

An interpretation of global terrorism (the Bush years
2001-2008) and considerations for peace

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Abstract

September 11, 2001 was a defining moment in world history; the events of that day ushered in what has been described as “global terrorism”, a phenomenon that precipitated the United States led invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq urging us to believe that the War on Terror could be the only pragmatic response to this kind of Islamic fundamentalist based militancy. This thesis investigates the part played by the West in the emergence of global terrorism and posits that dialogue in its differing manifestations is the optimum method of transforming this kind of political violence into a sustainable peace. It will be seen how the modernity of the West has brought exploitation and marginalisation to Islamic cultures and countries. Postmodernism and Postcolonialism, intellectual movements that critically review the dominant discourse of modernity, are therefore used as a lens through which to view and deconstruct global terrorism. Knowledge and power, viewed differently to the modern outlook, allows analysis to take on new directions and reveals to what degree the construction of knowledge and interpretation of terrorism has been governed by powerful players and forces in the context of modernist and neoconservative thought. In concert with Postmodernism and Postcolonialism, critical discourse analyses (CDAs) are performed on selected texts of George W. Bush and Osama bin Laden to form the central analysis of the thesis. It will be seen that neoconservative players have worked diligently to reshape core American convictions. These CDAs show that there has been a construction of new “knowledge” about “freedom” resulting in freedom undergoing a radically conservative shift to the right. Freedom now is more deeply connected with the globalised world where power is decided by the market which has become the ultimate legitimate authority. The presence of this authority is felt as far as the frontiers of Iraq through the democratisation agenda. Another result of the CDAs shows that dissent of militarisation has been suppressed; use is made of liberal-democratic discursive formations to project militarisation as an accepted practice, in the form of the defence policy of preemption, against a discursive background framing the US as an innocent actor on the world stage, apropos of the events of 9/11. The promulgation of America as a sacred beacon and protector of universal ideals is shown by the CDAs to act as a support to these new American foreign policy mechanisms. Terrorism has thus been advanced by the powerful as the very antithesis of

freedom obliterating exposure of the underlying causes of Islamic fundamentalist based radicalism and masking the Bush Administration's attempt to conduct preemptive wars waged in order to reconfigure the geopolitical map.

This thesis refutes the idea that global terrorism is logic of pure destruction or religious fanaticism. What the CDAs ultimately reveal is that Bin Laden's call to arms is found to be intimately related to modernity itself; the Islamic fundamentalism that describes his movement is both *product* and *response* to modernity. The division between the Western way of knowing the world and the way of the Islamic fundamentalist passionately calls out for a transcendence which can only be found in dialogue. In order to illustrate the efficacy of dialogue as a means of addressing conflicts where cultural divisions have resulted in violent responses that are labeled as "terrorism", the Silsilah Dialogue Movement of the Philippines was chosen as the site for field research where the outcomes of Muslim Christian dialogue were examined. Central to the findings was that dialogue assisted in solving conflict between Muslims and Christians as well as promoting sincerity and trust between them. The implications of these findings affirm that dialogue and not war may be the most appropriate means of dealing with global terrorism.

The issue of how we see and treat the Other is crucial to the form of conflict under investigation here. We cannot expect the Other to be politely compliant when we marginalise their cultures, destroy their way of life and denigrate their being through the processes of colonialism, imperialism and globalisation. Global terrorism ultimately involves us asking ourselves, "What is our relation to the Other?" whether on a personal, cultural or religious basis. At its heart, this thesis addresses this question. While there may be differing responses to this question, one of the most prescient voices comes from Postmodernist, Jacques Derrida, who seeks to accommodate the differences of the Other, not in terms of tolerance, which can be a very limiting vision, but in terms of an absolute hospitality where we must live in a state of continuing critical reflection in order to give the most ethical care we can to the Other. This thesis thus attempts to show that it is the inability to accommodate the differences of the Other that is at the root of global terrorism and that dialogue provides us with the most constructive means of fostering

understanding across cultures and religions where differing ways of perceiving reality, if not mutually understood and appreciated, may ultimately lead to the expression of this form of conflict.

I certify that the substance of this thesis has not already been submitted for any degree and is not currently being submitted for any other degree or qualification.

I certify that any help received in preparing this thesis, and all sources used, have been acknowledged in this thesis.

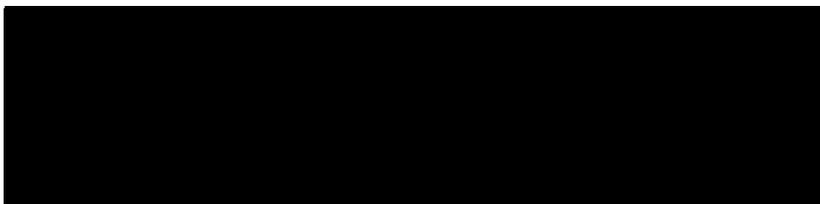


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List of Acronyms

AIPAC	American Israel Public Affairs Committee
ARMM	Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
ETA	Basque Homeland and Freedom
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FDD	Foundation for Defense of Democracies
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GWOT	Global War On Terror
ICBM	Intercontinental Ballistic Missile
ICG	International Crisis Group
IDF	Israel Defense Forces
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IRA	Irish Republican Army
Jl	Jemaah Islamiah
LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
MILF	Moro Islamic Liberation Front
MNLF	Moro National Liberation Front
NDP	National Democratic Party
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NPR	Nuclear Posture Review
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organisation
PNAC	Project for the New American Century
RAD	Rebuilding America's Defenses
SDM	Silsilah Dialogue Movement
SPCPD	Southern Philippines Council for Peace and Development
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
US	United States
USA	United States of America
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction
WTO	World Trade Organisation