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# Government

POWER AND PURPOSE

Edited by

DAVID T. CANON



JOHN J. COLEMAN



KENNETH R. MAYER

Readings for  
**American Government**

Power and Purpose

SEVENTH  
EDITION

David T. Canon  
University of Wisconsin-Madison

John J. Coleman  
University of Wisconsin-Madison

and

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# 1 Democracy and the Response to Terrorism

What caused 11 September 2001, and how do we deal with the consequences? Were the attacks a reaction against U.S. policies or a violent lashing out by those who oppose modernization and liberalism? Did the attacks constitute crimes or were they acts of war? Should the United States respond by finding and killing the perpetrators or by seeking resolution from international courts? Is it reasonable to ask "did we do anything to cause this," or is any such line of inquiry a morally repugnant blame-the-victim mentality?

The conventional wisdom is that the attacks changed everything. Never before had so many Americans died in a single day; the fatalities at the World Trade Center and Pentagon exceeded those at Pearl Harbor. The choice of weapons—civilian airliners flown into buildings—exposed the vulnerabilities of U.S. society as never before. The attacks have reopened debates over security versus freedom that many considered settled. Discussions of civil liberties, law enforcement powers, and ethnic profiling took on a different cast after September 11.

These two readings—the first an editorial from the *New Republic*, the second an article by Richard Falk published in *The Nation*—interpret September 11 and define the appropriate response very differently. To the *New Republic* editors, the attacks represented an assault on Western liberalism and resulted from outright hatred of the United States and what it stands for: individual autonomy, secularism, privacy, modernity, freedom, and human rights. The authors support treating the attacks as acts of war which should be punished by strong military action. They dismiss the notion that prosecuting this war will engender further hatred and terrorism against the United States, arguing that those who would hate the United States because of a strong response already hate the United States anyway.

Falk takes a very different view. Although he calls the attacks "truly a declaration of war from the lower depths," he is far more pessimistic about military action, seeing it as leading to more violence and restrictions on civil liberties. Instead of unlimited military retaliation, he argues for a narrow military response in connection to appropriate U.N. authorizations, law enforcement action against the terrorists and their sponsors, and an emphasis in U.S. foreign policy on "a credible commitment to the global protection of social justice."

It is not easy to reconcile these two contrasting views, since they both embody assumptions that depend on one's point of view. The fundamental distinction is how one views the U.S. role in the world: is the United States a source of enlightenment, promoting individual rights, free markets, and freedom. Or is the United States an imperialist, fostering human rights when convenient but willing to overlook or even condone repression when it suits our interests?

# EDITORS OF THE *NEW REPUBLIC*

## "It Happened Here"

"Senseless," "unimaginable," "crazy," "unfathomable": as the World Trade Center fell and the Pentagon burned, those were the words that came to the lips of many Americans, on camera and off camera. We must beware those words. They have a way of carrying the war against us away from us, of fortifying our incredulity against the evidence of our eyes, of shutting down thought when thought is required, of lifting the obscenity that was visited upon America back out of the realm of possibility. But the legacy of September 11, 2001, must be nothing less than a new sense of what is possible. When those planes flew into those buildings, the luck of America ran out. And so we must finally allow ourselves to be sobered out of our sensation of historical and geographical immunity. We must not let the tremor of what we have seen pass from us. It happened here.

"Senseless," "unimaginable," "crazy," "unfathomable": these words that preserve the catastrophe as a black idiosyncrasy of American experience, as an event too unlike the way we live to be incorporated into the way we think, must be resisted also on other grounds. They are simply false. It is not true that the attacks of September 11 were unimaginable; and anyway imagination is no longer necessary, now that we have memory. It is not true that they were crazy, except by our standards and the standards of civilization; but those are not the only standards in the world. It is not true that they were senseless, because they made sense to the people who carried them out, and to the individuals and the movements and the states that supported them or applauded them. It is not true that they are unfathomable: they were actions with reasons. These evil deeds were the results of beliefs. If we do not comprehend those reasons and those beliefs, then all we will do is mourn our dead and heal ourselves back into the traditions of our complacency. History is asking more of this country than sorrow.

