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Writing Wars on Terrorism: The Rhetoric of Counter-Terrorism from Ronald Reagan to George W. Bush Jr

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Abstract:

The construction of any kind of sustained political violence, including large-scale counter-terrorism campaigns, requires a powerful political discourse capable of enlisting widespread consent and subduing dissent. Employing the methodology of critical discourse analysis (CDA), this paper examines the key features and characteristics of the discourse of Bush Jr's second 'war on terrorism', in large measure by comparing it to the first 'war on terrorism' inaugurated by Reagan. I argue that the genealogical roots of Bush Jr's counter-terrorism policies can be found in the discursive constructions at the heart of Reagan's approach, and that both discourses make similar appeals to formative American political narratives. The paper also argues that the Bush Jr and Reagan 'wars on terrorism' have functioned in similar ways to structure overall foreign policy formation, write American identity, reflexively construct external threats, and discipline internal and external opponents. Finally, the paper suggests that it is possible to critique American counter-terrorism policy from both an ethical-normative perspective, and a realist-pragmatic viewpoint.

Introduction

The enactment of any large-scale project of political violence—such as war or counter-terrorism—necessitates a significant degree of political and social consensus. For any government to commit enormous amounts of public resources and risk the lives of its citizens in military conflict, it has to persuade both the political establishment and the wider society that such an undertaking is necessary, desirable, and achievable. The process of inducing such widespread consent calls for the construction of a powerful public discourse that manufactures approval while simultaneously suppressing individual doubts and circumventing the organization of political opposition. Thus, a major counter-terrorism campaign—a ‘war on terrorism’, for example—manifestly consists of both a set of institutional practices (military and intelligence operations, diplomatic initiatives, special government departments and security bodies, standard operating procedures, new laws and procedures), and an accompanying discursive project. The discursive dimension of counter-terrorism entails the construction and continual amplification and reproduction of an entire political language—a discourse—complete with its own ontological assumptions, symbolic systems, rhetorical modes and tropes, metaphors, narratives and meanings, and exclusive forms of knowledge. The language of counter-terrorism then functions to establish the vocabulary and parameters of public debate, as well as to legitimize, normalize, reify, and co-constitute the institutional practices of counter-terrorism.² From this perspective, a fully informed understanding of past and present ‘wars against terrorism’ is impossible without a critical analysis of the language of counter-terrorism.

Unfortunately, while studies on the military, diplomatic, geo-political, and legal aspects of American counter-terrorism are voluminous,³ apart from a few notable exceptions,⁴ studies on the ideational and discursive dimensions of counter-terrorism projects are few and far between. In addition, there are as yet very few studies which compare the discursive dimensions of counter-terrorism between different administrations. Given the continuities between the Reagan and Bush Jr presidencies in terms of key personnel, ideological orientation, political support networks, and foreign policy priorities, as well as the fact that both administrations enacted major and costly ‘wars on terrorism’, this seems surprising. The aim of this paper therefore, is to undertake a comparative critical discourse analysis of the official language of Ronald Reagan’s and George W. Bush Jr’s ‘wars on terrorism’. The overall argument is fairly simple: The genealogical origins of the post-September 11, 2001 ‘war on terrorism’ rests firmly in the discursive construction of counter-terrorism during the Reagan administration. The similarities in discourse and practice between these two ‘wars on terrorism’ are more than simply epiphenomenal or coincidental; rather, they are embedded in the discursive practices of American foreign policy and political life itself. Moreover, at the political level, they function in similar ways to write American identity, discipline domestic and foreign opponents, and reify state power.

This paper is divided into four main sections. The initial section briefly describes the methodology employed in the study. Section two critically analyses and compares the counter-terrorism discourses of the Reagan and Bush Jr administrations. The third section draws together some conclusions about the essential characteristics of the two discourses.

Finally, in the conclusion, I explore the practical and ethical dangers of American counter-terrorism policy under Reagan and Bush Jr.

Methodological Approach

The methodological approach I have employed to examine the official language of these ‘wars on terrorism’ is known broadly as critical discourse analysis (CDA). This approach is at once both a technique for analysing specific texts or speech acts, and a way of understanding the relationship between discourse and social and political phenomena. By engaging in concrete, linguistic textual analysis—that is, by doing systematic analyses of spoken and written language—CDA aims to shed light on the links between texts and societal practices and structures, or, the linguistic-discursive dimension of social action.⁵ The approach is based on a number of crucial assumptions. It assumes that discourse is a form of social practice which both makes or constitutes the social world, and is at the same time constituted by other social practices. Discourses both contribute to the shaping of social structures and are also shaped by them; there is a dialectical relationship between the two. Of even greater import, CDA assumes that discursive practices are never neutral, but rather that they possess a clear ideological character; they are the construction and deployment of ‘meaning in the service of power.’⁶ Or, more specifically, discourses act as constructions of meaning that contribute to the production, reproduction, and transformation of relations of domination in society.⁷ Thus, a central aim of CDA lies in revealing the means by which language is deployed to construct and maintain power. What makes CDA ‘critical’ is its normative commitment to positive social change.

In terms of studying the role and use of language, there are two levels at which CDA functions. First, it engages directly with specific texts in an effort to discover how discursive practices operate linguistically within those texts. Second, because individual text analysis is not sufficient on its own to shed light on the relationship between discourse and social processes, CDA adds a wider interdisciplinary perspective which combines textual and social-political analysis.⁸ In essence, CDA involves carefully reading a specific text—such as a speech, interview, or radio address—and subjecting it to a series of analytical questions: What assumptions, beliefs and values underlie the language in the text? How does the grammar, syntax and sentence construction reinforce the meanings and effects of the discursive constructions contained in the text? What are the histories and embedded meanings of the important words in the text? What patterns can be observed in the language, and how do different parts of the text relate to each other? What knowledge or practices are normalised by the language in the text? How does the language create, reinforce or challenge power relations in society? Finding answers to these questions goes some way towards understanding how discourses work to construct social processes and structures in ways that reproduce power relations.

In my analysis of the language of the two ‘wars on terrorism’, I chose to focus mainly on the speeches, interviews and public addresses given by senior members of the Reagan and Bush Jr administrations.⁹ I analysed over 150 speeches, interviews, radio broadcasts, press releases, and statements to Congress between 1981 and 1988 in the first time period, and September 11, 2001 and January 31, 2004 in the second. These texts were a representative sample of more than 6,000 official texts on the subject of terrorism

and counter-terrorism for these two periods. I began by examining all the important speeches that garnered major public attention or were of great symbolic importance, such as State of the Union addresses, special speeches on terrorism or terrorism-related crises, the September 11 and September 20, 2001 addresses to the American people, and anniversary and commemorative speeches. Lastly, I tried to ensure a selection of different speakers, from the president to cabinet members and senior ambassadors, as well as texts broadly covering each entire period.

Writing Wars Against Terrorism: Ronald W. Reagan and George W. Bush Jr¹⁰

An examination of the Reagan administration's language of counter-terrorism demonstrates unequivocally that the current 'war on terrorism' is genealogically rooted in this earlier period of American counter-terrorism policy. There is an extraordinary level of replication and mimicry of the central themes and narratives in every important dimension of the discourse. Both administrations discursively constructed the terrorist challenge and the counter-terrorism response in largely identical ways, despite the vastly different geo-political contexts in which they operated and the magnitude of the security threat each faced. This suggests that the first 'war on terrorism' was crucial for establishing the vocabulary and parameters of subsequent counter-terrorism discourse.

Terrorism as War

The most significant discursive move of any counter-terrorism campaign involves reconstructing terrorist attacks as 'acts of war.' Both the Reagan and Bush Jr 'wars on terrorism' followed this same rhetorical path. For example, the Reagan administration discursively re-constructed instances of anti-American terrorism as 'acts of war', rather than as crime, insurgency, or simply kidnappings, bombings, hijackings, and the like. Speaking about the kidnapping of American citizens in Lebanon for example, Reagan declared that, 'Their acts of terror constitute *a declaration of war* on civilized society;'¹¹ earlier he had stated that America 'would not tolerate what amounts to *acts of war* against the American people.'¹² In another speech, Reagan suggested that so-called 'terrorist states'—nations that sponsor terrorism—are 'now engaged in *acts of war* against the Government and people of the United States.'¹³ Secretary George Shultz echoed this formulation when he said that terrorism is 'not just criminal activity but *an unbridled form of warfare*' and that 'terrorism is being used by our adversaries as *a modern tool of warfare*.'¹⁴ Virtually every description of terrorism in the official speeches of the Reagan administration follows this same rhetorical pattern. Historically, this represented something of a departure in counter-terrorism discourse; previously, acts of terrorism had most often been described simply as hijacking, hostage taking, assassination, bombings, killings, and the like.¹⁵

Following the September 11, 2001 attacks, the Bush Jr administration articulated a very similar discursive construction, although with a slight variation in its chronological evolution. In the immediate aftermath of the devastating attacks, Bush Jr described them as 'deliberate and deadly *terrorist acts*' and 'despicable *acts of terror*.'¹⁶ In other words, there was at first no mention of 'war'. However, in a discursive sleight of hand, the attacks were then rhetorically reborn in subsequent days as an 'act of *war*'. Bush Jr

asserted that ‘*war has been waged against us*,’¹⁷ and ‘the wreckage of New York City’ was ‘the first *battle of war*.’¹⁸ Directly related to this, the victims of the September 11, 2001 attacks were reclaimed in a powerful discursive act as ‘combat casualties’ rather than ‘terrorist victims’. Donald Rumsfeld achieved this by announcing that the members of the armed forces killed in the attack on the Pentagon would be given war medals:

They were *acts of war, military strikes* against the United States of America. As such, those Department of Defense employees who were injured or killed were *not just victims of terror*. They were *combat casualties* [...] [T]he members of the armed forces that were killed or injured in the September 11th attack on the Pentagon and on the World Trade Center towers will receive the Purple Heart. As you know, the Purple Heart is given to *those killed or wounded in combat*.¹⁹

This was a powerful symbolic act that remade the terrorist attacks as fully ‘war’ and the victims as ‘casualties of war’. This discursive construction directly echoed Reagan’s use of the term ‘prisoners of war’ to describe the American hostages in Lebanon in the 1980s.²⁰

These discursive renderings of terrorist acts by Reagan and Bush Jr were central to placing counter-terrorism in an understandable ‘war’ narrative, and justifying a military rather than a criminal justice response. Moreover, discursively reconstructing terrorist attacks as ‘acts of war’ functioned to confer on the state powers reserved for the supreme emergency, as well as domestic and international justification for military-based self-defense. The language worked to thoroughly normalize a military response—a ‘war on terrorism’. Interestingly, both administrations described terrorism as ‘acts of war’ regardless of the scale of the attack: Reagan’s description of ‘acts of war’ referred to the kidnapping of a small number of Americans in Lebanon, while Bush Jr’s identical language referred to the devastating World Trade Center attacks that killed 3,000 people. This illustrates the degree to which foreign policy responses are a discursive construction rather than the objective reflection of a real problem—identical language is employed to describe entirely different realities.

