# China Link

**Their China advantage is a link**

**Pan 4** ChengxinPan is a Ph.D in Political Science and IR, Professor at the School of International and Political Studies @ Deakin University, “The "China threat" in American self-imagination: the discursive construction of other as power politics” June 1st 2004 http://www.articlearchives.com/asia/northern-asia-china/796470-1.html

Having examined how the "China threat" literature is enabled by and serves the purpose of a particular U.S. self-construction, I want to turn now to the issue of how this literature represents a discursive construction of other, instead of an "objective" account of Chinese reality. This, I argue, has less to do with its portrayal of China as a threat per se than with its essentialization and totalization of China as an externally knowable object, independent of historically contingent contexts or dynamic international interactions. In this sense, the discursive construction of China as a threatening other cannot be detached from (neo)realism, a positivist, ahistorical framework of analysis within which global life is reduced to endless interstate rivalry for power and survival. As many critical IR scholars have noted, (neo)realism is not a transcendent description of global reality but is predicated on the modernist Western identity, which, in the quest for scientific certainty, has come to define itself essentially as the sovereign territorial nation-state. This realist self-identity of Western states leads to the constitution of anarchy as the sphere of insecurity, disorder, and war. In an anarchical system, as (neo)realists argue, "the gain of one side is often considered to be the loss of the other," (45) and "All other states are potential threats." (46) In order to survive in such a system, states inevitably pursue power or capability. In doing so, these realist claims represent what R. B. J. Walker calls "a specific historical articulation of relations of universality/particularity and self/Other." (47) The (neo)realist paradigm has dominated the U.S. IR discipline in general and the U.S. China studies field in particular. As Kurt Campbell notes, after the end of the Cold War, a whole new crop of China experts "are much more likely to have a background in strategic studies or international relations than China itself." (48) As a result, for those experts to know China is nothing more or less than to undertake a geopolitical analysis of it, often by asking only a few questions such as how China will "behave" in a strategic sense and how it may affect the regional or global balance of power, with a particular emphasis on China's military power or capabilities. As Thomas J. Christensen notes, "Although many have focused on intentions as well as capabilities, the most prevalent component of the [China threat] debate is the assessment of China's overall future military power compared with that of the United States and other East Asian regional powers." (49) Consequently, almost by default, China emerges as an absolute other and a threat thanks to this (neo)realist prism. The (neo)realist emphasis on survival and security in international relations dovetails perfectly with the U.S. self-imagination, because for the United States to define itself as the indispensable nation in a world of anarchy is often to demand absolute security. As James Chace and Caleb Carr note, "for over two centuries the aspiration toward an eventual condition of absolute security has been viewed as central to an effective American foreign policy." (50) And this self-identification in turn leads to the definition of not only "tangible" foreign powers but global contingency and uncertainty per se as threats. For example, former U.S. President George H. W. Bush repeatedly said that "the enemy [of America] is unpredictability. The enemy is instability." (51) Similarly, arguing for the continuation of U.S. Cold War alliances, a high-ranking Pentagon official asked, "if we pull out, who knows what nervousness will result?" (52) Thus understood, by its very uncertain character, China would now automatically constitute a threat to the United States. For example, Bernstein and Munro believe that "China's political unpredictability, the always-present possibility that it will fall into a state of domestic disunion and factional fighting," constitutes a source of danger. (53) In like manner, Richard Betts and Thomas Christensen write: If the PLA [People's Liberation Army] remains second-rate, should the world breathe a sigh of relief? Not entirely.... Drawing China into the web of global interdependence may do more to encourage peace than war, but it cannot guarantee that the pursuit of heartfelt political interests will be blocked by a fear of economic consequences.... U.S. efforts to create a stable balance across the Taiwan Strait might deter the use of force under certain circumstances, but certainly not all. (54) The upshot, therefore, is that since China displays no absolute certainty for peace, it must be, by definition, an uncertainty, and hence, a threat. In the same way, a multitude of other unpredictable factors (such as ethnic rivalry, local insurgencies, overpopulation, drug trafficking, environmental degradation, rogue states, the spread of weapons of mass destruction, and international terrorism) have also been labeled as "threats" to U.S. security. Yet, it seems that in the post-Cold War environment, China represents a kind of uncertainty par excellence. "Whatever the prospects for a more peaceful, more democratic, and more just world order, nothing seems more uncertain today than the future of post-Deng China," (55) argues Samuel Kim. And such an archetypical uncertainty is crucial to the enterprise of U.S. self-construction, because it seems that only an uncertainty with potentially global consequences such as China could justify U.S. indispensability or its continued world dominance. In this sense, Bruce Cumings aptly suggested in 1996 that China (as a threat) was basically "a metaphor for an enormously expensive Pentagon that has lost its bearings and that requires a formidable 'renegade state' to define its mission (Islam is rather vague, and Iran lacks necessary weights)." (56) It is mainly on the basis of this self-fashioning that many U.S. scholars have for long claimed their "expertise" on China. For example, from his observation (presumably on Western TV networks) of the Chinese protest against the U.S. bombing of their embassy in Belgrade in May 1999, Robert Kagan is confident enough to speak on behalf of the whole Chinese people, claiming that he knows "the fact" of "what [China] really thinks about the United States." That is, "they consider the United States an enemy--or, more precisely, the enemy.... How else can one interpret the Chinese government's response to the bombing?" he asks, rhetorically. (57) For Kagan, because the Chinese "have no other information" than their government's propaganda, the protesters cannot rationally "know" the whole event as "we" do. Thus, their anger must have been orchestrated, unreal, and hence need not be taken seriously. (58) Given that Kagan heads the U.S. Leadership Project