Let us start the rebuilding of our understanding of our place in the world by recognizing that we are living in a new era of anti-Americanism. This may seem surprising, in the aftermath of America's triumph in the cold war. "I am for peace," the Psalmist declared in bewilderment, "but when I speak, they are for war." This is America's bewilderment exactly. But perhaps the equivocal position of the United States in the post-cold-war world is not so surprising. For the victory of the United States, democracy, and capitalism demonstrated more than just their superiority to the Soviet Union, totalitarianism, and socialism. It was also a great demonstration of what used to be called American exceptionalism. The United States—and more generally the West, a geographical appellation that is really a moral appellation—was revealed to be peaceful and prosperous in a world that was more and more a political and economic shambles. A shattering difference in the fates of nations was made clear.

The spectacle of American happiness—we were pursuing what Jefferson instructed us to pursue and we seemed to be gaining it—provoked opposite reactions in the suffering regions of the world. Briefly, it provoked a love of America and a

hatred of America. There were many who wanted an American happiness for themselves and their children, and they did what they could do to gain it. But there were many who chose to condemn what they could not attain—whose envy of America curdled into resentment, and whose resentment curdled into an analysis that made America responsible for the non-American conditions of their lives, and whose analysis curdled into ideologies of “resistance” against the symbols and the interests and the allies of the United States. This anti-Americanism had its spokesmen in America, too. “When will the smaller, lesser, weaker peoples,” Edward Said wrote in 1999, during the American-led war to rescue Kosovo from extinction, “realize that this America is to be resisted at all costs, not pandered to or given in to naively?” That was the “progressive” question and the “progressive” vocabulary in the 1990s.

Does anybody doubt that the crusade against globalization is to a significant degree a crusade against the proliferation of American values and American practices around the world? For an alibi must again be devised: another wave of progress has come and gone, and many regions did not seize it. Instead they transformed the old charge that modernization was American imperialism into the new charge that globalization is American imperialism. The politics of antiglobalization has revived the old “North-South” analysis of the 1970s, a fatalistic and even paranoid view of social and economic failure that had the effect of trapping many states and societies in their failing ways. The United States has become once again the archetypal adversary of the wretched of the earth; and in the excitable warrens of militant Islam this conspiracy theory has been promoted into a theology, into an expectation of apocalypse. Thus it was that *Al-Ahram*, the government newspaper in Egypt, described the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon as the “beginning of a war against globalization.” The editorial explained that “[t]he real reason behind the terrorism is the widening of the gap between north and south.” Never mind that poor people do not generally become murderers, and that the lesser, smaller, weaker peoples have sent many more immigrants to these shores than terrorists. We must welcome the immigrants. We must extirpate the terrorists.

Anybody who hates modernity hates America. Anybody who hates freedom hates America. Anybody who hates privacy hates America. Anybody who hates human rights hates America. Anybody who hates ballots and bookshops and newspapers and televisions and computers and theaters and bars and the sight of a woman smiling at a man hates America. Osama bin Laden and the terrorists of Al Qaeda chose the United States as their target in perfect accordance with their beliefs. Philosophically speaking, we are their mortal foes and they are ours. But to the hatred of America they add another virulence, the hatred of Israel. In the same breath bin Laden calls for the killing of Americans and the killing of Jews. “We will see again Saladin carrying his sword,” he ranted on a tape that surfaced this June, “with the blood of unbelievers dripping from it.” By unbelievers, of course, he means those who do not believe what he believes: this is an enemy by whom we should be proud to be known.