The Threat of Terrorism

At the heart of every counter-terrorism campaign is a ubiquitous narrative of threat and danger. In both ‘wars on terrorism’, the problem of terrorist violence was established as urgent, dramatic, and without precedent. For example, Reagan argued that ‘In recent years, a very worrisome and alarming *new kind of terrorism* has developed.’²¹ Stressing the unprecedented quality of the terrorist violence functions to legitimize unprecedented government measures: a ‘new’ kind of terrorism obviously necessitates a ‘new’ kind of counter-terrorism. In addition to its construction as a wholly ‘new’ threat, the Reagan administration rhetorically constructed terrorism as a threat of truly staggering proportions. In a speech to Congress for example, the president asserted that: ‘The training and support of terrorist groups and activities by a number of countries has *reached alarming proportions*. In addition, the number of states now using terrorism as an instrument of foreign policy is both *increasing and highly disturbing*’; it ‘has thus become *a matter of grave concern to national security*.’ He went on to state that terrorism posed a ‘growing *threat to our way of life*’, it had become ‘*a frightening challenge* to the

tranquility and political stability of our friends and allies', it was a 'growing *source of danger* to us, our friends, and our allies', and was 'a *severe challenge* to America's foreign policy.' Even more than this, he concluded that terrorism posed an apocalyptic threat to 'all mankind.'²² Reagan also spoke frequently of the 'the *deadly menace of international terror*'²³ which posed a 'pervasive and insidious *threat to all free peoples*.'²⁴ More than this, terrorism was described as 'a *unique threat* to free peoples,' 'a *threat to all of us*,' and 'an *attack upon the world*.'²⁵

Secretary Shultz directly amplified Reagan's language when he stated that 'The stakes in our war against terrorism therefore, are high,' largely because of 'the damage that terrorism *threatens to wreak on our modern civilization*.' He went on to add: 'The magnitude of *the threat posed by terrorism is so great* that we cannot afford to confront it with half-hearted and poorly organized measures,' and 'We cannot begin to address this *monumental challenge* to decent, civilized society until we clear our heads of the confusion about terrorism.' He ended his speech by arguing that 'We *should* be alarmed' as terrorism is 'a *threat to Western moral values*.'²⁶ Inadvertently perhaps, Shultz reveals the purpose and function of this highly inflated language: the public should be alarmed and afraid, as terrorism threatens their way of life, their civilization, their moral values, their peace and tranquillity, and all people everywhere. By implication, any measure the government deems necessary in such an extreme emergency appears as reasonable, prudent, and commonsensical. Unchallenged by the media, this language established the parameters of subsequent counter-terrorism discourse, despite the reality that international terrorism killed less than a dozen Americans per year throughout the 1980s.²⁷

The discursive construction of the threat of terrorism in the Bush Jr administration, unsurprisingly in the light of the WTC attacks, employed a hyperbolic language of threat that directly echoed Reagan's formulations. According to the administration, terrorism posed not just a threat of sudden violent death, but a 'threat to civilization', a 'threat to the very essence of what you do',²⁸ a 'threat to our way of life',²⁹ and a threat to 'the peace of the world'.³⁰ The notion of a 'threat to our way of life' is a cold war expression that vastly inflates the purported danger: instead of a tiny group of dissidents with resources that do not even begin to rival that of the smallest states, it implies that today's terrorists are as powerful as the Soviet empire was once thought to be with its tens of thousands of missiles and its massive conventional army. In addition, administration officials suggest that the threat of terrorism, like the threat of Soviet nuclear weapons, is supremely catastrophic:

The attack on our country forced us to come to grips with the possibility that the next time terrorists strike, they may well... direct chemical agents or diseases at our population, or attempt to detonate a nuclear weapon in one of our cities. [...] *[N]o rational person can doubt* that terrorists would use such weapons of mass murder the moment they are able to do so. [...] *[W]e are dealing with terrorists... who are willing to sacrifice their own lives in order to kill millions of others.*³¹

In other words, not only are Americans threatened by terrorists eager to kill millions, but this is a rational and reasonable fear to have; it is in fact, commonsensical. Americans should be very afraid: 'If they had the capability to *kill millions* of innocent civilians, do

any of us believe they would hesitate to do so?'.³² This is a way of normalizing the terrorist threat in everyday experience.

Bush Jr administration officials then went to great lengths to explain how these same terrorists (who are eager to kill millions) are actually highly sophisticated, cunning, and extremely dangerous. As John Ashcroft expressed it: 'The highly coordinated attacks of September 11 make it clear that terrorism is the activity of *expertly organized, highly coordinated and well financed* organizations and networks'.³³ Moreover, this is not a tiny and isolated group of dissidents, but 'there are *thousands of these terrorists* in more than 60 countries' and they 'hide in countries around the world to plot evil and destruction',³⁴ or, like the story line of a popular novel: 'Thousands of dangerous killers, schooled in the methods of murder, often supported by outlaw regimes, are now spread throughout the world *like ticking time bombs*, set to go off without warning'.³⁵ In other speeches, officials deliberately inflated the numbers of the terrorists to '*tens of thousands*' of killers spread throughout the world in a terror network

Interestingly, both Reagan and Bush Jr conflated the threat of terrorism with certain hostile states that were also the focus of American foreign policy; this was a highly politicized discursive move. For example, referring specifically to the phenomenon of 'international terrorism' (itself an appellation that vastly extends and amplifies the geographical threat of terrorism), Reagan argued that '*State-sponsored terrorism has increased dramatically* in the last few years',³⁶ and 'In recent years, there's been a *steady and escalating* pattern of terrorist acts against the United States and our allies.'³⁷ He went on to argue that 'Government-sponsored terrorism, in particular, cannot continue without *gravely threatening the social fabric of all free societies*.'³⁸ Importantly, the Reagan administration's continued reference to 'international terrorism' and 'state-sponsored terrorism' constructs a terrifying vision of terrorism that is both vast and backed by the power of so-called 'rogue' or 'outlaw' states; this is crucial to both amplifying the danger and to conflating terrorists and enemy states. Conflating terrorism with certain states allows a 'war' on terrorism to be re-targeted at countries which are the focus of American concern—and which are much easier to attack than clandestine groups operating in the shadows and across borders. Related to this, Reagan and his senior officials referred frequently to 'this network of terrorist states', and a 'confederation of criminal governments' allied with terrorist groups in 'the terrorist network.'³⁹ This added a note of conspiracy to a vision of dark agents of terror operating across the globe; the ubiquitous phrase, 'the terrorist network', echoed the title of Claire Sterling's notorious and deeply alarmist book about the Soviet Union as the puppet masters of global terrorism.⁴⁰ Her deeply flawed treatise was highly praised by Reagan, Alexander Haig, William Casey, and other senior Administration officials.⁴¹

Similarly, in the second 'war on terrorism' the threat of terrorism was from a very early stage reflexively conflated with the threat of 'weapons of mass destruction' and the 'rogue states' who might hand them on to terrorists. According to the official discourse, rogue states are apparently eager to assist terrorists in killing millions of Americans, just as the sponsors of 'international terrorism' were want to do in the 1980s. As Bush stated in his now infamous 'axis of evil' speech,

States like these, and their terrorist allies, constitute an axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world. By seeking *weapons of mass destruction*, these regimes pose a grave

and growing danger. *They could provide these arms to terrorists, giving them the means to match their hatred.*⁴²

This is actually an ingenious discursive sleight of hand which allows America to re-target its military from a war against a tiny group of individual dissidents scattered across the globe (an unglamorous and ultimately unwinnable war), to territorially defined states who also happen to be the target of American foreign policy. Dick Cheney explained it to his colleagues thus: ‘To the extent we define our task broadly, including those who support terrorism, then *we get at states*. And *it’s easier* to find them than it is to find bin Laden.’⁴³ Perhaps more importantly, it also allows for the simultaneous pursuit of geo-strategic objectives in crucial regions such as the Middle East, Central Asia, and Central America under the banner of the ‘war on terrorism’.⁴⁴

As measured by polling data, both the Reagan and Bush Jr administrations were highly successful in creating widespread public fear of terrorism and moral panics.⁴⁵ Again, this shows that public political discourse is rarely an accurate reflection of reality: the same language of threat characterized two completely different threat environments—neither of which was (or is) particularly serious in comparison to other pressing issues. As David Campbell has eloquently shown, discourses of danger and foreign threat have been integral in constituting and disciplining American identity as practiced through its foreign policy.⁴⁶ Collectivities, especially those as disparate and diverse as America, are often only unified by an external threat or danger; in this sense, threat creation is functional to political life. Historically, the American government has relied on the discourse of threat and danger on numerous occasions: the ‘red scares’ of the native Americans who threatened the spread of peaceful civilization along the Western frontier and the workers’ unrest at the time of the Bolshevik Revolution; the ‘Brown scare’ of fascism during World War II; the threat to the American way of life during the cold war; the threat of ‘rogue states’ like Libya, Panama, Iran, North Korea, and Iraq; and the threats posed by the drug trade, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and now of course, terrorism. These discourses of danger are scripted for the purposes of maintaining inside/outside, self/other boundaries—they write American identity—and for enforcing unity on an unruly and (dis)United States.

Of course, there are other more mundane political functions for constructing fear and moral panic: provoking and allaying anxiety to maintain social quiescence, delegitimizing dissent, elevating the status of security actors, diverting scarce resources into ideologically driven political projects, and distracting the public from more complex and pressing social ills.⁴⁷ This is not to say that terrorism poses no real threat; the dangers can plainly be seen in the images of falling bodies and the piles of rubble at ‘Ground Zero’. Rather, it is to point out that dangers are those facets of social life *interpreted* as threats (in one sense, dangers do not exist objectively, independent of perception), and what is interpreted as posing a threat may not always correspond to the realities of the actual risk of harm. Illegal narcotics, for example, pose less of a risk than the abuse of legal drugs, but a ‘war on drugs’ makes it otherwise. Similarly, the current ‘war on terrorism’ is a multi-billion dollar exercise to protect the United States from a danger that, excluding the September 11, 2001 attacks, killed less Americans per year over the past three decades than bee stings and lightning strikes. Even in 2001, America’s worst year of terrorist deaths, the casualties from terrorism were still vastly outnumbered by deaths from auto-

related accidents, gun crimes, alcohol and tobacco-related illnesses, suicides, and a large number of diseases like influenza, cancer, and heart disease.

Writing Identities: Evil Terrorists and Good Americans

The realm of foreign policy, and particularly foreign adversaries, is enormously significant for 'writing' identity.⁴⁸ Foreign policy is critical for maintaining internal/external boundaries, and war (as a special form of foreign policy) plays a central role in maintaining the domains of inside/outside, foreign/domestic, self/other. This is no less true for a 'war on terrorism', which is typically constructed in an epideictic rhetorical mode, rather than a deliberative mode.⁴⁹ Following the rhetorical path established by Reagan, Bush makes appeals that attempt to unify the community and amplify its virtues; national character rather than national deliberation determine its actions. Moreover, the identification of the enemy terrorist in a 'war on terrorism' acts as the 'enabling other' of the citizenry—its negative justification.⁵⁰ More than just identity maintenance then, the discourse of self and other in the rhetoric of counter-terrorism co-constitutes the political; it permits the state as practice.

