The 'War on Terror', the Liberalism of Fear, and the Love of Peace in St Augustine's *City of God*

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He needs must many fear whom many fear. Decimus Laberius.[1]

Perfect love casts out fear. 1 John 4. 18.

The selling of the Iraq war in 2001 to the American people involved a highly sophisticated public relations campaign, managed by a White House public relations staffer, Carolyn Beers, who had previously managed the advertising account for major US brands such as Head and Shoulders Shampoo and Uncle Ben's Rice.[2] The 'war on terror' was a brand the purpose of which was to sustain an atmosphere of fear in the United States, which was not hard to do following the terrorist attacks on the East Coast in 2001. The intent of the brand and its associated rhetoric was to justify a new set of foreign policy objectives and the creation of what William Pfaff calls a 'greater Middle East' and a new series of client states in Central Asia.[3] And the brand sold very well and was propagated for free by most United States media outlets with zeal and without critical scrutiny for a period of at least three years.[4]

In addition to the discourse of fear, the Bush-Cheney administration invented a number of devices and rituals that heightened the popular sense of fear including the suspension of *habeas corpus*, the creation of the Guantánamo Bay concentration camp, and an extensive array of new forms of government surveillance under the Patriot Act and mostly administered by the new Department of Homeland Security.

The motive of the United States government in recreating the politics of fear, which it had earlier utilised in the Cold War, may be

[1] Quoted in Seneca, *On Anger* II. 11.4 in *Seneca: Moral and Political Essays,* trans. John M. Cooper and J. F. Procope (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 52.

[2] Michael Northcott, *An Angel Directs the Storm: Apocalyptic Religion and American Empire* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2004),

[3] William Pfaff, 'Manifest destiny: a new direction for America' *The New York Review of Books* 54. 2 (February 15, 2007), http://www.nybooks.com/articles/19879. See also Nayna J. Jhaveri, 'Petroimperialism, US Oil Interests and the Iraq War', *Antipode* 36.1 (2004) 2–11.

[4] David L. Altheide, 'Terrorism and the politics of fear', *Cultural Studies, Critical Methodologies* 6. 4 (2006), 415–439.

identified in the speeches and strategy papers of the Bush administration. The terrorist attacks on America provide a 'moment of opportunity' for the United States to pursue a new geopolitical strategy which promotes American interests and values across the world against the enemies of 'freedom and democracy'.[5] This strategy involves military intervention in many terrains if the United States is to protect its interests in the era of globalization, and to maintain its cultural and economic primacy as a superpower.[6] And this strategy involves a new doctrine of 'pre-emptive defence' according to which military power will be projected into regions and states anywhere on earth that are deemed to be developing a capacity to attack the United States or threaten its economic interests.[7] The struggle has no territorial or temporal boundaries, and requires the largest foreign mobilisation of American military forces since the Vietnam War.[8]

The brand the 'war on terror' creates the illusion that the United States is engaged in a global war with a range of enemies who include Islamists, anti-globalisation activists, environmental and animal rights activists. The brand sustains a level of fear of the Islamist and even activist 'other' equivalent in cultural force to the fear of communist others which had legitimated the national security doctrines of the Cold War era, and which sustained a shift in public spending from social to national security, and extensive overseas military interventions.[9] The brand also assists in the continued subjugation of the citizenry, and the subversion of democratic participation, that the superpower state and its corporate sponsors and partners require.[10]

The rationales for the adoption by the United States of a new doctrine of unilateral global power are various. In part is the need of the corporate state, or what Eisenhower called the 'military industrial complex', to identify a new project of continual war to justify the levels of military spending required to sustain the superpower state and its corporate sponsors. But the new geopolitical strategy also has historical roots in accounts of America's 'manifest destiny', and of

[5] President George W. Bush, 'State of the Union Address', January 29, 2002.

[6] Pfaff, 'Manifest destiny'. See also Andrew J. Bacevich, *The New American Militarism: How Americans Are Seduced by War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

[7] *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington DC: The White House, September 2002). See also *Rebuilding America's Defenses: Strategy, Forces, Resources for a New Century: A Report of the Project for the New American Century* (Washington DC: PNAC, 2000) at http://www.newamericancentury. org/RebuildingAmericasDefenses.pdf.

[8] Jan Nederveen Pierterse, 'Scenarios of Power' in Alejandro Cojas and Richard Saull (eds.), *The War on Terror and the American 'Empire' After the Cold War* (London: Routledge 2005), 180–193.

[9] Sheldon S. Wolin, *Politics and Vision: Continuity and Innovation in Western Political Thought,* Revised and expanded edition (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 521. Also Ghada Hashem Talhami, 'Muslims, Islamists and the Cold War', *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 14 (March 2003), 109–126.

