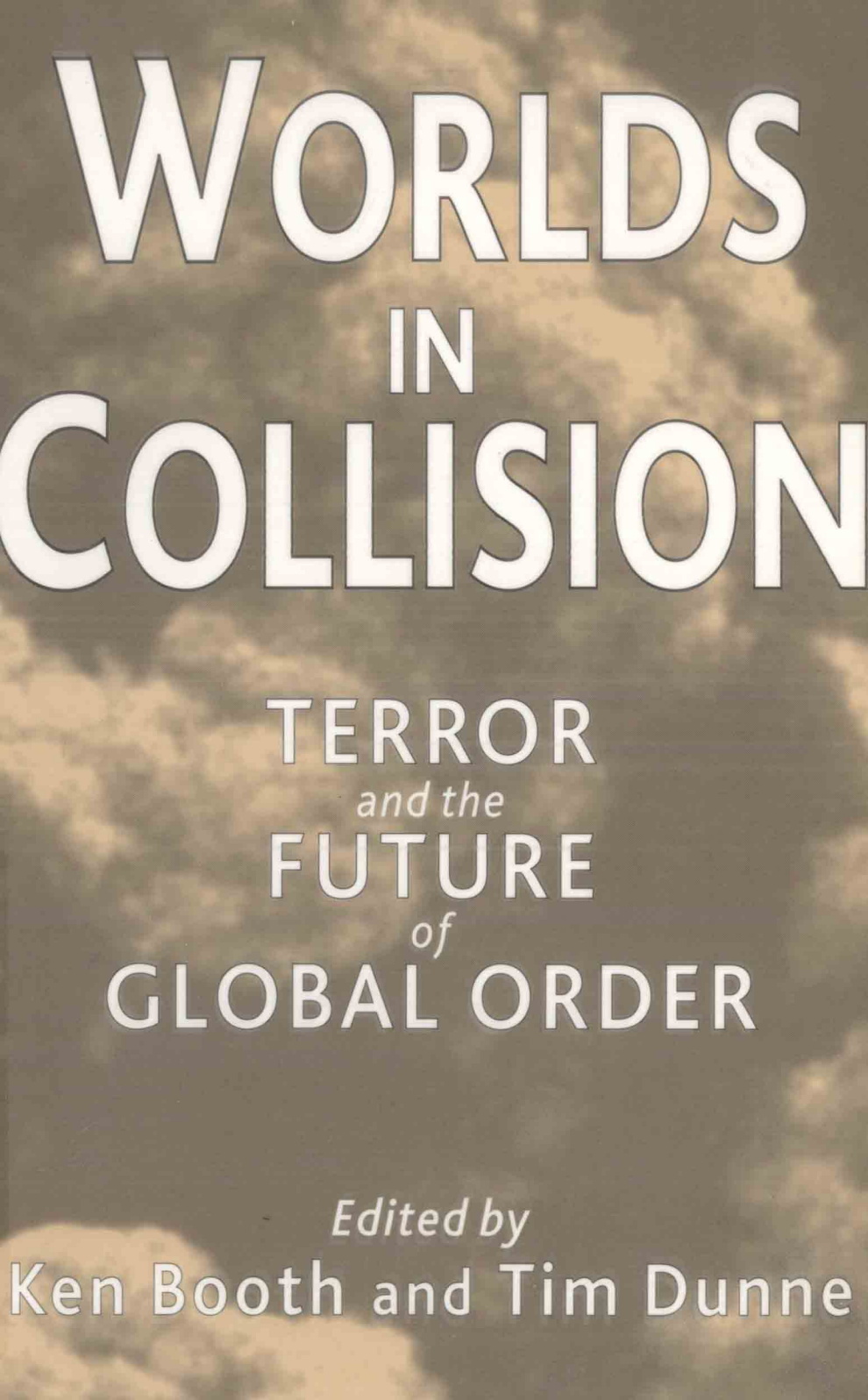




WORLDS IN COLLISION

TERROR
and the
FUTURE
of
GLOBAL ORDER

Edited by

Ken Booth and Tim Dunne

Worlds in Collision

Terror and the Future of Global Order

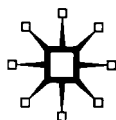
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Ken Booth

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Preface

Another book about the events and aftermath of September 11 needs no justification. For years to come, if not decades, the 'war on terrorism' will be the defining paradigm in the struggle for global order. There are other and arguably more crucial issues in world historical terms – the growing disparity between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots' and the deterioration of the global environment – but when the victim of terror attacks of spectacular horror happens to be the greatest power on earth, the agenda is set.

