation.

A good place to begin is with Ben Bernanke, head of the Federal Reserve during the Great Recession. Bernanke came from a rural, southern background in Dillon, South Carolina. His father owned a drugstore. Young Ben was a “brain” (he taught himself calculus) and went to Harvard and then MIT for his doctorate, about which certain wags chant: “MIT, PhD, M-O-N-E-Y.” Bernanke’s (1979) doctoral dissertation, titled “Long-Term Commitments, Dynamic Optimization, and the Business Cycle”, dealt with business executives and the “business cycle” (conventional economists’ way of conceptualizing cyclical contradictions). Bernanke (1979: 2) analyzed “the problem of making irreversible investment decisions when there is uncertainty about the true parameters of the stochastic economy.” A stochastic process is one where the outcome is unpredictable. A stochastic economy is one where the different production, distribution, and consumption results are uncertain. Bernanke told the world in his dissertation that when things are uncertain, economic elites “wait for new information” (ibid.). Brilliant! Ben was in the M-O-N-E-Y, ascending the ranks of government economic positions, until in 2002 he was appointed to the Federal Reserve’s Board of Governors, becoming its president in 2005.

In a 2004 speech entitled “The Great Moderation,” Bernanke was pretty certain of one thing: that, due to the effectiveness of contemporary macro-economic policy, the volatility of the business cycle had decreased to the point that it should no longer be a major topic in economics (in Krugman 2009: 10). This judgment was rendered after the recessions of the 1970s, 1980s, 1990s, and 2000, and just three years before the Great Recession. Three years later in 2007, during the eruption of grave volatility that was to be the Great Recession, Bernanke reached back to doctoral stochastic memories and asserted that a prime attribute of the current economy was “uncertainty” (2007). Of course, it would have been in times of uncertainty that Sir Mervyn King, then governor of the Bank of England, confided to a *Telegraph* reporter, “Who knows what’s going to happen tomorrow” (Aldrick and Kirkup 2011).

Other respected economic elites were of like mind. In an analysis of the US economy, Michael Spence, a Nobel Prize winner in economics, and his colleague Sandile Hlatshwayo concluded that employment problems had emerged. In their judgment about what will happen with this “employment situation” being “unknown,” “answers” as to what to do “appear to be missing,” so “experimenting is the only way to solutions” (Spence and Hlatshwayo 2011: 38). Robert Solow (2009), another Nobel Prize winner in economics, argued that a new regulatory system is needed to solve the problems of the Great Recession, though he also believed “there is no way yet to know what form the new system will take.”

Media hermeneuts surveying elite economic opinion arrived at conclusions similar to those of Bernanke and company. Robert Samuelson (2012), the *Washington Post's* business and economics journalist, told readers in 2012, "It must be obvious that, economically speaking, we're in another country. Things we took for granted no longer apply. . . . We've entered a zone of ignorance." Two years later he was equally gloomy, writing, "These are hard times for economists. Their reputations are tarnished; their favorite doctrines are damaged. Among their most prominent thinkers, there is no consensus as to how—or whether—governments in advanced countries can improve lackluster recoveries" (Samuelson 2014). Regarding resolution of the financial crisis, the *Business Week* editor Paul Barrett (2009) advised, "Let's enact some thoughtful regulation, and hope for the best." In covering the 2012 Davos World Economic Forum, where elites met to discourse on the state of the globe, Jim Frederick of *Time* magazine asked participants, "what practically speaking will a global capitalism retooled for the 21st century look like?" He discovered that, "Well, no one has quite figured that one out yet. But a surprising number of attendees (and these are the world's most direct beneficiaries of the current system) seems to agree that something is wrong" (Frederick 2012). Three years later, again at Davos, Unilever's chief executive, Paul Polman, worried that what might be "wrong" was the "capitalist threat to capitalism" (in Milne 2015). At the same Davos meeting Christine Lagarde, the IMF's managing director, agreed, worrying that Marx may have been right all along and that capitalism might harbor the "seeds of its own destruction" (ibid.). After all, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Europe's most important institution for predicting economic futures, had warned world leaders to prepare for "systemic shock" that would shake the global system (OECD 2011). Robert Johnson, a former hedge fund manager, declared, "I know hedge fund managers all over the world who are buying airstrips and farms in places like New Zealand, they think they need a getaway" (in Hogg 2015).

Finally, let us explore the experience of a gentleman at the very height of the US financial elite as the stochastic economy darkened, as this will lead us to grasp the significance of Malinowski quoted at the beginning of this section. This was Hank "the Hammer" Paulson. A "jock" (athlete) while at Dartmouth, Hank went to Harvard Business School and on to a career that led to his becoming CEO of Goldman Sachs, one of Wall Street's and the world's largest investment banks. He was appointed Bush II's treasury secretary (28 June 2006) when it became clear that there could be a severe financial upheaval.

Dubya brought Hank to the Treasury because, he said, Paulson had "intimate knowledge of financial markets" (in Isidore 2006). After nine

months on the job, Hank drew upon this “intimate knowledge” to lecture a Chinese audience that “an open, competitive, and liberalized financial market can effectively allocate resources ... far better than governmental intervention” (Yidi and Hamlin 2008). As US subprime mortgage problems mounted in August 2007, he assured Americans they need not worry because the global economy was very strong (Lawder 2007). Eleven months later, following failure of the Indymac Bank, he reassured the public that the US had a “safe and sound banking system” (Garofalo 2008). On 15 September 2008, the day Lehman Brothers Bank went into bankruptcy, Hank reassured the “American people” that they “can remain confident in the soundness and resilience of our financial system” (Gross 2008).