[10] Wolin, *Politics and Vision*, 520–2.

the providential spread of American dominion over its hemisphere. These beliefs, since Woodrow Wilson's intervention in the First World War, have increasingly taken on a global aspect and echoes of Wilsonianism are evident in the strategic agenda of the 'war on terror'.[11]

What is more difficult to explain is the adoption of this same strategy, and of the associated politics of fear, by the government of Tony Blair. The library in which I researched this paper in Edinburgh, the National Library of Scotland, informs its readers on a daily basis of the level of terror alert, with a large board at the entrance which displays colours ranging from black through red, and states of threat ranging from low to acute. In a recent speech to the Criminal Bar Association the head of the Crown Prosecution Service, Ken MacDonald QC, distanced British legal opinion from government adoption of the phrase 'war on terror' as a description for state action to defend citizens against terrorists. MacDonald suggested that the CPS preferred recourse to conventional legal devices in its efforts to prevent terrorist attacks in Britain, and that stoking a climate of fear served only to add weight to the vanity of Islamist terrorists who claim in their videos that they are 'soldiers' in a holy war.[12] However, the language and the rhetoric of fear remains a significant element in the public speech of many New Labour politicians. In January 2007 the Home Secretary John Reid addressed the Scottish Labour Party and suggested that an independent Scotland would have weaker border controls against immigrants than those provided by the United Kingdom and that this would expose Scottish citizens to a greater risk of terrorist attack.[13] Reid also claims that the UK is committed for at least a generation to the global war against Islamist terrorists, and that the level of threat to the UK is equivalent to that represented by the Second World War.[14]

We might say that the Blair government's willingness to accede to the new geopolitical strategy of the Bush administration is of a piece with Britain's 'special relationship' with the United States, reflecting as it does cultural, linguistic and economic ties. But given that resort to fear as a political driver is the conventional strategy of totalitarian states, and was a major feature in the rise of Nazism and anti-semitism in Germany in the 1930s, it remains a paradox why New Labour, a liberal democratic government publicly committed to extending citizen engagement in politics, and to the recognition of

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[11] See Northcott, *An Angel Directs the Storm* for an extensive discussion of the historical and theological precedents.

[12] 'Senior British prosecutor warns against "fear-driven" legislation to combat terrorism', *International Herald Tribune*, Associated Press, January 24, 2007.

[13] Paul Hutcheon, 'Reid says Scots state would be weak in the face of al-Qaeda', *Sunday Herald*, December 2nd, 2006.

[14] 'Terror war "to last generation"', BBC News, January 15, 2007, http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/uk_politics/6264597.stm

human rights in British law, should resort to this most illiberal of political devices. It is also notable that the 'special relationship' did not motivate the Labour government of Harold Wilson to join the United States in its Cold War interventionism in Southeast Asia in the 1960s.

The ostensible reason for the adoption of the politics of fear by the Blair government is the defence of the British people from terror attacks. But if this is the reason it has signally failed. Few outside of the present British Cabinet believe that the war in Iraq was not a significant motivating factor in the terror attacks launched on Central London on July 7th 2005. And it is hard to believe had the British government not adopted the rhetoric and strategies of the American imperial push into the Middle East and the Caucasus since 2001 that British Islamists would be involved in the '30 terrorist conspiracies' that John Reid claimed were monitored by the security services in 2006.[15] Even the Foreign Office now believes that the rhetoric of the 'war on terror' has advanced Islamist hostility to Britain around the world and advises government ministers to avoid the term.

Far from reducing the risk of terrorist attacks, and fear of such attacks, the 'war on terror' has actually advanced both the fear and the reality of terror and violence, much of it sponsored by the 'war on terror' itself, as exemplified by the incarceration without trial of Islamists as potential enemies of the state in places such as Belmarsh Prison and Guantánamo Bay.[16] The Guantánamo regime of incarceration and interrogation is described by most observers as contrary to the Geneva Conventions governing the treatment of prisoners of war, and as amounting to torture, and although it is an extra-legal terrain, these practices and techniques have infected the larger 'war on terror' with the spread of torture and killing of detainees in Iraq and Afghanistan. This extra-legal and extra-territorial promotion of torture has also infected government law officers in the 'homelands'. Both the Bush and Blair governments have sponsored legal argument that evidence obtained from torture is permissible in courts of law because of the unique emergency said to be represented by Islamic terrorism.[17]

These developments bear troubling parallels with the rise of totalitarian regimes, and especially Nazism, which used the claimed emergency of Jewish originated threats to the prosperity and security of the German people to justify suspension of legal norms amd the use

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[15] 'Will Woodward, 'Reid: Christmas terror attempt highly likely', *The Guardian*, December 11, 2006.

[16] Yee-Kuang Heng, 'Unravelling the 'War' on Terrorism: A Risk-Management Exercise in War Clothing?' *Security Dialogue* 33.2 (2002), 227–242.

