First published in *Australian Review of Public Affairs*, Volume 7, Issue 1 (2006). Published by School of Economics and Political Science, University of Sydney.

6 November 2006

American empire

Howard Brasted, University of New England

Nicholas B. Dirks *The Scandal of Empire: India and the Creation of Imperial Britain* Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2006 (389 pp). ISBN 0-674-02166-5 (hard cover) RRP $49.95.

Bernard Porter *Empire and Superempire: Britain, America and the World*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2006 (224 pp). ISBN 0-300-11010-3 (hard cover) RRP $59.95.

Charles S. Maier *Among Empires: American Ascendancy and its Predecessors*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2006 (373 pp). ISBN 0-674-02189-4 (hard cover) RRP $49.95.

Imperial history—the study of empires rising and falling—is making a comeback, if the recent outpouring of scholarly books on the subject is any indication. America's current quest to install a system of international law and order in the 21st century—a *pax Americana*—has rekindled this interest in empires. But so has the emerging framework of analysis within which imperial history is being debated and interpreted. That framework arises from the proposition that the United States is essentially an empire. It may be the most powerful of all time in military and economic terms, but America's particular exercise of global ascendancy is characteristic of the empires which preceded it—especially Britain's. Thus, the American empire is better understood when compared with and referenced against the kind of hegemony that empires of the past acquired and were able to exert (Ferguson 2004, p. vii). Though not the first to put this case, British historian Niall Ferguson has mounted it so forthrightly in *Colossus: The Price of America's Empire* that the key arguments of his book appear to have become standard points of concurrence or contestation for any subsequent reappraisal of American imperialism.

The American empire that Ferguson plots is a 'peculiar' empire. It has no colonies, and it does not annex foreign territory. But it does preside over a network of client states, seeks to expand its frontiers of global power by means of market forces, corporate capitalism, and international monetary organisation, and it regularly sends in gun-ships and guided missiles to topple recalcitrant regimes or prop up friendly ones. It stations significant troop numbers in Asia, Europe and the Middle-East and maintains military outposts—some 725 of them according to one tally (Chalmers Johnson, quoted in Maier 2006, p. 312)—in more than half the countries of the world. In Ferguson's view this is imperialism 21st century style (Ferguson 2004, p. 10).

The trouble is that despite its massive strengths—military, financial, and cultural—the United States 'struggles to impose its will beyond its shores' (Ferguson 2004, p. 286). In part this is because it is an empire in 'denial' that habitually proclaims its anti-imperialist credentials as a 'liberating' rather than 'conquering' power, and it is reluctant to embrace the policing responsibilities its global dominance confers (Ferguson 2004, pp. ix, 6–7). It is also because Americans do not make very efficient or dedicated imperialists, unlike their British predecessors. They lack 'the imperial cast of mind' and prefer to 'build shopping malls than nations'. Nonetheless Ferguson believes that on balance 'liberal empire', which America represents, is a good thing and that the world can only benefit from the order it offers (Ferguson 2004, pp. 24, 29, 297). While his 'bottom line' is that there is no 'alternative' to American imperialism (Ferguson 2004, pp. xxii-xxviii, 301)—except international anarchy—such are the 'debilitating weaknesses' of the United States, especially its 'attention deficit' disorder or 'absent-mindedness' where empire is concerned, that its imperial primacy is not likely to last for long or indeed much longer (Ferguson 2004, pp. 2, 293–295). Should the problems faced in Afghanistan and Iraq become insoluble, the United States might decide to pull back to its homeland borders and leave the

external boundaries of conflict to the 'barbarians' or the forces of disorder gathering along them (Ferguson 2004, p. 302). In Ferguson's calculation America's withdrawal would not only risk a new dark age, but also precipitate the process of imperial decline that all previous empires had gone through sooner or later (Ferguson 2004, p. 14).

AMERICAN WORLD ORDER

The historical context for the reappraisal of American imperialism that Ferguson calls for broadly covers the period from World War II, following the dismemberment and demise of the British Empire, to the present. But it arguably spans the last fifteen years from 1991 to 2006. This is a period in which America's leaders continue to insist that they don't 'do' empire, but are prepared to countenance the attainment of a benevolent world order and commit the United States to achieving it. President H.W. Bush (hereafter Bush Snr) did so openly in 1991 when the Soviet Union collapsed along with the communist system, leaving the international field to the United States alone. This 'rare transforming moment of world history' (quoted in Chomsky 2003a, p. 1), Bush proclaimed, was the perfect time to build a 'new world order' to be based on an American formula of liberal democracy, free markets, and international consensus.