Perhaps the invisible hand had been out to lunch. It certainly hadn't guided the economy. Financial elites, knowledgeable about the situation, did not “remain confident.” Rather, Wall Street flew into a “panic” (Reich 2010: 103), and shortly thereafter the Dow experienced the largest one-day loss in its history. Money markets globally went into free fall. Wall Street was effectively bankrupt, obliging the US Congress to authorize the “Paulson Plan” (3 October 2008) and create the US Emergency Stabilization Fund, that included the Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP). TARP had \$700 billion to buy distressed bank assets, especially mortgage-backed securities. Two years after Paulson's lecturing Chinese people on the superiority of liberal financial management, that system had failed. Now Hank was busily engineering government regulation using public money, overseeing the largest government intervention in financial history to save the economic lives of the elites who owned most of the financial system's assets.

Understandably for Hank, the worst experiences of his stint as treasury secretary were during the Lehman Brothers collapse. The *Washington Post* recounted at this time:

In the tense moments as Lehman Brothers slid toward bankruptcy, he [Hank] stepped out of his office and called her [his wife Wendy]. She had just been to church. “Everybody is looking to me and I don't have the answer,” he told her. “You needn't be afraid,” she replied. “Your job is to reflect God, Infinite Mind, and you can rely on Him.” (Goldfarb 2010)

So, by the beginning of the twenty-first century, as the contradictory storm hit, the economic elites faced grave reproductive vulnerability following failure of the neoliberal fix. One of the two US gentlemen with the most authority to fix the economy babbled on about “uncertainty.” The other admitted he didn't “have the answer,” but was told by his wife to “reflect God.” Nietzsche sneaks back into the narrative to be corrected by Malinowski.

Nietzsche had shouted “Gott ist tot” (“God is dead”). Not so! God, like capitalism, is a tough nut to crack. Wendy told her very elite hubby not to “be afraid”; he could rely on “Him.” Malinowski classically argued in the quotation that began this section that religion “fixes ... courage and confidence” in the face of “difficulties.” In effect, Malinowski was observing that there were religious reproductive fixes as well as economic and violent ones. Economic elites did not know what to do as they faced “difficulties” produced by rising economic contradictions. Some, like the very elite Hank, turned to “religious faith” because it “fixes ... courage and confidence.” Of course, other economic elites, like the fund managers mentioned by Robert Johnson, were not into “courage” but just planned to make their “getaway,” splitting to remote places.

### *“Turbulent Waters”*

Mervyn King’s 2012 warning—“We are navigating through turbulent waters” (2012)—was apt. The neoliberal fix of cyclical contradictions failed. Fixes of systemic contradictions failed. The contradictory turbulence seemed to be driving the US Leviathan toward its limits. Of course, a Malinowskian God might fix “courage.” But a Nietzschean God seemed to be more in evidence, and this God was either out to lunch with the Invisible Hand or dead. Our gaze now turns to an intensifying political contradiction.

## **“The Rarest Opportunity”: The Dominator/Dominated Contradiction**

By the 1990s the condition of the political contradictions was complicated, being at the same time both relaxed and intensifying—relaxed because the Soviets were gone, taking with them the inter-imperial contradiction that had churned Cold War politics; intensifying because, as documented in the last chapter, the dominator/dominated contradiction intensified in the years 1975–1989, taking the form of increasing resistance terrorism. This strengthening continued throughout the 1990s. Out of this situation came what Brent Scowcroft called “the rarest opportunity.”

Bush I was president in 1990. The key security elites in his administration—himself, NSA Brent Scowcroft, Secretaries of State James Baker and Lawrence Eagleburger, CIA Director Robert Gates, and Defense Secretary Dick Cheney—were hardly pacifists. However, their main chore was helping choreograph the Soviet Union’s collapse. Gorbachev and Bush I met at their first summit meeting at the end of 1989 in Malta, at which time



Gorbachev reflected, “We stated, both of us, that the world leaves one epoch of cold war and enters another epoch” (Bush and Gorbachev 1989: 3). However, it was a delicate time. Something could go wrong: it was the domino theory in reverse as territory after territory hived off the former Soviet Empire. Gorbachev would soon be struggling for his own survival. There was also the matter of German reunification; sparks could fly.

Accordingly, Bush’s I security elites entered conflict-avoidance mode as much as possible. The one time they warred—in Iraq—was the result of blatant aggression on Baghdad’s part (discussed in the next chapter). Bush I’s response, Operation Desert Storm (August 1990–February 1991), was a swiftly successful invasion. However, the US evacuated Iraq as quickly as possible, leaving Saddam Hussein chastened but still in power. Hence, the end of the Cold War was initially a time of trying to hold the peace; with security elites restraining violent dispositions, whatever their personal proclivities. When it was all over—the USSR gone, Gorbachev history—the New American Empire stood alone as the world’s sole superpower.

Brent Scowcroft, Bush I’s trusted friend and NSA, interpreted the circumstance as one where, “The final collapse of Soviet power ... brought to a close the greatest transformation since World War I. ... We were suddenly in a unique position ... standing alone at the height of power. It was an unparalleled position in history, one that presents us with the rarest opportunity to shape the world” (Bush and Scowcroft 1998: 565). Dean Acheson, remembering the old boys’ creation of the post–World War II world, might well have disputed the claim that the dissolution of the Soviets was “unparalleled,” but he would have probably agreed that it was another opportunity “to shape the world.” The only problem was that the New American Empire was not the only social being out to “shape” global structures.

The groups that had been labeled “terrorists” by the US government competed to be present at the creation of the post-Soviet world. It was a ludicrous competition—mere hundreds on the side of the “terrorists” versus the full military might of the New American Empire. But resistance to the New American Empire increased in the 1990s, perhaps because, with the Soviet monster-alterity slain, Washington dropped some of its imperial cloaking, revealing more plainly its domination. After all, the US Leviathan was the “sole ... superpower.” Robert Gates (2014: 149–150) wrote that during this time, “other nations increasingly resented our singular dominance and growing penchant for telling others how to behave,” adding that “the arrogance with which we conducted ourselves in the 1990s and beyond ... caused widespread resentment.”