[17] See the comments of Keir Starmer QC on *Chahal v UK* in Starmer, 'Setting the record straight: human rights in an era of international terrorism', Legal Action Group Annual Lecture, 2006, 7–8.

of torture and terror against Jews and other enemies of the people.[18] As Sheldon Wolin suggests, a state of fear is used by the architects of the 'war on terror' to create compliance and political apathy in the general population and so sustain a willingness to sacrifice constitutional freedoms and the rule of law for the defence of 'national security'.[19] Recall that after the terror attacks in 2001 Bush suggested that Americans should respond by uniting behind the government in its anti-terror laws and wars, and carry on flying and consuming.[20] This was no call to mobilize the citizenry in a renewal of threatened democratic values and freedoms. Instead the interests that are promoted by the extension of state power under the guise of the 'war on terror' are those of the military and security services, and of the economic corporations who increasingly control the organs of state through their monetary power over political parties and the electoral process.

In a critique of the United States government's response to the terrorist attacks the Kentucky farmer and essayist Wendell Berry suggests the violence of the terrorists is a reflection of the violent nature of the global regime of international trade which the United States has promoted in the last thirty years. The use of destructive weapons against the United States is a by-product of a global corporate economy which accepts 'universal pollution and global warming as normal costs of doing business.'[21] It is also a reflection of the inequality implicit in the scale of American consumption of the earth's resources. American companies advance their wealth, and the culture of consumption by advancing ecological and social collapse in other earth regions by their coercive harvesting of cheap labour, foods, fuel, metals, minerals and timber. The claim that American 'security' is advanced by the rhetoric of hate, the caricature of enemies, and violent wars is at odds, Berry suggests, with the denials of freedom and the growth in political fear that have accompanied this claim. The claim also masks the imperial character that America's corporate economy gives to its relations with the parts of the world where threats to America's security emerge. If peace and security are the true aims of government policy then the means to realising them is the recovery of meaningful local economic livelihood, political participation, and the education of the people of the United States in the virtue of peaceableness:

[18] John Milbank, *Being Reconciled: Ontology and Pardon* (London: Routledge, 2002), 37–46.

[19] Sheldon S. Wolin, *Politics and Vision: Continuity and Innovation in Western Political Thought,* Revised and expanded edition (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 559–563.

[20] Sheldon Wolin, 'Brave new world', *Theory and Event* 5.4 (January 30, 2002) at http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/theory_and_event/v005/5.4wolin.html

[21] Wendell Berry, 'Thoughts in the presence of fear' in *Citizenship Papers* (Washington DC: Shoemaker and Hoard, 2004), 17–22.

> The key to peace is not violence but peaceableness, which is not passivity, but an alert, informed, practiced, and active state of being. We should recognize that while we have extravagantly subsidized the means of war, we have almost totally neglected the ways of peaceableness.[22]

The reason the United States neglects peaceableness and advances violence is not only that war is profitable, which it is, but because its government supposes that 'it is possible to exploit and impoverish the poorer countries, while arming and instructing them in the newest means of war'.

Berry suggests that Americans since 2001 face a choice between an economic system dependent on worldwide sourcing of goods and services which will require a hugely expensive worldwide police force to secure it and restraints on freedom and civil rights at home, or a decentralized world economy whose aim would be to assure 'to every nation and region a *local* self-sufficiency in life-supporting goods'.[23] The virtues which underlie the recovery of a self-sufficient economy are those of thrift and care, saving and conserving whereas 'an economy based on waste is inherently and hopelessly violent, and waste is its inevitable by-product. We need a peaceable economy.'[24]

Berry's comments recall the claim of Ulrich Beck that globalisation involves a condition of risk which is in many ways novel, linking people and societies through systems and technologies which involve the multiplication of risks between persons and organisations that are unknown to each another and places that are far distant from one another.[25] A globalized world is an increasingly borderless world where viruses can cross national boundaries as easily as packets of drugs or plastic explosives. The side effect of globalization is the emergence of a condition in which security in one country can no longer be assured when other countries with which goods or personnel are regularly exchanged are in states of insecurity or anarchy.[26] Fear of violence from non-state actors is advanced by globalization as dependence on globally traded foods, fuels and fibres is combined with trade in weapons which sustain authoritarian elites in Third World countries whose populace are immiserated by the larceny of their lands, forests and oceans for corporate profit. For a superpower such as the United States this new global condition produces a situation in which no territory can any longer be said to be distinct from the project of global

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[22] Berry, 'Thoughts in the presence of fear', 20.
[23] Berry, 'Thoughts in the presence of fear', 19.
[24] Berry, 'Thoughts in the presence of fear', 22.
[25] Ulrich Beck, *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*, (London: Sage, 1992). See also Keith Spence, 'World risk society and war against terror', *Political Studies* 53 (2005), 284–302.
[26] See Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Fear* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2006), 96.

economic dominance if it contains actors or resources on which the United States has become economically dependent, or if it threatens the United States or its economic interests with violence.[27]

