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**THE CONSTRUCTION OF 'SEPTEMBER 11<sup>TH</sup>,**

**AND**

**THE NEW ZEALAND RESPONSE**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment  
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## Introduction

“In defending democracy, we must not forget the need to observe the values that make democracy worth defending”.<sup>1</sup>

On 11 September 2001, four hijacked passenger planes crashed in the United States. Two of the planes were deliberately piloted into highly populated buildings in New York City, one hit the American Defence Department (the Pentagon) in Washington D.C., and the fourth crashed near the small town of Shanksville, Somerset County, Pennsylvania. This thesis will examine how these events were constructed in mainstream Western discourse, and how these constructions helped shape the environment in which subsequent world affairs emerged. A principal focus of the study is the largely unquestioned resort to violent, military action in the wake of 11 September 2001, and it will be shown how the key constructions worked in conjunction with each other to support this development. The second central issue examined is the response of the New Zealand government. What would be the position of New Zealand’s Labour-led government, with its tradition of an independent, moral foreign policy and a commitment to a rules-based international order in the wake of the events?

My choice of this topic, and this particular approach, stems from my witnessing the extreme convergence of opinion that followed these events, both in the mainstream media and in general conversations with fellow New Zealanders. The clearly developing plans for aggressive retaliation, along with claims that ‘the world had changed’, led me to be concerned about the implications for human rights.

I found the theoretical works of Murray Edelman most accurately reflected the situation I was observing, and the thesis is thus largely informed by his writings.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Britain’s Lord Chief Justice Woolf, cited in the *Dominion Post*, 2 November 2002.

Edelman's fundamental premise is that politics are constructions of the publics concerned with them. This is not to argue that events themselves are not real – rather, that what they mean and whether they are noticed depends on observers' situations, and the language that reflects and interprets those situations.<sup>3</sup> It is not 'reality' in any testable sense that shapes political consciousness and behaviour, Edelman argues, 'but the beliefs that language helps evoke about the causes of discontents and satisfactions'.<sup>4</sup> Constructions, however, have real effects, and it will be shown here that in the wake of 'September 11<sup>th</sup>' the human rights of some have been, and continue to be, submerged by these dominant constructions.<sup>5</sup>

In Chapter One, the mainstream representation of 'September 11<sup>th</sup>' will be portrayed through a description of articles and pictures that appeared in New Zealand's capital city newspaper, the *Dominion*, throughout the month of September 2001. It is important to note that the objective here is not to analyse the media as such, but the mainstream *discourse*. While I personally agree with those such as Noam Chomsky, who argue that the media tends to be manipulative of public opinion, the constructions of 'September 11<sup>th</sup>' were almost unique in their dominance and uncontested nature. Accordingly, I have taken the *Dominion* to be reflective of this, and have not set out to assess the extent to which it was also influential in forming the dominant discourse.

Chapter Two will deconstruct 'September 11<sup>th</sup>' as it was identified in Chapter One, and will discuss the relationship of the constructions to the almost uniform Western response. Drawing on the theories of Edelman, Chomsky,<sup>6</sup> and Edward Said, the particular representation of the victims, the events, 'the enemy' and the military

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<sup>2</sup> Murray Edelman, *Constructing the Political Spectacle*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988. Edelman's conceptual framework is influenced by the work of George Herbert Mead, Lev Vygotsky, Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida. Edelman, p. 9.

<sup>3</sup> Edelman, p. 2.

<sup>4</sup> Edelman, p. 104.

<sup>5</sup> Due to space constraints, the human rights implications of changes in domestic anti-terrorism legislation following the events have not been able to be examined here.

<sup>6</sup> Some of the theoretical framework of Chomsky's media analysis has been used here, in slightly modified form, to analyse aspects of the discourse. Herman, Edward S., and Chomsky, Noam, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*, London: Vintage, 1994.

response itself will be carefully analysed. Said's arguments in *Covering Islam*<sup>7</sup> have been used here in analysing the representation of the 'other', however the fundamental thesis of *Covering Islam* is based on that of Said's original work: *Orientalism*.<sup>8</sup>

Chapter Three will consider the response of the New Zealand government. The principal focus of this chapter is on the discourse in the New Zealand political environment, especially that of government Members of Parliament, and how this conformed with or deviated from the mainstream constructions outlined in Chapters Two and Three. International legal opinions on the military campaign will also be discussed here to throw light on both the New Zealand government's response and the military response in general, and it will be shown how, driven by the apparent 'inevitability' of the path to war, the Labour-led government contributed New Zealand troops to an unconstrained, United States-led campaign in Afghanistan.

In Chapter Four, it will be reiterated that, rather than any inherent justification or requirement for war, it was the discursive tide following the events of 11 September 2001 that led to a military campaign against Afghanistan, and that the New Zealand government was caught up in and in turn contributed to this tide. The changing nature of the constructions will also be identified in this chapter. As Edelman says, subjects and objects are continuously evolving constructions of each other, and it will be shown that substantial criticism has now emerged of the 'war on terror' as it relates to Iraq. Yet it will be maintained that while the constructions have evolved, the earlier, dominant constructions – and, indeed, the critical focus on Iraq – have served to obscure both the nature of the war in Afghanistan, as well as other features of the 'war on terror'. It will be argued, finally, that as we proceed in this era following 'September 11<sup>th</sup>' it is both morally and strategically imperative for human rights to be placed at the forefront of international relations.