Some “resentment” produced resistance, and some resistance augmented terrorism; especially when al-Qaeda, led by Osama bin Laden, was

formed in 1988 from elements of the Afghanistan I's anti-Soviet mujahideen movement.<sup>5</sup> Al-Qaeda was distinguished from other guerilla organizations at the time in that it increasingly came to target the US and was relatively comfortably funded due to Osama's connections and wealth. In 1992 it conducted its first bombing of US troops in Yemen. Terror was brought home to Americans in February 1993 when al-Qaeda bombed the World Trade Center in lower Manhattan for the first time, with six fatalities and a thousand wounded. That October, the Battle of Mogadishu was waged. Elite US Special Ops—Delta Force, Rangers, and Seals—were sent in Black Hawk helicopters to attack a Somali warlord, Mohamed Farrah Aidid. Aidid's troops turned the tables, shot down the helicopters, and annihilated the Special Ops. Mark Bowden published *Black Hawk Down* (1999), and Ridley Scott directed a 2001 movie by the same title. In effect, Bowden and Scott were hermeneuts interpreting for Americans the dangers of terrorism. Both evoked images of dead US troopers' bodies dragged through Mogadishu's streets. Al-Qaeda claimed to have trained the soldiers that killed the Americans.

The following year, 1994, brought no significant terrorist attacks upon the US, but in 1995 al-Qaeda plotted to assassinate President Clinton during a visit to the Philippines. More disturbing was the Oklahoma City bombing (April 1995). In this "home-grown" act of terrorism Timothy McVeigh, who viewed the US government as "the ultimate bully" (Aitken 2001), blew up the Alfred Murrah Federal Building, killing 168 people and wounding 680.

The bombing of the Khobar Towers in Saudi Arabia a year later (June 1996) killed 19 US Air Force soldiers and 372 others. The identity of the attack's perpetrator is debated: the US at one point attributed it to Iran; then the FBI blamed it on Hezbollah; meanwhile Abdel Bari Atwan (2006) argued al-Qaeda was responsible. Regardless of who was responsible, the Khobar Towers were near the headquarters of Saudi Arabia's oil company Aramco and a place where US soldiers were stationed. The bombing was a symbolic strike, and not an especially subtle one, at the US-Saudi alliance and its control over vast amounts of oil.

Two months later (August 1996), al-Qaeda formally targeted the US, declaring jihad against America in a *fatwa*—literally, a "judgment"—in the Palestinian newspaper *Al Quds Al Arabi*. The fatwa made it an "obligation incumbent upon every Muslim" to "kill the Americans and their allies—civilians and military" (Bin-Ladin et al. 1998). It should be understood as an al-Qaeda public *délire* binding its members to violence against the US. Al-Qaeda went to work to implement the fatwa. The Clinton administration got the message. In his memoir, *My Life*, Clinton reported that by August 1996 he had recognized "the threat of terrorism is on the rise" (2005: 737).

However, before al-Qaeda could strike, terrorism returned to New York from another source in February 1997, when Ali Abu Kamal, a Palestinian teacher, shot and killed tourists and himself on the observation deck of the Empire State Building. A note found on his body said his act was an attack upon the enemies of Palestine. Thereafter al-Qaeda, implementing its fatwa, conducted a double bombing (August 1997) against US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. The Kenyan bomb killed 291 persons and wounded about 5,000. Ten were killed and 77 wounded in the Tanzanian blast. Roughly two weeks later, Clinton responded to the embassy attacks by striking Afghanistan and the Sudan with cruise missiles. Unimpressed, al-Qaeda responded by blasting a gaping hole in the *USS Cole* (October 2000); a destroyer in port at Aden, Yemen's major harbor.

Then came 9/11. From the perspective of most Americans, 9/11 was an atrocious horror: the homeland attacked and 2,977 people killed utterly unexpectedly—and on television, for everybody to watch it over and over again. From al-Qaeda's perspective, as well as that of others in opposition to the New American Empire, 9/11 had a different significance. How is one to understand these differing meanings?

Elite US officials tried to interpret it as follows. They observed that terrorist operations, al-Qaeda or otherwise, were largely directed against the US. A Congressional Research Service report declared that "U.S. policies, citizens, and interests are prime targets for international and foreign terrorism—in 2001, approximately 63 percent of all terrorist incidents worldwide were committed against U.S. citizens or property" (Perl 2003: 2). Immediately following the 9/11 attacks, Congress organized an investigation to understand their causes and what to do about them. The investigators' final document, *The 9/11 Commission Report*, was clear. The assaults were the result of "Islamic terrorism," whose agents were "Islamist extremists," a "minority strain" and "perversion of Islam" (Kean and Hamilton 2004). So from the vantage of the official US, 9/11 was the work of monstrous Middle Eastern, religious perverts. It was Huntington redux.

Al-Qaeda did not share this interpretation. Its 1998 fatwa declaring war on America had stressed, "It should not be hidden from you that the people of Islam had suffered from aggression, iniquity and injustice imposed on them by the Zionist-Crusaders alliance and their collaborators; to the extent that the Muslims blood became the cheapest and their wealth as loot in the hands of the enemies" (Bin-Ladin et al. 1998). "Zionist-Crusaders" was al-Qaeda's term for the New American Empire and its allies, including Zionist Israel. The US Leviathan had committed "aggression" against people in the Middle East. Their wealth had been seized as "booty" by their "enemies." They had become "dispossessed people" (ibid.). The

1998 fatwa was a response to the “arrogance” of which Gates had said the US was guilty.