The construction of identity in both 'wars on terrorism' drew on a number of meta-narratives common to American political discourse, notably, the historic struggle of 'civilization' against 'barbarism.' This meta-narrative actually has a long genealogy in international relations,⁵¹ articulated recently in the so-called 'clash of civilizations' thesis and the new imperialism debate. In both popular culture and counter-terrorism discourse, terrorists function as 'the new barbarians', the epitome of savagery in the Western psyche.⁵² Linguistically, this trope is achieved through the natural functioning of the binary structure of language itself: employing the concept 'civilization' instinctively brings to mind the opposite concept, 'barbarism'. In its textual usage in political and social conversation, the civilization-barbarism dichotomy has a number of different layers of meaning. On one level it evokes images of menacing nomadic armies attempting to conquer Christian Europe. In the context of terrorism, it implies that 'the behavior of these new "barbarians" is uncontrollably guided by the same cruel instincts that motivated some of the most infamous "barbarians" of past centuries, including Attila the Hun and the Mongol leader Genghis Khan.'⁵³ On another level, the civilization narrative is, for Americans at least, embedded in its foundational myths: 'The myth represents American history as an Indian war, in which white Christian civilization is opposed by a "savage" racial enemy: an enemy whose hostility to civilization is part of its nature or fundamental character, an enemy who is not just opposed to our interests but to "civilization itself."⁵⁴ In Freudian terms, we might say that the barbarians are representative of the id force: libidinous, irrational, violent, and dangerous. And on another related level, the civilized Western world is contrasted with the violent and barbaric Eastern world. According to Edward Said, it is a function of the way that our identity has been constructed; the Western person exists largely as a contrast with the 'Oriental' Other.⁵⁵

The Reagan administration made frequent reference to the civilization meta-narrative. For example, Reagan stated that terrorism constituted 'a declaration of war on *civilized* society' and that America joined 'with *civilized* countries in condemnation of terrorist outrages.'⁵⁶ In another speech, Reagan stated that 'Arab nations themselves have

been forced to endure *savage* terrorist attacks from this minority. We hope and pray the Arab world will join us to eliminate *this scourge of civilization*.⁵⁷ Of course, the savage nature of the terrorists is visible in ‘their *cruelty*’, the ‘*viciousness* of their tactics’,⁵⁸ and their ‘*bestial* nature.’⁵⁹ George Shultz was even more explicit: terrorists commit ‘acts of *brutality*’ upon ‘*civilized* society’, they ‘are *depraved* opponents of *civilization* itself’, and ‘terrorism represents *a return to barbarism* in the modern age.’⁶⁰ Such a formulation not only removes terrorists from the human community (they are quintessential ‘the enemies of all mankind’⁶¹), but it also functions to de-politicize their motivations while simultaneously re-writing their actions as the expression of primitive savagery. Implicit within this formulation is the notion that rational political dialogue is impossible with terrorists; savages require control and suppression, not accommodation.

The second ‘war on terrorism’ followed an almost identical rhetorical path to Reagan’s initial construction of the counter-terrorist identity. For example, the WTC attacks were immediately written as being symbolic of the eternal struggle between the forces of ‘barbarism’ and ‘civilization’. The attacks of ‘9-11’, as administration officials constructed them, drew ‘a bright line of demarcation between the civil and the *savage*’,⁶² between civilized people and the terrorists that ‘live on the *hunted margins of mankind*’,⁶³ and between terrorism’s values and the ‘values that separate us from *animals*—compassion, tolerance, mercy’.⁶⁴ This language was deliberately employed to mark a clear boundary between the self and the ‘other’; at the same time, it functioned to essentialize the ‘other’ as belonging to the realm of nature rather than civilization. Of course, the Abu Ghraib abuse photos from April 2004 destabilized this discursive binary; with their subliminal references to slavery era photos of Africans bound by the neck, it was the American soldiers who looked like barbarous savages.

Another key narrative in counter-terrorism discourse is the Manichean struggle between good and evil, a sub-plot of the civilization-barbarism narrative; counter-terrorism campaigns invariably construct terrorists as being motivated by ‘evil’ rather than any genuine political grievance or ideology. In the first ‘war on terrorism’, Reagan frequently referred to ‘the *evil* scourge of terrorism’,⁶⁵ and stated that ‘terrorism is the preferred weapon of weak and *evil* men’ such as the ‘*evil* man... Colonel Qadhafi.’⁶⁶ He argued that the world needed to ‘stamp out this ugly, *vicious evil* of terrorism.’⁶⁷ Importantly, Reagan’s designation of the ‘evil’ of terrorism was both a deliberate rhetorical link to his notorious description of the Soviet Union as ‘an *evil* empire’ that was ‘the focus of *evil* in the modern world’, and a reflection of his fundamentalist Christian world-view. In the same evil empire speech, Reagan stated: ‘There is *sin and evil* in the world, and we’re enjoined by Scripture and the Lord Jesus Christ to oppose it with all our might.’⁶⁸ In other words, in the discursively constructed world of ultimate good versus evil and *The Terror Network* controlled by the Soviet puppet-masters, ‘evil terrorists’ and the ‘evil empire’ were one and the same.

Bush Jr’s ubiquitous use of the rhetorical trope of ‘good and evil’ directly echoed Reagan’s initial formulation. Deeply embedded in American rhetorical traditions and religious life, this language functioned to essentialize the terrorists as satanic and morally corrupt. On the day of the WTC attacks, Bush stated that ‘Today, our nation saw *evil*, the very worst of human nature’;⁶⁹ in subsequent texts, he frequently referred to terrorists as ‘the evil ones’, and ‘evildoers’. These are theological terms, deployed largely for a Southern conservative audience, but also appealing to popular entertainment

understandings of ‘good guys’ and ‘bad guys’. In this agent/act ratio, the character of the terrorists precedes their actions: the terrorists did what they did because it is in their nature to do so—they murdered because that is what evil, demonic terrorists do.⁷⁰ It is a powerful discourse, and an act of demagoguery, which functions to de-contextualize and de-historicize the actions of terrorists, emptying them of any political content, while simultaneously de-humanizing them. After all, there can be no deeper explanation for such acts, and there can be no reasoning or compromising with evil; the only right response is exorcism and purification.

Another rhetorical theme common to both ‘wars on terrorism’ is the purported linkage between international terrorism and international communism. This is made explicit throughout Reagan’s foreign policy speeches. For example, in describing his administration’s policy towards Latin America, Reagan stated that the two issues, ‘the march of freedom, especially in Central America, and the fight against terrorism—are directly related.’ This is because of ‘the strong ties of the Sandinistas to the international terror network’, and ‘the fact that the *Sandinistas* have been training, supporting, and directing, as well as *sheltering terrorists*.’⁷¹ In another speech, he spelled out the implications of this link: ‘If the *Sandinistas* are allowed to consolidate their hold on Nicaragua, we’ll have a permanent staging ground for *terrorism*. A home away from home for Qadhafi, Arafat, and the Ayatollah—just 3 hours by air from the U.S. border.’⁷² Similarly, in justifying the invasion of Grenada, Reagan referred to the close links between terrorism and communism. During the invasion, American troops found a warehouse:

This warehouse contained weapons and ammunition stacked almost to the ceiling, enough to *supply thousands of terrorists*. Grenada, we were told, was a friendly island paradise for tourism. Well, it wasn’t. It was a Soviet-Cuban colony, being readied as a major military *bastion to export terror* and undermine democracy. We got there just in time. [...] The events in *Lebanon and Grenada*, though Oceans apart, are closely related. Not only has Moscow assisted and encouraged the violence in both countries, but it provides direct support through a network of surrogates and *terrorists*.⁷³

In other words, the ‘war against terrorism’ is an integral part of the war against communism—as well as a war against barbarism and evil.

Interestingly, the cold war meta-narrative was also employed by the Bush Jr administration to frame the present struggle against terrorism. As Paul Wolfowitz stated in prepared testimony to the Senate Armed Services Committee:

The American people breathed a sigh of relief when *the Cold War* ended a decade ago. [...] And there was a temptation to believe that this favorable circumstance was a permanent condition. On September 11th, America learned that it was not. [...] This threat is as great as any we faced during *the Cold War*.⁷⁴

In this speech, Wolfowitz first links the terrorist attacks to the cold war in an opaque and indirect way. He draws a chronological line from the end of the cold war to the WTC attacks, thereby placing them in a single narrative. In addition, simply by mentioning the two events in such close proximity an association between them is formed. Next, Wolfowitz directly and explicitly compares the two conflicts, stating that they are

different on one level, but the same on another—they are ‘just as dangerous’ as each other. Extraordinarily, he goes on to explicitly state that the attacks and the cold war pose a comparable level of threat: the threat posed by terrorism is equal to the threat of global nuclear annihilation at the height of the cold war. Moreover, just as the barbarism narrative suggests that terrorists are cruel, treacherous, and vicious, so the cold war framework paints them as totalitarians and soulless ideologues seeking to impose their ‘way of life’ on subject populations. As Bush spelled it out: ‘In this way *our struggle is similar to the Cold War*. Now, as then, our enemies are totalitarians, holding a creed of power with no place for human dignity.’⁷⁵ Here, in a direct echo of Reagan, Bush is saying that terrorists and communists are essentially the same kind of enemy and the ‘war on terrorism’ is just like the cold war. In one sense, Bush is re-deploying the old cold war argument in which the enemy is seeking to overthrow the American ‘way of life’. In a discursive sense, ‘*terrorism* now occupies the place and function that *fascism* held in World War II and that *communism* held within the discourse of the cold war.’⁷⁶

Another crucial element in the construction of the terrorist identity lay in the depiction of terrorists as basically inhuman and non-human. In this regard, terrorism was frequently constructed employing medical metaphors. For example, Reagan frequently referred to the ‘the *scourge* of terrorism’,⁷⁷ arguing that decent people must ‘unite to eradicate the *scourge of terror* from the modern world.’⁷⁸ In a hybrid formulation that combined the civilization narrative with a medical metaphor, Reagan described terrorism as both cancerous and infectious: ‘If we permit terrorism to succeed anywhere, it will *spread like a cancer*, eating away at civilized societies and fear and chaos everywhere.’⁷⁹ Shultz echoed this formulation when he stated that ‘Terrorism is a *contagious disease* that will inevitably spread if it goes untreated.’⁸⁰ The key functions of this vitriolic language of identity are to de-politicize, demonize, and de-humanize the terrorist enemy, and thereby normalize a policy of violent eradication. After all, the only way to effectively and sensibly deal with infectious disease or ‘evil’ is through physical and ritual purification; it is nonsensical to speak of dialogue with a ‘cancer’.