In the immediate aftermath of the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, every well-known writer joined in the global attempt to try to understand the meaning of that shocking and terrifying morning. Longer pieces then started appearing, and more recently books. What almost all of this analysis and imagining revealed was a sense not only that one historical era had ended, but that something of truly epic significance had occurred which would affect the human international political consciousness with the same impact as the dropping of the atomic bombs, the First World War or the Thirty Years War: the 'events' of that day will become hard-wired into the world historical memory. Six months later, the pictures and sounds of that morning are no less shocking; so shocking, indeed, that one still hopes it is a dream and that in the next re-run the planes will miss their targets.

We have learned over these past months how different states and groups chose to respond to the global crisis. What we do not know, and cannot know, is how it will end. This is one of the most powerful lessons we should all take from the experience: September 11 should have taught us that we cannot assume, for the foreseeable future, that tomorrow will be like today. The global order is being recast, and the twists and turns will surprise us.

To help us think about the importance of these events, both on specific issues and the broadest canvas, we have assembled an outstanding group of academics and public intellectuals from a variety of countries, all expert on questions relating to terror, force, law, ethics and global order. Many of the contributors live and work in the United States, and we make no apology for this, given that the terrorist attacks were aimed at the heart of America. The volume gives voice to a

plurality of viewpoints and we believe this diversity of opinions sets it apart from comparable publications. Within these pages, readers will find scholars who are broadly in support of America's war on terror, and others who are more hesitant, conscious that terror is a method that US governments have perpetrated and not just recently experienced. In the spirit of the best American tradition, this book is a home for patriotic and dissident opinions alike.

In bringing this volume to completion, our first acknowledgement must be to our contributors, all of whom are very busy people, but who agreed to write to tight deadlines. This is testimony to the importance they attach to understanding what happened, and their concern that the ways in which people and states respond to September 11 will determine the possibilities for the future global order. As ever, we wish to thank our colleagues in the Department of International Politics at the University of Wales Aberystwyth; their engagement with these issues has been intense, and we have benefited enormously from their conversations and writings. It gives us particular pleasure, finally, to acknowledge Alison Howson, publisher at Palgrave, for her enthusiasm, professionalism and support. This book was her idea.

Ken Booth and Tim Dunne
March 2002

Contents

<i>Preface</i>	ix
1 Worlds in Collision <i>Ken Booth and Tim Dunne</i>	1
Part One: Terror	
2 History and September 11 <i>Francis Fukuyama</i>	27
3 A New Type of War <i>Lawrence Freedman</i>	37
4 Unanswered Questions <i>Steve Smith</i>	48
5 Desperately Seeking Bin Laden: The Intelligence Dimension of the War Against Terrorism <i>Desmond Ball</i>	60
6 Targeting Terrorist Finances: The New Challenges of Financial Market Globalization <i>Thomas J. Biersteker</i>	74
7 Who May We Bomb? <i>Barry Buzan</i>	85
8 Mr Bush's War on Terrorism: How Certain is the Outcome? <i>Immanuel Wallerstein</i>	95
9 <i>In Terrorem</i> : Before and After 9/11 <i>James Der Derian</i>	101
10 Terror and the Future of International Law <i>Michael Byers</i>	118
11 Who Are the Global Terrorists? <i>Noam Chomsky</i>	128