at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and is very much at the heart of redefining the United States as the benevolent global hegemon, his confidence in speaking for the Chinese "other" is perhaps not surprising. In a similar vein, without producing in-depth analysis, Bernstein and Munro invoke with great ease such all-encompassing notions as "the Chinese tradition" and its "entire three-thousand-year history." (59) In particular, they repeatedly speak of what China's "real" goal is: "China is an unsatisfied and ambitious power whose goal is to dominate Asia.... China aims at achieving a kind of hegemony.... China is so big and so naturally powerful that [we know] it will tend to dominate its region even if it does not intend to do so as a matter of national policy." (60) Likewise, with the goal of absolute security for the United States in mind, Richard Betts and Thomas Christensen argue: The truth is that China can pose a grave problem even if it does not become a military power on the American model, does not intend to commit aggression, integrates into a global economy, and liberalizes politically. Similarly, the United States could face a dangerous conflict over Taiwan even if it turns out that Beijing lacks the capacity to conquer the [island](http://www.articlearchives.com/asia/northern-asia-china/796470-1.html).... This is true because of geography; because of America's reliance on alliances to project power; and because of China's capacity to harm U.S. forces, U.S. regional allies, and the American homeland, even while losing a war in the technical, military sense. (61) By now, it seems clear that neither China's capabilities nor intentions really matter. Rather, almost by its mere geographical existence, China has been qualified as an absolute strategic "other," a discursive construct from which it cannot escape. Because of this, "China" in U.S. IR discourse has been objectified and deprived of its own subjectivity and exists mainly in and for the U.S. self. Little wonder that for many U.S. China specialists, China becomes merely a "national security concern" for the United States, with the "severe disproportion

between the keen attention to China as a security concern and the intractable neglect of China's [own] security concerns in the current debate." (62) At this point, at issue here is no longer whether the "China threat" argument is true or false, but is rather its reflection of a shared positivist mentality among mainstream China experts that they know China better than do the Chinese themselves. (63) "We" alone can know for sure that they consider "us" their enemy and thus pose a menace to "us." Such an account of China, in many ways, strongly seems to resemble Orientalists' problematic distinction between the West and the Orient. Like orientalism, the U.S. construction of the Chinese "other" does not require that China acknowledge the validity of that dichotomous construction. Indeed, as Edward Said point out, "It is enough for 'us' to set up these distinctions in our own minds; [and] 'they' become 'they' accordingly." (64) It may be the case that there is nothing inherently wrong with perceiving others through one's own subjective lens. Yet, what is problematic with mainstream U.S. China watchers is that they refuse to acknowledge the legitimacy of the inherent fluidity of Chinese identity and subjectivity and try instead to fix its ambiguity as absolute difference from "us," a kind of certainty that denotes nothing but otherness and threats. As a result, it becomes difficult to find a legitimate space for alternative ways of understanding an inherently volatile, amorphous China (65) or to recognize that China's future trajectory in global politics is contingent essentially on how "we" in the United States and the West in general want to see it as well as on how the Chinese choose to shape it. (66) Indeed, discourses of "us" and "them" are always closely linked to how "we" as "what we are" deal with "them" as "what they are" in the practical realm. This is exactly how the discursive strategy of perceiving China as a threatening other should be understood, a point addressed in the following section, which explores some of the practical dimension of this discursive strategy in the containment perspectives and hegemonic ambitions of U.S. foreign policy.

# Heg Link

**Hegemony projects our anxiety and paranoia onto the world—creates self-fulfilling prophecies that make war inevitable—all of their arguments are ideologically loaded—this evidence will smoke them
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The image of Prometheus has often been used as a metaphor to describe the conjoining of capitalist and technological development, something which has unleashed processes of modernisation, the like of which have never been seen before (Landes 1969). The metaphor of `Prometheus Unbound’, once used by Shelley as descriptor for the Industrial Revolution in the 19th Century, now seems an apt image for American economic, military and cultural power at the beginning of the new century. Prometheus represents humanity’s freedom to rebel against the God’s, a rage against the arbitrary finality of mortality. But whilst Prometheus is noble hubris and grandiosity also mark his stance – the creations of his imagination will displace the divine. Therefore, like other less clamorous and dynamic narcissants, the Promethean is one also contemptuous of limits and incapable of (inter)relations. Alone in a world of his own creation. In her classic paper on narcissism Joan Riviere (1936) insists `we should not be deceived by the positive aspects of narcissism but should look deeper, for the depression that will be found to underlie it’ (p.368). Fear is now an abiding, pervasive and dominant affect in American life and has been since the Second World War. However this relates to a paradox that the ancient Greeks knew so well. Lying at the very heart of the hubris of an individual or nation that believes in its omniscience lies fear, fear of its own capacity for self-annihilation. Speaking of the narcissistic character, Rivierre noted that ultimately this individual lives in `fear of his own suicide or madness’; this is the essence of what she calls his depressive anxiety. It is necessary therefore to focus upon this dark side of the new Promethean for this is a figure wracked by guilt and anxiety concerning the destructive consequences of his creative powers. First there is internal destruction. In a recent bestseller, The Culture of Fear: Why Americans are Afraid of the Wrong Things, Barry Glassner (1999) investigates a range of social anxieties which have beset the American psyche, from panics about smack and gunslinging black teenagers to scares about satanic abuse and internet addiction. The book is a rich description of some of the fears that haunt the contemporary American psyche but it is ultimately disappointing for it offers little insight into the deeper cultural anxieties that the American media so cleverly exploits. What Glassner highlights, without ever examining, is the internal destruction consequent upon the American mode of development. The USA is a grossly unequal society and one in which structural