Initially, this 'new world order', which became the catch phrase of Bush Snr's presidency, so often was it mentioned in his speeches, was to be a collective undertaking involving great power co-operation, a 'credible United Nations' with effective collective peacekeeping power, and a system of international relations governed by 'the rule of law, not the law of the jungle' (Presidential Speeches, George H.W. Bush, 11 Sep 1990, 16 Jan 1991, 6 Mar 1991). Later, when it became apparent that the United States was 'the only remaining superpower', Bush began reserving the right to 'act alone' if necessary. The United States was the only power 'capable of assembling the forces of peace' and the only country with the resources and strength 'to shape the future'. Its 'leadership' was 'indispensable'. There was 'no one else' (Presidential Speeches, George H.W. Bush, 29 Jan 1991, 15 Dec 1992). Ultimately, this was to be a 'new world order' underpinned by the military, moral, and material authority of the United States.

On 11 September 2001 Al Qaeda dealt Bush Snr's 'new world order' an horrendous blow, and President George W. Bush (hereafter Bush Jnr) both reinforced and substantially transformed it (Nye 2006, p. 21). Declaring in the aftermath that international order was needed more than ever, Bush Jnr pledged that the United States would 'help make the world not just safer but better' (National Security Strategy of the United States of America 2002). The Strategy replaced the centrepieces of Bush Snr's 'new world order'—the constraining influence of the rule of law and the partnership of the United Nations—with the right of the United States to undertake a preventative war in pursuit of tyrants and terrorists (with or without the support of the international community), the right of defensive pre-emptive attack, and the right to force democracy on so-called failed states (Presidential Speeches, George W. Bush, 14 Sep 2001, 1 June 2002; *National Security Statement* 2002, pp. 6, 15). International support was envisaged, but this would be provided by 'allies and friends'—'coalitions of the willing'—not the United Nations.

These new ground rules closely matched those contained in *Rebuilding America's Defenses,* the September 2000 blueprint of the neo-conservative lobby—the Project for the New American Century (PNAC)—for the maintenance of American supremacy. *Rebuilding America's Defenses* stipulated that for the United States to remain the world's supreme power, it needed a 'suitably equipped' armed force, capable of fighting and winning 'multiple, simultaneous theatre wars' and pushing forward the frontiers of 'America's principles and interests'. Global 'leadership' of this 'constabulary' kind had to be exercised regardless of the 'costs', and 'as far into the future as possible' (2000, pp. 2, 4, 11, 14, 18). It is little wonder that Noam Chomsky has identified the 'threat or use of military force'—or might is right—as lying at the heart of Bush Jnr's 'global agenda' (Chomsky 2003b, pp. 11–15).

Since 9/11 the United States has ostensibly followed the neo-conservative script to the letter. It has

committed troops to multiple 'theatres' of conflict, first to Afghanistan to knock out Al Qaeda and overthrow the Taliban regime harbouring it, and then to Iraq to destroy its weapons of mass destruction; and when none were found to install liberal democracy instead. None of these actions has delivered the promised new order of peace and security to these as yet unpacified and still violent 'frontiers'. Most of Afghanistan remains in the control of the old ethnic warlords and the Taliban are effectively regrouping. In Iraq Saddam Hussein was toppled in a matter of weeks, but three years on, according to General Abizaid, US Commander in the Middle-East, the country is much nearer to full-scale civil war than functioning civil society ('The sound of one domino falling' 2006).

THREE RECENT TREATMENTS OF AMERICAN IMPERIALISM

Against this backdrop of world disorder Nicholas Dirks, Bernard Porter, and Charles Maier proffer three very different approaches to comprehending American power and contextualising it. Dirks does this indirectly by suggesting a link between the way the British acquired empire in India and America's presiding over a world he considers to have been misshapen by imperialism. He emphasises the dark side of empire. Bernard Porter takes his bearings from the British empire too, but primarily to identify the bigger, 'super' character of American imperialism. Charles Maier roams over the entire historical landscape of all previous empires to map both the universal and unique features of American empire.