Part Two: Order

- | | | |
|----|---|-----|
| 12 | The Public Delegitimation of Terrorism and Coalition Politics | 141 |
| | <i>Robert O. Keohane</i> | |
| 13 | Meanings of Victory: American Power after the Towers | 152 |
| | <i>Michael Cox</i> | |
| 14 | Upholding International Legality Against Islamic and American Jihad | 162 |
| | <i>Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im</i> | |
| 15 | The United States and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict | 172 |
| | <i>Avi Shlaim</i> | |
| 16 | The Reconstruction of Afghanistan | 184 |
| | <i>William Maley</i> | |
| 17 | State-Society Relations: Asian and World Order after September 11 | 194 |
| | <i>Amitav Acharya</i> | |
| 18 | Catharsis and Catalysis: Transforming the South Asian Subcontinent | 205 |
| | <i>C. Raja Mohan</i> | |
| 19 | Political Violence and Global Order | 215 |
| | <i>Paul Rogers</i> | |
| 20 | World Politics as Usual after September 11: Realism Vindicated | 226 |
| | <i>Colin Gray</i> | |
| 21 | A New Global Configuration | 235 |
| | <i>Fred Halliday</i> | |

Part Three: Worlds

- | | | |
|----|--|-----|
| 22 | Democracy and Terror in the Era of Jihad vs. McWorld | 245 |
| | <i>Benjamin R. Barber</i> | |
| 23 | How to Fight a Just War | 263 |
| | <i>Jean Bethke Elshtain</i> | |

24	Terrorism or Intercultural Dialogue <i>Bhikhu Parekh</i>	270
25	Rethinking Common Values <i>Sissela Bok</i>	284
26	Narratives of Religion, Civilization and Modernity <i>Chris Brown</i>	293
27	Unnecessary Suffering <i>Andrew Linklater</i>	303
28	Governance Hotspots: Challenges We Must Confront in the Post-September 11 World <i>Saskia Sassen</i>	313
29	Testing Patriotism and Citizenship in the Global Terror War <i>Richard Falk</i>	325
30	Peace, Poetry and Pentagonese <i>Patricia J. Williams</i>	336
31	The Continuity of International Politics <i>Kenneth N. Waltz</i>	348
	<i>Notes on the Contributors</i>	355
	<i>Index</i>	360

CHAPTER 1

Worlds in Collision

Ken Booth and Tim Dunne

It is curious how a specific date – not a year, but a specific month and a specific day – have almost universally come to define a world historical crisis. The signposts of world affairs in the twentieth century were fixed in particular places: Sarajevo, Munich, Suez, Cuba, Vietnam and the rest. In the case of the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon it is as if we instantly understood that the meanings of these ‘events’ were global, beyond locality, an out-of-geography experience. September 11 was a place we all shared.

It was a place we all shared because there was a sense that what we were witnessing, literally, was a collision of worlds. The suffocating smoke and debris from the collapse of the Twin Towers (the image on the cover of this book) not only show the material destruction that follows when worlds collide, but also symbolize the difficulty of understanding colliding thought-worlds. The collisions we pick out in this chapter run through the book: those between different political entities, struggling for power and employing violence and other traditional instruments of policy; and between those thought-worlds characterized by different beliefs about what is reality, what constitutes reliable knowledge and how we should behave. Although what follows are presented as collisions in the context of September 11, we have chosen not to link them by a ‘versus’, because in our view most of them do not necessarily stand in opposition. We have linked them by ‘and’. The one exception – the one unambiguous *versus* – is terrorism itself.

Islam and the United States

In the collision between the United States and Islam two parallel questions have pressed for answers. Why is the United States hated in so

many parts of the world? And why is Islam so feared? The answer at one level is easy: the United States is hated because it is feared, while Islam is feared because it is hated. This is a start. In the search for a fuller answer, unfortunately, the chief protagonists shy away. It should be a time for introspection, for the deepening of self-knowledge; instead, self-justification has been the norm.

Introspection in the United States is discouraged by the very circumstances of the attacks. Such was the sense of homeland violation that it was no surprise when President Bush demanded a loyalty test: 'Either you are with us or you are with the terrorists', he told Congress on September 20, 2001.¹ As a result, to criticize the White House's handling of the crisis, or to seek an explanation for the attacks that is more penetrating than simply asserting the nihilistic mindsets of the perpetrators, is considered to be tantamount to being sympathetic to the terrorists. To try to find reasons is seen as a slippery slope towards concluding that the United States 'deserved it', and hence is treason. Some external friends might have kept quiet out of opportunism. Like the UK, they have stood (more or less) 'shoulder to shoulder' with the United States in its time of crisis, in the hope, one day, that the United States would do the same for them.