The logic of this position, as Benjamin Barber suggests, is that in order to sustain the global supremacy of its corporate interests it becomes necessary for the United States to advance its rule in every domain to the point where it is engaged in a unilateral war against all.[28] This seeming necessity produces a new cartographic view of the world in which terrains are identified by the United States as either connected and integrated into the global economic core or disconnected and isolated and hence threatening to the globalization project. And it is with the aid of this cartography that lists of rogue states are enumerated whose existence seems to require a pre-emptive military response.[29] This condition of war against all is a by-product of the superpower stance towards globalization adopted by the United States first under Clinton and then under Bush which has necessitated the reinvention of the language and strategy of empire. The imperial accumulation of surplus value without regard for ecological limits or social consequences produces a new and dangerous global condition, which Zygmunt Bauman characterises as 'liquid fear'.[30]

Acknowledgement of the risks implicit in the neo-imperial character of economic globalization helps explain the commitment of the government of New Labour in Britain to the United States' originated frame and rhetoric of the 'war on terror' and the politics of fear. New Labour is also committed to developing a flexible and borderless economy which is uniquely open to world trade and investment and which advances the growing economic interdependence of nation states. Blair and Brown position their vision for Britain as an American-European hybrid in which British prosperity is built on open borders to goods and services, with the minimum of obstacles to the movement of goods and investment capital. In a recent interview Blair explicitly linked his support for military interventionism in places such as Iraq and Afghanistan with economic globalisation: 'I think we live in a far more interdependent world where our self-interest cannot be pursued effectively unless we recognise that one part of the world affects another part of the world.' In such a world the only way to deal with threats to Britain's self-interest is 'to go out after the threat with others and deal with it.' And Blair described this

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[27] Robert O' Keohane, 'The globalization of informal violence, theories of world politics, and the "liberalism of fear", *Dialog-IO* (Spring 2002), 29–43.

[28] Benjamin R. Barber, *Fear's Empire: War, Terrorism and Democracy* (New York: Norton, 2003), 71.

[29] Thomas P. M. Barnett, *The Pentagon's New Map: War and Peace in the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Putnams, 2004).

[30] Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Fear* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2006), 74.

new interventionist strategy, much as Bush does, as a global struggle between a 'perversion of Islam' and the 'forces of progress.[31]

This new strategy of neo-imperial military interventionism is not only a significant departure from the long established tradition of non-intervention between nation states first promulgated by Hugo Grotius, and at the Peace of Westphalia. It also deliberately downplays the extent to which the forces which are destabilising nation states in the developing world are imperial. If all the peoples of the world consumed as the beneficiaries of the consumer economy do there would be need for at least three planets.[32] Pressures on natural resources, and ecosystems, represented by the corporate driven growth in the global consumer economy destabilise governments and cause dramatic population movements. In this sense Islamic terrorism is a distraction, or a particular form of a much larger problem, as Darfur illustrates. The civil war in Darfur is usually presented in Western media as a conflict between Muslim Arabs and Christian Africans. But the civil war has arisen as a result of a large and involuntary movement of people, commonly identified as Arabs, from the drought plagued Sahel region into the 'black African' region of South Sudan.[33] Scientific evidence indicates that the drought in the Sahel is a consequence of global warming whose effects are driving extreme climate events as a result of the dramatic growth in greenhouse gas emissions from the exponential increase in global trade in goods and services in the last thirty years.[34]

The strategy of global military interventionism fails to recognise the ecological and social destruction created by growing global trade. Just as it is wreaking havoc in local and global commons, the public politics of developing countries are also frequently corrupted by trade arrangements with multinational companies. The areas of the world that are most politically unstable, and prone to civil unrest and terrorist violence, are precisely those areas where trade in high value goods such as diamonds, precious metals, oil and gas, and tropical timber, is most prominent. Weapons and monies nefariously acquired through such arrangements are used by developing country elites to control local mass media, and to militarily subdue the protests of their own citizens at the sale and larceny of their natural resources.[35]

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[31] Prime Minister Tony Blair, Interview with John Humphries, *Today Programme*, BBC Radio 4, 22 February 2007.

[32] Bauman, *Liquid Fear*, 76.

[33] Pfaff, 'Manifest Destiny'.

[34] Ning Zend, 'Drought in the Sahel', *Science,* 302 (7 November 2003), 999–1000, and Mike Hulme, Ruth Doherty, Todd Ngara, Mark New and David Lister, 'African climate change 1900–2100', *Climate Research*, 12 (2000), 9–30.

[35] See for example Christian Aid's report on the effects of oil wealth on developing countries *Fuelling Poverty: Oil, War and Corruption* (London: Christian Aid, 2005).