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<sup>7</sup> Edward Said, *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World*, London: Vintage, 1997.

<sup>8</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1978.

## Chapter One: 'As the Civilised World Watched in Horror ...'

Using the columns of the Wellington *Dominion*, the principal newspaper of the capital city of New Zealand, this chapter will outline the way in which the events of 11 September 2001 and their aftermath were represented throughout the month of September. Firstly, an extreme level of attention was given to the shocking nature of the attacks, and to the plight of the victims and their loved-ones. The suffering that had occurred in America was quickly defined as the suffering of the 'civilised world', and the attacks themselves characterised as an attack on Western civilisation – embodied in the principles and practices of the United States. The enemy responsible for the attacks emerged almost immediately as a particular individual, Osama bin Laden; then as a particular regime, the Taleban. In the lead-up to the military attack on Afghanistan, however, the enemy also began to be characterised as 'Afghans' and 'Muslims'. A continuing threat to the United States was consistently implied through multiple references to (generally unidentified) terrorists, and the sense of foreboding this evoked was heightened by the portrayal of Afghans and Muslims as a threatening 'other'. It had been made immediately clear that the United States' response to the events would involve violent retaliation. While Afghanistan quickly materialised as the initial target, the attacks were identified as having far-reaching and unconstrained ramifications: the United States would 'throw all its might into payback', and exact 'military revenge' throughout the world for years to come. Yet while the response was conveyed as being driven by a desire for revenge and retribution, it was at the same time depicted as an honourable quest for peace and justice: embodied in the initial name of the campaign, 'Operation Infinite Justice'.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Dominion*, 21 September 2001, p. 1.

### **'America's Agony' ... the Agony of the 'Civilised World'**

On 11 September 2001, four United States commercial domestic flights were hijacked. The first two planes targeted and hit the World Trade Center in New York, with roughly fifteen minutes between the strikes. At 8.45 a.m. United States time, American Airlines Flight 11, a Boeing 767 carrying eighty-one passengers and eleven crew, crashed into the north tower of the World Trade Center, tearing a gaping hole in the building and setting it on fire; at 9.03 a.m. the second plane, United Airlines Flight 175, with fifty-six passengers and nine crew aboard, hit the south tower, exploding on impact. An estimated 40-50 thousand people worked in the towers, and many thousands visited daily. At 9.43 a.m., American Airlines Flight 77, carrying sixty-four passengers and crew, hit the Pentagon in Washington D.C.; and at 10.10 a.m. the fourth hijacked airline, United Airlines Flight 93, crashed in Somerset County, Pennsylvania, killing all 40 people on board.<sup>2</sup>

The attacks came as a great shock to the United States government and its citizens – and to the rest of the world. The first reports in the *Dominion* were dominated by expressions of shock and horror, as well as a certain degree of awe at their spectacular nature. 'US UNDER ATTACK, Hijacked planes destroy skyscrapers', said the headlines on 12 September; 'APOCALYPSE NOW', on 13 September. The startling headlines were accompanied by dramatic pictures of the once mighty towers: billowing smoke clouds hovering like nuclear mushrooms over New York City; gaping holes in the ruined towers as they burned, and the mountainous rubble upon their final, total collapse.

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<sup>2</sup> 'September 11: Chronology of terror', CNN.com, 12 September 2001, [www.cnn.com/2001/US/09/11/chronology.attack/](http://www.cnn.com/2001/US/09/11/chronology.attack/).

The focus quickly extended to the victims; their terror, their suffering, and the torment of relatives and friends as they waited desperately for news of their loved-ones. Not only was the actual amount of coverage significant, but the victims were personalised, with what had occurred described and shown in such a way as to generate interest and sympathy. A representative article, 'Terror in towering inferno. Desperate workers fall to their deaths', described the suffering and the chaos – scenes, as one eye-witness described it, of 'broken bodies, pieces of bodies. ... All those people jumping out of the windows who have never done anything to anyone'.<sup>3</sup> The terror of the scene was fully relayed, and accompanying the article was a picture of desperate looking rescue workers rushing a victim from the wreckage. Similarly, on 14 September, an article headed, 'Tombs of the Towers, Desperate search for signs of life', described frantic rescuers searching for survivors, New York feared to be a 'mass tomb', and the scene as looking like a 'war zone'. Accompanying the article were large pictures of the ruins of the World Trade Center.

A focus on relatives and friends of the victims brought attention to the fact that the victims were 'real people', whose lives – and deaths – meant something. The article, 'Tombs of the Towers', for example, ended by talking of 'wrenching scenes played out over and over, [as] panicked family members rushed from hospital seeking missing relatives'.<sup>4</sup> On page two of the same issue, an article, 'Keeping faith at a time of death and waiting', was accompanied by three large pictures of families and friends of victims – sombre, weeping, and holding photos of their loved ones. 'All they could do was wait ...', said the article, describing their feelings as ranging from great sadness to anger. The reader was encouraged to identify with their suffering, to imagine their despair; indeed, one relative was quoted as saying, 'Imagine

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<sup>3</sup> *Dominion*, 13 September, p. 3.