The terrorist identity is similarly inscribed in the second ‘war on terrorism’. Bush frequently spoke of the ‘*curse* of terrorism that is upon the face of the earth’,⁸¹ while Colin Powell, in a direct echo of Reagan, referred to ‘the *scourge* of terrorism’.⁸² This medical metaphor was restated even more explicitly by Rumsfeld: ‘We share the belief that terrorism is a *cancer* on the human condition’.⁸³ Bush in turn, spoke of the danger to the body politic posed by ‘terrorist *parasites* who threaten their countries and our own’.⁸⁴ In this construction, the terrorist was re-made as a dangerous organism that makes its host ill; they hide interiorly, drawing on the lifeblood of their unsuspecting hosts and spreading poison. This particular language is actually a precursor to the disciplinary idea of ‘the enemy within’; terrorists are the new ‘reds under the bed’. Of course, such ‘an evil and *inhuman* group of men’⁸⁵—these ‘*faceless* enemies of human dignity’⁸⁶—are undeserving of our sympathy or protection. Moreover, with hoods on terrorist suspects are actually ‘faceless’. While it would be wrong to treat an enemy soldier inhumanely, or torture a criminal suspect, the same cannot be said for a parasite, a cancer, a curse.

At the same time that terrorists were constructed as an evil and inhuman ‘other’, the language of counter-terrorism constructed Americans as possessing equally opposite (good) qualities. For example, Reagan frequently referred to ‘the *will* of the American people, their *love* for freedom, and national *valor*’ and claimed to ‘speak for a *united*

people.’ Frequently, he ended his speeches with the words: ‘We are Americans, We love our country, we love what she stands for, we will always defend her. We live for freedom.’⁸⁷ In a similar vein, Reagan described the moral qualities of the American people: their ‘well-known *likeability, patience, and generosity*’; ‘we are an *easygoing* people, slow to wrath’; and Americans show ‘no limits to their national *valor* nor their consuming *passion* to protect this nation’s cherished tradition of freedom.’⁸⁸ He went on to suggest that ‘by nature we prefer to solve problems *peacefully*.’⁸⁹ Furthermore, in regards to the necessity for a firm response to terrorism, ‘the American people are of *one mind* on this issue.’⁹⁰

Bush Jr’s second ‘war on terrorism’ closely followed Reagan’s scripting of American identity. The first major discursive inscription of the American character comes early on at the Prayer and Remembrance Day service on September 14, 2001. At this symbolically charged and constitutive pageant, Bush says:

In this trial, we have been reminded, and the world has seen, that our fellow Americans are *generous* and *kind, resourceful* and *brave*. We see *our national character* in rescuers working past exhaustion; in long lines of blood donors; in thousands of citizens who have asked to work and serve in any way possible. And we have seen *our national character* in eloquent acts of *sacrifice*. [...] In these acts, and in many others, Americans showed a deep *commitment* to one another, and an abiding *love* for our country. Today, we feel what Franklin Roosevelt called the warm courage of national *unity*. This is a *unity* of every faith, and every background.⁹¹

Bush is here constructing a new world of clearly demarcated characters: where terrorists are cruel, ‘the American people’ are generous and kind; where terrorists are hateful, Americans are loving; where terrorists are cowardly, Americans are brave and heroic; and where terrorists hide and run, Americans are united. This highlighting and amplification is necessary to inscribe the essential qualities of insiders and outsiders, and plays through a movie-based mode of the simple opposites of ‘good guys and bad guys’.

Related to this, both the Reagan and Bush Jr administrations frequently tapped into the ‘innocent Americans’ narrative in their counter-terrorism rhetoric. The construction of American casualties of terrorism or war as ‘innocent’ is a long-running feature of American political discourse and during the Reagan administration for example, the soldiers killed in the 1983 marine barracks bombing in Lebanon were recorded in official State Department records as ‘innocent civilians.’⁹² This is reflective of what Richard Hughes calls a ‘cult of innocence’ in American political discourse.⁹³ In this foundational myth America emerges as an innocent child among nations, untainted by the finite dimensions of human history. As Reagan expressed it, ‘The calendar can’t measure America because we were meant to be an endless experiment in freedom, with no limit to our reaches, no boundaries to what we can do, no end point to our hopes.’⁹⁴ Rooted in a rejection of history then—‘History is bunk’—American political discourse (and its counter-terrorism discourse in particular) has always sought to portray its motives as being free from self-interest or the *realpolitik* of foreign policy. In this sense, America genuinely believes itself to be ‘innocent’ of anything but pure motives and noble aspirations. By definition then, all victims of terrorism are ‘innocent’; and through the natural functioning of language binaries, all terrorists are ‘guilty’.

Officials in both administrations also made frequent reference to the ubiquitous hero narrative of American popular culture. Shultz for example, stated: ‘I would like to salute the unsung *heroes* of the struggle against terrorism. These *heroes* are the intelligence analysts.’⁹⁵ This construction placed the ‘war on terrorism’ in the mode of a popular movie, and reinforced the identity of ‘good’ Americans fighting ‘cowardly’ terrorists in an epic struggle of good versus evil. In the end, constructing American identity in this manner works discursively to enforce discipline, suppress dissent, and circumvent criticism; if Americans are inherently ‘good’, their counter-terrorism wars are by definition ‘good wars’. Similar to Reagan, Bush Jr’s discourse also draws heavily on a ‘hero’ narrative modelled on popular entertainment scripts, where every story has a cast of heroes and villains. The ‘war on terrorism’ is no different: in a sense, every EMS worker on September 11 is Bruce Willis in *Die Hard*; every member of the armed forces in Afghanistan and Iraq is Tom Hanks in *Saving Private Ryan*; and every ordinary citizen is Mel Gibson in *The Patriot*. Rumsfeld, in a memorial service the Pentagon victims, constructs these all-American heroes:

We remember them as *heroes*. [...] ‘He was a *hero* long before the eleventh of September,’ said a friend of one of those we have lost—‘a *hero* every single day, a *hero* to his family, to his friends and to his professional peers.’ [...] About him and those who served with him, his wife said: ‘It’s not just when a plane hits their building. They are *heroes* every day.’ ‘*Heroes* every day.’ We are here to affirm that.⁹⁶

In one sense, this could be seen simply national therapy—a way of giving meaning and respect to the lives lost. However, in its discursive function, it is also the inscription of the heroic Americans who are the opposite of the cowardly terrorists; it is the rendering of America’s soldiers who are risking their lives to fight for the Homeland, freedom, and the safety of decent folk. Elevation to the status of hero is more than just leading by example, however; heroes are above criticism or moral judgment. Heroes are free to act as they see fit, even if it sometimes involves crossing the lines of public morality, and their shortcomings are quickly forgiven because by definition their motives are honest.

In the final analysis, destroying the face of the terrorist, removing all traces of their personality or humanity, is essential to constructing the massive counter-violence of a ‘war on terrorism’. After all, it would be far more difficult to bomb, torture, or hold in prison camps ‘enemy combatants’ that were simply misguided patriots or psychologically ill. Simultaneously, the scripting of Americans as essentially ‘good’ is a means of reassurance: whatever Americans do is moral and right, because it is their nature to be good—even if on the face of it, the victims of October 7, 2001 and March 19, 2003 look strikingly similar to the victims of September 11, 2001.

Writing a Good War on Terrorism

By this stage, it seems obvious that a ‘war on terrorism’ is by definition a ‘good war’:⁹⁷ it is a war fought against the barbarous evil of terrorism, by good people, and in order to save liberty, civilization, and all mankind. In addition to this implicit scripting, the language of counter-terrorism also makes more direct appeals to good war or just war status, in part, as an appeal to the Christian Right—core supporters of both the Reagan and Bush Jr administrations. For example, Reagan legitimized the first ‘war on terrorism’

as justified and legal self-defense, stating that ‘these terrorist states are now engaged in acts of war against the Government and people of the United States. And under *international law*, any state which is the victim of acts of war has *the right to defend itself*.’⁹⁸ This is the traditional means by which states assert their right to wage war; wars of aggression are by definition wrong, but wars of self-defense are fully justified. Shultz made exactly the same claim: ‘The terrorists are waging war against us. And we have *every right under international law* to defend ourselves. Part of that defense is to take the offense.’⁹⁹ Interestingly, Shultz takes the argument a step further, suggesting that attacking other nations can be construed as part of a defensive posture. He goes on to assert a more profound moral right to militarily defend America against terrorism: ‘There is no room for guilt or self-doubt about *our right to defend a way of life* that offers all nations hope for peace, progress, and human dignity.’¹⁰⁰ There is an implicit recognition here that the wider international community may not accept such a broad legal argument for pre-emptive war, but nonetheless America has the right under Natural Law.

The discursive construction of counter-terrorism as legal and justified self-defense finds a direct echo in Bush Jr’s second ‘war on terrorism’. Under Secretary of State Marc Grossman, expressed it thus:

I believe that Security Council resolution 1368 that was passed on the 12th of September, offers all of the legal basis and requirement that we need, in addition to Article 51 of the United Nations Charter, which is *the right of self-defense*. And we believe the United States was attacked on the 11th of September and that we have *a right of self-defense* in this regard.¹⁰¹

Rumsfeld repeats this construction by appealing to the universal right of every nation to self-defense: ‘there is no question but that any nation on Earth has *the right of self-defense*. And we do.’¹⁰² In other words, the second ‘war on terrorism’, like the first, is a just war because it is legally sanctioned by the authority of international law.¹⁰³ Importantly, just as the Reagan administration did, the Bush Jr administration enshrined its right to pre-emptive or ‘anticipatory’ self-defense (the so-called Bush Doctrine) in the *National Security Strategy* of September 2002. This doctrine was then used to justify the attack on Iraq in March 2003.

A second discursive strategy for constructing counter-terrorism as the pursuit of the quintessential ‘good war’ is to define its purpose as nothing less than the pursuit of justice. As Reagan expressed it, the purpose of forceful counter-terrorism strategies was ‘to see that the perpetrators of terrorist acts are brought to *justice*.’¹⁰⁴ Speaking about the bombings and kidnappings in Lebanon, Reagan argued that the terrorists ‘who directed this atrocity must be dealt *justice*, and they will be.’¹⁰⁵ Similarly, Shultz argued that ‘We have to go on the offensive to disrupt terrorist operations, destroy their networks, and *bring them to justice*.’¹⁰⁶ This notion of counter-terrorism as a form of ‘justice’ simultaneously fits both the just war narrative of having a proper *casus belli* (where revenge would not be a legitimate cause, for example), and American narratives of more rough and ready frontier justice (where swift retribution is viewed as necessary to maintaining order). Additionally, it functions as a means of legitimizing military conduct in war: the excesses of war may be excused in the pursuit of a just cause.

The second ‘war on terrorism’ is constructed in an identical mode. In Bush Jr’s somewhat nonsensical formulation of the purposes of counter-terrorism, he stated that:

‘Whether we bring our enemies to *justice*, or bring *justice* to our enemies, *justice* will be done.’¹⁰⁷ In the same speech, Bush injected a religious element to the counter-terrorism cause: ‘Freedom and fear, *justice* and cruelty, have always been at war, and we know that *God is not neutral between them.*’¹⁰⁸ In other words, God is on the side of ‘justice’; America is bringing ‘justice’; therefore, by definition, God is on America’s side. In part, it is this assertion of universal values and divine calling that led the Bush administration to initially call the Afghan campaign ‘Operation Infinite Justice’; more than simply a slip of the tongue as it was later claimed, it was the logical choice in the construction of a quintessential just war. On another level, framed in the language and symbolism of the American frontier (note the use of Wanted Dead or Alive posters and bounties, the ‘Most Wanted Terrorists’ featured on the popular television program *America’s Most Wanted*, and Bush’s cowboy boots), the campaign in Afghanistan to ‘smoke them out of their holes’¹⁰⁹ also fits easily into America’s rich mythology of redemptive violence; it is *Shane*, John Wayne, or Clint Eastwood exacting revenge, enforcing a kind of natural justice and ridding the West of dangerous villains so that decent folk can rest safe.