Dirks' *Scandal of Empire* is essentially a condemnatory treatment of the 'conquest' of India by a handful of British conquistadors in the 18th century. But it also advances a challenging and confronting critique of imperialism that applies not only to the formation of the British empire, but centrally to the prospect of any new empire—especially the American—rising to replace it in the 21st century or beyond. That critique arises in part from Dirks' analysis of how the British came to acquire India, by plundering its sources of revenue and by propping up the mercenary East India Company to take over indigenous governments when their administrations collapsed.

Dirks' critique also springs from his proposition that Britain's rule of India underpinned the 'rise' of the modern West and provided one of the main 'roots' of American imperialism (pp. 330–331). Born of 'scandal', the British subjugation of India was a defining moment of both British history and world history. Not only did it affect the development of the ideas of 'virtue, corruption, nationalism, sovereignty, economic freedom, governmentality, tradition, and history itself'—the very hallmarks of modernity—but it also 'set the stage' for American empire (pp. 29, 32). Reminded of Britain's occupation of India when America invaded Iraq in 2003, Dirks points to the element of 'scandal' as the 'continuity' connecting them. For Dirks, 'scandal' is 'emblematic' of all imperial enterprise and 'constitutive of the history' of those nations that have exercised hegemonic power, the United States being simply the latest exponent (p. 26).

Dirks offers what I would venture to call a 'subalternist' reappraisal of empire (p. 32), together with a reading of British imperial history in the style of Edward Said's famous critique of 'Orientalist' literature (Said 1978). Disdainful of approaches like those of Neill Ferguson's *Empire: How Britain Made the Modern World* (2004) and the Oxford History of the British Empire (Louis 1998–2001), Dirks argues that imperial rule should be viewed not from the perspective of the colonisers—as these accounts do—but essentially from the experience and outlook of the colonised. Stripped of their mythology, empires were never agencies of benevolence, but were constructions of an exploitative, repressive and despotic kind (pp. 333–335). That Ferguson could exhort the United States to emulate the British empire and continue to spread the benefits of capitalism and democracy overseas, Dirks dismisses as misrepresenting the reality of empire and advancing a recipe for perpetuating scandal. 'Scandal' is what empires were 'all about', and it was 'high time for the sun to set' on them (p. 35).

For Dirks, then, the 'final scandal of empire' is that empire had not been 'confined to the past tense once and for all' (pp. 26, 34–5, 329–330). This owed something to contemporary rationales that fallen states—like India—needed advanced states—like Britain—to help them climb the ladder of civilisation,

rationales that may have lost their gloss but which continue to be dusted down by latter day apologists of imperialism. But it owed even more to the historical record of empire that British imperial historians had subsequently created (pp. 243, 311). Dirks accuses them of erasing the corrupt origins of empire by reconstituting them as 'narratives of imperial, nationalistic and capitalistic triumph', something to take pride in rather than be ashamed of. In this form the immorality of empire had been effectively 'laundered' in modern British and European history, discounted in the American vision of world order, and lost sight of in Bush Jnr's recourse to 'imperial ways and means' (pp. xviii, 25–26, 35). Written as a 'different kind of imperial history', Dirks' *Scandal of Empire* appeals for the return of post-colonial 'balance' in historical commentary on imperialisms, and draws on the lessons of Britain's colonial past as a warning against any imperial future, American or otherwise (pp. 27, 32).

What those lessons actually should be, Bernard Porter, a leading historian of the British empire whom Nicholas Dirks would doubtless categorise as belonging to the old school of imperial historians he takes issue with, explores in considerable depth. In Porter's view not only have 'most people' got the 'wrong idea about the British empire', they have derived the wrong idea about American imperialism as a consequence (p. 15). In *Empire and Superempire: Britain, America and the World*, Porter sets out to correct the record about British imperialism, and to throw light on American imperialism by getting the comparisons 'right'. Otherwise, as Porter fears, the misapprehensions of past history—especially the nature of Britain's 19th century paramountcy—will continue to fuel the misreadings of current history and America's 21st century predominance (pp. 6, 8, 94).