inequality remains steadfastly mapped onto questions of race and class. Right at the end of his book Glassner briefly examines the source of the moral panics he has described, suggesting that they are `oblique expressions of concern about problems Americans know to be pernicious but have not taken decisive action to quash – problems such as hunger, dilapidated schools, gun proliferation, and deficient health care for much of the US population’ (Glassner p.209). No more vivid expression of this social divisiveness can be found than in statistics regarding prison populations. According to recent Home Office (2000) figures, Britain, the worst offender in Europe, has a prison population of 72,000, equivalent to 139 per 100,000 people (Norway has 59). But the US tops the table with 686 per 100,000 (compared to China’s 111 and Brazil’s 133). The US prison population currently stands at 1.96 million people, an astronomical figure, the overwhelming proportion of whom are black men, and the US government spends more on imprisonment than on higher education! Contrary to the belief that the US exemplifies an effective multicultural society what we see is a severely restricted multiculturalism in which racial divisions, focusing upon the exclusion of African-Americans and Latinos, are more entrenched than ever. This has led some commentators to suggest that the US’s failure to understand global inequality and its incomprehension at the rage that many peoples feel towards it is an expression of its own inability to understand the sharpness of its own internal differences (Shapiro 2003). But social disintegration in the US is not just mapped along racial lines. As the effects of decades of neo-Liberal social and fiscal policies accumulate it is increasingly clear that in the US the concept of a `safety net’, central to the post-war settlement in western type democracies, has all but disappeared. As a consequence, and this has been glimpsed in some of Richard Sennett’s (1998) recent work, failure can now have catastrophic psychological and material effects even upon the American middle classes. The result seems to be a form of `moral isolationism', which is spreading through American society, a feeling that there is no-one and no-thing to rely upon. And whilst associationism, despite Putnam’s (2000) gloomy prognostications, still seems to be a strong feature of civic culture in the USA, with a few exceptions, such as strong faith communities, this offers little consolation when the chips are really down. In the absence of collective solutions to shared risk Americans fall back upon themselves. But this is not healthy individualism but social anomie, an isolationism fueled by those survival anxieties which were first glimpsed by Christopher Lasch (1985). There exists a second reservoir of guilt and anxiety, which is intimately connected to the destructive creativity of the American Prometheus. This can be traced back to the hideous and monstrous child that America, more than any other, nurtured from conception through to realisation. A monstrous child, Little Boy by name, which was unleashed upon the ordinary civilians of Hiroshima. The first of countless thousands of such children which, along with consequences of other monstrous biological and chemical conceptions, now constitute the exterminating logic of modernity. Let us not forget who unleashed the first Weapon of Mass Destruction and the imprint that this act must have left upon the collective psyche of the perpetrator. Within a few years a whole genre of sci-fi American B movies, paperbacks and comics was flourishing in which the theme of mutation was a constant motif (Jancovich 1996). This was the return of the repressed, or, rather, the annihilated. A whole culture of paranoia was developing; partly fueled by the Cold War, a culture that remains a potent dimension of the American psyche to this day. Richard Hofstadter (1979) described how this culture of paranoia infused American politics. Describing the paranoid style of the American politician, Hofstadter argues that whilst retaining some of the characteristics of the clinical paranoiac - overheated, oversuspicious, overaggressive, grandiose, and apocalyptic in expression – this character does not perceive that the hostile and conspiratorial world is necessarily directed at him. Rather he sees all that is bad and evil directed at his nation, his culture and his way of life (Hofstadter, p.4). This has been typical of new right politics for many years and, for example, has resulted in persecutory immigration policies designed to protect ways of life that are often fictitious and based in phantasy. In a recent essay, Jason Cowley (2001) argues that this culture, despite its religiosity, `is essentially an entertainment culture, addicted to narratives of catastrophe’ in everything from film right through to computer games. Sat astride the pinnacle of this culture is Tom Clancy, the best-selling, Reagan-adoring writer of fiction such as the Sum of all Fears which presciently described the hijacking by Arab militants of civilian planes which were then used as weapons against the American people. Fiction becomes fact. America looks into the mirror of the world and sees an enemy, an enemy which if not contained will spread. Thus the `domino theory’, given vivid expression by Harry.S. Truman who succeeded Roosevelt as US President in 1944, a `theory’ which justified American intervention in Greece, Turkey and countless Latin American countries during the Cold War, inspired the Vietnam tragedy and now `the War on Terror’ in which a febrile Islam is imagined to be spreading rhizome-like around the edges of the `free world’. But who is this enemy if not Thanatos, Little Boy and all his heirs, the dark echoes of the idealisation of the American way of life - a variety and quantity of weapons of mass destruction which are now, like China’s citizens, almost beyond enumeration? In 2000 American defence expenditure stood at $295bn, this exceeded the combined expenditure of the rest of the world by almost $30bn. This year, 2003, it is set to rise by a further 14%, the biggest leap in over two decades, as a new generation of tactical nuclear weaponry, outlined in Rumsfeld’s `nuclear posture review’ of the previous year, is actively contemplated by the National Nuclear Security Agency (Guardian 2003). Despite the caution of John Quincy Adams, America’s sixth president, not to go `in search of monsters to destroy’, Rumsfeld and Co. are clearly bent on fostering the conditions that will keep this species sustainable for decades to come (and the US defence industry by the way). Such an overwhelming degree of military superiority betrays not just the extent of American ambitions for global hegemony but also the extent of America’s fear. Returning to Riviere, she notes how depressive anxiety gives rise to its own special defence, the manic defence. In place of vulnerability there is omnipotence and specifically an attitude of contempt and depreciation for the relationships upon which the narcissist depends. Listening to Richard Perle and other architects of the Project for the New American Century this contempt – for the United Nations, `Old