



# An Ordinary Person's Guide to Empire

By Arundhati Roy

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Just in time for the elections, Arundhati Roy offers us this lucid briefing on what the Bush administration *really* means when it talks about “compassionate conservatism” and “the war on terror.” Roy has characteristic fun in these essays, skewering the hypocrisy of the more-democratic-than-thou clan. But above all, she aims to remind us that we hold the essence of power and the foundation of genuine democracy—the power of the people to counter their self-appointed leaders’ tyranny.

First delivered as fiery speeches to sold-out crowds, together these essays are a call to arms against “the apocalyptic apparatus of the American empire.”

Focusing on the disastrous US occupation of Iraq, Roy urges us to recognize—and apply—the scope of our power, exhorting US dockworkers to refuse to load materials war-bound, reservists to reject their call-ups, activists to organize boycotts of Halliburton, and citizens of other nations to collectively resist being deputized as janitor-soldiers to clear away the detritus of the US invasion.

Roy’s *Guide to Empire* also offers us sharp theoretical tools for understanding the New American Empire—a dangerous paradigm, Roy argues here, that is entirely distinct from the imperialism of the British or even the New World Order of George Bush, the elder. She examines how resistance movements build power, using examples of nonviolent organizing in South Africa, India, and the United States. Deftly drawing the thread through ostensibly disconnected issues and arenas, Roy pays particular attention to the parallels between globalization in India, the devastation in Iraq, and the deplorable conditions many African Americans, in particular, must still confront.

With Roy as our “guide,” we may not be able to relax from the Sisyphean task of stopping the U.S. juggernaut, but at least we are assured that the struggle for global justice is fortified by Roy’s hard-edged brilliance.

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## **Editorial Review**

From Publishers Weekly

Those who fear the dry and impenetrable prose of many political essays need have no such reservations with this selection. Indian author Roy (*The God of Small Things*) brings a novelistic readability and immediacy to her impassioned critiques of imperialism, the corporate media and their "neo-liberal project"—what she describes as "the medium of those who have power and money." Her unequivocally critical look at the Bush administration's policy in Iraq will likely lead American readers to label her as either brilliantly astute or strongly anti-American. Still, she carefully differentiates between governments and their people. In "Instant Mix Imperial Democracy," she congratulates Americans for standing up to their government: "Hundreds of thousands of you have survived the relentless propaganda you have been subjected to, and are actively fighting your own government. In the ultra-patriotic climate that prevails in the United States, that's as brave as any Iraqi or Afghan or Palestinian fighting for his or her Homeland." In the same talk, Roy delivers a scathing critique of the current state of democracy: "The project of corporate globalization has cracked the code of democracy. Free elections, a free press and an independent judiciary mean little when the free market has reduced them to commodities on sale to the highest bidder." In addition to observing problems; Roy suggests non-violent solutions—boycotts, protests and open discussion. Regardless of whether one agrees with her ideas, Roy crafts articulate and convincing arguments that deserve their place in any debate on globalization, democracy or Iraq.

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### **About the Author**

Arundhati Roy wowed critics with her writing debut, *The God of Small Things*, which won the Booker Prize in 1998. She has also published several collections of essays *The Cost of Living*, *Power Politics* and most recently *War Talk*. Ms. Roy is an outspoken critic of India's nuclear weapons testing, controversial environmental issues and the US "war on terrorism".

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