The misapprehensions Porter lays bare concern the 'essence' of the British empire on the one hand, and the nature of American imperialism in the 19th and 20th centuries and its subsequent transformation in the 21st century on the other. Casting aside what he considers to be semantic quibbling, Porter adopts a definition of empire that is not restricted to the possession of colonies, but extends to the exercise of power in the world and dominance over other countries (pp. 2, 64, 133). On this basis he proceeds to claim that not only were 'many of the nitty-gritty details' of the imperialistic histories of Britain and America 'uncannily alike', the two countries were also imperialistic 'in most of the same ways' (pp. 7, 37–8, 62, 90). Empire may traditionally have constituted a dirty word in the American vocabulary, but the United States was never averse to extending its power by means that stopped just short of direct rule or outright territorial control. Supported by a 'vast network of military and naval bases' in the 20th century, as Britain had been in the 19th, the United States proceeded to carve out an economic empire of expanding commerce, free trade, and foreign investment. Regardless of any proclaimed commitment to the concept of a self-governing world, self-aggrandisement and self-interest largely informed American expansionism (pp. 80–82). In short the United States was more imperialistic than Americans have cared to recognise.

On the flip side, as Porter had shown in two earlier studies of British imperialism—*The Absent-Minded Imperialists: Empire, Society, and Culture in Britain* (2004) and *The Lion's Share: A Short History of British Imperialism 1850-2004* (2004)—Britain's history was much less imperialistic than Americans have been prone to imagine. The British empire was actually a 'fundamentally weak' system of control that managed to last as long as it did only through a combination of luck, bluff and repression (pp. 15, 37–38). Wherever possible, Britain preferred to run this territorial empire indirectly through local rulers or amenable intermediaries. But where necessary, it was also able to send a trained cadre of pro-consuls and civil servants to various parts of its far-flung empire to rule them directly. That the United States had no such imperial civil service to call on constitutes in Porter's mind one of the few differences between British and American imperialisms up to this point.

By the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and markedly after 9/11, British and American imperialisms displayed differences of a major scale. This was not because the United States suddenly embraced the kind of old fashioned imperialism associated with the British empire or cast off its reluctance to dominate the world physically and formally. It was because American imperialism dramatically transcended British imperialism. Apart from being 'much, much bigger', it was militarily more impressive, more culturally and economically pervasive, more 'amazingly ambitious' in the vision of its

'imperialists' to create a new world order in 'its own image', and, after 9/11, more ideologically driven. 'Exceeding any previous empires the world has ever seen', for Porter America is nothing less than a 'superempire' (pp. 95, 162).

Even so, as Porter points out, the recent imperialist orientation of American foreign policy was partly fortuitous. Had one of the Supreme Court judges changed their vote in the disputed presidential election of 2000, Al Gore might have been anointed president instead of George W. Bush. And had 9/11 not allowed the United States to promote 'superimperialism' as an 'agenda for self-defence', the ideas informing it might well have remained marginalised and in check (pp. 97, 165–167). Against this, however, as Porter clearly shows, 'superimperialism' grew directly out of the past, and he pulls no punches in suggesting that 9/11 was a 'form of blowback' against America for all the 'covert' and 'informal' imperialism it had inflicted on the world since World War II (pp. 95–99). As it turned out, 9/11 presented the neo-conservative forces in America with the golden opportunity to enact their 'broader vision' of America's destiny and promote not just America's 'interests' abroad, but critically her 'principles' as well. What they believed it would take to remould the world was nothing less than the application of 'full spectrum' dominance (pp. 100–110, 130).

Reinforcing this aggressive superimperialism and giving it a rather scary 'edge' is what Porter calls the 'premillennial dispensationalism' of the Christian Right. This theology holds Americans to be the agents of God's 'salvation', a salvation which would follow a turbulent period presided over by the Antichrist when Palestine would be returned to the Israelites, Solomon's temple would be rebuilt in Jerusalem on the site of the Al-Aqsa mosque, the Jews would convert to Christianity, and the faithful would be whisked away to heaven before being returned to earth during the thousand year reign of the Saints. Whether or not Bush Jnr gives any credence to a script taken straight out of the Book of Revelations, Porter reminds us that the 'bible belt' states of the South and mid-West represent a crucial constituency for him and that he persistently characterises America's mission to right the wrongs of the world in messianic terms of 'good' and 'evil' (pp. 95–112). British imperialism was much more down to earth and the British empire was never captured or principally run by imperialists of this ilk—'crazies' as Colin Powell has apparently labelled them (p. 153).