Europe’ and countries which cannot or will not embrace the neo-conservative brand of modernisation – is explicit and worn with smirking pride. Contemplating the demise of the UN after the war on Iraq, Perle notes that `whilst the chatterbox on the Hudson will continue to bleat’ what will die `is the fantasy of the UN as the foundation of the new world order’ (Perle 2003). He then unleashes an apparently clinical demolition of the repeated failure of the Security Council to act against breaches of international law without providing even the faintest of hints that in truth it has been the US which has most consistently used its veto on the Security Council – nine times in all since 1990 against the four vetos cast by the other four members combined during the same period. And whilst we’re on the subject of inaction in the face of breaches of international law we’d do well to remember that over the last thirty years the USA has vetoed 34 UN resolutions on Israel and has consistently supported Israel’s routine violations of UN resolution 242 to which the US is a signatory. What we have here is both cold cunning – there is no room for the UN as a countervailing source of authority in `the Project’ – and a paranoia about the world which has become so routine that it is not even aware of itself. Allusions to `threat’ and `security’ run like a thread throughout the brief manifesto of the Project, that is, its `Statement of Principles’. But what makes this paranoia, instead of a rational fear response to the real threats that exist to American hegemony around the world? The massive overkill, the self-fulfilling nature of so many American interventions, the uncanny knack that American foreign policy has displayed of making its worst fears come true, the classic paranoid conviction that one is the misunderstood victim and never the perpetrator, the complete inability to perceive how ones own `defensive actions’ are experienced by the other as provocation and threat – wherever we look, the `arms race’ with the Soviet Union, the run-up to the Cuban Missile Crisis, fear of communist contagion in S.E Asia and Latin America, the current `war on terrorism’ and `containment’ of N.Korea we see the same mixture of provocation, ineptness and misunderstanding. In his recent book on paranoia, David Bell (2003) notes how the fears that the paranoid is subject to are the echo of what has become alien(ated). In this way Melanie Klein adds a twist to our understanding of alienation by insisting that what we project into the world forever threatens to return and haunt us. Bell notes how films such as Alien and The Conversation vividly depict this. Indeed Klein argues that through projective identification the other can become subject to control by self, in subtle ways becoming nudged and coerced into enacting what is put into them. In this way paranoia can become self-fulfilling and it really does seem as if the world is out to get you. God’s chosen people Estimates suggest that well over 60% of the citizens of the USA engage in religious worship on a regular basis – in Britain the figure is more like 7%. Christian fundamentalism has become particularly powerful in the USA since the late 1960’s, perhaps as the backlash towards 60’s `godlessness’. But these fundamentalist movements seem to be simply the tip of the iceberg that is modern American religiosity. Indeed, as Karen Armstrong (2001) noted, the concept of `fundamentalism’ was first coined to characterise the emergence of charismatic religious movements in N.America at the beginning of the twentieth century. In fact God and America have walked hand in hand ever since the Founding Fathers. This has found a powerful and consistent expression in the politics of the United States, and particularly in its foreign policy, where analysts have coined the phrase `American exceptionalism’ to describe the belief that `the United States is an extraordinary nation with a special role to play in human history’ (McCrisken 2001). Almost from the beginning of the occupation by European settlers N.America has been construed as a promised land and its citizens a chosen people. The New World was, in this sense contrasted with the Old, a world of famine, war and intolerance from which many of these settlers had fled. McCrisken provides countless indications of this exceptionalist belief system from George Washington to Bill Clinton but all are characterised by certain common suppositions – that America is the land of the free, that its intentions are inherently benevolent, that inside every non-American there is an American struggling to get out and, perhaps most importantly given the War on Terror and the occupation of Iraq, that the US is the embodiment of universal human values based on the rights of all mankind – freedom, democracy and justice. Weinberg (1935) described this in terms of the belief in `manifest destiny’ which gave successive administrations in the nineteenth century the sense of America’s special mission to bring freedom to the peoples of the world, as in the Mexican War or the Spanish-American War which led to the `liberation’ of Cuba. Today the sense of manifest destiny is no less strong but now it is garbed in the cloak of `modernisation’ – the belief that all societies pass through certain stages of development (from traditional to modern) and that the West, and particularly the United States, is the common endpoint towards which all peoples must irresistibly move. Of course, this is Fukuyama’s `end of history’ and it is perhaps no surprise to find him to be (along with Rumsfeld, Wolfowitz & Co.) one of the 25 signatories to the Statement of Principles (written in June 1997) of the Project for the New American Century – the neo-Conservative manifesto which now directs American and British foreign policy. The point about all this is that this very idealisation of America by Americans, its self-identification with virtue, contributes enormously both to its innocence and to its arrogance. There is often a real generosity of spirit and a friendly naivete which strikes the non-American (at least the English ones) when encountering an American citizen. One thinks of the countless jokes about the American as an `innocent abroad’ captured in the image of the gawping American tourist. But there is also the arrogance added to this, an arrogance which leads even hard nosed strategists to assume that invading troops need know nothing about the peoples that they are about to `liberate’, a mistake which had tragic consequences in Somalia and is now being repeated in Iraq. Moreover this is an arrogance which leaves Americans with such a strong sense that they have virtue on their side, and it is this that has provided the fertile ground for the splitting and paranoia which has been such a feature of the American view of the world since the Second World War. Again, if we return to Hofstadter's ideas about American politics we can see this paranoid belief in a vast and sinister conspiracy which is set out to undermine and destroy a way of life. Indeed for Hofstadter, `the paranoid spokesman sees the fate of this conspiracy in apocalyptic terms - he traffics in the birth and death of whole