Following Nixon’s 1970s recognition of the importance of Persian Gulf oil, the US had sought to dominate the region; especially by supporting its ally Israel, which violently expropriated Palestinian land and wealth. Additionally, the US government created client states throughout the Middle East. Saudi Arabia and Iran were the twin towers in the 1970s. Iraq became one for a while in the 1980s, as did Egypt and other Gulf States. Many leaders in these client states, schooled in American or European educational institutions, were hybrid elites. They collaborated with US economic and security elites, especially, among other matters, helping them earn profits for US companies. At the same time, these hybrid elites richly compensated themselves at the expense of ordinary people in their countries, all the while repressing them. Here was a situation of double domination, with two sets of dominators; US and client state elites, accumulating at the expense of ordinary repressed people.

In this optic, the increased Middle Eastern resistance terrorism in the 1990s further intensified the dominator/dominated contradiction. At first, in the 1980s that resistance had been supported by Gaddafi. Then, in the 1990s al-Qaeda, who as allies of the Americans during the first Afghanistan War had learned how to war against them, applied this knowledge to resisting the Zionist-Crusaders. The 1998 fatwa declaring war upon the Americans was a public *délire* ratcheting up the dominator/dominated contradiction. Annihilation of the people in the World Trade Center—iconic seat of capitalist accumulation—was an exercise of violent force implementing this public *délire*.

In the 1980s, as documented in the last chapter, US security elites had been unable to fix the problem of terrorism. Throughout the 1990s, the Bush I and Clinton administrations instituted agencies and policies to counter terrorism. The evolution of these was described by Richard Clarke, the National Coordinator for Security, Infrastructure Protection, and Counter-terrorism in the Clinton administration (2004). The *9/11 Commission Report* judged US counterterrorism to have been inadequate (2004: 71–107). The attack itself, with its nearly three thousand deaths, was brutal demonstration of the accuracy of the commission’s judgment. Prior to 9/11, Washington’s counterterrorism measures were fixless fixes to the dominator/dominated contradiction. It had become, as the title of one book put it, *The Age of Terror* (Talbot and Chanda 2001).

Scowcroft said that the fall of the Soviets led to “the rarest opportunity to shape the world.” Perhaps, but what world was to be shaped? By the turn of the new millennium the cyclical contradiction had intensified and coalesced with the systemic contradiction, which had intensified and co-

alesced with the dominator/dominated contradiction, which itself had intensified. Fixes to the contradictions had been tried and failed. Whatever shaping the Security Elites 3.0 would do was in a tempest of contradiction and fixless fixes.

## **Vulcans and Liberal Hawks**

Two sorts of Security Elites 3.0 with varying ideologies emerged to “shape” the world of contradiction and fixless fixes. These were the Vulcans and the liberal hawks. Consider first the Vulcans.

### *Vulcans*

The Vulcans were Republicans, Bush II’s leading Security Elites 3.0: Cheney; Rumsfeld; Powell; Condoleezza Rice; and slightly below the top Wolfowitz and Richard Perle; along with a number of others.<sup>6</sup> They originated as Bush II’s foreign policy advisory team during his first presidential campaign. The group met at times in Birmingham Alabama, Rice’s hometown, which boasts the world’s largest cast iron statute of the Roman god Vulcan, the divine forger of weapons out of fire. The iron and steel industry had been important in Birmingham’s history, and the statue symbolized this past. Rice called this gaggle of foreign policy advisors Vulcans, after the statue. Their “vision” reflected the understanding that US was the world’s only superpower, “whose military power was so awesome that it no longer needed to make compromises or accommodations” (Mann 2004: xii). They were iron-hard forgers of American security.

Dov Zakheim, a lesser Vulcan, has emphasized that there were differences among the major Vulcans. These certainly existed. However, all shared a long-running elective affinity with neoconservatism. Cheney and Rumsfeld came by their neoconservatism, in some measure, out of the hurley-burley of hermeneutic politics and their struggle to forge a hard line against the Soviets during the Ford administration. Wolfowitz and Perle, purported intellectuals, came by their neoconservatism from the teachings of Leo Strauss and Albert Wohlstetter; both from the University of Chicago’s economics and politics faculty, which had been deeply conservative in in the last half of the twentieth century.<sup>7</sup>

So, among the differences were key similarities: Dick Cheney expressed the shared Vulcan Ur-principle when he declared (2003) that security elites have “the duty to use force in order to create a world in the image of the US.” The emphasis in this quotation is on the word “duty.” Why was violent force a duty? Rumsfeld (in Thomas 2002), a wise-guy joker, bor-

rowed a line from the gangster Al Capone, insisting, “You get more with a nice word and a gun, than you get with a nice word”—funny man.

“Big Bad,” as Bush II nicknamed Wolfowitz, expressed more seriously why the exercise of violence was a “duty.” He recognized, as had John Quincy Adams, that there were monsters in the world. However, unlike John Quincy Adams, in the words of Richard Immerman, Wolfowitz believed “monsters cannot be contained”; so again in the words of Immerman (2010: 21), “Destroying monsters was the prerequisite for establishing an American empire, and American empire was a prerequisite for an Empire of Liberty.” Who were the monsters (or monster-alterities as I term them)? They were America’s enemies, opponents of democracy and liberty, who would deny the Vulcans the possibility of creating “a world in the image of the US.” Vulcans knew the monsters were so evil they could not “be contained.”

Dean Acheson and the old boys 1.0 were pretty tough. They had fought World War II, seen its terror, and set the US on the path of global empire by developing enormous violent force resources. But for the most part they aimed to use those forces as part of a policy of containment or rollback. Nobody dreamed of a preemptive strike against Russia. Daalder and Lindsey (2003: 2) propose that Bush II unleashed a “revolution” in US foreign policy because at the urging of his Vulcans, he “turned John Quincy Adams on his head and argued that the United States should aggressively go abroad searching for monsters to destroy” (ibid.: 13). Consider next the Democratic Security Elites 3.0 who championed a liberal hawk ideology based upon concern for the defense of human rights.