Another essential element in the construction of a good and just counter-terrorist war is to fix it as inherently achievable; despite the long historical record of governmental failure in counter-terrorism, a ‘war on terrorism’ must be presented as immanently winnable. The Reagan administration was always clear about the ultimate outcome of the struggle: ‘Human liberty will prevail and civilization *will triumph* over this cowardly form of barbarism.’¹¹⁰ Similarly, Shultz affirmed that he was ‘convinced that if the American people and our allies support our policy, *we will succeed*. Terrorism will ebb. And *humanity will be saved.*’¹¹¹ The second ‘war on terrorism’ was constructed no less emphatically from the very first day: ‘we stand together to *win the war* against terrorism.’¹¹² Furthermore, in addressing the final outcome of the war, the grammatical form is always unequivocal: ‘*we will win this conflict* by the patient accumulation of successes’;¹¹³ ‘We will fight for as long as it takes, and *we will prevail*’;¹¹⁴ ‘And on the home front, terrorist violence must be prevented, and must be defeated. And *it will be.*’¹¹⁵ In fact, when asked about the length of the war—a direct reference to the chances of winning in a reasonable period of time—Bush replied: ‘People often ask me, how long will this last? This particular battlefield will last as long as it takes to bring al Qaeda to justice. It may happen a month from now; it may take a year or two. But *we will prevail.*’¹¹⁶ There is no question about the outcome, even if the timeframe is a little vague. In this case, the certainty of victory rhetorically overwhelms the uncertainty over the length of the campaign; the end result—triumph—is more important than the time it takes to get there.

A final element in the construction of America’s good ‘wars on terrorism’ lies in the constant rhetorical links to America’s historic calling, or America’s ‘exceptionalism’, which in turn is based on the universal values that America embodies. As Reagan expressed it: ‘As a world power, the United States bears *global responsibilities* from which we must not shrink in the face of cowardly attempts at intimidation.’¹¹⁷ For Reagan, America’s responsibilities are due in part to the fact that America is ‘a country that remains *a shining city on a hill.*’¹¹⁸ On one level, this is another deeply religious metaphor, evoking the images of heaven, the new Jerusalem, and the shining light of Christian faith that should not remain hidden. Shultz reiterated these constructions when he argued that ‘We must not abandon... *our role in the world, or our responsibilities* as

the champions of freedom and peace.’ He went on to boldly assert that ‘the United States has a *special responsibility*.’¹¹⁹ Again, like Reagan, Shultz based his belief in America’s special responsibility on the fact that America possesses ‘a way of life that offers *all nations* hope for peace, progress, and human dignity.’¹²⁰ In large part, this language taps into the deeply held (and deeply religious) American myths of manifest destiny, Nature’s Nation, the Chosen Nation, and ‘American exceptionalism’.¹²¹ These beliefs are embedded in American political life and are discursively reflected in the Great Seal of the United States; in this potent symbol, God’s eye looks down on the new order being built while the Latin inscription simply states: ‘annuit coeptis’—‘he (God) has favoured our undertaking’.

Reagan’s rhetorical construction of America’s counter-terrorism responsibilities are replicated in the second ‘war on terrorism’, although in this case they are even more explicitly encumbered with a sense of divine calling. Like the ‘indispensable’ role of America in defeating nazism in World War II and communism in the cold war, Bush Jr’s ‘war on terrorism’ is painted as a moral obligation for the world’s remaining superpower which cannot be shirked.¹²² Bush Jr for example, suggested that America had in fact, been given a specific responsibility by History to lead the campaign against the evil of terrorism: ‘[O]ur *responsibility to history* is already clear: to answer these attacks and rid the world of evil. [...] [T]he commitment of our fathers is now *the calling of our time*.’¹²³ The theme of a ‘responsibility to history’ was extended by Cheney’s formulation: ‘The government of the United States has a *moral duty* to confront those threats, and to do whatever it takes to defeat them. And as the leading power, we have a *further responsibility* to help keep the peace of the world.’¹²⁴ In this language, the responsibility to history has been transformed into a ‘moral duty’, which in part, flows from the natural responsibility placed on the world’s leading power.

Bush Jr’s ‘war on terrorism’ then, is not just a quest for justice or a national security issue; it is rather a moral responsibility, an obligation—a ‘calling.’ Bush Jr himself stated: ‘The advance of freedom is more than an interest we pursue. It is a *calling* we follow.’¹²⁵ Crucially, as one commentator notes, ‘The word “calling”, with its theological overtones as well as its Weberian connotations, attaches a redemptive cast to counterterrorism.’¹²⁶ In fact, it could also be argued that the ‘calling’ of the ‘good war on terrorism’ is a direct outcome of the earlier discursive foundation laid by the circular ontology of the ‘evil’ discourse: ‘[B]ecause ‘terrorists’ are evil, America is good and virtuous; the “Axis of Evil” implicitly positions the US and its allies as the “Axis of Good”. But this is not simply a binary opposition: the ontological element, the nature of American being, makes America *only* good and virtuous. It is a small step then to assume that you are chosen both by God and history.’¹²⁷ The official discourse therefore leaves no doubt that America is duty bound to once again save the world from evil.

In addition to a sense of historic calling, the second ‘war on terrorism’ also invested the counter-terrorism campaign with a sense of divine calling and divine sanction. The repeated (and often retracted) references to the counter-terrorist war as a ‘crusade’, which was for a short time called ‘Infinite Justice’, discursively renders it a religious war—even a holy war.¹²⁸ The writing of a good (and holy) ‘war on terrorism’ actually began just a few days after the terrorist attacks, on September 14, 2001. This date was declared a National Day of Prayer and Remembrance by the President and a service of remembrance for the victims was held at the National Cathedral in Washington—a

national symbolic site where government, religion, culture and the military coalesce.¹²⁹ Here, in a powerful rhetorical turning point, the potent symbolism of the location and the ritualism of the service combined with the words of respected religious leaders and the President to construct a thoroughly religious conception of the coming counter-terrorist war. After the military's presentation of the colours, all of the religious dignitaries—Dean Baxter, Reverend Caldwell, Imam Dr Siddiqi, and the Reverend Dr Billy Graham—echoed Bush's language of 'evil' in their prayers for the nation.

When it was time for the President to speak, Bush Jr began by remembering the victims: 'So many have suffered so great a loss [...] We will read all these names. We will linger over them, and learn their stories, and many Americans will weep.' Following this discursive act of commemoration and the personalising of suffering, Bush Jr donned a more pastoral role, assuring the nation that the universe has a moral design, that their prayers were heard and understood, and that God was with them:

God's signs are not always the ones we look for. We learn in tragedy that his purposes are not always our own. Yet the prayers of private suffering, whether in our homes or in this great cathedral, are known and heard, and understood. [...] This world He created is of moral design. Grief and tragedy and hatred are only for a time.

The most crucial point in the speech came when Bush Jr said, 'War has been waged against us by stealth and deceit and murder' and as a consequence, America's 'responsibility to history is already clear: to answer these attacks and *rid the world of evil*'. In the context of the site of the speech (the National Cathedral), the occasion (A National Day of Prayer), and the military ritualism (the presentation of the colours), this was a powerful call to arms. It was a call to divinely sanctioned war—a crusade against evil. Bush Jr ended his address by invoking God's blessing on the nation and asking God to watch over and guide America in its task. He fortified the appeal by quoting directly from scripture:

On this national day of prayer and remembrance, we ask almighty God to watch over our nation, and grant us patience and resolve in all that is to come. [...] As we have been assured, neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, can separate us from God's love. May He bless the souls of the departed. May He comfort our own. And may He always guide our country. God bless America.¹³⁰

The discursive act of divine sanction for a kind of holy war against evil was then subtly reinforced by the singing of the final hymn, 'Battle Hymn of the Republic'. The opening stanza potently underlined Bush Jr's central message:

Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord,
He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored,
He hath loosed the fateful lightening of His terrible swift sword,
His truth is marching on.

In a sense, Bush Jr was claiming the mantle of God's sword; America would march out to bring God's swift justice to the evildoers. Through the combination of language, religious symbolism and ritual, he appealed directly to the beliefs of millions of American

evangelical Christians and imbued the second ‘war on terrorism’ with God’s blessing and a divine sanction. Ironically, in doing so, Bush Jr reflectively mimicked the language of Osama bin Laden’s initial call for holy war against the United States.¹³¹

The Nature of the Counter-Terrorist Discourse

There are a number of significant and interesting aspects to Reagan and Bush Jr’s language of counter-terrorism. Obviously, they were both extremely powerful discourses that normalized a particular approach to counter-terrorism which for the most part, remained uncritically accepted and unquestioned except in its tactical application. Even the opposition Democrats never fundamentally questioned the necessity of waging a ‘war on terrorism’, even if they sometimes debated its specific strategies.¹³² The ideological hegemony of the discourse was (and still is) aided by its relatively unmediated reproduction in the American media. In addition, as I have clearly demonstrated, the genealogy of the current ‘war on terrorism’ demonstrates clear lines of discursive continuity with the first ‘war on terrorism’ constructed by the Reagan administration. Far from unique then, the discourse of the current ‘war on terrorism’ follows long established interpretive dispositions by American administrations towards the international sphere: a zero-sum attitude towards international action, a tendency to militarize foreign policy responses, a fear of internal subversion, and a sense of endangerment towards ‘the other.’¹³³ Part of the reason why the current discourse has been so uncritically accepted (particularly domestically) is because it is built on the logic of previous American responses to similar crises.

Related to this, both discourses are noteworthy for their hybridity and the ease with which they weave disparate narratives into a single seamless story of the good fight against terrorism/barbarism/evil. The language powerfully combines civilization versus barbarism, good versus evil, cold war, and good war narratives into a new super-narrative—a textual symphony—that legitimizes and normalizes the practice of American domestic and foreign policy. These powerful discursive combinations provide the authorities with multiple possibilities for disciplining subjects, allies, and enemies. At the same time, the two discourses are noted for their opacity; most of the key terms and phrases are never properly defined or explained, which results in their meanings having to be assumed or inferred through the context in which they occur. As Suman Gupta notes, the current ‘war on terrorism’ is a discourse of ‘indistinct, hazy, de-contextualised—and let’s face it, deeply worrying—abstractions.’¹³⁴ Keeping the key terms of the public rhetoric deliberately opaque allows the speakers to use them in politically defined ways and for specific purposes, such as denigrating or de-legitimising particular opponents.