worlds, whole political orders, whole systems of human values. He is always manning the barricades of civilization’ (Hofstadter 1979, p.29). Three decades on and this still sounds very familiar. One thinks of the `fighting talk’ of George Bush in the war on Iraq, in the fight against the Axis of Evil, and the struggle against global terrorism - fighting terror with terror, the talion morality of the paranoid schizoid position, destroying and re-creating political systems, acting as the purveyor of civilization to the world. This then, is a world in which American society has been called upon to resist the spreading evils, first of communism, now of militant Islam. Moreover, it has been this splitting of good and evil which fueled the rise of McCarthyism in the 1950’s and which is threatening American civil liberties today. Injured narcissism In 'Notes on Some Schizoid Mechanisms' Melanie Klein (1946) describes the destructive and controlling nature of the narcissistic state of mind. A typical feature of paranoid object relations is their narcissistic nature, for in reality the objects to which the paranoid individual or group relates are representations of their alienated selves. Moreover the narcissistic relationship has strong obsessional features, and in particular the need to control others, to remain omnipotent and all powerful. David Bell develops this theme in his commentary on Mike Davis’s recent NLR article (Davis 2001) in which he notes that the resort, following September 11th, to increasingly pervasive forms of security and control within the USA actually contributes the very anxiety these measures seek to address. Bell argues, `the grandiose demand for complete security creates ever more, in our minds, enemies endowed with our own omnipotence who are imagined as seeking to control us’ (Bell, p.37). But what happens when this narcissism is injured, omnipotence punctured? In the real world, as opposed to the world of the imaginary, this attitude of omnipotence is repeatedly subject to disconfirmation. McCrisken (2003) refers to the `Vietnam syndrome’ as a defining element of American foreign policy since the 1970’s, something which formed the backdrop to the first Gulf War through which it reached a partial and incomplete resolution. Vietnam was a trauma for the USA in two ways. The American claim to have a monopoly on virtue was destroyed by successive scandals, atrocities and outrages, in fact they were revealed to be as savage as any other occupying power. Jean-Paul Sartre (1968) famously argued that the war waged by America on Vietnam was implicitly genocidal. Indeed for Sartre, the war in Vietnam signified a new stage in the development of imperialism - 'it is the greatest power on earth against a poor peasant people. Those who fight it are living out the only possible relationship between an over-industrialized country and an under-developed country, that is to say, a genocidal relationship implemented through racism' (p.42). Worse still, they lost the war, against one of the most economically backward societies imaginable the might of American military power came to nought. The impact of Vietnam was such that the USA virtually avoided direct military involvement for twenty five years, preferring indirect involvement (encouraging and equipping Iraq versus Iran, Afghanistan versus the Soviet Union) or direct engagement in situations such as tiny Grenada where they could hardly lose. The Vietnam Syndrome also encouraged the development of an approach to warfare which gave maximum emphasis to the use of air power and the avoidance of ground troops, something exemplified by the intervention in Kosovo and, later, Afghanistan. We can also understand the Vietnam Syndrome in terms of Freud’s work on trauma and his notions of repetition and working through. Trauma (whether loss of limb or sexual abuse) is an attack upon the narcissistic organisation of the psyche/body, it is experienced as loss which is irreparable. But loss can be managed sufficiently for a life to move on, and for this to occur a place in the psyche/culture needs to be found in which some of the shock, rage, horror and grief can be addressed symbolically. And for a while in the 1970’s elements of the liberal American intelligentsia were able to initiate such a process through critical self-analysis, literature, film and music. But a quite different response, based upon a manic form of denial, was waiting in the wings. Freud notes how a child may engage in the repetition of traumatic experience in an attempt to magically overcome it by reversing the subject/object relationship, by becoming master rather than victim. But this is a `working through’ by enactment, an attempt to `act upon’ reality rather than understand it. Thus the `action movie’ and the `action hero’ of the Hollywood movies which began in the 1970’s featuring Schwarzenegger, Jean Claude Van Damme, and, later, Bruce Willis. But, more seriously, we can also see the same process of `working through’ in terms of the search to re-enact in reverse the humiliation of Vietnam but this time with the US as master. The first Gulf War only partially accomplishes this, Saddam remains unfinished business for many of the neo-conservatives gathering with Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz in the late 1990’s. It is in this context that we can understand September 11th . For September 11th was a second huge narcissistic injury for the USA and the current war on Iraq is a further attempt at `working through’. As by now is absolutely clear (and openly admitted by Wolfowitz) the existence of Weapons of Mass Destruction in Iraq was the pretext for an intervention which had quite different motives. These motives were partly strategic (oil, the need to find an alternative to Saudi Arabia as a forward base for US forces in the region) but they were also partly simply about the reassertion of American power against a more fulfilling target than the Taliban in Afghanistan. They set about `finishing the job’ begun by Bush Snr and achieving `closure’, closing the narcissistic wound opened up by Vietnam and never properly healed. Psychotic Anxieties, Splitting and September 11th If we think psychoanalytically about the events leading up to the war on Iraq, then the starting point is the twin towers - September 11th . Its not easy to forget the horror of that day. There was no absence of bodies then. Horrific scenes of people jumping out of windows, running for life, mangled and dismembered corpses. On September 11th we witnessed true annihilation, not a film, just annihilation. As Cowley (2001) acutely observed, `Islamic terrorists appropriated the destructive impulses of American entertainment culture, making of a nation’s apocalyptic fantasies a terrifying actuality, as if they were attempting to speak to the Americans in their own language’. This was a massive attack on the security of the American nation. As Hanna Segal (2002) noted, the trauma of the terrorist attack had an added dynamic 'the crushing realisation that there is somebody out there who actually hates you to the point of annihilation'. It is now commonplace to say that the USA lost its innocence on September 11th. But