### *Liberal Hawks*

Security elites variously called “humanitarian interventionists” or “humanitarian imperialists” rose to prominence in the Clinton administration. They helped Dubya in Iraq and flourished during the Obama years.<sup>8</sup> Because these elites continue the Democrats’ Vietnam War hawk faction, they are usefully termed “liberal hawks.” They include journalist and intellectual hermeneuts such as Thomas Friedman of the *New York Times*, Fareed Zakaria of *Newsweek*, Fred Kaplan of the *Atlantic*, and Paul Berman of the *New Republic*. Other prominent liberal hawks found within the Clinton and Obama administrations included both presidents as well as Anthony Lake, Madeleine Albright, Susan Rice, Samantha Powers, and Dr. Slaughter.<sup>9</sup>

Bill Keller of the *New York Times* asserted that peace-loving liberals had had an “epiphany” (2003) that metamorphosed them from doves into hawks. Actually, the epiphany was a long time coming. Its origins lay in Jimmy Carter’s decision to make the support of human rights a guiding

principle of US foreign policy, though Carter's own human rights policy was more a diplomatic tool than a war-justifying stratagem. Anthony Lake, director of policy planning in the State Department, was an important proponent of Carter's initiative in opposition to Brzezinski (Glad 2009). Lake became Clinton's NSA.

President Clinton, and a number of important players in his administration, had opposed the Vietnam War—so much so that he had trouble properly saluting his military, a failing that ex-president Reagan kindly helped him to overcome (Gibbs and Duffy 2012). However, there was a bigger difficulty that might be called a “Kennan Problem.” “From the early days” of the Clinton administration, with the Soviets gone, there was concern to formulate “a new, integrating foreign policy doctrine to replace George Kennan's containment” (Dumbrell 2009: 41).

The slow liberal hawk epiphany, nudged by the Kennan problem, began to emerge during the grim Rwandan and Yugoslavian civil conflicts. Liberal security elites, through the windows of their authority, perceived the perpetrators of human rights violations engineering massacres, rapes, holocaust, and genocides. Rwanda in 1994, where the US refused to intervene and some 800,000 people were massacred, was central in stimulating humanitarian interventionism. Susan Rice, who observed the US's refusal to intervene from her position in the State Department, has said, “I swore to myself that if I ever faced such a crisis again, I would come down on the side of dramatic action, going down in flames if that was required” (in Power 2001: 10). Anthony Lake also witnessed Rwanda and years later reflected in a television interview that “it [Rwanda] sits as the saddest moment, in retrospect, of my time in the Clinton administration” (2004). Why was it his “saddest moment”? He did not directly explain, but perhaps it was because “we” (the US) never contemplated “an American intervention itself.” Later in the interview, he announced, “I believe in humanitarian intervention” (ibid.). President Clinton himself, after leaving the White House, said, “I'll always regret that Rwanda thing” (in Pearlman 2008: 1). Guilt over the hundreds of thousands butchered, partly due to American inaction, was the reason that Rwanda was so important in raising the security elites' consciousness about human rights.

It was during Yugoslavia's dismemberment that members of the Clinton administration actually began to act as humanitarian interventionists, no one more so than Madeleine Albright. She, according to David Halberstam, was “a champion of the use of force” and the “leading hawk” in Clinton's administration (2001: 197, 376), due in part to her particular background. Her parents had been Czech elites prior to World War II. Her father had been the Czech ambassador to Yugoslavia, witnessed Nazi terror in Eastern Europe followed by the Soviet takeover, and become a “hard-

liner” in the struggle against Moscow (*ibid.*: 382). Albright said her parents were “great humanists who worried about what happens if evil succeeds” (in M. J. Lee 2012: 3). In 1994 she had contemplated the Rwandan “evil” from her position as UN ambassador (1993–1997). Thereafter, promoted to secretary of state (1997–2001), she watched “evil” as Milosevic’s Serbs brutalized Bosnians, Croatians, and Kosovars and as these latter returned “evil” with “evil.” Such experiences made her a fierce promoter of US military intervention—so great an advocate that when the US finally did begin bombing Serbia (1999) over its Kosovo invasion, the ensuing conflict would be called “Madeleine’s War” (Buckwalter 2002).

Paralleling and aiding Albright’s rise was Hillary Clinton’s emergence as a liberal hawk. She had favored intervention in Haiti (1994) and Bosnia (1995), and then, in the hermeneutic politics over whether to bomb Serbia to punish its military campaign in Kosovo, she sided with Albright. Secretary of Defense William Cohen, and Chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Colin Powell, two influential interpreters of the Kosovo situation, were hesitant about the use of violent force. Hillary was not. She recalled telephoning her husband: “I urged him to bomb” (in S. Chapman 2007: 23). According to her biographer, Gail Sheehy (1999: 345), Bill and Hillary disputed over the matter for a number of days, and finally she moralized, “You cannot let this go on to the end of a century that has seen the major holocaust of our time. What do we have NATO for if not to defend our way of life”? What she understood by “way of life” apparently was, bombs away!

To be clear, certain liberals justified violent intervention in terms of “evil.” Obama had underscored this in his Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech when he said: “evil does exist.” However, their understanding of evil came from a particular hermeneutic based upon a particular perceptual understanding of wickedness. Terrorist violation of human rights was evil. The procedure for addressing malevolence was intervention against it, with violent intervention being entirely acceptable. Epiphany had been a long time coming. Ten years to be exact, but doves metamorphosed into hawks, supported by a humanitarian interventionist ideology.