The strategy of military intervention as a way of patching up a politically imperious and ecologically dysfunctional global economy also completely misses the extent to which many of the risks posed by the increased global flows of goods and people are intrinsic to the global economic project. This was powerfully illustrated by the recent incident of bird flu in a Suffolk factory farm, and by the government's reaction. Initially government vets identified the cause of the infection as wild bird movements. It is now thought more likely that the infection came from the movement of infected turkey meat from a Hungarian slaughter house to the Bernard Mathews food processing plant, where gulls and rats transferred the infection into the 'biosecure' turkey sheds. Until this incident government and media consistently blamed the spread of avian flu on wild birds. But the poultry industry is the most globalised of all forms of intensive farming. Factories in Southeast Asia, and not wild birds, were the original source of the most deadly pathogen in the already chequered history of industrial farming. And movements of live and dead birds around the world are the cause of the international spread of avian flu from Vietnam to North Asia, India, Africa, and now Europe. The regional movements of the disease in Asia are actually inconsistent with bird migratory patterns, as are its appearances in India and Africa, whereas they are entirely consistent with the movement by road and ship of industrially reared live and dead chicken.[36] Furthermore the vast majority of bird flu cases have been on factory farms, and in countries such as Nigeria, the Netherlands, India and now Britain, factory farms are the only places where the pathogen has appeared.[37] And yet despite the evidence of the association of avian flu with intensive farming and the transnational trade in meat, governments, the mass media, and even the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation, continue to blame wild birds and the free range chickens of smallholders.[38]

This whole saga is a strong exemplar of the judgment that extreme global economic interdependence fosters insecurity and multiplies risk. But those who promote this interdependence in government and industry imagine that it is 'nature' which is the source of 'bio-insecurity' while the domination of nature by technological capitalism is said to render natural resources amenable and safe for efficient human use. As with the 'war on terror', the 'war' against avian flu is designed in such a way as to suggest that the policing of global flows of live and dead chickens under the regimen of global corporate capitalism, and their incarceration in systems which involve

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[36] Danielle Nierenberger, 'A fowl plague', *World Watch Magazine* (January/February 2007) at http://www.worldwatch.org/node/4779.

[37] Nierenberger, 'A fowl plague'.

[38] 'Bird flu crisis: Small farms are the solution not the problem', *Grain* (July 2006) 24–28 at http://www.grain.org/seedling_files/seed-06-07-11.pdf.

extensive electronic surveillance and technological control, will contain the problem and advance biosecurity while small farmers, rogue traders, wild birds, are identified as the source of threats to security.

Alongside the risks inherent in the global economy, Corey Robin suggests that inequality and fear of crime within the homeland play an equally significant role in promoting the return of the politics of fear, and in corroding a sense of peace and security: 'the kind of fear that arises from the social, political, and economic hierarchies that divide a people' is highly damaging to liberal politics.[39] The outsourcing of millions of American manufacturing jobs to the developing world from the United States in the last thirty years has been accompanied by a dramatic increase in inequality which has created distrust and fear on the streets, and which is accompanied by a decline in political participation of those millions of Americans who find themselves in an underclass of low wages, poor educational opportunities and who live in violent, crime-ridden neighbourhoods. Neoconservative domestic and foreign policies are in effect delivering the United States to a Hobbesian condition of original violence in which men and women, and business corporations, are said only to contract together to form a state in order to protect their person and property from others who would violently attack them. For Bush, as for Reagan, the neoliberal state is only really good at one thing, and that is punishing wrong-doing both at home and overseas. It is no coincidence that prisons and military spending absorb so much of the budget of the United States under this ideology, while health and social services, and agencies for environmental protection and workplace safety are cut back. In the neoliberal perspective when the state tries to do other things that might be said to serve the common good – like regulating pollution or redistributing wealth or providing health care – it is said to be inefficient or even morally perverse.[40] The logic of a strong corporate economy and a weak state promotes ever more divisive social conditions at home and greater flows of goods and persons around the world, and so the global spread of the politics of fear becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

The origins of the modern politics of fear may be traced to Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan* where he argues that fear is the natural state in which men enter into a social contract; from their 'natural condition' of individualism they look for a state to protect them and their property from their neighbours and from strangers. On Hobbes' account fear is *the* political emotion since it is only fear of the other which forces men to abandon their natural independence for certain purposes and join in society. For Hobbes men and women are intrinsically at

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[39] Corey Robin, *Fear: The History of a Political Idea* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 18.