<sup>4</sup> *Dominion*, 14 September, p. 2.



how I'm feeling ...'.<sup>5</sup> Similar articles focusing on both the plight of the victims and the suffering of their loved ones appeared throughout the month.<sup>6</sup>

Articles describing vigils and tributes for the victims also appeared frequently throughout the month, generally accompanied by pictures. On 14 September, 'Park Vigil' showed mourners singing during a service in New York's Washington Square Park.<sup>7</sup> On 15 September, a prominent picture of mourners accompanied an article on a memorial service held at St Paul's Cathedral in Wellington;<sup>8</sup> weeping mourners were also pictured on page one of the same issue's 'Weekend Magazine'. On 19 September, there were pictures of New Zealand firefighters gathering for three minute's silence in honour of their 'fallen comrades'.<sup>9</sup> On 22 September, former US President, Bill Clinton, was shown comforting British Prime Minister Tony Blair's wife, Cherie Blair, at a memorial to firefighters lost in the attacks on the World Trade Center;<sup>10</sup> and on 24 September, 'Stars remember fallen heroes' discussed a celebrity Telethon show held in America, in which actors and singers paid tribute to the victims. The article was accompanied by a picture of the group of celebrities – singing, according to the caption, *America the Beautiful*.<sup>11</sup> 'Thousand candles lit for US victims', appearing in the same issue, described a gathering at Wellington's Civic Square, and was accompanied by a photo of wreaths

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<sup>5</sup> *Dominion*, 14 September, p. 2.

<sup>6</sup> For example: 'People jump from buildings', 12 September, p. 1; 'US Under Attack, Hijacked planes destroy skyscrapers', 12 September, p. 1; 'Kiwi killed on board terror plane', 13 September, p. 1; 'Harrowing calls help put focus on bin Laden', 13 September, p. 2; 'Humanity shines through the chaos', 13 September, p. 3; 'I didn't watch, I didn't see it hit. I just ran', 13 September, p. 5; 'I just took my shoes off and ran – NZ woman', 13 September, p. 5. Of twenty quotes in the 'quotes of the week' section on 13 September, seventeen related to the attacks. Pictures of the ruined Towers were placed alongside the quotes, accompanied by the caption: 'Gone but not forgotten'. The 13 September issue also devoted two full pages to pictures of the attacks and their aftermath. On 15 September, 'Tell them you are about to die' appeared on page one of the 'Weekend Magazine', accompanied by pictures of the burning towers and mourning relatives. On 19 September, '2000 children may have lost a parent' appeared on p. 6; on 21 September, 'Still burning', accompanied by a picture of the burning rubble of the World Trade Center (p. 5); on 25 September, 'Tribute to Kiwi missing after US attacks' (p. 8); and on 28 September, 'Families begin applying for death certificates' (p. 4).

<sup>7</sup> *Dominion*, 14 September, p. 2.

<sup>8</sup> *Dominion*, 15 September, p. 2.

<sup>9</sup> *Dominion*, 19 September, p. 3.

<sup>10</sup> *Dominion*, 22 September, p. 23.

<sup>11</sup> *Dominion*, 24 September, p. 5.

laid outside the United States embassy in Wellington.<sup>12</sup> On 25 September, President Bush and his wife Laura were pictured, hands on hearts as the United States flag was raised at the ending of the official mourning period.<sup>13</sup> 'Memorial Ruin', appearing on 27 September, described plans to save the material remains of the Twin Towers for possible use in a memorial, and was accompanied by a picture of the last standing piece of the World Trade Center – a seven-storey twisted metal ruin.<sup>14</sup> On 17, 18, 19, 20, 24, and 25 September, all of the 'Briefs' articles (columns of very short articles appearing along the left or right-hand side of the *Dominion's* international section) related to the attacks.<sup>15</sup> (*Briefs* articles did not appear at all between 13 and 16 September, apparently to provide more room for coverage of the attacks).

Slogans and emblems highlighting America's suffering also began to appear almost immediately. From 13 September, the words 'America's Agony' were printed prominently on the front page of every issue, as well as each individual page devoted to the attacks. The slogan was accompanied by a type of 'emblem' of the burning towers on each front page from 17 September until 25 September – at which time, in accordance with the growing focus on the military response, the slogan changed to 'Targeting Terror'.

'America's Agony' quickly became the agony of the 'civilised world', and the events became attacks against 'the West'. On 13 September, the *Dominion's* editorial claimed the attacks were blows not only to America but to America's Western allies: to 'those of us who regard ourselves as part of the civilised world'. While the 'civilised world' had watched the attacks

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<sup>12</sup> *Dominion*, 24 September, p. 9.

<sup>13</sup> *Dominion*, 25 September, p. 4.

<sup>14</sup> *Dominion*, 27 September, p. 4.