Another obvious characteristic of both discourses is their extremely gendered language and their reflection of traditional patriarchal male-female roles. The current ‘war on terrorism’ for example, is actually an overwhelmingly masculine narrative full of stereotypical masculine heroes (firefighters and police officers, soldiers/warriors), equally stereotypical female victims (the oppressed women of Afghanistan, Private Jessica Lynch, the ‘Homeland’) and an accompanying set of traditional masculine behaviours and images (missions to smoke bin Laden out of his cave, Wanted Dead or Alive posters, macho warriors battling a savage enemy). It is not simply that the discourse reflects

primarily masculine values, but also that women have been rendered largely invisible in both the media (except as victims), and more importantly, in the decision-making arena since September 11, 2001. Some scholars have argued that American foreign policy and political culture is deeply and inherently masculinized and the militarised approach to the ‘war on terrorism’ is simply a reflection of this dominant trait. That is, the reflexive need to appear ‘tough’ in the face of any crisis or challenge makes a war-like response appear natural and normal, and privileges the use of military force as a foreign policy tool—while simultaneously silencing women’s voices and restricting their access to political influence.¹³⁵

The gendered language of the counter-terrorism discourse however, is more than simply an unconscious reflection of dominant cultural attitudes; rather, as with other aspects of the discourse, it has an important political function—it ‘serves to legitimate certain activities and ways of thinking over others.’¹³⁶ In this sense, these discourses are notable for their ideological character, if we understand ideology to be ‘meaning in the service of power’,¹³⁷ or as constructions of meaning that contribute to the production, reproduction, and transformation of relations of domination in society.¹³⁸ Far from being a neutral reflection of international realities, or the objective and dispassionate discussion of competing policy alternatives, counter-terrorism campaigns are both embedded within, and attempts to advance, ideological goals.

The discourses are also notable for their silences and gaps—for what they omit. What is missing from a discourse can often be more revealing than that which is included. In these discourses there are a number of glaring omissions—apart from the missing stories about the dead and injured ‘innocent’ civilians in places like Libya, Afghanistan, and Iraq. First, there is little mention of history or context—except to invoke the analogies of previous ‘good wars’. Some of the relevant histories which are missing from these ‘wars against terrorism’ include: American support for terrorist activities against Cuba, Nicaragua, Afghanistan, Angola, and left-wing rebels in Latin America during the 1980s; the record of American involvement in the politics of the Middle East—its support for Israel, its military bases in the Arabian Peninsula, its alliances with despotic regimes, its murky dealings with the Taliban and the Mujahaddin before them, and its oil politics; the history and context of al Qaeda’s decade long struggle against American policy in the region; the global context of state failure and breakdown, arms trading (America being the world’s largest dealer of weapons), and increasing levels of state and sub-state violence and disorder; and the histories and lessons of other nations’ struggles against terrorism, such as Israel, Northern Ireland, Italy, Germany, Spain, Sri Lanka, and Chechnya—to name a few.

There is also a missing political dimension. Counter-terrorist war is defined as a struggle between ‘good’ and ‘evil’ rather than as a contest over policies, ideologies, or global military, political and economic structures; never heard are the political aims of the terrorists. There is also an absence of discussion regarding the broad range of counter-terrorist policies available to governments, particularly non-military based methods. Instead of acknowledging that there are a great many models and paradigms for dealing with terrorism—legal and policing-based approaches, diplomatic and political approaches, conciliatory approaches, long-term structural approaches—it is axiomatically assumed that military and repressive approaches are the only rational and realistic

options. These silences are not merely accidental omissions; they are deliberate exclusions, designed to ensure that no challenge is made to the dominant paradigm.

Conclusion

The approach to counter-terrorism constructed during the Reagan administration has by now been thoroughly legitimized, institutionalized, and normalized. Alarming, the core of the discourse relies on an approach to counter-terrorism that has historically proved to be of limited effectiveness, and through the privileging of some forms of knowledge over others, excludes other potentially more effective counter-terrorist strategies. In particular, it is obvious that the moral absolutism at the heart of the discourse induces a form of political amnesia about the importance of political dialogue, winning hearts and minds, and political reform as more effective counter-terrorism strategies, for example.¹³⁹ More fundamentally, the discourse misconceives and misunderstands the nature of the terrorist threat; it constitutes poor ‘threat assessment’, to use military parlance. In other words, by failing to understand the history and context of terrorism, the actual nature and causes of terrorism, and the real motivations and aims of terrorists (who most certainly do not sacrifice their lives in suicidal attacks simply for the sake of ‘evil’), counter-terrorism discourse undermines the search for more effective and long-term policy solutions. Disturbingly, the dominance of the current discourse may mark out the meaning and role of American counter-terrorist policies for decades to come, regardless of their actual impact on security.

Another very real danger is that American counter-terrorism, as it is currently constructed and practiced, is actually making terrorism worse through the entrenchment of cycles of violence and counter-violence; that just as has already occurred in Israel, Chechnya, Kashmir, Colombia, Algeria, Spain, and other places, it is making the world less secure, more violent, and more unjust, and creating self-fulfilling prophecies—where ‘terrorism foretold must become prophesy fulfilled at some point.’¹⁴⁰ There is a real risk of constructing a situation of perpetual war where terrorism and counter-terrorism become indistinguishable; where the discursive practices of a ‘war on terrorism’ echo and mimic the absolutist mentality and exceptionalist tactics of terrorists themselves.¹⁴¹ Moreover, there is a genuine danger that the ‘war on terrorism’ may damage society through weakening democratic values and undermining the legitimacy of democratic institutions, particularly the judicial system, the police, and the security services. Historically, the construction and reproduction of the ‘security state’ has tended to lead to a narrowing of civic culture and political life—the constriction of politics through demonising an ever-widening variety of dissent.¹⁴² In short, the construction of counter-terrorism in this mode threatens to transform the ‘war *on* terrorism’ into a ‘war *of* terrorisms’.

The discourse and practice of counter-terrorism in its current form leads to the delegitimizing of dissent and the narrowing of the discursive space for political debate. In recent times we have witnessed conservative attacks on anti-globalization protesters, academics, postmodernists, liberals, pro-choice activists, environmentalists, and gay liberationists as being aligned with terrorism and its inherent evil.¹⁴³ The moral taxonomy of the good versus evil construction in particular, is extremely corrosive of democratic politics because it undermines the possibility of a loyal opposition.¹⁴⁴ Moreover, the

invocation of evil is a powerful tool for ending arguments and displacing more complex understandings of political and social events; the suffocating logic of the discourse makes it exceedingly difficult to think clearly about the terrorist attacks and the counter-terrorist campaign that has followed.¹⁴⁵

Finally, there are real dangers for the stability of the international system itself. There is the danger of de-stabilizing already unstable regions through the application of pre-emptive war doctrines (the operative conclusion of the discourse) by states that are fighting insurgencies and terrorist campaigns of their own. Many of these states—Russia, China, Algeria, India, Israel, Macedonia, Malaysia, Indonesia, Zimbabwe—have already re-framed their struggles against internal dissidents as local ‘wars on terrorism’ as a way of both muting international criticism and garnering external support. Additionally, there is little doubt that the Iraq war phase of the ‘war on terrorism’—like the attack on Libya years before it—undermined institutions of global governance, particularly the United Nations, and weakened international rules and norms.

If these and other dangers are to be avoided, scholars and citizens must first reclaim the right to question and debate the profound policy issues that lie at the heart of any ‘war on terrorism’, and must challenge the normative foundations of counter-terrorist violence. In large part, such an engagement with hegemonic power will only be possible when the deconstruction of the discursive straightjacket we are currently trapped within begins in earnest.

Notes

¹ This paper extends the research published in my most recent book: Richard Jackson, *Writing the War on Terrorism: Language, Politics and Counter-terrorism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005).

² Ontologically, a number of studies have demonstrated the manner in which political reality is a social construct, manufactured through discursive practices and shared systems of meaning. Language does not simply reflect reality, it co-constitutes it. Ideational and discursive analysis therefore, is critical to understanding foreign policy. See Alexander Wendt, ‘Anarchy is What States Make of it’, *International Organization* 46 (1992), pp. 391-425; David Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity*, Revised edition, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998).

³ The literature on the practice of the current ‘war on terrorism’ is already vast and growing almost daily. The following list is just an illustrative selection: Rahul Mahajan, *Full Spectrum Dominance: U.S. power in Iraq and Beyond* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2003); Alex Callinicos, *The New Mandarins of American Power* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003); Carl Boggs, ed., *Masters of War: Militarism and Blowback in the Era of American Empire* (New York and London: Routledge, 2003); David Cole, *Enemy Aliens: Double Standards and Constitutional Freedoms in the War on Terrorism* (New York and London: The New Press, 2003); Dilip Hiro, *War Without End: The Rise of Islamic Terrorism and Global Response* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002); Aftab A. Malik, ed., *Shattered Illusions: Analyzing the War on Terrorism* (Bristol: Amal Press, 2002); Kenneth Booth and Timothy Dunne, eds., *Worlds in Collision: Terror and the Future of Global Order* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002). Studies on the geo-political aspects of Ronald Reagan’s ‘war on terrorism’ include: David Wills, *The First War on Terrorism: Counter-terrorism Policy during the Reagan Administration* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), and David Martin and John Walcott, *Best Laid Plans: The Inside Story of America’s War Against Terrorism* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988).

⁴ The following studies examine the official discourse of the current ‘war on terrorism’: Jackson, *Writing the War on Terrorism*; John Collins and Ross Glover, eds., *Collateral Language: A User’s Guide to America’s New War* (New York: New York University Press, 2002); Sandra Silberstein, *War of Words: Language, Politics and 9/11* (London: Routledge, 2002); and John Murphy, “‘Our mission and our

moment”: George W. Bush and September 11’, *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 6, vol. 4 (2003), pp. 607-32. The following studies examine the discursive and ideational construction of American counter-terrorism more broadly and largely prior to September 11, 2001: Philip Jenkins, *Images of Terror: What We Can and Can’t Know about Terrorism* (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 2003); Richard Leeman, *The Rhetoric of Terrorism and Counterterrorism* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991); and Joseba Zulaika and William Douglass, *Terror and Taboo: The Follies, Fables, and Faces of Terrorism* (New York and London: Routledge, 1996).

⁵ Marianne Jorgensen and Louise Phillips, *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method* (London: Sage, 2002), pp. 60-71.

⁶ Norman Fairclough, *Media Discourse* (London: Edward Arnold, 1995), p. 14.

⁷ Norman Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), p. 87.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ The reason for focusing on these particular texts and not the documents of law enforcement officials, official reports, memos, letters, operating manuals, legal opinions, or the content of websites, for example, is that these speeches represent the source of the discourse as it were. Both ‘wars on terrorism’ were elite led projects and the elites provided the primary justifications and overall vision for the project. Forthcoming papers from this project will demonstrate how the language of senior officials first expressed in public later becomes visible in official documents, memos, and operating procedures, rather than the other way round. See Richard Jackson, ‘The Discursive Construction of Torture in the War on Terrorism: Narratives of Threat and Danger’, *The Barbarisation of Warfare Conference*, June 27-28, 2005, The University of Wolverhampton, United Kingdom, available online at:

http://www.naspir.org.uk/members/richard_jackson/richard_jackson.htm.