With brute force failing in Afghanistan and Iraq, Porter concludes his assessment of American 'superimperialism' by pouring cold water on Niall Ferguson's notion that direct rule—for periods up to 75 years if need be—may be the answer. While acknowledging that 'successful' states should help pick up and revive 'failed' states, Porter insists that the 'days of a more direct and benevolent form of empire' are over, and imperialism itself always entailed some 'rape' and pillage no matter how high minded the intentions of its proponents. That was not 'the kind of lesson' anyone would want the Americans to 'copy today', though they could still learn something from the British empire if they 'chose the right bits' (pp. 167-176).

Last but not least, Charles Maier delivers a masterful history lesson in his reappraisal of America's rise to global ascendancy and the kind of power the United States has acquired and currently exercises. While he traverses some of the same ground as Ferguson, Dirks, Porter, and others, he covers more of it, from different angles, and over a greater span of time. Setting out to determine whether America can be called a new empire, Maier takes his bearings from not just the British empire, but all the leading empires stretching back to antiquity. Against the template of imperial features they provide, he compares the sources and structures of American power in the 19th and 20th centuries, before reflecting on the kinds of worlds empires in general tend to deliver both at home and abroad, and on the 21st century world order that the United States in particular has pledged itself to build.

Non-committal from the outset, Maier does not rush to label America's ascendancy as imperialistic, hegemonic, scandalous, or benevolent (pp. 59-65). Despite canvassing a range of definitions (pp. 24-64), he remains reluctant to make this call. Nonetheless, Maier goes a long way to showing that America, when he compares it with imperial models of the past and consults prevailing theories of imperialism to see where it fits, meets the basis criteria for an empire. It possesses 'unparalleled' 'hard power'—in the

form of massive military and economic capacity—that can be deployed at any time and anywhere to pressure unruly states like Slobodan Milosevic's Serbia or invade so-called rogue states like Saddam Hussein's Iraq. It projects prodigious 'soft power'—the appeal of its popular culture and the reach of its commercial, ideological, and informational dissemination—that can unobtrusively cut through national barriers (p. 65). And it protects the far-flung borders of its global influence by marking out frontiers of containment between 'those who belong and those who stand outside'. Certainly, for instance, the United States defended the contested frontiers of Germany, Korea, and Vietnam during the cold war, ejected Iraq from Kuwait in 1991, and periodically lent its support to Israel to make its borders more secure. 'Good fences', Maier observes, 'make good empires' (pp. 9, 165).

Maier does not comment on whether America would make a good empire, but he does acknowledge that the opportunity to try arrived in the 1990s (p. 141). Up to then the United States was never strong enough to dominate Europe or the Soviet Union, and the ideal of empire, which had seldom achieved sustained popular momentum since independence, 'stalled'. What provided the platform for restarting it, according to Maier, was the transformation of America's ascendancy from a system of mass production at the beginning of the century to one of globalised mass consumption by the end (chapter 6). The creation of a military strike force that could be quickly deployed to trouble spots around the world when required and the control of digital technology, served to give the United States a further edge (p. 254).

Maier ends, as he begins, by engaging with the question of the 'long-term implications for international and domestic society', should America succeed in becoming an empire (pp. 8, 12). Although suspicious of empires in general because of their propensity to 'debase democratic institutions', Maier does not discount the notion that they can also 'enforce peace on peoples who would otherwise remain at war' (p. 120). But empires are 'also about violence and bloodshed', which has been their story throughout history and remains very much the case in the attempt by America to keep Islamic resistance 'at bay' (p. 19). Ultimately what counts is whether empires tend to produce more or less violence, whether they 'safeguard' or 'subvert' their domestic laws and institutions, and whether they do more to create a system of 'order' or 'disorder' (pp. 9, 140). On balance Maier would favour the United States over any other imperial contender to establish the ground rules for world order, because of its commitment to liberty, democracy, and the rights of man.

INTERIM REPORT CARDS

None of the recent appraisals of American imperialism that I have consulted, including the three books reviewed here, believe that Bush Jnr's new world order is destined to last much beyond his presidency. Dirks takes the view that empire is such a scandalous phenomenon that it cannot be sustained or supported whatever the circumstances. But whether, as he implies, the capitalistic and financial misdeeds of a few 18th century British traders were as badly out of step with the international standards of morality of the 18th century, is at least open to question. The machinations of modern day American companies like Halliburton in securing contracts to rebuild Iraq are probably of more questionable probity in the 21st century. Pondering whether empires, whatever their nature, decline and fall as a matter of course, Porter reserves judgement about the fate of American imperialism. Much depends on a number of factors that could combine to undermine it: 'overstretch', 'financial weakness', 'terrorism', 'foreign rivalry' (from China in particular), internal corrosion, and 'implosion'—'the contradiction that lies at the heart of a liberal state dominating others' (pp. 168–170). Maier entertains the possibility that American ascendancy may prevail in the short term 'if citizens wish it to'. But in the long term he envisages the 'new wealth of Asia' or even the 'partial union of Europe' throwing down the challenge to America and limiting its imperial aspiration (pp. 12-15).