The religious dimension of bin Laden’s war against Zionism is perfectly clear. In his view, he wins heaven who wreaks hell. Bin Laden is waging a holy war, which is

always the unholy war of all, since it drags the most sacred things into its crimes. The common view is that he is seeking to punish America for its association with Israel, but the contrary is also the case. He wishes also to punish Israel (and Jews generally) for being so remorselessly American, that is, so secular, so liberal, so enthralled by enlightenment, so unimpeded by the burdens of the past. Israel poses the same threat to bin Laden's picture of the world, the same challenge to his horror of liberty and equality, as the United States does, and Israel is flourishing right there in the orbit of Islam. Its vitality represents a rebuke to its torpid region. For this reason, the terrorist war against the United States and the terrorist war against Israel is the same war. This is as it must be, for the principles of the United States and the principles of Israel are the same principles, the same brazenly modernizing ideals. If not for anti-Americanism and anti-Semitism, those two towers would still be standing.

This week there does not seem to be anybody in America who does not agree that this is a war.

Under the influence of those infernal images, the nation appears to have discovered the virtue of indignation. But can we bind this anger? It will not be easy. Americans are athletes of the emotions, and we live in a society for which anger is merely "healthy," that is, valuable for its lack of consequences. It is also true that the resumption of ordinary life is the only real victory over all this death. But this time the anger of America must not be regarded as just a sentiment, for it represents also a proper assessment of our situation. We *were* attacked. We *are* vulnerable. We *have* enemies. This is a war.

So how shall we fight this war? We cannot fight it as we fight other wars. Our adversary is not a state and not an army: the defense professionals warn of the difficulties of "asymmetric warfare." But surely one of those asymmetries is an asymmetry of power. We are spectacularly stronger and more resourceful than the suicidal cabals that have been formed against us. We require a lot more intelligence (judging by what happened last week, we require any intelligence at all) and a lot more cunning; but above all we must state clearly as a nation, to ourselves and to the world, that we are preparing to kill anybody who is preparing to kill us. Is this a policy of assassination? It is not, because assassination is too grand a term for the murder of murderers. It is a policy of self-defense. And it is not a policy of retaliation, but a policy of active and sustained aggression against all individuals and groups whom we have confidently identified as terrorists. These murderers may be in our midst, or they may be in Afghanistan or Iraq or Syria or Pakistan or the Sudan; but it is impossible to believe that we cannot find them if we genuinely wish to find them. President Bush was right to proclaim, moreover, that "we will make no distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbored them." Our adversaries are not states, but they cannot survive or succeed without the support of states. It is time to raise the costs of such support. (It is also time for the Saudis to cease their filthy little games.) For pursuing such a policy, we will assuredly reap more hatred, but only in places where we are already despised; and behold what the absence of such a policy has already reaped.

The fires were still roaring at the World Trade Center and the Pentagon when the air began to fill with alarms about the morality of a serious campaign against terrorism. David McCullough preached on CNN that "I'm afraid that it will also mean a curtailing, trimming up some—maybe even eviscerating of the open society [that] we know." (This is the same man who is making a mint off an admiring biography of the author of the Alien and Sedition Acts.) The editorial page of *The New York Times* warned that "[t]he temptation will be great in the days ahead to write draconian new laws that give law enforcement agencies—or even military forces—a right to undermine the civil liberties that shape the character of the United States." Military forces? The editors of the *Times* have been spending too much time at Blockbuster. Who in the American government is suggesting that we tear up the Constitution or perish? The notion that we cannot destroy terrorism without destroying liberalism, or that the fight against terrorists transforms us into terrorists, is *bien pensant* demagoguery, and its only effect is to inhibit the already inhibited. Our security need not be purchased at the price of our scruples. Now we have been shown that we are not secure. Is there really no significant change in our national security policy that is warranted by what we have witnessed? If the charnel house of lower Manhattan changes nothing, then we will deserve to despise ourselves.

But in truth it is hard to speak of policy when all that fills the mind is tragedy. The ashes of Manhattan cover the entire land. The pictures wound and wound and wound. The planes slam every time for the first time, the buildings fall every time for the first time. Over and over our brothers and our sisters die. These are the records of a defeat, and of a derangement of the universe. Eloquence is stupid. We have been slaughtered. Even if we live in a culture of forgetting, this we must never forget.