During an Indonesian campaign of terror in East Timor in the late 1990s, Sandy Berger, who replaced Anthony Lake as NSA (1997–2001), responded to criticism that the Clinton administration had not intervened in East Timor with the statement, “I don’t think anybody ever articulated a doctrine which said that we ought to intervene whenever there’s a humanitarian problem” (in Dumbrell 2009: 45). This might be called the “Berger Caveat” to the humanitarian interventionist hermeneutic, that is, the US government will intervene in humanitarian crises when and where it wants. Because of this qualification, some have detected hypocrisy concerning the liberal hawks’ defense of human rights.<sup>10</sup>



But the Clinton administration had done it. They had solved the Kennan problem. They had their grand strategy. It was a liberal hawk iteration of the “violence makes peace” hermeneutic of the Security Elites 1.0. Human rights were universal. Evil violated those rights. Terrorists despoiled them, so terrorists were evil. Procedurally, if the US perceived human rights had been violated anywhere in the world, then they could proceed to intervene. If the violations had been violent, then the US reserved the right to fight evil violence with good violence.

This argument reprises that of nineteenth-century imperialists. Then, it was legitimate to violently intervene globally because the opponents were bad savages. Now it was legitimate to do the same because the terrorists were still bad savages. In both cases it was a moral good, as Kurtz had put it in Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, to “exterminate all the brutes.”

It is time to summarize how the Republican and Democratic security elites had responded to the worsening contradictions that they faced at the end of the old and the beginning of the new millennium. Their responses differed from those of their economic elite counterparts, who were frozen into impotence due to the uncertainty of their fixless fixes. The masters and commanders 3.0 intended to “shape” their imperial world. Andrew Bacevich (2005), a perceptive scholar of contemporary imperial warring, has argued that they would do so, due in good measure to a “new militarism.” In our terms, this neo-militarism was the Vulcan and Hawk iterations of the “violence makes peace” hermeneutic. However, the fact that US security elites were disposed to make peace violently does not explain *what* they would be violent about and *how* they would go about implementing the wars they waged from the 1990s through 2014. The first of these two questions is answered by considering the fixation affecting the Vulcans and Hawks.

### Situational Fixation: Oil and Terror

Reflection upon reoccurring events was said in Chapter 2 to be situational fixation. If the situation is such that an event happens once and never again, it is a one-off; people do not think much about it. If the situation is such that it reoccurs, and what is reoccurring is important, they reflect, that is, fixate, upon it. If you get a toothache that lasts for ten minutes and then goes away, it is no big deal and you forget about it. However, if that toothache continues for several days, it becomes something you fixate upon. People desire to fix what they are situationally fixated upon; that is, they are experimentally fixated. Be very clear, experimental fixation is desire—a union of reason and emotion—to *act*, and thus motivates people

with a laser-like focus to act on their fixations. In the 1990s Vulcans and Hawks situationally fixated upon two sorts of circumstances: those involving oil, and those involving terror.

### *Oil: The “Foundation” of “the Global Economy”*

First, the situation regarding oil looked bad—at least for the US Leviathan. As earlier documented, since the 1970s the US oil industry “had fallen on tough times” (LeVine 2007: xiii) with the extensive oil nationalizations and the rise of OPEC. Starting in the 1980s, the addition of new players in oil commodity chains that competed with the majors for oil supplies exacerbated the “tough times.” These companies—Russian and Chinese—might be called the new majors. The three largest Russian petroleum companies are Gazprom, Lukoil, and Rosneft. Three Chinese companies—the Chinese National Offshore Corporation, the Chinese National Petroleum Corporation, and PetroChina—had been “increasingly aggressive” in a “global investment blitz” (“Chinese Oil Giants” 2003).

Then, for a while in the 1980s, the situation regarding oil looked better because of the state of affairs in the USSR’s former Caspian and Central Asian region, where the Russians had been developing oil and gas for over a century (LeVine 2007). With the dissolution of the Soviet Union, this industry was up for grabs. The Clinton security elites could hardly believe their calculations. Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott announced there might be 200 billion barrels of crude oil around the Caspian, together with additionally enormous amounts of gas (Cheterian 1997). Media heremeneuts hyped the region as the “new” oil “El Dorado” (Guma 2006).<sup>11</sup> Consequently, the Clinton administration’s energy policy sought “to establish an American preserve” in the Caspian (LeVine 2007: xiv). So the oil situation changed: in the 1990s, oil elites went from a fixation upon “tough times” to preparing for a new “El Dorado.”

Clinton’s liberal hawks fixated on the oil situation because they recognized, as Bill Richardson, Clinton’s energy secretary (1998–2001), put it, that “oil has literally made foreign and security policy for decades” (in Kaldor, Karl, and Said 2007: 1). Why had oil “made ... security policy”? This question was easily answered by Kenneth Pollack, who bluntly stated, “It’s the Oil, Stupid—... the global economy built over the last 50 years rests on a foundation of inexpensive, plentiful oil, and if that foundation were removed, the global economy would collapse” (in Everest 2004: 251). You were “stupid” if you did not know the world “runs” on petroleum energy. Liberal hawks were not “stupid.” What about the Vulcans?

They were not stupid either, and some of them, as earlier noted, had close ties with the energy business. However, they fixated upon a seemly

self-contradictory realization: on one hand, the US Leviathan, even though it had economic problems, was in a good situation; on the other, the petroleum situation was bad; but not to worry—this could redound to the New American Empire's benefit. Two reports documented their fixation.

The first came from the Project for the New American Century (PNAC), founded in 1996 as a neoconservative think tank; Wolfowitz, Perle, Rumsfeld, and Cheney were active members. At the end of the 1990s the PNAC published *Rebuilding America's Defenses* (RAD; Donnelly 2000), which largely addressed military policy but had implications for oil.<sup>12</sup> The document concentrated on political circumstances and was triumphalist, declaring the times to be a “unipolar” moment in world history (Donnelly 2000: 2) at which the US was “the world's only superpower” enjoying “pre-eminent military power” (ibid.: i). In effect, the Vulcans were bragging. With the Soviets eliminated, the New American Empire had achieved what no other empire had ever achieved: world empire. Eat your hearts out, Alexander, Ghengis Khan, Napoleon.