However one looks at it, the 'new world order' inspiring American rhetoric over the last fifteen years does not seem any closer to being realised. Certainly the platform on which it was to be built has well and truly buckled. Militarily invincible in conventional warfare, the United States has shown itself to be vulnerable to warfare of an unconventional and irregular kind. In the way it has treated prisoners at

Guantanamo Bay and Abu Graib and authorised covert torture in Eastern Europe and elsewhere, its moral leadership has been tarnished too. In a damning 54 page report on 15 February 2006, the United Nations Human Rights Commission found the United States guilty of infringing several treaties protecting human rights and violating Articles 1, 3, 7, 9, 10, 12, 13, 16 and 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (United Nations Commission on Human Rights 2006, pp. 36–40). With America having been accused of infringing the Geneva Conventions as well, new legislation now empowers the President to determine their 'meaning and application' and 'strips the courts of jurisdiction to hear challenges to his interpretation' (Shane & Liptak 2006). Economic vulnerability places a question mark over America's material pre-eminence too. It has generated massive trading and current account deficits that are underwritten by the foreign holders of American dollars; though especially the Chinese and Japanese (Maier 2006, pp. 267f). Militarily, morally and materially the ascendancy of the United States is under siege.

As Britain had earlier discovered, the United States was never likely—as policeman of the world—to receive any thanks from those it protected or attempted to make 'better'. But it does not help that under Bush Jnr, as the 9/11 Commission observed, the United States also seemed to be losing the 'war of ideas'. The world order the United States had been promoting to that juncture was unclear to the Commission and it urged the Bush government clearly to define what they meant:

We should offer an example of moral leadership in the world, committed to treat people humanely, abide by the rule of law, and be generous and caring to our neighbours (National Commission on Terrorist Attacks 2004, pp. 375–6).

Such a recommendation was completely at odds with the neo-conservative recipe of forceful and unapologetic promotion contained in *Rebuilding America's Defenses*. On 5 December 2005 the 9/11 commissioners, who had continued their work as a privately funded entity—the 9/11 Public Discourse Project—awarded the Bush administration a virtual fail for 'public diplomacy' and confirmed that it remained America's challenge to persuade the rest of the world to follow it. For this to happen, the United States would need to provide leadership of a different kind (Kean et al 2005).

According to Francis Fukuyama, who decided to jump off the neo-conservative bandwagon in 2004, Bush Jnr's 'new world order' is not something that can be imposed on the international community. While still holding firm to the view that he advanced in his 1992 best seller, *The End of History*, that liberal democracy will ultimately be embraced by every country, he now concedes that this will be at a time of their choosing, not America's. For him this is one of the lessons of Iraq. The problem of 'legitimacy' has been another. Having designated itself as the creator and custodian of the new world order, the United States is now finding that it cannot automatically carry the rest of the world along with it by dint of its power alone (Fukuyama 2004, pp. 60–64; Fukuyama 2006). The paradox of this situation has not been lost on Immanuel Wallerstein either, who as early as 2002 described America as a 'world leader nobody follows' and a superpower 'drifting dangerously amidst a chaos it cannot control'. In his opinion, the 'Pax Americana' was already over (Wallerstein 2002, pp. 60–68).

If these interim report cards on American imperialism appear too negative and pessimistic, let me end by adding to the ledger Niall Ferguson's more upbeat forecast. On 11 September 2006, in a *Time* magazine retrospective on 9/11, Ferguson looks back from an imaginary vantage point of 2031 to offer a different, more hopeful prognosis. By and large he goes along with the critics of American empire that America's use of force to reshape the world failed. By 2008 the United States had not only to surrender the Middle East to Iran as the dominant state in the region, but also shortly after to share the world stage with an outward looking China and a rejuvenated Russia. At the same time it stopped being 'everybody's whipping boy', and began working to create a different kind of 'American century'. Based not on 'full spectrum dominance' but on democratic modernisation and 'technological revolution', this version encountered much less resistance and progressively caught on (Ferguson 2006, pp. 23–27).