[40] See further Northcott, *Angel Directs the Storm*, 36–50.

odds with one another in their interests and in the goods they elect to pursue in their lives. Hobbes defines happiness as 'the continual progress of the desire, from one object to another, the attaining of the former being still but the way to the latter'.[41] The insatiable and incommensurable nature of individual and private desires requires that social power is monopolised by the state because the possibility of a shareable good is denied. For Hobbes politics is pursued on the basis of fear and not solidarity.[42]

Hobbes' account of the politics of fear is prophetic since, as Wolin argues, it anticipates the extent to which modern political elites of all stripes have resorted to fear in order to justify their rule.[43] This explains why modern intellectuals also resort to fear as a device for advancing solidaristic politics and the common good.[44] It was out of her experiences of the politics of fear in Nazi Germany that Judith Shklar developed her account of a 'liberalism of fear' in which she suggests that fear is anti-political and that freedom from fear is the first goal of politics. For Shklar the core task of liberal politics is to protect citizens 'against the fear of cruelty'.[45] Shklar's 'liberalism of fear' seeks to counter Hobbesian fear with the claim that it is the core duty of the state to secure the political conditions such that 'every adult should be able to make as many effective decisions without fear or favour about as many aspects of his or her life as is compatible with the like freedom of every other adult.'[46] This same liberalism of fear is also evident in Hannah Arendt's suggestion that fear of concentration camps and totalitarian terror could sustain a new political morality.[47]

But the liberal account of politics as freedom from fear shares with Hobbes a crucial distinction between the political and the personal which Shklar and others suggest is also foundational to liberalism because this distinction sets limits to coercion 'with a prohibition on invading the private realm'.[48] This is not to say that a liberal society does not have a normative shape, or that it does not depend on the development of moral character and conscience in its citizens. But the key thing about this character is that individuals are able to stand up for themselves and they are free to make independent and uncoerced moral choices. And this is why the eschewal of torture and

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[41] Hobbes, *Leviathan* 11, cited Wolin, *Politics and Vision*, 249.

[42] Wolin, *Politics and Vision*, 249.

[43] Wolin, *Politics and Vision*, 293–7.

[44] Robin, *Fear*, 34.

[45] Judith Shklar, 'The liberalism of fear' in Shklar, *Political Thought and Political Thinkers*, ed. George Kateb (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1998), 3–20.

[46] Shklar, 'The liberalism of fear', 3.

[47] Hannah Arendt, 'Ideology and terror: a novel form of government', *The Review of Politics* 15. 3 (1953), 303–327.

[48] Shklar, 'Liberalism of fear', 6.

fear is so foundational to liberalism. But with the rise of 'national warfare states' since 1914, torture is again widespread and personal freedoms are again threatened. The fear of fear returns with the return of widespread cruelty and it is against this fear that liberalism claims to be the true cosmopolitan political creed for 'systematic fear is the condition that makes freedom impossible, and it is aroused by the expectation of institutionalized cruelty as by nothing else'.[49] And it is the capacity of the over-weaning state to make war, maim and kill which is the reason liberals protest against 'every extralegal, secret, and unauthorized act by public agents or their deputies'. Only the constant division and subdivision of state power, and the vigilance and vitality of voluntary agencies and legal process, can ensure that the state is kept within the bounds required by the liberalism of fear: 'where the instruments of coercion are at hand, whether it be through the use of economic power, chiefly to hire, pay, fire, and determine prices, or military might in its various manifestations, it is the task of a liberal citizenry to see that not one official or unofficial agent can intimidate anyone, except through the use of well-understood and accepted legal procedures.'[50]

What is notable about Shklar's liberalism of fear is that, like Isaiah Berlin's account of negative liberty, or John Rawls' 'original condition', it fails to offer a positive account of politics in liberal societies. Instead it suggests that the best that can be hoped for after a twentieth century dominated by total war is a politics in which cruelty and coercion are kept at bay. But the paradox of the liberalism of fear is that it is actually far more positive about the political significance of fear than its advocates at first claim, and in this sense is more Hobbesian than they imagine.

The dependence of liberals on the emotion of fear as a political driver in late modernity exposes some of the inherent weaknesses of liberal political theory, and in particular the inability of liberals to specify positive public political ends or practices. Law is described as a means for the restraint of wrongdoing by the citizen and a restraint on the state, but it is not seen as capable of promoting a more positive vision of social life. Contrast this with the traditional Western account, as held by the Dutch philosopher Hugo Grotius, according to which law is seen to be the fruit of community, and community and law are not means to an end – freedom of choice between diverse goods – but intrinsically good practices which sustain human flourishing.[51] The difficulty with liberalism is that it is so intrinsically consequentialist that it can ultimately offer no sure

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[49] Shklar, 'Liberalism of fear', 11.
[50] Shklar, 'Liberalism of fear', 12.
[51] Hugo Grotius, *The Rights of War and Peace* Book 1, edited by Richard Tuck from the translation by Jean Barbeyrac (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2005), 85–91.

ground for the defence of something like community or even the rule of law against the over-weaning power of the state and the corporation other than the individual's right to choose. But as the state and the corporation become ever more successful in diverting this right into consumerism, political participation declines and hence the resort to the politics of fear. Combined with the rising power of the state and the corporation, and their harnessing of science and technology in the extension of their powers, this produces a situation in which political fear again rears its ugly head in the form of what Wolin insightfully calls 'inverted totalitarianism' where it is not the state but the corporation which wields unchallenged power as even torture and war are privatised.[52] As Robin suggests, the liberal claim that fear, or the fear of fear, is a powerful political motivator is ultimately self-defeating because it legitimates the return to political fear as the justification of new state and corporate powers in response to global risk and terror.[53]