So why is the United States hated? 'It' is not: and the very question betrays a powerful stereotyping that feeds global disorder. We do not believe that the 'United States' is hated. There is a large Muslim population in the country not seeking to emigrate; there is a well of respect for American life and people throughout the world. Without doubt, many people have ambivalent feelings towards US society: but so do many of us about our own societies. The 'United States' must be disaggregated. Then it becomes apparent that it is the policies of successive US governments that are so hated: the manner in which the world's sole superpower tends always to get its way; its sometimes brutal foreign policy and profitable project of globalization; its support for tyrants while mouthing the language of democracy and human rights; and the way it uses local proxies to dominate the global order. However benign the US hegemon, it will be feared because it is drawn as no other power into the daily business of running the world, and it will get its way. In any human situation, such structural power tends to provoke the hostility of those who are not listened to, or who do not get their way, ever.

US governments have, without doubt, much to answer for. Set against this, as a society, the US is an idea to which countless victims flock, seeking refuge from tyranny and hunger. Its capacity for

economic regenerations is such that it is one of the few countries to treat immigration as an economic resource rather than a burden. One wonders how many of those demonstrating against 'The Great Satan' in places like Iran, Pakistan and Iraq, would pass up the opportunity to join generations of Poles, Italians, Cubans and others who have helped create the land of the free? Many Muslim asylum seekers, migrants and intellectuals have chosen the United States as the site of their hopes for themselves and their families, and not countries at the heart of the Islamic world. The distinction between the US state and US society is vital, and too little heeded by those casually labelling the United States as universally hated, and those critics of this or that policy casually labelling them as 'anti-American'.

Self-knowledge never comes easily. Many Americans are held back from achieving a better understanding of how their government is perceived by knowing so little of their own history, and even less of the history of other peoples. It is not that long since George W. Bush, then on the campaign trail, was unable to name several heads of state, including President Musharraf of Pakistan. After 9/11, Musharraf's agreement to 'full cooperation' in the global war on terror was a decisive part of US coalition building. Lack of knowledge is made worse by the mythological history promoted for profit and entertainment by Hollywood. Intensely law-abiding people who are brought up to believe they belong to the land of the free, the home of the brave, and the shining city on the hill, and who are convinced that their country is a force for good in the world, find it truly shocking when told by one of their own leading intellectuals, Susan Sontag, that 'America is founded on genocide'.² The thought is so shocking that it is erased from memory, or she is. Ignorance and myth can breed self-righteousness – a dangerous foundation on which to engage with the world.

The moral high ground is where ethnocentric memories reside. And here, also, is where there are so many similarities between the Bush presidency and the Reagan era. In both cases there is a gap between the self-image of standing firm for liberty, democracy, international law and peace, while conducting policies characterized by inconsistency on free trade, the support of tyrants, economic imperialism, playing fast and loose with international law and, when necessary, being ready, willing and able to use violence. The echoes of the Reagan era are the stronger today because of the return of so many officials of that time to key positions in Washington.

If power is part of the problem with the United States, it is lack of power that besets Islam. In various contexts in recent years, Muslims

have been on the receiving end of world politics. They have frequently been victims, although they are invariably represented as perpetrators. As with the US, it is therefore necessary to disaggregate 'Islam'. The stereotype is of suicide bombers, terrorists and fundamentalist clerics. But when one contemplates the 1.2 billion Muslims around the world, the emptiness of the stereotype is evident; most live lives of tolerance, order and decency. It is true that many Muslims regard with distaste some of the excesses of 'Western' life (the breakdown of family life, crime, pornography, and so on) but this is not much different to the feelings of many in the West. If we strip away national structures, militarized security managers and religious fanatics, it is possible to see here a core of shared values. Sections of the Islamic world celebrated the attacks on September 11, but these were drowned out by the expressions of sympathy shown for innocent victims.