<sup>15</sup> Articles fairly representative of the continued focus on the victims in the *Dominion's* 'Briefs' sections included: 'Jackson to lead band aid', on 18 September and describing a group of American pop stars, led by Michael Jackson, planning to record a new song to raise US\$50 million for families of the victims; 'Wellington condolence book', on the same date, referred to a condolence book available for signing in Wellington (p. 4). On 21 September, 'Depression rife', described America as a nation suffering from depression following the attacks; 'Patriotic music', on the same date, referred to Americans 'storming record stores' for patriotic music such as Lee Greenwood's *God Bless the USA* (p. 5). On 24 September, 'Queen to make donation', described the Queen as having been 'deeply affected' by the atrocities, and intending to give a donation to a fund for victims of the terrorist attacks (p. 4).



unfold with horror, others, such as 'Iran' and 'Iraq', had rejoiced – only the civilised world felt for the victims and abhorred the attacks, and the West was now faced with a deadly new evil.<sup>16</sup> On 14 September, New Zealand's Prime Minister, too, was quoted describing the attacks as 'like a war against civilisation'.<sup>17</sup> The attacks, she said, were 'utterly incomprehensible'.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, the attacks drew the openly expressed 'shock' and 'disbelief' of both ex-New Zealand Prime Minister Jim Bolger, and former Deputy-Prime Minister Jim Anderton.<sup>19</sup>

In articles and cartoons, the United States was portrayed as an aggrieved victim whose history was, for the most part, either not referred to, or characterised as earnestly benign. The United States' desire to stand up for human rights and to 'curb despots and dictators', the *Dominion's* 13 September editorial maintained, had forced it to adopt the role of 'world policeman'.<sup>20</sup> In doing so, the United States acted for all of us, and was a 'force for freedom and decency'. Reinforcing the image of America as an innocent victim, the political cartoon of the day, shown on the same page as the editorial, was of a weeping 'Uncle Sam' being squeezed by a large, black hand of 'terrorism'.<sup>21</sup> Similarly, an article on the following page described the United States as having acted as a 'force for moderation' in the Middle East.<sup>22</sup> It was, indeed, this that 'they' wanted to destroy. *They* hated decency, they hated freedom, and, thus, they hated us. While this particular article hinted at the notion by stating that the intention of the terrorists had 'no doubt' been to destroy the moderating force of the United States, a reprinted article from the *New York Post* on 15 September, quoting President George Bush, asserted unequivocally that America had been attacked because it was a

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<sup>16</sup> *Dominion*, 13 September, p. 8.

<sup>17</sup> *Dominion*, 14 September, p. 5.

<sup>18</sup> *Dominion*, 13 September, p. 3.

<sup>19</sup> *Dominion*, 13 September, pp. 3-4.

<sup>20</sup> It was the Americans, the editorial claimed, that had forced Saddam Hussein out of Kuwait; it was the Americans, through Nato, that had forced an end to the 'frightful barbarism' of ethnic cleansing in the Balkans; and it was the 'tacit support' of the Americans that had enabled Australia and New Zealand 'to act with some confidence' over East Timor.

*Dominion*, 13 September, p. 8.

<sup>21</sup> *Dominion*, 13 September, p. 8.

<sup>22</sup> *Dominion*, 13 September, p. 9.

'beacon of freedom' in the world.<sup>23</sup> An article by left-wing political commentator Chris Trotter, in his weekly column on 14 September, however, referred to the hostility in which Westerners were held by the rest of the world. While we (and nowhere more so than in the United States) saw ourselves as 'the beleaguered guardians of freedom and democracy, pacesetters in the race for technological salvation, and enlightened champions of rational economic organisation', in the 'desiccated scrublands of Somalia'; the 'fetid slums of Cairo', the 'claustrophobic towns of the West Bank and the squalid refugee camps of Gaza', the 'bombed cities of Iraq', and the 'trampled villages of Chechnya', the West wore a different face, he said. And where the 'dazzling writ of global prosperity' did not run, the West and its leader, the United States, were regarded as 'the great Satan'.<sup>24</sup>

### **Who is the Enemy?**

Who 'they' (the perpetrators) were was not initially clear. While Osama bin Laden was focused on almost immediately as a suspect, this coincided with expressions of uncertainty. In 'Blow from a secret enemy', on 13 September, the enemy was referred to as one which 'lurk[ed] in the obscure shadows'.<sup>25</sup> On 14 September, an article headed, 'Proud giant felled by evil genius', asked: who is the enemy? Unlike the response to Pearl Harbour, in which the United States was able to concentrate its fury on a real, live foe, now there was no enemy to see – to stand up and fight, 'toe-to-toe'. Osama bin Laden, it said, 'has no Luftwaffe to shoot down, no submarines to sink, no marching army to wear down by attrition'. Now, as the United States roused itself in retribution, the enemy was not there. The hijackers' leaders were 'but shadows'; Osama bin Laden may be their ultimate leader, or he may not. He may be in Afghanistan; he may not. Where would the US turn, then, to exact the revenge that its President must deliver: 'Who are these people?' Conveying the same message, the *Dominion's* political cartoon of the day showed an angry but bewildered 'Uncle Sam', guns in holster, staring at 'the

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<sup>23</sup> *Dominion*, 15 September, p. 12.

<sup>24</sup> *Dominion*, 14 September, p. 10.