## RICHARD FALK

### "A Just Response"

America and Americans on September 11 experienced the full horror of what must surely be the greatest display of grotesque cunning in human history. Its essence consisted in transforming the benign, everyday technology of commercial jet aircraft into weapons of mass destruction. There has been much talk about Americans discovering the vulnerability of their heartland in a manner that far exceeds the collective trauma associated with the attack on Pearl Harbor. But the new vulnerability is radically different and far more threatening. It involves the comprehensive vulnerability of technology closely tied to our global dominance, pervading every aspect of our existence. To protect ourselves against the range of threats that could be mounted by those of fanatical persuasion is a mission impossible. The very attempt would quickly turn the United States into a prison-state.

And yet who can blame the government for doing what it can in the coming months to reassure a frightened citizenry? Likely steps seem designed to make it more difficult to repeat the operations that produced the WTC/Pentagon tragedy,

but it seems highly unlikely that a terrorist machine intelligent enough to pull off this gruesome operation would suddenly become so stupid as to attempt the same thing soon.

The atrocity of September 11 must be understood as the work of dark genius, a penetrating tactical insight that endangers our future in fundamental respects that we are only beginning to apprehend. This breakthrough in terrorist tactics occurred in three mutually reinforcing dimensions: (1) the shift from extremely violent acts designed to shock more than to kill, to onslaughts designed to make the enemy's society into a bloody battlefield, in this instance symbolically (capitalism and militarism) and substantively (massive human carnage and economic dislocation); (2) the use of primitive capabilities by the perpetrators to appropriate technology that can be transformed into weaponry of mass destruction through the mere act of seizure and destruction; (3) the availability of competent militants willing to carry out such crimes against humanity at the certain cost of their own lives. Such a lethal, and essentially novel, combination of elements poses an unprecedented challenge to civic order and democratic liberties. It is truly a declaration of war from the lower depths.

It is important to appreciate this transformative shift in the nature of the terrorist challenge both conceptually and tactically. Without comprehending these shifts, it will not be possible to fashion a response that is either effective or legitimate, and we need both. It remains obscure on the terrorist side whether a strategic goal accompanies this tactical escalation. At present it appears that the tactical brilliance of the operation will soon be widely regarded as a strategic blunder of colossal proportions. It would seem that the main beneficiaries of the attack in the near future are also the principal enemies of the perpetrators. Both the United States globally and Israel regionally emerge from this disaster with greatly strengthened geopolitical hands. Did the sense of hatred and fanaticism of the tactical masterminds induce this seeming strategic blindness? There is no indication that the forces behind the attack were acting on any basis beyond their extraordinary destructive intent.

And so we are led to the pivotal questions: What kind of war? What kind of response? It is, above all, a war without military solutions. Indeed it is a war in which the pursuit of the traditional military goal of "victory" is almost certain to intensify the challenge and spread the violence. Such an assessment does not question the propriety of the effort to identify and punish the perpetrators and to cut their links to government power. In our criticism of the current war fever being nurtured by an unholy alliance of government and media we should not forget that the attacks were massive crimes against humanity in a technical legal sense, and those involved in carrying them out should be punished to the fullest extent. Acknowledging this legitimate right of response is by no means equivalent to an endorsement of unlimited force. Indeed, an overreaction may be what the terrorists were seeking to provoke so as to mobilize popular resentment against the United States on a global scale. We need to act effectively, but within a framework of moral and legal restraints.