However, it cannot be avoided that there were celebrations, and the terrorists did identify with Islam. Introspection is needed, but as with the United States the search for self-knowledge is not a priority. Nor is it encouraged in Islamic states and societies, where tyranny and constraints on freedom of enquiry are widespread. These are circumstances in which it is easier to blame others. So, is 'it' about Islam? For understandable reasons Western political leaders have gone out of their way to say 'No'. Soon after the attacks, Prime Minister Blair, for example, said that 'we do not act against Islam'.³ He and other leaders attempted to limit intercultural hostility by showing sensitivity to cultural particularities while at the same time underlining common values. Others, without the pressures of office, maintained different views. Salman Rushdie insisted: 'Yes, this is about Islam.'⁴ Osama bin Laden, for example, has been part of a radical political movement of Islamists who have had a presence in Egypt, Algeria, Iran and Pakistan. The origins of the Taliban government in 1994 exemplify the rise of Islamism, with its adherence to a particular interpretation of the faith and its desire to fight a holy war against the 'infidel' using a transnational coalition of Islamist warriors.⁵ It is partly about Islam, therefore, but there is much more to fathom, from the fantasies of the terrorists of September to the unravelling of the relationships between culture, politics and religion in the Islamic world. The latter is not helped by the fact that many intellectuals in the West treat the subject as 'taboo', the result of physical fear, or guilt for the imperial past, or because of the fashion for not wanting to engage in intercultural critique.⁶ The attempt to explain what happened with reference to religion is crude reductionism. Trying to unravel the intricacies of the Muslim world

cannot be achieved by 'naive references to the Koran'; this, according to Stephen Chan, would be 'as stupid as trying to understand "the West" by Saddam distributing the Bible and talking about the children of Abraham'.⁷ What is more, ideas about defending the faith, by force if necessary, are present in many of the world's religions. It is possible to find passages in Judaism, Christianity and in the Koran 'that legitimate violence, terror and senseless sacrifice'.⁸

We are not suggesting here anything as naive as the simple idea that deeper self-knowledge on the part of Muslims and Americans will stop future collisions of one sort or another, but it would help to change the climate. What we have suggested here, all too briefly, is the critical point that we are not confronted today by a simple 'clash of civilizations'.⁹ What we have instead is a confusion of misunderstandings, crude stereotypes, and parallel absences of self-knowledge.¹⁰ The United States and Islam represent major forces in contemporary world politics: one is politically and economically centralized and dominant in terms of both material and soft power, while the other is politically decentralized and weak but ideationally massively influential. An attitudinal shift is needed, and the starting point may have been precisely identified by a Palestinian journalist who, when asked if he could say one thing to Americans in the aftermath of September 11, replied: 'America, we feel your pain. Isn't it time you felt ours?'

The West and the Rest

If we take Osama bin Laden's public statements as our guide, the al-Qaeda network does not believe that it is in a fight with the 'West' so much as with the United States. Yet many commentators and some political leaders have seen the US-Islam collision as a particular manifestation of a much wider one. The collapse of the Twin Towers exposed a gap into which politicians and writers, journalists and academics have poured explanations based on their worries about globalization, fears about anarchy, guilt about Israel, shame about Africa, anxiety about the unknown, and a generalized sense of responsibility for what happened.

The world is not working for countless millions of its inhabitants. There is a growing gap between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots' through profit-led globalization, the buccaneering behaviour of global corporations, the voracious consumption of Western societies, the marginalization of the 'majority world', failed states, human rights abuses, cycles of economic boom and bust, regional crises in the Balkans and central Africa and elsewhere, escalating violence in the

Middle East, Western support for tyranny while ritualistically declaring its commitment to democracy, increasing numbers of desperate refugees, societies crippled by debt, the spread of weapons of mass destruction, environmental decay, the AIDS plague which continues to terrorize and kill in millions and enervate societies, and so on. These are seen as the breeding grounds for rage against 'the West' – but does it explain terror?¹¹ We know from history that the poor and humiliated might do anything if roused by voices able to promise them the earth, or heaven. Does al-Qaeda speak for the global poor? Whatever doubts may persist about the electoral legitimacy of George W. Bush, nobody elected Osama bin Laden, and the attacks were not followed by the discovery of a political testament by the perpetrators.