The extent of the infection of the politics of fear in neoliberal societies is evident in the turn even of some environmentalists and scientists to fear as motive in relation to the threat of global warming. In his novelistic debunking of global warming, *State of Fear*, Michael Crichton suggests that the hypothesis of anthropogenic global warming is being used to spread apocalyptic fear, and so enhance the powers of the state over the individual.[54] The science, Crichton suggests, is exaggerated because without this kind of global threat it is impossible for the nation state to justify its continuing centralisation of powers over the lives of citizens, and its claims to govern and direct the goals and procedures of their lives. This is in an interesting suggestion when we consider that many of the leading advocates of state and collective action to respond to global warming also compare it to the threat of terrorism and nuclear war, including for example Al Gore and Sir David King. They also believe that only fear of cataclysm, and representation of global warming as a kind of ultimate apocalyptic war with forces which threaten human security, will generate the kinds of shared purpose which will make collective action possible.

The politics of global warming, like the 'war on terror', reveals the paradoxical nature of the liberalism of fear, which is oddly positivistic about the solidaristic potential of the fear of evil. Thus for Arendt the memory of the holocaust provides the only sure way to resist a return to totalitarianism just as for Al Gore the fear of climate catastrophe offers the only sure way to remoralise the consumer society. But this is an essentially negative account of politics,

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[52] Wolin, *Politics and Vision*, 591–4.
[53] Robin, *Fear*, 15–16.
[54] Michael Crichton, *State of Fear* (London: Harper Collins, 2005).

which recalls the radical move in Western political theory made by Machiavelli, as well as Hobbes, towards a politics of interest and sovereign power, and away from a participative politics of active citizenship and a shared quest for the common good of people and planet.[55]

The question I will attempt to ask in conclusion is where we might find resources for the recovery of a more hopeful and peaceable vision of politics, and of participation in the political, not as a necessity for the restraint of evil but as an intrinsic aspect of a life worth living. If the innovators whose ideas are at the root of the politics of fear are Hobbes and Machiavelli, we might expect to find resources for repair in some of their predecessors in Western political thought. The Hobbesian division of personal interest and political power, which the liberalism of fear also sustains, contrasts significantly with the political thought of Augustine of Hippo who was the key architect of the tradition of political thought Hobbes inherited. For Augustine the political is a far more complex interaction of soul and society. There is not one governing emotion – such as fear – which drives men and women to submit to sovereign power. Instead the possibility of the political arises from the concept of divine order which breaks into human history in the form of grace and which draws men and women towards participation in a good that is truly, and emotively, shared.[56]

In Augustine's definitive account of political emotions in *Civitas Dei* he suggests that a commonwealth is a multitude of people who are bound together by their 'common objects of love'.[57] The moral quality of a commonwealth therefore depends on the kinds of things that are loved. The supreme love is the love of God, and this love characterises those who inhabit what Augustine calls the heavenly city or the Church. But there can also be worthy loves in an earthly city, even although in such a city there will not be so much common agreement about the love of worthy objects. And the love that is most widely held in the earthly city is the love of peace or the desire for security.[58] Wherever men and women live together it is possible to discern that they will act together socially in order to bring about a state of affairs in which they can enjoy peace. This is because peace is that collective condition without which it is much harder to pursue such other worthy goals and ends as the nurture and education of the young or the contemplation of the eternal.

[55] Wolin, *Politics and Vision*, 211.
[56] Wolin, *Politics and Vision*, 117–8.
[57] Augustine, *City of God*, 19. 17: the precise translation 'common objects of love' is Oliver O'Donovan's in O'Donovan, *Common Objects of Love* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), 20.
[58] Augustine, *City of God*, 19. 17.

But if love of God, and love of peace are the ordering loves of the heavenly and earthly cities, is there any need for other kinds of emotive political drivers? Well yes, Augustine suggests, there is, because despite the common desire for peace there are individuals and groups of individuals who will still be drawn to, and may even love, violence. In such cases there is a need for another political emotion which is fear, for the wrongdoer, in order to be sufficiently restrained in his wrongful desires, needs to fear the ability of the state to impose its laws and punish malefactors or else there will be no peace even for those who do love it. What motivates the law maker, the judge and those who punish crime is not anger or a desire for revenge but rather that they are representatives of God and of the commonwealth, and behind their actions is the judgement of God and it is this which ought to inspire fear of those whose job it is to enforce the law when people refuse to do what the law requires.[59]

To underscore the proposal that love is a superior political emotion to anger or fear Augustine suggests that one of the best examples of judgment, from which all earthly judges and punishers should learn, is the story of the woman caught in adultery in the Gospel of John where Christ asks those about to stone her 'who among you is without sin? Let him be the first to cast a stone at her.' (John 8. 7) This also, Augustine suggests, is why people are generally happier to defend than to prosecute in a court of law for in interceding on behalf even of the guilty they act out of compassion and not from fear or a desire for vengeance. This does not mean that punishment is never appropriate, for sometimes punishment can itself be a form of mercy, saving the criminal from his own disordered desires, as well as protecting the innocent. But Augustine suggests that healing and redemption are what the sinner stands in need of, and mercy is far more likely to bring these about than fearful punishment.