REFERENCES

Chomsky, N. 2003a, *Power and Terror: Post 9/11 Talks and Interviews*, Seven Stories Books, New York.

Chomsky, N. 2003b, *Hegemony or Survival: America's Quest for Global Dominance*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney.

Ferguson, N. 2004, *Empire: How Britain Made the Modern World*, Penguin Books, London.

Ferguson, N. 2005, *Colossus: The Rise and Fall of the American Empire*, Penguin Books, London.

Ferguson, N. 2006, 'The nation that fell to earth', *Time*, 11 September, pp. 23–27.

Fukuyama, F. 1992, *The End of History and the Last Man*, Free Press, New York.

Fukuyama, F. 2004, 'The neoconservative moment', *The National Interest*, summer, pp. 57–68.

Fukuyama, F. 2006, *America at the Crossroads: Democracy, Power, and the Neoconservative Legacy*, Yale University Press, New Haven.

Kean, T.H. & Hamilton L.H. 2005, 9/11 Public Discourse Project, Prepared Statement, 5 December [Online], Available:http://www.9-11pdp.org/press/2005-12-05_statement.pdf [2006, Feb 3].

Kean, T.H., Hamilton L.H., Ben-Veniste, R., Fielding F.F., Gorelick J.S., Gorton S., Kerrey B., Lehman J.F., Roemer T.J., Thompson J.R. 2005, 9/11 Public Discourse Project, Final Report, 5 December [Online], Available: http://www.9-11pdp.org/press/2005-12-05_report.pdf [2006, Feb 3].

Louis, Wm R. (Gen. lessoned.) 5 vols. 1998–2001, *Oxford History of the British Empire*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

National Commission on terrorist attacks upon the United States, 2004, *9/11 Commission Report* [Online], Available: http://www.9-11commission.gov/report/911Report.pdf [2004, Jul 14].

National Security Strategy of the United States of America 2002 [Online], Available: http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss.pdf [2006, Nov 3]

Nye, J. 2006, 'Transformation is hard', *Time*, 17 July, p. 21.

Porter, B. 2004, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists: Empire, Society, and Culture in Britain,* Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Porter, B. 2004, *The Lion's Share: A Short History of British Imperialism 1850–2004* Pearson Longman, London & New York.

Presidential Speeches, available from Miller Center of Public Affairs Archive [Online], Available: http://millercenter.virginia.edu/scripps/diglibrary/prezspeeches/ghbush/index.html [2005, Dec.10].

Project for the New American Century (PNAC) 2000, *Rebuilding America's Defenses: Strategy, Forces and Resources for a New Century*, September, 2, 11, 18 [Online], Available: http://www.newamericancentury.org/RebuildingAmericasDefenses.pdf[2005, Dec 10].

Said, E. 1978, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London.

Shane, S. & Liptak, 2006, A. 'Shifting power to the President', *New York Times*, 30 September, p. A.1.

'The sound of one domino falling', 2006, *New York Times*, 4 August, p. A.16.

United Nations Commission on Human Rights 2006, *Joint Report of the Special Rapporteurs on Health, Religion, Torture, Independence of Judges and Lawyers on the situation of detainees in Quantanamo*, E/CN.4/2006/120 [Online], Available: http://www.ohchr.org/english/bodies/chr/docs/62chr/E.CN.4.2006.120_.pdf [2006, Feb 3].

Wallerstein, I. 2002, 'The eagle has crash landed', *Foreign Policy*, July–August, pp. 60–68.

Howard Brasted is Professor in History and Director of the Asia Centre for Research at the University of New England. Appointed to teach the history of South Asia at the UNE, he became long time editor of the refereed journal 'South Asia' (1984-2001) and Secretary of the South Asian Studies Association of Australia (1984-2004). He has published widely in the fields of Indian Nationalism, decolonisation, child and female labour in Asia, and various aspects of Islam in Asia. He currently co-ordinates the MA{Islamic Studies].

ISSN 1832-1526
Australian Review of Public Affairs

First published in *Australian Review of Public Affairs*, Volume 7, Issue 1 (2006). Published by School of Economics and Political Science, University of Sydney.