It does not dishonour those murdered in New York, Washington and Pennsylvania to point out, as did the leader writers of the *New Statesman* shortly afterwards, that the dead that day numbered less than half the total of children who die somewhere in the world each day from diarrhoea (caused by the lack of clean water). The point is not about forgetting September 11, but of remembering what the world is like every day. 'Never forget the other Terror' was the message, and the great American writer Mark Twain provided the text. Recalling the way Europe trembled in the 1790s as the terror swept through France, Twain pointed out that there had been two 'Reigns of Terror'. The first was the immediate and urgent one, which brought 'the horror of swift death'; the other resulted in 'lifelong death from hunger, cold, insult, cruelty and heartbreak'. The former 'inflicted death upon a thousand persons, the other upon a hundred million'. Writing as if for today, Twain said that the one brief terror 'we have all been ... diligently taught to shiver at and mourn over', whereas the other we had never learnt to see 'in its vastness or pity as it deserves'.¹² Terrorism is an abomination and must be countered, but poverty is the world's biggest killer.

Images of terrorism and poverty have fed fears of the 'coming anarchy' envisioned in the early 1990s by Robert D. Kaplan. He warned of a world splitting apart – a 'bifurcated world' – with the West inhabiting islands of comfort being threatened by a tidal wave of criminal anarchy on the part of the masses of alien races and cultures. It would be a violent state of nature in which he thought it doubtful whether the West could survive in its present form.¹³ September 11 has confirmed this 'new pessimism'. One response has been the call to 'reorder' the world, by leaders such as Prime Minister Blair. Would any new world order – echoing the jibe of a decade earlier – simply be another version of the New World's order?

Some argue that the present crisis reveals how foolish have been the ideals of those who have imagined that the world could ever come together sharing a set of common values. But while the attacks and the reactions to them have revealed incompatibilities, there has been a range of agreement among those of different faiths, and no faiths, on what constitutes proper behaviour. There has been a massive rejection of terrorism as an instrument of politics, for example. Definitional difficulties remain, of course, but here is a case where collectivities have shared values about behaviour, even if they do not share the same prophet. We are not therefore witnessing a comprehensive clash of incompatible values across the world. It is simply not the case empirically. The south and north coexist in New York. The targeting of that city had a logic in terms of it being the highest symbol of modernity, but was inept at the human level, for it is a living example of people of all cultures being able to share the same busy space. The people of many nations and different faiths who were murdered in the World Trade Center are a tragic testimony to that fact. There are no clear-cut 'civilizational' lines. Western leaders in recent months have regularly pointed out their intervention on behalf of Muslim victims in Kosovo in 1999. As the bombs started dropping on Afghanistan in October 2001, the early stages of the trial of former Yugoslav leader Slobodan Milosevic gave some credence to their arguments.

It would be an error of historic proportions to exaggerate the incompatibility between the thought-worlds of the so-called West and the so-called Rest. We in the West may not be able to understand the thinking of the mass murderers of September 11, but few in the rest of the world could comprehend their motives either. In the week after the attacks a leading Muslim writer, Ziauddin Sardar, wrote:

Islam cannot explain the actions of the suicide hijackers, just as Christianity cannot explain the gas chambers, Catholicism the bombing at Omagh. They are acts beyond belief, by people who long ago abandoned the path of Islam.

The rest of the article is an account of how the actions of the terrorists were outside the faith and reasoning of Islam.¹⁴ Mohammed Atta's mindset was no more comprehensible to the Arab street than that of Timothy McVeigh had been to the American suburb.