Fear for Augustine is a secondary political emotion and it is a much more clearly negative and punitive emotion than it is for the advocates of the liberalism of fear. Fear is politically weak because it does not direct those who love the right things to love them any better. Nor does it educate the misdirected desires of those who do not love the right things so that they love what is worthy of love. Fear is at most a necessary political emotion that is only needful where the love of the right things is absent. On the other hand once having ensured that criminals right the wrongs they have committed in the way of theft by returning stolen goods, being 'conciliatory to those who are bad' is not to make them happy or keep them bad but 'because those who become good come from among them' and

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[59] Augustine, *Letter 153: Augustine to Macedonius* in Margaret Atkins, *Augustine: Political Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, 71–86.

because 'self-sacrificial mercy pleases God.'[60] This account is also consistent with Augustine's refusal of a doctrine of absolute evil. For Augustine evil is always defined as lack, a loss of being, rather than the kind of positive and even heroic force that moderns from Nietzsche onwards have conceived it.

In this perspective it may not be insignificant that the use of fear as a political emotion in the 'war on terror' has been accompanied by the preparedness of Bush, and Blair at times, to vilify those whom the 'war' is said to oppose as 'evil' people devoted to evil ends. Bush in his speech in the national cathedral in Washington DC after the terror attacks suggested that since September 11 the United States faced radical evil. And in subsequent speeches he indicated that it would in turn need to resort to ambiguous means and that the struggle will require that the State and its agents are freed from some of the conventional restraints on its use of power and violence.[61]

As I have suggested elsewhere there is something else going on here. Since 2001 Bush, other members of the Republican party, and the Bush-Cheney administration have mobilised Protestant fundamentalist and apocalyptic rhetoric of the kind that distinguishes sharply between good and bad people in such a way as to suggest that the United States in the pursuit and defence of its superpower supremacy is advancing on the world stage 'the forces of light against the forces of darkness'.[62] The representation of the 'war on terror' as an apocalyptic struggle in which the United States is realising a divine mission to direct world history towards a certain end is also not inconsistent with earlier uses of providential and apocalyptic discourses in the history of the Republic. And it is consistent with Cold War rhetoric in relation to which there has simply been a changing of the evil other from Communist to Islamist. Just as the battle with Communism could be represented as in part a moral and a religious struggle for freedom of conscience and faith, as well as for economic freedom, so the battle with Islam can be represented as a struggle for Christian and Western values of democracy, liberty and the pursuit of wealth against Islamist forms of theocracy, and a counter to Islamist resistance to American cultural and economic influences.

Against the return to the politics of fear under the aegis of a perversion of apocalyptic Christianity, and its mirror image in a violent perversion of Islam, Augustine's account of the politics of mercy and peace may be said to have significant cultural power. It does not lend itself to the kinds of distinctions between good and evil people to which both Bush and Blair are prone. It opposes the politics of

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[60] Augustine, *Letter 153*, 88.
[61] See further Northcott, *An Angel Directs the Storm*.
[62] Michael Northcott, 'Confessing Christ in the "War on Terror"', *Anvil*, 22 (2005), 119–124.

coercive punishment which the politics of fear promotes both at home and abroad. And it provides an account of the common good that does not require resort to fear to save the planet or to defend the nation state.

Augustine's account has one other crucial advantage over the liberalism of fear for against the 'end of politics' that inverted totalitarianism involves it suggests that political participation is not epiphenomenal but essential to the functioning of a good society.[63] For Augustine, political participation is a good which is intrinsic to human life. And on this account demitting political power to autonomous procedures like markets or surveillance systems, or to corporate elites, is bound to advance a demoralised society, and a loss of hope in the political. Combating terrorism, like combating climate change, requires instead the engagement of citizens in positive projects of mercy and communitarian virtue. The kinds of projects needful to turn the imperious global economy from its collision course with the health of people and planet are careful, deliberative and embodied practices such as energy conservation, farmers markets, fair trade, and intercultural dialogue. These kinds of practices cannot be rolled out by private finance initiatives, central government directives, or autonomous market procedures. They require instead active political participation, the recovery of local and ecological knowledges, and the remoralisation of economic relationships. Such knowledges and practices generate security not because they are efficient but because they are peaceable, they rebuild local community, and they care for the earth.[64]

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[63] Wolin, *Politics and Vision*, 448–50.
[64] Berry, 'Thoughts in the Presence of Fear'.