Nevertheless, the PNAC report recognized that the US faced economic problems, which they spoke of in terms of “a shrinking industrial base poorly structured to be the ‘arsenal of democracy’ for the 21st century” (ibid.: 1). In terms earlier discussed in the chapter, the “shrinking industrial base” was a consequence of neoliberal outsourcing and the cyclical contradiction. To address this vulnerability, the report recommended that security elites proceed “from the belief that America should seek to preserve and extend its position of global leadership by maintaining the pre-eminence of U.S. military forces” (ibid.: 4). Implicit in this “belief” was an understanding that military “preeminence” could “preserve and extend” US empire. Preserving and extending empire was reproducing it, so RAD did not base the New American Empire's reproduction on an economic system beset with fixless fixes. Rather, imperial reproduction was to be entrusted to the military.

RAD reiterated that the Persian Gulf was, “an essential element in U.S. security strategy given the long-standing American interests in the region” (ibid.: 17). Of course, those “interests” were in oil. The second report was more explicit about oil. In April 2001, two months after Bush II's inauguration, the US Council on Foreign Relations and the Baker Institute of Public Policy issued an energy task force report concerning US energy strategy entitled *Strategic Energy Policy Challenges for the 21st Century* (SEPC 2001). The report had been commissioned by the new vice president, Dick Cheney. Task force members were technical specialists from “every segment of the world of energy” (ibid.: 3). Their expert finding was brutal: “the energy sector” was “in critical condition” (ibid.: 7). Cheney's task force singled out “spare capacity”—the amount of oil available at any

time above that needed for immediate consumption—as a key concern. The report noted that OPEC spare capacity stood at 25 percent of global demand in 1988 and at 8 percent of demand in 1990. It was projected at only 2 percent in 2001. The report interpreted this rapid decline as follows:

The world is currently precariously close to utilizing all of its available global oil production capacity, raising the chances of an oil supply crisis with more substantial consequences than seen in three decades. (SEPC 2001: 4)

The SEPC report obliterated any notion that the New American Empire was headed for any petroleum El Dorado. The energy sector was in a “critical condition.” So the situation the Vulcans fixated on in the 2000s was that that the US had become a world empire reproducible by “military preeminence,” but that the empire was threatened by an “oil supply crisis.” How should the US Leviathan respond?

The Vulcans answered this question in the “capstone” public statement of US military policy, the National Defense Security Strategy (NDS-2008 2008). Released in 2008, it reflected earlier Vulcan understandings that had been around since the 1990s. It decreed that “as the relative balance of economic and military power between states shifts ... new fears and insecurities will arise, presenting new risks.... These risks will require managing the divergent needs of massively increasing energy demand to maintain economic development” (ibid.: 5). It explicitly recognized that the US military must involve itself in “managing ... massively increasing energy demands.” Later the same document further announced, “The well-being of the global economy is contingent on ready access to energy resources;” and “The United States will continue to foster access to and flow of energy resources vital to the world economy” (ibid.: 16). As Bush II began his presidency, the Vulcans’ fixation upon the situation of their empire and the world’s oil focused upon the military’s “managing” oil in the sense of providing “access to” it.

They might have been said to be experimentally fixated upon global warring as a force resource to control petroleum energy, thereby enhancing the New American Empire’s “managing” the “well-being” of its global economy.

In sum, US security elite fixation on the situation of oil might be understood as beginning with the Nixon Administration’s recognition of an oil “crisis,” continuing with the Carter’s administration’s Carter Doctrine, and strengthening with the liberal hawks’ and Vulcans’ common belief that if the US Leviathan employed its military to control the oil, then it could control the global economy and thereby relax the economic contradictions to its imperial being. Consider now the fixation on terror.

### *Terrorism: A Happening Thing*

The situation with terrorism was simpler than that of oil. As it had been in the 1980s, so it was in the 1990s. Terrorism happened, re-happened, and re-happened again and again. It could not be stopped. It was, like the sound of police, fire truck, and ambulance sirens in a city, “a happening thing”—and, in bad news for US elites, was often aimed at them. Then, it *really* happened. 9/11! Out of the clear blue sky, the hijacked planes flew in for a second attack on the World Trade Center and a first on the Pentagon. The twin towers—the New York ones, not the Middle Eastern ones—afire, collapsed. My youngest son sat at the Brooklyn waterfront that day and watched little black specks falling from the burning towers. He puzzled over what they might be before recognition struck: Desperate people flinging themselves off the towers to avoid the inferno.

On the following weekend, Bush II and his top Vulcans met at Camp David to decide on a response. Following this meeting Dubya announced his war on terrorism, saying, “This crusade—this war on terrorism—is going to take awhile” (in Bazinet 2001). A week later, in a nationally televised address to a joint session of Congress, he reiterated the message, saying, “Our ‘war on terror’ begins with Al Qaeda, but it does not end there. It will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped, and defeated” (“Transcript of President Bush’s Address” 2001).

The oil situation had been like a roller coaster melody, from high notes to low notes, all the time getting higher. That of terrorism was like a sharp dental pain that suddenly became excruciating. Terrorists had been unstoppable. When they took down the towers, the hurt became unbearable. Dubya cried out that he would mount a “crusade,” and US security elites 3.0 experimentally fixated upon a “war on terrorism.”