what it really lost was its embrace of the imaginary. Until that day the American psyche had been consumed by a helpless fascination with a fictional threat, or rather a series of fictional threats; on September 11th they received the shock of the real. `Welcome to the world’ some people said. Suddenly Americans became as vulnerable as the rest of us. The immediate response to September 11th was bewilderment and incredulity. Again, as Segal noted, the question on most American lips was `why’? It is a common reaction for people in trauma situations to think that people are out to get them, ‘in the case of the terrorist attacks it is actually a true fact. One’s worst nightmares come true’. Segal added another dimension - the symbolism of the twin towers and the Pentagon. This is very important if we are to try and understand the meanings and motivations behind the war on Iraq. So, the symbolism equates to ‘we are all-powerful, with our weapons, finance, high tech - we can dominate you completely’. The suicide bombers destroyed this omnipotence. As Segal noted: we were pushed into a world of terror versus terror, disintegration and confusion. The shock was followed by mourning and barely contained anxiety. The president of the United States of America appeared on global television networks as `the child adult’, a little boy lost. At first he seemed quite inadequate to the part that was being demanded of him. It almost looked like he wanted to run – asking, `why me’? For weeks the USA was gripped by a wave of panics about anthrax and other impending attacks. But traces of American triumphalism were being quickly reasserted. The flags which, from Maine to Arizona, first hung from poles and windows in grief quickly transmuted into a sign of strength and resolution, and later, to bellicosity. This other mood could also be discerned in homage to the courage of fire crews and emergency service personnel and to the passengers who overcame the hi-jackers on the fourth plane (`let’s roll’). But rage took time to gather. Many liberals and leftists in Europe anticipated an outpouring of vengeful rhetoric from the Republicans, but it did not come. Rather, the response was surprisingly measured and multilateral. And whilst many opposed the war of the `coalition against terror’ against Afghanistan, at least the connection with September 11th seemed obvious – Al Quaeda was clearly being protected by the Taliban regime. It was only when this phyric victory had been swiftly achieved that a shift, symbolised by the `Axis of Evil’ speech in January 2002, into a more paranoid and in-your-face triumphalist discourse began. The question of weapons of mass destruction became central to the moral and ethical charge for war. Was there any proof of their existence? The weapons inspectors could find none, yet we were told time after time that clear evidence existed, even though the documents cited had very little credibility. Again, as Hofstadter noted, the typical procedure of higher paranoid scholarship is to start by accumalating facts, or what appear to be facts to establish 'proof' that a conspiracy exists - the paranoid mentality seeks a coherence that reality cannot provide. Indeed for Hofstadter, `what distinguishes the paranoid style is not, then, the absence of verifiable facts (though it is occasionally true that in his extravagant passion for facts the paranoid occasionally manufactures them), but rather the curious leap in imagination that is always made at some critical point in the recital of events.’ (Hofstadter 1979, p.39). The deployment of reason and strategic cunning becomes unpinned by the apocalyptic vision of paranoid politics. Destroying the Bad Object Classically, in a paranoid schizoid state, manic defenses are called into play. The splitting of good and bad, processes of idealisation and denigration, as we have seen, lead us to perceive the world in dichotomous relationships between good and bad. The bad object/other becomes the fixation point of our anger, fear, rage and paranoia. Excessive projection leaves the individual in mortal fear of an attack from the bad object. Thus we try and destroy this object, lest it comes back to destroy us. The question arises though, as to what happens when these destructive forces are unable to find a satisfactory object. Despite the measured and multi-lateral nature of the intervention there was still something murderous and retaliatory about the attack on the people of Afghanistan. An attack based in the talion morality of the paranoid schizoid position - an eye for an eye. The problem with the war in Afghanistan against the Taliban was there was no sense of gratification and the lust to get equal was never satisfied. There are several reasons for this. First, the bombing of Afghanistan simply wasn’t enough to either exact revenge, or to demonstrate the power of the Apocalypse - you cannot bomb the stone age back into the stone age even though, as Sartre (1968, p.40) had noted over thirty years earlier, this had already been attempted in Vietnam with disastrous effects. Second, Bin Laden disappeared, vaporised - there was no bad object to destroy. Finally, the exercise of military might, of unadulterated power had nothing to be powerful over - power only exists if people are the objects of that power. Instead we seemed to have an increasingly paranoid American population and its government on the one hand and disappearing enemy bodies on the other. And then came the `Axis of Evil’ speech and a further ratcheting up of the spiral of splitting, projection, paranoid phantasy, and defensive offence. White House rhetoric began providing florid depictions of a world divided between good and evil in which there was no `in between’, `you are either with us or you are against us’. Fakhry Davids (2002) notes that the events of September 11th were brought home vividly to us by the wall to wall media coverage - the shocking images of the planes crashing into the twin towers of the World Trade Centre, and then its collapse. Psychically unbearable events, argues Davids, call into play powerful defences whose aim is to protect us from perceived danger. For Davids, the extent to which the event has been reframed in stereotyped racist terms is apparent everywhere, ‘the problem has now been reduced to a conflict between the enlightened, civilised, tolerant, freedom loving, clean living democrat versus the bearded, robed, Kalashnikov bearing bigoted, intolerant, glint in the eye fundamentalist fanatic, or viewed from the other side, the humble believer with God on his side versus the infidel armed with all the worldly might of the devil’ (Davids 2002, p.362). For Davids, it is difficult for us to find neutral ground - you are either with us, or against us - which side are you on? This reduction of a complex situation into black and white, good and bad is a paranoid solution to intense anxiety which reinforces the self-idealisation which we have seen lies at the heart of American exceptionalism. As Davids notes, such a world view makes us feel that we know who we are, and may justify actions that make us feel better. The problem is that we don’t face the problem. There have been many arguments