¹⁰ Given the vast corpus of texts involved, and the size and complexity of an entire political discourse, the following analysis is necessarily only summative and illustrative; each instance of a specific use of language represents one of often many hundreds of similar examples in the official texts. A much more in-depth treatment of the discourse of the Bush Jr ‘war on terrorism’ can be found in Jackson, *Writing the War on Terrorism*. Unfortunately, no similar in-depth treatment of the language of Reagan’s ‘war on terrorism’ yet exists.

¹¹ Emphasis has been added by the author to direct quotes to illustrate the basis of claims about the specific discursive constructions under examination. Ronald W. Reagan, ‘Statement on the Kidnapping of United States Citizens in Lebanon’, January 26, 1987, *The Public Papers of President Ronald W. Reagan*, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, available online at:

<http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1987/012687b.htm>.

¹² Ronald W. Reagan, ‘Remarks at the Heritage Foundation Anniversary Dinner’, April 22, 1986, *The Public Papers of President Ronald W. Reagan*, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, available online at: <http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1986/42286f.htm>.

¹³ Ronald W. Reagan, ‘Remarks at Annual Convention of the American Bar Association’, July 8, 1985, *The Public Papers of President Ronald W. Reagan*, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, available online at: <http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1985/70885a.htm>.

¹⁴ George P. Shultz, ‘Terrorism and the Modern World’, October 25, 1984, Current Policy, United States Department of State Bulletin, available online at:

http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1079/is_v84/ai_3536874/print.

¹⁵ See Zulaika and Douglass, *Terror and Taboo*.

¹⁶ George W. Bush Jr, ‘Statement by President George W. Bush, Address to the Nation’, September 11, 2001, available online at: <http://usinfo.state.gov/topical/pol/terror/>.

¹⁷ George W. Bush Jr, ‘President’s Remarks at National Day of Prayer and Remembrance, the National Cathedral’, September 14, 2001, available online at: <http://usinfo.state.gov/topical/pol/terror/>.

¹⁸ George W. Bush Jr, Colin Powell, and John Ashcroft, ‘Remarks at Camp David’, September 15, 2001, available online at: <http://usinfo.state.gov/topical/pol/terror/>.

¹⁹ Donald H. Rumsfeld, with Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Henry H. Shelton, Assistant Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs) Victoria Clarke, and Assistant Secretary of Defense (Force Management Policy) Charles S. Abell, ‘News Briefing’, September 27, 2001, available online at: <http://usinfo.state.gov/topical/pol/terror/>.

²⁰ Wills, *The First War on Terrorism*, p. 3.

- ²¹ Ronald W. Reagan, 'Message to the Congress Transmitting Proposed Legislation to Combat International Terrorism', April 26, 1984, *The Public Papers of President Ronald W. Reagan*, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, available online at: <http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1984/42684a.htm>.
- ²² Reagan, 'Message to the Congress Transmitting Proposed Legislation To Combat International Terrorism', April 26, 1984.
- ²³ Ronald W. Reagan, 'Radio Address to the Nation on International Stability', October 26, 1985, *The Public Papers of President Ronald W. Reagan*, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, available online at: <http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1985/102685a.htm>.
- ²⁴ Ronald W. Reagan, 'Proclamations: Proclamation 5266—A time of Remembrance for All Victims of Terrorism Throughout the World', October 19, 1984, *The Public Papers of President Ronald W. Reagan*, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, available online at: <http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1984/101984c.htm>.
- ²⁵ Ronald W. Reagan, 'The President's News Conference', May 7, 1986, *The Public Papers of President Ronald W. Reagan*, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, available online at: <http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1986/50786a.htm>.
- ²⁶ Shultz, 'Terrorism and the Modern World.'
- ²⁷ See Zulaika and Douglass, *Terror and Taboo*.
- ²⁸ Colin Powell, 'Remarks to the National Foreign Policy Conference', 26 October, 2001, available online at: <http://usinfo.state.gov/topical/pol/terror/>.
- ²⁹ Bush Jr, 'Address to a Joint Session', September 20, 2001.
- ³⁰ George W. Bush Jr, 'State of the Union Address', January 29, 2002, available online at: <http://usinfo.state.gov/topical/pol/terror/>.
- ³¹ Cheney, 'Remarks to the American Society of News Editors', April 9, 2003.
- ³² Paul Wolfowitz, Deputy Secretary of Defense, Prepared Testimony: 'Building a military for the 21st century', To the Senate Armed Services Committee, October 4, 2001, available online at: <http://usinfo.state.gov/topical/pol/terror/>.
- ³³ John Ashcroft, 'Testimony to House Committee on the Judiciary', September 24, 2001, available online at: <http://usinfo.state.gov/topical/pol/terror/>.
- ³⁴ Bush Jr, 'Address to a Joint Session', 20 September, 2001.
- ³⁵ Bush Jr, 'State of the Union Address', 29 January, 2002.
- ³⁶ Ronald W. Reagan, 'Message to the Congress on "A Quest for Excellence"', January 27, 1987, *The Public Papers of President Ronald W. Reagan*, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, available online at: <http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1987/012787b.htm>.
- ³⁷ Reagan, 'Remarks at Annual Convention of the American Bar Association', July 8, 1985.
- ³⁸ Ronald W. Reagan, 'Remarks to the International Forum of the Chamber of Commerce of the United States', April 23, 1986, *The Public Papers of President Ronald W. Reagan*, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, available online at: <http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1986/42386a.htm>.
- ³⁹ Reagan, 'Remarks at Annual Convention of the American Bar Association', July 8, 1985.
- ⁴⁰ Claire Sterling, *The Terror Network: The Secret War of International Terrorism* (New York: Holt, Ronehart, and Winston, 1981).
- ⁴¹ Zulaika and Douglass, *Terror and Taboo*, p. 14. See also, Edward Herman, *The Real Terror Network: Terrorism in Fact and Propaganda* (Boston: South End Press, 1982), pp. 49-62.
- ⁴² Bush Jr, 'State of the Union Address', 29 January, 2002.
- ⁴³ Quoted in John Kampfner, *Blair's Wars* (London: The Free Press, 2003), p. 156.
- ⁴⁴ See Mahajan, *Full Spectrum Dominance*; Callinicos, *The New Mandarins of American Power*; Carl Boggs, 'Introduction: Empire and Globalization', in Boggs, ed., *Masters of War*.
- ⁴⁵ See Zulaika and Douglass, *Terror and Taboo*, p. 6, and Jackson, *Writing the War on Terrorism*, pp. 162-63.
- ⁴⁶ Campbell, *Writing Security*.
- ⁴⁷ See Robert Hariman, 'Speaking of Evil', *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 6, vol. 3 (2003), pp. 511-517; Murray Edelman, *The Symbolic Uses of Politics* (Urbana: University of Illinois press, 1964); Barry Glassner, *The Culture of Fear: Why Americans are Afraid of the Wrong Things* (New York: Basic Books, 1999).
- ⁴⁸ See Campbell, *Writing Security*.

- ⁴⁹ See Murphy, ““Our Mission and Our Moment”” p. 609.
- ⁵⁰ See Samuel Weber, ‘War, Terrorism, and Spectacle: On Towers and Caves’, *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 101, vol. 3 (2002), p. 452.
- ⁵¹ See Mark Salter, *Barbarians and Civilization in International Relations* (London: Pluto Press, 2002).
- ⁵² Zulaika and Douglass, *Terror and Taboo*, p. 156.
- ⁵³ Marina Llorente, ‘Civilization Versus Barbarism’, in John Collins and Ross Glover, eds., *Collateral Language: A User’s Guide to America’s New War* (New York: New York University Press, 2002), pp. 41, 45.
- ⁵⁴ Slotkin, quoted in Ziauddin Sardar and Merryl Wynn Davies, *Why do People Hate America?*, Cambridge: Icon Books, 2002), pp. 190-91.
- ⁵⁵ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon books, 1978).
- ⁵⁶ Reagan, ‘Statement on the Kidnapping of United States Citizens in Lebanon’, January 26, 1987.
- ⁵⁷ Reagan, ‘Remarks to the International Forum of the Chamber of Commerce of the United States’, April 23, 1986.
- ⁵⁸ Reagan, ‘Remarks at Annual Convention of the American Bar Association’, July 8, 1985.
- ⁵⁹ Reagan’s remarks to reporters regarding the marine barracks bombing in Lebanon, quoted in Wills, *The First War on Terrorism*, p. 63.
- ⁶⁰ Shultz, ‘Terrorism and the Modern World.’
- ⁶¹ Reagan, ‘Remarks at Annual Convention of the American Bar Association’, July 8, 1985.
- ⁶² Ashcroft, ‘Testimony to House Committee on the Judiciary’, September 24, 2001.
- ⁶³ George W. Bush Jr. , ‘Remarks by the President to the CEO Summit’, Pudong Shangri-La Hotel, Shanghai, People’s Republic of China, October 20, 2001, available online at: <http://usinfo.state.gov/topical/pol/terror/>.
- ⁶⁴ Howard H. Baker Jr., U.S. Ambassador, ‘Japanese Observance Ceremony for Victims of Terrorism in the U.S.’, September 23, 2001, Tokyo, available online at: <http://usinfo.state.gov/topical/pol/terror/>.
- ⁶⁵ Ronald W. Reagan, ‘Remarks Following Discussions With Prime Minister Shimon Peres of Israel’, October 17, 1985, *The Public Papers of President Ronald W. Reagan*, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, available online at: <http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1985/101785c.htm>.
- ⁶⁶ Ronald W. Reagan, ‘Remarks at a White House Meeting With Members of the American Business Conference’, April 15, 1986, *The Public Papers of President Ronald W. Reagan*, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, available online at: <http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1986/41586c.htm>.
- ⁶⁷ Televised address to the American people following the hijacking of TWA Flight 847, quoted in Willis, *The First War on Terrorism*, p. 133.
- ⁶⁸ Ronald W. Reagan, ‘Speech to the National Association of Evangelicals’, March 8, 1983, Miller Center of Public Affairs, Scripps Library and Multimedia Archive, available online at: <http://www.millercenter.virginia.edu/scripps/diglibrary/prezspeeches/reagan/>.
- ⁶⁹ Bush Jr, ‘Address to the Nation’, 11 September, 2001.
- ⁷⁰ See Murphy, ““Our Mission and Our Moment””, p. 616.
- ⁷¹ Reagan, ‘Remarks at the Heritage Foundation Anniversary Dinner’, April 22, 1986.
- ⁷² Ronald W. Reagan, ‘Remarks to Jewish Leaders During a White House Briefing on United States Assistance for the Nicaraguan Democratic Resistance’, March 5, 1986, *The Public Papers of President Ronald W. Reagan*, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, available online at: <http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1986/30586c.htm>.
- ⁷³ Ronald W. Reagan, ‘Address to the Nation on Events in Lebanon and Grenada’, October 27, 1983, *The Public Papers of President Ronald W. Reagan*, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, available online at: <http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1983/102783b.htm>.
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- ⁷⁵ George W. Bush, ‘Remarks by the President at the 2002 Graduation Exercise of the United States Military Academy’, West Point, New York, June 1, 2002, available online at: <http://usinfo.state.gov/topical/pol/terror/>.
- ⁷⁶ Nikhil Singh, ‘Cold War Redux: On the “New Totalitarianism”’, *Radical History Review*, Issue 85 (2003), p. 173; original emphasis.