<sup>25</sup> *Dominion*, 13 September, p. 9.

world' (a globe held in his hand), trying desperately to locate 'the enemy'.<sup>26</sup> The *Dominion's* editorial, headed, 'But how will they respond?', urged that, while the 'fingerprints' on the attacks appeared to point to bin Laden, the United States should exercise caution in its response – while it was clearly preparing for war, 'war with whom?', it asked.<sup>27</sup>

Interwoven with early references to the unknown, or uncertain, identity of the enemy there was, simultaneously, a focus on Osama bin Laden. On 12 September, bin Laden had been referred to (according to quoted statements of the editor of the *al-Quds al-Arabi* newspaper) as 'almost certainly' responsible for the attacks. On 13 September, Osama bin Laden was being described as the 'main suspect'; and by 14 September, he had become 'prime suspect', and the 'wide net' that had apparently been cast by investigators hunting for those responsible was said to be increasingly centring on him.<sup>28</sup> The emphasis on bin Laden continued throughout the month, and while he was never referred to explicitly as anything other than 'suspect' it was, in various ways – in words, cartoons, and through the repeated appearance of his photographed image – implied that he was responsible. As early as 13 September, a picture of bin Laden appeared directly juxtaposed against a picture of one of the victims, Barbara Olsen – who, fresh-faced and smiling at the camera contrasted starkly with bin Laden who, dark-faced, turbaned, and with eyes looking side-ways appeared sinister, especially in conjunction with the accompanying text linking him with the attacks. Titled, 'Harrowing calls help put focus on bin Laden', the captions under the respective pictures stated: 'Bin Laden ... early information links him to crashes', and 'Mrs Olson ... said attackers used knifelike instruments'.<sup>29</sup> On 14 September, a large picture of

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<sup>26</sup> *Dominion*, 14 September, p. 3.

<sup>27</sup> *Dominion*, 14 September, p. 3.

<sup>28</sup> *Dominion*, 14 September, p. 2.

<sup>29</sup> While the heading stated that '[h]arrowing calls' had 'put the focus on bin Laden', in fact, the article contained no information at all to support the claim. Beginning by asserting that American officials were piecing together a case linking bin Laden to the attacks aided by an intercept of communications between his 'supporters' and cellphone calls from 'victims on the airliners before they crashed', the article went on merely to discuss various phone calls that had been made by victims, and ended with a statement that, according to 'a Palestinian', bin Laden had congratulated the people who had carried out the attacks. *Dominion*, 13 September, p. 2.

bin Laden's face appeared with an article discussing his elusive past and his 'formidable army of fanatical followers'.<sup>30</sup> His image again appeared on 17 September, with three photo shots under the heading, 'Wanted by Interpol';<sup>31</sup> on 25 September, on a poster held by protesting Pakistani Muslims, accompanying an article discussing 'the world and its woes according to Osama bin Laden';<sup>32</sup> and on 26 September, with a front-page article headed, 'Bin Laden rallies Muslims for war'.<sup>33</sup>

Another way in which bin Laden was conveyed as the enemy was through a theme of 'everybody knows' (that bin Laden was the perpetrator), which contributed to an overall representation of bin Laden as guilty. The *Dominion's* political cartoon of 21 September, for example, showed a large, jig-saw puzzle picture of bin Laden. Two peripheral jig-saw pieces were missing from the picture, but bin Laden's face was patently clear. A dopey/untrustworthy-looking Afghan representing 'the Taleban' (he bore the words 'Taleban' across his front), was shown standing in front of the picture saying, 'We'll get him only if a full picture of bin Laden's involvement emerges'. The implication was, clearly, that bin Laden was the man – and that everybody knew it, despite the Taleban's ridiculous requests for 'evidence'.<sup>34</sup> Articles and quoted statements also referred to bin Laden, and the attacks, as if he were the perpetrator. On 21 September, an article stated that the week's attacks had 'demonstrated' that bin Laden (and his 'Afghan veterans') had extended their terrorist operations into America.<sup>35</sup> Also appearing on 21 September was political commentator Chris Trotter's column which, despite the fact that bin Laden remained merely a suspect, referred to 'bin Laden's attacks on the United States'. A quote by New Zealand Foreign Minister, Phil Goff, on 29 September (after a trip to Washington DC) epitomised the theme: 'There's nobody that I've talked to in any country that

<sup>30</sup> *Dominion*, 14 September, p. 11.

<sup>31</sup> *Dominion*, 17 September, p. 4.

<sup>32</sup> *Dominion*, 25 September, p. 7.

<sup>33</sup> *Dominion*, 26 September, p. 1.

<sup>34</sup> *Dominion*, 21 September, p. 12. Similarly, on 17 September, the Taleban was referred to as 'defying outraged world opinion' in defending bin Laden and claiming that the United States had failed to provide evidence (p. 4).