about why America and Britain decided to wage war on Iraq. All quite plausible in their own right - Saddam the evil dictator, Saddam the murderer of his own people, then there are the economic, the oil, the money to be made from reconstructing the country, the geo-political, securing the middle east - stopping a snowball of violence, and of course harbouring the terrorist. Then of course there are the weapons of mass destruction, yet to be found, despite the documentation of the paranoid conspirators. All these explanations contribute to a fuller picture, but as David Hare (2003) recently wrote, the main motivation behind this war was a simply assertion of American power, `the feral pleasure of the flex’. Uppity Saddam had dared to piss on the boots of Uncle Sam. A lesson in respect was due. An annihilatory lesson aimed at the global (and not just Islamic) psyche. But we’ve been here before. This is Sartre (1968, p.42) again on Vietnam, `when a peasant falls in his rice paddy, mowed down by a machine gun, everyone of us is hit…. The group which the United States wants to intimidate and terrorize by way of the Vietnamese nation is the human group in its entirety’. Not just an attack but an annihilatory one aimed at the Iraqi body, its government, its history and its country – an attempt at vaporisation - an apocalyptic vision - such is the style of paranoid politics. And for a while the world did look on in shock and awe. Empty Boots, Empty Tanks, Empty Buildings According to Baudrillard (1994), `Coppola makes his films like the Americans make war… with the same immoderation, the same excess of means, the same monstrous candour… and the same success. The war as entrenchment, as technological and psychedelic fantasy, the war as a succession of special effects, the war becomes film even before being filmed… a test site, a gigantic territory in which to test their arms, their methods, their power.’ America had a choice after September 11th. It could have joined much of the rest of the world in its shared sense of vulnerability and interdependence. But, once more, America chose denial and magic. Denial of the real and a manic reassertion of omnipotence. The war on Iraq was a demonstration of pure and total power. It became sanitised as a film of all the elements that might obstruct or resist power. There were no bodies, just empty tanks, boots and buildings that were endlessly pounded as a demonstration of shock andawe. The Iraqi bodies disappeared, the presidential guard disappeared and then Saddam disappeared, as did the mighty Republican Guard and, oh yes, it seems so have the weapons of mass destruction. Peter Preston (2003) commented along similar lines, `the missing link, for those of us watching far away is death: the bodies of the men and women who have died’. Preston argued that the televised war turned away from the reality of the situation. Nobody wanted to see dead bodies, wounded soldiers or civilians suffering. We can watch the bombs falling, but not see the effect - ‘the dead become undead for photographic purposes’. In Britain, the first time we saw blood and bodies, despite the apocalyptic first night of the cruise missiles, was a report by John Simpson two weeks into the war. Simpson (2003) was with a convey of Kurdish fighters and American special forces when they came under attack from American warplanes: "This is just a scene from hell here. All the vehicles on fire. There are bodies burning around me, there are bodies lying around, there are bits of bodies on the ground. This is a really bad own goal by the Americans" . The very graphic images were even worse, broadcast on BBC television - blood dripping down the windscreen of a vehicle while the reporter sat inside. The cameraman wiping blood from the lens of the camera with his fingers. It was as if the full horror of war had suddenly hit the world. We could at last see the very symbolic and sickening images of a real, as opposed to a hyperreal war. It is paradoxical that there has been more emphasis on casualties since the end of the war. Some conclusions The destruction of the world trade centre was a terrible event in world history, a terrible shock to the American psyche and brought terrible traumas to the ordinary citizens of New York. For the USA as the only world power, the bubble was burst. Coppolla wasn’t there, or even Bruce Willis to protect the ordinary person in the street - the terrorists struck at the very heart of America. The tables, however, were turned and the Middle East temporarily succumbed to the (film) show of power (with no casualties), the show that should have protected the twin towers but didn’t. The problem is we cannot have war without bodies - and there cannot be power without being in relation to the other. Despite the fact the neo-Conservatives were itching to take on Saddam before Bush even got into office, despite the fact that for some of these strategists September 11th was therefore both a shock and an opportunity sent from heaven, despite the long period of military preparation and the diplomatic side-show conducted by that naïve Mr Blair that accompanied it, despite all this the occupation of Iraq looks like being a piece of inept foreign policy making in the best traditions of American irrationalism. Little thought appears to have been given to what happens once the military occupation was achieved, to the problem of law and order or to reviving the basic infrastructure. Little thought appears to have been given to the possibility that armed Saddam loyalists might `melt’ into the night in order to fight a sustained campaign of sabotage and guerilla warfare or that the repressed Shias might quickly fill the power vacuum left by the collapse of the Baathists and look to their theocratic Shia neighbours in Iran as guide and model. Little thought seems to have been given to an exit strategy and, as the situation deteriorates, the obvious solution – call for the UN to pick up the pieces – can only be reached for if an enormous chunk of humble pie is swallowed. Besides, the Project for the New American Century is not concerned to restore any legitimacy to this `Old World’ institution. To return to more or less where we began, it is impossible to stress enough the narcissistic and fearful character of contemporary American power. This is a power based in a paranoid syle of politics and expressed from a seemingly omnipotent position. Five decades of a growing ascendancy have encouraged the fantasy that there really are no limits, a delusional belief system has become corroborated by reality. Well almost. God’s chosen people really have acquired a technical, military and economic superiority, which seems to make interdependence unnecessary. But this is the problem of the narcissant, the attack upon relatedness. That America can destroy (like in Afghanistan) there can be no doubt, but it has little or no capacity to build or create beyond that which can be included within a commodified mode of relatedness – it has lost the capacity to rebuild states or civil societies (witness the continued degradation of the former Soviet Bloc). America, the Empire of Fear, now stands as the major threat to global society.