All this suggests that the image of the West and the Rest should be challenged. This metanarrative reifies 'the West' and other groupings as if they are the categorical realities of world politics. Again, life is more

complex, except for the terrorist. Speaking for the part of the world in which he lives, Umberto Eco writes:

We are a pluralist civilisation because we allow mosques to be built in our countries, and we are not going to stop simply because Christian missionaries are thrown into prison in Kabul. If we did so, we too would become Taliban.¹⁵

If the first step is to challenge the notion of a bifurcated world, the second is to accept Mark Twain's warning. There is a relationship between the two terrors, if not a direct one. Even as we in the West seek to deal with the immediate terror resulting from the attacks of September 11, attempting to overcome the terror we have not learned to see will in itself mark the beginning of a victory.

Terror versus Dialogue

Terrorism is a method of political action that uses violence (or deliberately produces fear) against civilians and civilian infrastructure in order to influence behaviour, to inflict punishment or to exact revenge. For the perpetrators, the point is to make the target group afraid of today, afraid of tomorrow, and afraid of each other.¹⁶ Terrorism is an act, not an ideology. Its instruments are assassination, mass murder, hijacking, bombing, kidnapping and intimidation. Such acts can be committed by states as well as private groups.

Western states have consistently sought to deny that states can commit terrorism. The bias of terror has always been 'against people and in favour of governments'.¹⁷ Whether government or group, motivation should play no part in assessing whether terrorism has taken place. Terror is delineated by method, not motives. Even if actors are motivated by noble objectives – such as the liberation of their homeland – these are deformed by terrorist practices. Third World states have consistently sought to deny that liberation movements can commit terrorism. *All* states deny specific accusations of terrorism although *many* routinely use torture, a particular form of terror against individuals. Both terror and torture are justified pragmatically in the context of 'supreme emergency', although neither method is justified morally.¹⁸

It is worth remembering that the word 'terror' came into prominence during the French Revolution, a moment in history which also witnessed the beginnings of ideas about the inalienable rights and freedoms of individual citizens. In the two centuries that followed,

European states gradually sought to enmesh these values in domestic political constitutions based on dialogue and negotiation. Yet in their external relations, states viewed terror (and terror by proxy) as a legitimate weapon for furthering their interests. One of the tragic paradoxes of the twentieth century is that those states which have most closely self-identified with the path of the Enlightenment have committed acts of barbarism that no modern terrorist group has yet been able to match. As producers of terror, states remain far more significant than non-state groups, although the emerging market in relatively cheap weapons of mass destruction could level this particular killing field in the future.

Acts of terrorism have been seen on every continent. Perpetrators come from diverse religions and ethnic groups, but governments and networks in the Islamic world commit the most extreme forms of terror. This is true of interstate conflict (the Iran–Iraq war) and intrastate conflict (such as the violence perpetrated by Algerian Islamists). According to Walter Laquer, ‘Muslim states and Muslim minorities are involved in almost 90 percent of all sub-state terrorist conflicts.’¹⁹ What Laquer fails to make clear is that in many of these cases (such as Bosnia and Palestine), Muslims are not the primary cause of the violence.²⁰

If it is not faith, then is it poverty that forces certain states and non-state actors to terrorize? It has been commonplace to read explanations of this kind, as though poverty itself breeds extremism, yet it is just as easy to think of examples where extreme views and wealth march hand in hand (Christian fundamentalism in the United States, for example). Who becomes a terrorist is not simply a consequence of an unjust environment. Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda do not belong to the poor of the Middle East; they belong to an old tradition in which self-serving elites seize upon and manipulate the grievances of the poor.

Al-Qaeda (literally, ‘the base’) illustrates the extent to which terrorism has more complex causes than material dispossession. To carry out a war against the West, bin Laden and his associates have built an army of around 5000 trained terrorists. Contrary to the stereotype of al-Qaeda as a band of itinerant cave dwellers, ‘they’re modern, and they use modern methods’.²¹ One of these modern methods is communicating their message using video recordings, broadcast on an Arab satellite channel and reported in the world’s media. It is in these messages that bin Laden exploits symbolic references to the fate of the world’s Arabs and Muslims. He tells his ‘brothers’ to ‘rise up’ and ‘die defending Islam’ against the ‘infidels’. He gives his followers no choice: ‘Muslims have to ally themselves to Muslims.’²² Given the widespread feeling of injustice perpetrated by Western states against