<sup>35</sup> *Dominion*, 15 September, p. 6.

has any thoughts that there is an organisation other than bin Laden's that's capable of carrying out what happened on September 11'.<sup>36</sup>

In addition to the theme of 'everybody knows', it was also implied from an early stage that bin Laden would be a military target of the West, and that this was natural and appropriate – that it should be right that he be targeted (indeed, killed, or obliterated), correspondingly implied that he was guilty. The *Dominion's* political cartoon of 15 September, for example, depicted a rocket-bomb about to blow up a make-shift tent covered by sand-bags.<sup>37</sup> A hapless-looking Taleban/Afghan character was shown outside, saying '... your wake-up call Mr bin Laden'. On 17 September, the *Dominion's* political cartoon again implied that it was right that bin Laden (and the Taleban in this case) should be killed; or, at least, that the US should want to do this. Showing a health worker in a blood donation clinic asking 'Uncle Sam' whether he wanted to donate blood, 'Uncle Sam', holding up pictures of bin Laden and the Taleban, was saying: 'Yeah – theirs!'.<sup>38</sup> On 19 September, the *Dominion's* political cartoon corresponded with its front page article, in which George Bush was quoted proclaiming that the United States wanted bin Laden 'dead or alive'.<sup>39</sup> The cartoon depicted a determined, grinning 'Uncle Sam', complete with 'wild Western' hat and gear, 'all fired up' and with both hands ready to grab the guns from his well-equipped holsters, next to a poster which showed bin Laden under the words: 'WANTED Dead or Alive'.

Quickly emerging alongside bin Laden as 'the enemy' was Afghanistan's Taleban regime. As with bin Laden, the Taleban began to be portrayed as a military target – again, conveyed as entirely natural, legitimate and appropriate, this also had the effect of according the Taleban perpetrator/enemy status, especially in conjunction with the emphasis on their negative characteristics.<sup>40</sup> The focus on the regime as associated with violence and terror was indeed another way in which they were portrayed as

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<sup>36</sup> *Dominion*, 29 September, p. 2.

<sup>37</sup> *Dominion*, 15 September, p. 12.

<sup>38</sup> *Dominion*, 17 September, p. 8.

<sup>39</sup> *Dominion*, 19 September, p. 10.

<sup>40</sup> The portrayals of the Taleban as a military target will be referred to later in the chapter, when the military response is discussed.

the enemy. Images of armed Taleban appeared frequently: on 15 September, for example, a picture of a 'Taleban soldier', shown holding a large gun, accompanied an article headed, 'The birthplace of terror';<sup>41</sup> an armed Taleban soldier was shown with an article on 27 September, headed, 'Bin Laden and his friends at the top'.<sup>42</sup> On the front page of the *Dominion's* 20 September issue, a Taleban soldier armed with what was described as a 'rocket-propelled grenade launcher' was shown. Again, on the front page of the 'Weekend Magazine' on 29 September, an article on Afghanistan was accompanied by a picture of two Afghans hanging from makeshift gallows – having been 'strung up', the caption stated, by the Taleban.<sup>43</sup> Pictured next to this was a 'Taleban fighter' – firing, according to the caption, Soviet-built artillery. The Taleban fighter was shown staring into the camera, a large weapon trailing ominously behind him, with sand and smoke rising and swirling somewhat dramatically around the two. On 26 September, the *Dominion's* editorial talked scathingly of the 'horrifying hardships these fundamentalist zealots' had imposed on the Afghan people – particularly their women. Their edicts, it said, were like something from the dark ages, and even neighbouring Islamic nations were embarrassed by their excesses.<sup>44</sup>

By 15 September, 'Afghans' had also begun to be moulded into the representation of the enemy, in the sense that they were portrayed, like the Taleban, as vicious and fearsome, and also by way of implicit suggestions that 'they' were responsible for the attacks. A lengthy article on 15 September, headed, 'The birthplace of terror',<sup>45</sup> described Afghanistan as harbouring a 'nest of vipers' which, for the past twenty years, had spread 'terrorist poison' throughout the world. Discussing the 'astonishingly successful' holy war against the Soviet Union in the 1970s, the article described Afghans as a 'fierce, warrior people'. Immediately below, an article headed, 'Deadly warrior tribes kept invaders at bay', described Afghanistan as 'the graveyard

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<sup>41</sup> *Dominion*, 15 September, p. 13.

<sup>42</sup> *Dominion*, 27 September, p. 9.

<sup>43</sup> *Dominion*, 29 September, 'Weekend Magazine', p. 1.

<sup>44</sup> *Dominion*, 26 September, p. 12.

<sup>45</sup> *Dominion*, 15 September, p. 6.



of invading armies'. Deadly in terrain and vengeful in retribution, no country had ever proved so difficult to conquer, it claimed: the multitudes who had attempted such a feat over history had found their graves in the mountains of 'Asia's most savage country'.<sup>46</sup>

As the United States invasion of Afghanistan became imminent, 'Americans love Pepsi-Cola, but we love death', appeared on 25 September.<sup>47</sup> Its opening statement, printed in large, bold letters, declared, 'The veteran mountain fighters of Afghanistan's Mujahedin actually relish the prospect of a United States attack'. Describing a particular setting in Peshawar where the journalist, David Blair, had spoken with two Afghan men, the article referred to 'garish posters' emblazoned with AK47 assault rifles and the slogan 'jihad is our existence' – which, apparently, matched exactly the mood of the 'intense, bearded figures' seated beneath them.<sup>48</sup> Described as exchanging memories of their victory in the war against the Soviet Union with 'delight' and 'relish', Maulana Inyadullah was quoted as saying that he and his 'fellow Afghans' actually looked forward to the prospect of an American attack; that war was their 'best hobby'. 'The sound of guns firing is like music for us', the Maulana was quoted as saying: 'We have no other way except jihad'.