# Terrorism Link

**Their threats of terrorism are paranoid creations of the MIC---turns case**

**Valenzuela 3** Manuel, social critic, commentator, Internet essayist and author of Echoes in the Wind, “perpetual war; perpetual terror”

Without war, violence and weapons there is no Pentagon. And so to survive, to remain a player, wars must be created, weapons must be allocated, profits must be made and the Military Industrial Complex must continue exporting and manufacturing violence and conflict throughout the globe. And, as always, in the great tradition of the United States, enemies must exist. Indians, English, Mexicans, Spanish, Nazis, Koreans, Communists and now the ever-ambiguous Terrorists. The Cold War came to an end and so too the great profits of the MIC. Reductions in the Pentagon budget threatened the lifeblood of the industry; a new enemy had to be unearthed. There is no war – hence no profit – without evildoers, without terrorists lurching at every corner, waiting patiently for the moment to strike, instilling fear into our lives, absorbing our attention. We are told our nation is in imminent danger, that we are a mushroom cloud waiting to happen. And so we fear, transforming our mass uneasiness into nationalistic and patriotic fervor, wrapping ourselves up in the flag and the Military Industrial Complex. We have fallen into the mouse trap, becoming the subservient slaves of an engine run by greed, interested not in peace but constant war, constant killing and constant sacrifice to the almighty dollar. Brainwashed to believe that War is Peace we sound the drums of war, marching our sons and daughters to a battle that cannot be won either by sword or gun. We are programmed to see the world as a conflict between “Us” versus “Them”, “Good” versus “Evil,” that we must inflict death on those who are not with us and on those against us. The MIC prays on our human emotions and psychology, exploiting human nature and our still fragile memories of the horrors of 9/11, manipulating us to believe that what they say and do is right for us all. We unite behind one common enemy, fearing for our lives, complacent and obedient, blindly descending like a plague of locusts onto foreign land, devastating, usurping, conquering and devouring those who have been deemed enemies of the state, those who harbor and live among them, “evil ones,” “evildoers” and “haters of freedom,” all for the sake of profit and pillage, ideology and empire. Power unfettered and unleashed, our freedoms die and are released. The so-called “War on Terror” is but a charade, a fear-engendering escapade, designed to last into perpetuity, helping guarantee that the Military Industrial Complex will grow exponentially in power. It is a replacement for a Cold War long ago since retired and unable to deliver a massive increase in defense spending. Terrorists and the countries that harbor them have replaced the Soviet Union and Communists as enemy number one. With a war that may go on indefinitely, pursuing an enemy that lives in shadows and in the haze of ambiguity, the MIC will grow ever more powerful, conscripting hundreds of thousands of our youth, sending them to guide, operate and unleash their products of death. Rumblings of bringing back the draft are growing louder, and if you think your children and grandchildren will escape it, think again. In a war without end, in battles that do not cease, the MIC will need human flesh from which to recycle those who perish and fall wounded. Empire building needs bodies and drones to go with military might, instruments of death need trigger fingers and human brains, and, with so many expendable young men and women being conditioned in this so-called “war on terror,” MIC will continue its reprogramming of citizen soldiers from peaceful civilians to warmongering killing machines. After all, “War is Peace.” Yet the Department of War, ever steadfast to use its weaponry, fails to realize that no amount of money will win this war if the root causes of terrorism are not confronted as priority number one. If you get to the roots, you pull out the weed. If not, it grows back again and again. But perhaps a perpetual war is what MIC has sought all along. A lifetime of combat, a lifetime of profit, a lifetime of power. Assembly lines of missiles, bombs, tanks and aircraft operate without pause, helping expand a sluggish economy and the interests of the Pax Americana. Profit over people, violence before peace, the American killing machine continues on its path to human extinction, and it is the hands and minds of our best and brightest building and creating these products of decimation. While we look over our shoulders for terrorists and evildoers, the world ominously looks directly at us with both eyes intently focused on the armies of the “Great Satan” and the “Evil Empire,” not knowing which nation will be attacked or on whom the storm of satellite-guided-missiles will rain down on next. Every action has an equal and opposite reaction. In becoming pre-emptive warmongers, we are also becoming victims of our own making, helping assure a swelling wrath of revenge, resentment and retaliation against us. If we kill we will be killed, if we destroy we will be destroyed. The MIC is leading us down a steep canyon of fury, making us a pariah, a rogue country in the eyes of the world. We are becoming that which we fear most, a terrorist state. As political scientist and ex-marine C. Douglas Lummis has said, “Air bombardment is state terrorism, the terrorism of the rich. It has burned up and blasted apart more innocents in the past six decades than have all the anti-state terrorists who have ever lived. Something has benumbed our consciousness against this reality.” Today we are seen, along with Israel, as the greatest threats to world peace. When hundreds of thousands throughout the planet call Bush “the world’s number one terrorist,” that less than admirable distinction is automatically imputed onto the nation as a whole and the citizens in particular. This can be seen in the world’s perception and treatment of us today.