- ⁷⁷ Ronald W. Reagan, 'Address to the 43rd Session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York', September 26, 1988, *The Public Papers of President Ronald W. Reagan*, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, available online at: <http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1988/092688b.htm>.
- ⁷⁸ Reagan, 'Remarks at a White House Meeting With Members of the American Business Conference', April 15, 1986.
- ⁷⁹ Public meeting with citizens of Chicago Heights, quoted in Willis, *The First War on Terrorism*, p. 130.
- ⁸⁰ Shultz, 'Terrorism and the Modern World.'
- ⁸¹ Bush Jr, Powell, and Ashcroft, 'Remarks at Camp David', September 15, 2001.
- ⁸² Colin L. Powell, 'Remarks by the Secretary of State to the National Foreign Policy Conference for Leaders of Nongovernmental Organizations (NGO)', October 26, 2001, Loy Henderson Conference Room, U.S. Department of State, Washington, D.C., available online at: <http://usinfo.state.gov/topical/pol/terror/>.
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- ⁸⁵ Baker Jr., 'Japanese Observance Ceremony for Victims of Terrorism in the U.S.', September 23, 2001.
- ⁸⁶ George W. Bush Jr, 'Remarks in Commencement Address To United States Coast Guard Academy', Nitchman Field, New London, Connecticut, May 21, 2003, available online at: <http://usinfo.state.gov/topical/pol/terror/>.
- ⁸⁷ Reagan, 'Remarks at the Heritage Foundation Anniversary Dinner', April 22, 1986.
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- ⁹⁰ Ronald W. Reagan, 'Address to the 41st Session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York', September 22, 1986, *The Public Papers of President Ronald W. Reagan*, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, available online at: <http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1986/092286a.htm>.
- ⁹¹ Bush Jr, 'President's Remarks at National Day of Prayer and Remembrance', September 14, 2001.
- ⁹² See Steven Livingston, *The Terrorism Spectacle* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994).
- ⁹³ Richard Hughes, *Myths America Lives By* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2003), p. 154.
- ⁹⁴ Ronald W. Reagan, 'State of the Union Address', 1987, quoted in Hughes, *Myths America Lives By*, pp. 155-56.
- ⁹⁵ George P. Shultz, 'The Struggle Against Terrorism', Address before the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith on the Occasion of Receiving the Joseph Prize for Human Rights in Palm Beach, Florida, February 12, 1988, available online at: http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1079/is_n2133_v88/ai_6761419/print.
- ⁹⁶ Donald H. Rumsfeld, 'Remarks at a Memorial Service in Remembrance of Those Lost on September 11th', The Pentagon, Arlington, October 11, 2001, available online at: <http://usinfo.state.gov/topical/pol/terror/>.
- ⁹⁷ For a useful discussion of the 'good war' narrative and its applicability to counter-terrorism after the WTC attacks, see Peter Lawler, 'The "Good War" after September 11', *Government and Opposition*, vol. 37, no.2 (2002), pp. 151-172.
- ⁹⁸ Reagan, 'Remarks at Annual Convention of the American Bar Association', July 8, 1985.
- ⁹⁹ George P. Shultz, 'The Struggle Against Terrorism', Address before the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith on the Occasion of Receiving the Joseph Prize for Human Rights in Palm Beach, Florida, February 12, 1988, available online at: http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1079/is_n2133_v88/ai_6761419/print.
- ¹⁰⁰ Shultz, 'Terrorism and the Modern World.'
- ¹⁰¹ Marc Grossman, 'Interview of Under Secretary of State', Digital Video Conference, October 19, 2001, Washington, D.C., A trans-Atlantic digital interview with London-based journalists of Arab newspapers, available online at: <http://usinfo.state.gov/topical/pol/terror/>.
- ¹⁰² Donald H. Rumsfeld, Secretary of Defense, 'Interview with Wolf Blitzer, CNN', October 28, 2001, available online at: <http://usinfo.state.gov/topical/pol/terror/>.
- ¹⁰³ The choice of legal arguments for attacking Afghanistan in 2001 was in itself highly strategic: going for UN legal justification in terms of self-defense rather than Chapter VII action provided a greater freedom to

maneuver and avoided existing and constraining precedents. See Andrew Hurrell, “‘There are no Rules’ (George W. Bush): International Order after September 11”, *International Relations*, vol. 16, no. 2 (2002), p. 188.

¹⁰⁴ Reagan, ‘Message to the Congress Transmitting Proposed Legislation To Combat International Terrorism’, April 26, 1984.

¹⁰⁵ Reagan, ‘Address to the Nation on Events in Lebanon and Grenada’, October 27, 1983.

¹⁰⁶ Shultz, ‘The Struggle Against Terrorism’, February 12, 1988.

¹⁰⁷ Bush Jr, ‘Address to a Joint Session’, 20 September, 2001.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Bush Jr, Powell, and Ashcroft, ‘Remarks at Camp David’, September 15, 2001.

¹¹⁰ Ronald W. Reagan, ‘Remarks at the Welcoming Ceremony for Presidential J.R. Jayewardene of Sri Lanka’, June 18, 1984, *The Public Papers of President Ronald W. Reagan*, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, available online at: <http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1984/61884a.htm>.

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¹¹² Bush Jr, ‘Address to the Nation’, 11 September, 2001.

¹¹³ George W. Bush Jr, ‘Statement by the President on Military Strikes in Afghanistan’, The Treaty Room, White House, October 7, 2001, available online at: <http://usinfo.state.gov/topical/pol/terror/>.

¹¹⁴ George W. Bush Jr, ‘Radio Address by the President to the Nation’, November 24, 2001, available online at: <http://usinfo.state.gov/topical/pol/terror/>.

¹¹⁵ George W. Bush Jr, ‘Presidential Remarks to U.S. Attorneys Conference’, Dwight David Eisenhower Office Building, November 29, 2001, available online at: <http://usinfo.state.gov/topical/pol/terror/>.

¹¹⁶ George W. Bush Jr, ‘Press Conference’, The East Room, Washington, DC, October 11, 2001, available online at: <http://usinfo.state.gov/topical/pol/terror/>.

¹¹⁷ Reagan, ‘Proclamations: Proclamation 5266—A time of Remembrance for All Victims of Terrorism Throughout the World’, October 19, 1984.

¹¹⁸ Reagan, ‘Remarks at Annual Convention of the American Bar Association’, July 8, 1985.

¹¹⁹ Shultz, ‘Terrorism and the Modern World.’

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Hughes, *Myths America Lives By*.

¹²² Such a view of history taps directly into popular myths about America’s role in the world seen in movies like *U-571* where, in a re-scripting of history, an American submarine captures a German enigma code machine and turns the tide of the sea war; in actual fact, it was a British submarine. Even science fiction movies such as *Independence Day*, *Deep Impact*, and *Armageddon* express the view that America is the one nation which can save the world from any kind of global catastrophe—apart from global warming, of course.

¹²³ Bush Jr, ‘President’s Remarks at National Day of Prayer and Remembrance’, September 14, 2001.

¹²⁴ Cheney, ‘Remarks to the American Society of News Editors’, April 9, 2003.

¹²⁵ George W. Bush Jr, ‘Remarks in Commencement Address To United States Coast Guard Academy’, Nitchman Field, New London, Connecticut, May 21, 2003, available online at: <http://usinfo.state.gov/topical/pol/terror/>.

¹²⁶ Lon Troyer, ‘The Calling of Counterterrorism’, *Theory & Event*, vol. 5, no. 4 (2002).

¹²⁷ Sardar and Davies, *Why do People Hate America?* p. 198; original emphasis.

¹²⁸ Rosalind Morris, ‘Theses on the Questions of War: History, Media, Terror’, *Social Text* 72, vol. 20, no. 3 (2002), p. 152.

¹²⁹ Silberstein, *War of Words*, p. 40.

¹³⁰ Bush Jr, ‘President’s Remarks at National Day of Prayer and Remembrance’, September 14, 2001.

¹³¹ See Bruce Lincoln, *Holy Terrors: Thinking About Religion After September 11* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003).

¹³² See Jackson, *Writing the War on Terrorism*, and Leeman, *The Rhetoric of Terrorism and Counterterrorism*.

¹³³ David Campbell, ‘Time is Broken: The Return of the Past in the Response to September 11’, *Theory & Event*, vol. 5, no. 4, (2002); see also Joseba Zulaika ‘The Self-fulfilling Prophecies of Counterterrorism’, *Radical History Review*, Issue 85 (Winter 2003): 191-99; and Zulaika and Douglass, *Terror and Taboo*.

¹³⁴ Suman Gupta, *The Replication of Violence: Thoughts on International Terrorism After September 11th 2001* (London: Pluto Press, 2002), pp. 22-23.

¹³⁵ See Cynthia Enloe, 'Masculinity as a Foreign Policy Issue', in Susan Hawthorne and Bronwyn Winter, eds., *September 11, 2001: Feminist Perspectives* (Melbourne: Spinifex Press, 2002).

¹³⁶ J. Ann Tickner, 'Feminist Perspectives on 9/11', *International Studies Perspectives*, vol. 3 (2002), p. 336.

¹³⁷ Fairclough, *Media Discourse*, p. 14.

¹³⁸ Jorgensen and Phillips, *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*, p. 75; Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change*, p. 87.

¹³⁹ Campbell, 'Time is Broken'.

¹⁴⁰ Joseba Zulaika, 'The Self-Fulfilling Prophecies of Counterterrorism', *Radical History Review*, issue 85 (Winter 2003), p. 193.

¹⁴¹ Many would argue that the almost daily revelations about the widespread and systematic abuses of human rights in the current 'war on terrorism'—from Guantanamo Bay to Abu Ghraib and Afghanistan—mean that we have already passed the point of no return: the 'war on terrorism' is now simply a mimetic war of terrorisms—America's and the terrorists. The staggering abuses of current American counterterrorism policies are documented in the following publications: Karen Greenberg and Johua Dratel, eds., *The Torture Papers: The Road to Abu Ghraib* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Mark Danner, *Torture and Truth: America, Abu Ghraib, and the War on Terror* (New York: New York Review of Books, 2004); David Rose, *Guantanamo: America's War on Human Rights* (London: Faber and Faber, 2004); Seymour Hersh, *Chain of Command: The Road from 9/11 to Abu Ghraib* (London: Penguin, 2004); David Cole, *Enemy Aliens: Double Standards and Constitutional Freedoms in the War on Terrorism* (New York: The New Press, 2003)—among others.

¹⁴² Carl Boggs, 'Introduction', pp. 10-11.

¹⁴³ Campbell, 'Time is Broken'.

¹⁴⁴ James Aune, 'The Argument from Evil in the Rhetoric of Reaction', *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 6, vol. 3 (2003), p. 520.

¹⁴⁵ See Ryan McGreal, 'Paradigm Bait and Switch', *Perspectives on Evil and Human Wickedness*, vol. 1, no. 2 (2003), pp. 99-107.