Further reinforcing the association of Afghans with fanaticism and violence, 'Chilling tales from an Afghan terror training camp', appearing on 27 September (directly beneath an article on the threat of bio-terrorism – described as America's 'worst nightmare'), talked of Afghans at training camps learning 'how to assassinate, commit sabotage, unleash poisons and build explosives'.<sup>49</sup> On 29 September, an article in the *Dominion's* 'Weekend Magazine' again advanced the notion of 'the Afghan' as brutal and savage.

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<sup>46</sup> *Dominion*, 15 September, p. 6.

<sup>47</sup> *Dominion*, 25 September, p. 5.

<sup>48</sup> The two men were portrayed as railing against 'the evils of the West' – the twin forces of 'Judaism and America' – with 'messianic zeal'. In fact, the individual quoted, Maulana Inyadullah, had been at pains to point out that it was the United States *government* that was resented, as compared with the American people – whom, as Christians, they had nothing against. Blair, however, dismissed the claim as an attempt to 'make a good impression on a Western visitor'.

<sup>49</sup> *Dominion*, 27 September, p. 4.

Headed, 'A way of life', the article launched immediately into accounts by former SAS veteran, Tom Carew, of the Afghan people's 'gut-turning barbarism' – which he encountered, the article claimed, as he trained the mujahedin during their fight against the Russians.<sup>50</sup> 'You see a lot of sickening sights in the SAS', Carew was quoted as saying, 'an awful lot', but while he could stomach most things, what he saw in Afghanistan was 'truly nauseating'. Having said that he had never in all his experience seen barbarity of the kind he witnessed in Afghanistan,<sup>51</sup> 'for the Afghans', such sights were commonplace. 'Every [Afghan] man is a fighter', he said, adding that there was little distinction in Afghanistan between a mujahedin and a civilian. 'The Afghans' took positive delight in their barbaric practices, and would indeed be a 'formidable foe' against any Western intervention – war, he said, was simply their 'way of life'.

That the majority of Afghans were, at the time, at risk of death through starvation was omitted in articles like these, and generally only mentioned on the perimeters of the media coverage.<sup>52</sup> Several exceptions to this did occur towards the end of September; however the issues were discussed mainly in the context of an association with New Zealand. On 24 September, an article headed 'NZ Afghans fear for relatives', described a New Zealand Afghan

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<sup>50</sup> *Dominion*, 29 September, p. 12.

<sup>51</sup> While it was mentioned that Carew had served in Northern Ireland, no other indication was given as to how broad or extensive his SAS experience might have been.

<sup>52</sup> Throughout September, three small articles touched briefly on the humanitarian risk facing the people of Afghanistan. On 17 September, the largest, 'Kabul empties as Afghans flee' (appearing under the caption 'AMERICA'S AGONY'), referred to Afghans fleeing the country along with Western aid agencies, and was accompanied of a picture of Afghan refugees. Implying that it was the Taleban that was the sole cause of the mass flight, the 'hardline Taleban' were described as nevertheless remaining 'unbowed' (p. 4). On 25 September, a tiny article headed 'Ban threatens relief work', appearing at the bottom of page 5, maintained that relief work was under threat in Afghanistan; as a consequence of the Taleban's actions. In one sentence, it was also stated that 'millions face[d] starvation', however, there was no elaboration or further reference to the matter in the article (p. 5). On 29 September, in a small article which focused principally on the evils of the Taleban and the developing American campaign against Osama bin Laden (who President Bush was quoted as calling an 'evil man', with 'evil goals', who 'hated freedom' and had 'declared war on innocent people'), referred briefly to a warning from United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Mary Robinson, that action in Afghanistan could send up to 1.5 million people fleeing into neighbouring countries, and who had called on the international community to provide massive assistance to deal with what could be the 'biggest humanitarian crisis since war in Kosovo' (p. 25).



refugee's concerns for his relatives and others left in Afghanistan.<sup>53</sup> 'The situation is very sad and difficult in Afghanistan', Mohammad Baghlani, looking sad and concerned in a photograph, was quoted as saying. Afghans were dying, he said, and wanted to leave 'the disease, fighting, poverty and no food'. On 25 September, an article appeared titled, 'NZ aid worker upset to leave friends behind', in which a New Zealander who had fled Afghanistan with his family talked of their agony at leaving their friends to an uncertain fate.<sup>54</sup> On the same date, the *Dominion's* political cartoon also portrayed Afghanistan's vulnerability: 'Uncle Sam' was shown hands on hips, saying 'We're gonna blast ya back to the stone age!' An Afghan man and woman were pictured standing behind a sign saying 'Afghanistan', with the woman saying 'We're already there ...'.<sup>55</sup> The perilous plight of the people of Afghanistan in the lead-up to the war was, however, given minimal attention. The focus on their apparently inherent brutality resulted in the main impression being of a savage and threatening enemy, especially in conjunction with the focus on the other so-depicted 'enemies' – which, along with Osama bin Laden, the Taleban, and Afghans, also began to include Muslims in general.