First of all, there should be the elementary due process of convincingly identifying the perpetrators and their backers. Second, maximum effort should be made to obtain authorization for any use of force in a specific form through the procedures of

the United Nations Security Council. Unlike the Gulf War model, the collective character of the undertaking should be integral at the operational level, and not serve merely as window dressing for unilateralism. Third, any use of force should be consistent with international law and with the “just war” tradition governing the use of force—that is, it should discriminate between military and civilian targets, be proportionate to the challenge and be necessary to achieve a military objective, avoiding superfluous suffering. If retaliatory action fails to abide by these guidelines, with due allowance for flexibility depending on the circumstances, then it will be seen by most as replicating the fundamental evil of terrorism. It will be seen as violence directed against those who are innocent and against civilian society. And fourth, the political and moral justifications for the use of force should be accompanied by the concerted and energetic protection of those who share an ethnic or religious identity with the targets of retaliatory violence.

Counseling such guidelines does not overcome a dilemma that is likely to grow more obvious as the days go by: Something must be done, but there is nothing to do. What should be done if no targets can be found that are consistent with the guidelines of law and morality? We must assume that the terrorist network anticipated retaliation even before the attack, and has taken whatever steps it can to “disappear” from the planet, to render itself invisible. The test, then, is whether our leaders have the forbearance to refrain from uses of forces that are directed toward those who are innocent in these circumstances, and whether our citizenry has the patience to indulge and accept such forbearance. It cannot be stressed too much that the only way to win this “war” (if war it is) against terrorism is by manifesting a respect for the innocence of civilian life and by reinforcing that respect with a credible commitment to the global promotion of social justice.

The Bush Administration came to Washington with a resolve to conduct a more unilateralist foreign policy that abandoned the sort of humanitarian pretense that led to significant American-led involvements in sub-Saharan Africa and the Balkans during the 1990s. The main idea seemed to be to move away from liberal geopolitics and to downsize the international U.S. role by limiting overseas military action to the domain of strategic interests, and to uphold such interests by a primary reliance on America’s independent capabilities. Behind such thinking was the view that the United States does not need the kind of help that it required during the cold war, and at the same time that it should not shoulder the humanitarian burdens of concern for matters that are remote from its direct interests. Combined with the Administration’s enthusiasm for missile defense and weapons in space, such a repositioning of foreign policy was supposed to be an adjustment to the new realities of the post-cold war world. Contrary to many commentaries, such a repositioning was not an embrace of isolationism, but was a revised version of internationalism based on a blend of unilateralism and militarism. In the early months of the Bush presidency this altered foreign policy was mainly expressed by repudiating a series of important, widely supported multilateral treaty frameworks, including the Kyoto Protocol dealing with global warming, the ABM treaty dealing with the militarization of space and the Biological Weapons Convention dealing with implementing the prohibition on developing biological weaponry. Allies of the United States were

stunned by such actions, which seemed to reject the need for international cooperation to address global problems of a deeply threatening nature.

And then came September 11, and an immediate realization in Washington that the overwhelming priority of its foreign policy now rests upon soliciting precisely the sort of cooperative international framework it worked so hard to throw into the nearest garbage bin. Only time will tell whether such a realization goes deeper than a mobilization of support for global war. Unlike the Gulf War and the Kosovo War, which were rapidly carried to their completion by military means, a struggle against global terrorism even in its narrowest sense would require the most intense forms of intergovernmental cooperation ever experienced in the history of international relations. The diplomacy needed to receive this cooperation might set some useful restraints on the current U.S. impulse to use force excessively and irresponsibly.

A root question underlying the U.S. response is the manner in which it deals with the United Nations. There is reportedly a debate within the Bush Administration between those hardliners who believe that the United States should claim control over the response by invoking the international-law doctrine of "the inherent right of self-defense" and those more diplomatically inclined, who favor seeking a mandate from the Security Council to act in collective self-defense. Among the initiatives being discussed in the search for meaningful responses is the establishment through UN authority of a special tribunal entrusted with the prosecution of those indicted for the crime of international terrorism, possibly commencing with the apprehension and trial of Osama bin Laden. Such reliance on the rule of law would be a major step in seeking to make the struggle against terrorism enjoy the genuine support of the entire organized international community.