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has narrated a tale of two economic and security elites in the face of a perfect storm of intensifying and coalescing contradictions that provoked ominous reproductive vulnerabilities. The economic elites tried, and failed, to fix the vulnerabilities. The security elites responded to the storm of contradictions by developing liberal hawk and Vulcan factions. Neither faction understood the storm in terms of contradiction. Rather, they fixated on it in terms of the perceptual cultural messages already stored in the neuronal memory evoked by the actualities the contradictions created. In the actuality created by the intensification of economic contradictions, the control of oil became central to the US Leviathan’s

“well-being.” Meanwhile, intensification of the dominator/dominated contradiction created an actuality where terror stalked US elites.

So the Hawks and Vulcans first became situationally fixated on oil and terror during the 1990s. Having reflected on them, they came away with the understanding that they would be violent about issues of oil and terror, believing that such violence could fix the US Leviathan’s reproductive vulnerabilities. That is, this situational fixation produced an experimental one in which Hawks and Vulcans experimentally fixated on the exercise of violent force to control oil and eliminate terrorism. The next two chapters are about how they did it—how they used the oil-control and anti-terrorist iterations of the global domination public *délire*, already instituted back in the 1980s, to choreograph world warring.

## Notes

1. Bush II was controversial. A word is in order about his competencies. Rumsfeld (2011: 319) insists Bush “was a far more formidable president than his popular image.” As Condoleezza Rice explained, “He’s really smart—and he’s also self-disciplined” (in Felix 2005: 8). Scott McClellan (2009: xiii) described him as “self-confident, quick-witted, down-to-earth and stubborn.” Rumsfeld, Rice, and McClellan were Dubya’s employees. Bush (2010: 61) himself announced he became convinced he should run for president after listening to a sermon about Moses leading the Israelites out of Egypt. Kristof (2000) reported on the occasion he walked up to a matron at a smart cocktail party and asked, “So, what’s sex like after 50, anyway?” Bush II denigrated his policy people as “propeller heads” and insisted, “I don’t do nuance” (Draper 2007: 165). Furthermore, prior to assuming the presidency, he acknowledged in a moment of candor (or perhaps foolhardiness), “I don’t have the foggiest idea what I think about international, foreign policy” (in B. Woodward 2006: 3). Nevertheless, he believed himself to be effective, confiding, “I don’t spend a lot of time theorizing or agonizing, I get things done” (Daalder and Lindsay 2003: 199). The evidence of his cocaine use is largely hearsay, but it is considerable (Hatfield 1999).

2. Condoleezza Rice’s family preserves the memory of their great-grandmother Julia Head Rice, who was a house slave on an Alabama plantation during the Civil War (Felix 2005: 24; Rice 2010: 13). It is remembered that toward the end of the war, when Union soldiers threatened the plantation, Julia helped hide its horses from them. How is one to interpret Rice’s family remembrance? Does it support the contention that her family looked favorably on working for oppressors? It will be recalled that in the Civil War, hundreds of thousands of slaves fought for the North, against those oppressors.

3. The US had been involved in Congolese conflicts well before Susan Rice. However, the Rwandan invasion of Congo (the First Congo War, 1996–1997) that Rice argued for led directly to the Second Congo War (1998–2003), the deadliest conflict in contemporary African history, in which an estimated 3.9 million people were killed (Coghlan et al. 2006: 44). Capitalist interests, including US ones, plundered Congolese resources during these wars (Renton, Seddon, and Zeilig 2007).

4. Information about declining profit rates is presented by Magdoff and Sweezy (1988). Makoto Itoh (1990) provides evidence for the 1970s and 1980s; Foster and McChesney (2009) for the 2007–2009 Great Recession. In an entire issue of the *New Left Review*, Robert Brenner (1998) marshaled evidence bearing on profit rates that supported an overaccumula-

tion explanation for the period between 1950 and 1993. Callinicos (2010: 51–68) summarizes evidence of the entire period.

5. Steven Wright (2007) and Hellmich (2011) provide useful accounts of al-Qaeda. Ibrahim (2007) has published certain of al-Qaeda's texts, allowing readers to grasp al-Qaeda from their own perspective.

6. I am using the term Vulcan broadly to refer to Bush II's leading security advisors, as does James Mann (2004). Daalder and Lindsey (2003: 17–35) discuss the Vulcans from a Democratic perspective. Zakheim (2011a) provides an insider's view.

7. Strauss was a political philosopher whose thought has been judged by some to be elitist and anti-democratic (Drury 1999; for an opposing view consult S. Smith 2006). Wohlstetter was a controversial Cold War nuclear strategist credited with steering his students along a neoconservative path (Unger 2008), and the supposed model for the mad Dr. Strangelove in Stanley Kubrik's dark 1964 comedy of the same title.

8. Humanitarian interventionism is an old liberal doctrine found in John Stuart Mill (1859). Chomsky (1999) criticizes it. Brimont (2006) explains how it legitimates imperial violence.

9. Perhaps most directly influential, at least concerning Dubya's Iraq II War, was Kenneth Pollack, a longtime CIA specialist on Iranian and Iraqi military issues who became the director of Persian Gulf affairs for the NSC during the Clinton administration. Leaving government, he took up residence at the Brookings Institution, a centrist think tank dedicated to propagating interpretations relevant to US government policy. Especially important in this regard was his *The Threatening Storm: The Case for Invading Iraq* (2002). Bill Keller, then the *New York Times* managing editor, when revealing his own support for Iraq II, announced "Kenneth Pollack" wrote "surely the most influential book of this season" because it "provided intellectual cover for every liberal who finds himself inclining toward war but uneasy about Mr. Bush" (2002).

10. Herman and Peterson (2010) document US human rights hypocrisy, especially as it pertains to genocide.

11. A "downsizing" has reduced proven Central Asian crude oil reserves (Ebel and Menon 2000: 4), perhaps down to 40 million barrels.

12. RAD's project participants were a neoconservative who's who in which the father-son team of the Kagans—Donald (father), Fred, and Robert (sons)—was particularly important. RAD's principal author was Thomas Donnelly.