It must be understood that the huge challenge posed by the attacks can be met effectively only by establishing the greatest possible distance between the perpetrators and those who are acting on behalf of their victims. And what is the content of this distance? An unconditional respect for the sacredness of life and the dignity of the individual. One of the undoubted difficulties in the weeks and months ahead will be to assuage the bloodthirst that has accompanied the mobilization for war while satisfying the rest of the world that the United States is acting in a manner that displays respect for civilian innocence and human solidarity. A slightly related challenge, but with deeper implications, is the need to avoid seeming to exempt state violence from moral and legal limitations, while insisting that such limitations apply to the violence of the terrorists. Such a double standard will damage the indispensable effort to draw a credible distinction between the criminality of the attack and the legitimacy of the retaliation.

There are contradictory ways to address the atrocities of September 11. The prevailing mood is to invoke the metaphor of cancer and to preach military surgery of a complex and globe-girdling character that must be elevated to the status of a world war, and that bears comparison with World Wars I and II; the alternative, which I believe is far more accurate as diagnosis and cure, is to rely on the metaphor of an iceberg. The attack on America was the tip of an iceberg, the submerged portions being the mass of humanity that is not sharing in the fruits of modernity, but finds itself under the heel of U.S. economic, military, cultural and diplomatic power. To



eliminate the visible tip of the iceberg of discontent and resentment may bring us a momentary catharsis, but it will at best create an illusion of victory. What must be done is to extend a commitment to the sacredness of life to the entire human family—in effect, joining in a collective effort to achieve what might be called “humane globalization.”

The Israel/Palestine conflict, its concreteness and persistence, is part of this new global reality. All sides acknowledge its relevance, but the contradictory narratives deform our understanding in serious respects. Israel itself has seized the occasion to drop any pretense of sensitivity to international criticism or calls for restraint in its occupation of the Palestinian territories. Israeli spokespersons have been active in spreading the word that now America and the world should appreciate the adversaries Israel has faced for decades, and should learn from Israel's efforts to control and destroy its terrorist enemies. In contrast, those supporting Palestinian rights argue that the kinds of violence generated by Israeli oppression and Israel's refusal to uphold international law and human rights give rise to a politics of desperation that includes savage attacks on Israeli civilian society. They argue that giving a suppressed people the choice between terrorism and surrender is abusive, as well as dangerous.

On the deepest level, the high-tech dominance achieved by U.S. power, so vividly expressed in the pride associated with “zero casualties” in the 1999 NATO war over Kosovo, is giving to the peoples of the world a similar kind of choice between poverty and subjugation, on the one hand, and vindictive violence, on the other.

Is our civil society robust enough to deliver a just response in some effective form? We cannot know, but we must try, especially if we value the benefits of discussion and debate as integral to the health of democracy. Such an imperative seems particularly urgent because of the vacuum at the top. There has been, in these terrible days of grieving for what has been lost, no indication of the sort of political, moral and spiritual imagination that might begin to help us better cope with this catastrophe. We should not fool ourselves by blaming George W. Bush or Republicans. The Democratic Party and its leaders have shown no willingness or capacity to think any differently about what has occurred and what to do about it. Mainstream TV has apparently seen its role as a war-mobilizing and patrioteering mechanism, with no interest in including alternative voices and interpretations. The same tired icons of the establishment have been awakened once more to do the journeyman work of constructing a national consensus in favor of all-out war, a recipe for spreading chaos around the world and bringing discredit to ourselves.

We are poised on the brink of a global, intercivilizational war without battlefields and borders, a war seemingly declared against the enigmatic and elusive, solitary figure of Osama bin Laden, stalking remote mountainous Afghanistan while masterminding a holy war against a mighty superpower. To the extent that this portrayal is accurate it underscores the collapse of a world order based on relations among sovereign territorial states. But it also suggests that the idea of national security in a world of states is obsolete, and that the only viable security is what is being called these days “human security.” Yet the news has not reached