On 15 September, an article reprinted from the London *Sun* had argued that if the terrorists were 'Islamic fanatics' then the world must not make the mistake of condemning all Muslims. Islam was not an evil religion but one of peace and discipline, it said – the fanatics distorted the Koran to justify their bloody outrages and cruel, oppressive regimes.<sup>56</sup> From 19 September, however, Muslims were consistently portrayed as a violent, threatening enemy. With a front-page article on 19 September discussing the military build-up and the imminence of war, was a large picture of protesting Pakistani Muslims. The protestors were waving anti-American signs and, according to the caption, chanting anti-American slogans. Protesting Muslim Pakistanis were again pictured on page four of the 24 September issue; clearly angry, and pictured

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<sup>53</sup> *Dominion*, 24 September, p. 2.

<sup>54</sup> *Dominion*, 25 September, p. 8.

<sup>55</sup> *Dominion*, 25 September, p. 6.

<sup>56</sup> *Dominion*, 15 September, p. 12.

with an article headed, 'Bin Laden 'lying low', which asked where bin Laden might be hiding. There was no discussion in either of the articles of the reasons for the protests. In fact, there was no apparent reason at all for the appearance of the pictures given that they did not correspond with the nature of the article, which focused on the military build-up, and failed to discuss the significance or relevance of Pakistan to the situation.

The front page on September 25 was, again, dominated by a very large picture of protesting Pakistani Muslims – this time shown waving United States flags, one of which was being burned. The flames and black smoke surrounding the burning flag took up almost half the picture, giving a dramatic, ominous effect. The caption read: 'Pro-Taleban protestors burn a US flag during a protest in Lahore, Pakistan'. Again, however, there was no discussion of the reasons for the protest (other than the protestors being labelled 'pro-Taleban' in the caption), and neither was Pakistan the subject of the article the photograph accompanied – which, again, focused principally on the military build-up.<sup>57</sup> The impression given that 'Muslims' were the enemy was further reinforced by the nature of the article, which discussed the imminence of war, along with its large headline: 'Targeting Terrorism, The Noose Tightens' – i.e. *this* was the terrorist enemy that was being targeted. Page seven of the same issue carried another large picture of protesting Pakistani Muslims, with an almost full-page article on Osama bin Laden, headed, 'A black day for America'. The protestors were shown holding up a picture of bin Laden, and making what the caption described as victory signs.

The front page of 26 September carried yet another picture of protesting Pakistani Muslims. Here, the pictured Muslims were conveyed even more strongly as being associated with Osama bin Laden – in fact, as being directly instructed by him. The picture of the protestors was placed opposite a separate photo of bin Laden who, due to the way the photo was positioned,

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<sup>57</sup> At the end of the article, two paragraphs (of seventeen) referred briefly to Pakistan (but not the protestors), stating that a United States military team had arrived in the country and was consulting with the Pakistani Government regarding President Musharraf's pledge to support the United States.

appeared to be actually facing the crowd of Pakistanis. The header, appearing in large, bold type, was: “Crush the infidel”, Bin Laden rallies Muslims for war’. While the caption under bin Laden referred to the photo as undated, the overall impression given was that of bin Laden actively and presently directing the protestors, who, according to the caption, had their ‘hands up for war’ – registering their vote ‘for a “holy war” against the US’. An association of the protestors with the attacks was further implied by the heavy emphasis on ‘terror’ throughout the article: for example, the header of ‘Targeting Terror’; the caption under bin Laden and an associate, headed, ‘Faces of Terror’; and a prominent picture of bin Laden’s signature – labelled ‘Mark of Terror’. The Pakistani context was, again, largely omitted from the text.<sup>58</sup>

The slightest glimpse of what might, at least in part, have been motivating the protestors had been indicated by the caption on the front page on 19 September, which had said that the protestors were chanting anti-American slogans ‘after Pakistan said it would help the United States against the Taleban’. In the same issue, an article on page ten discussed some of the actual background. In ‘Pakistan leader faces threat of civil war’, Pakistan’s President, General Pervaiz Musharraf, having aligned himself with the United States, was described as having risked trouble with not only ‘fundamentalist groups’ in Pakistan but also some of his own corps commanders, who viewed Washington as Islam’s enemy. The article also drew attention to the fact that even ‘moderate Pakistanis’ were averse to the idea of United States troops using Pakistan as a base. Describing ‘Abdullah’, 26 years old and ‘as modern in outlook as people get in Peshawar’ (jean-wearing, working for a mobile phone company, and sans facial hair), the article quoted him as saying that it was wrong for a Muslim country to help anyone attack another Muslim country. Like ‘other moderates’, Abdullah also wanted the United States to present credible evidence of bin Laden’s involvement in the attacks before

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<sup>58</sup> Pakistan was given a brief mention half-way through the article, where it was suggested that bin Laden had asked Muslims in Pakistan to ‘rise to the defence of Islam’ against ‘the new Jewish crusader campaign led by the biggest crusader Bush under the banner of the cross’. It was then suggested that Pakistan, like Saudi Arabia, could be about to cut ties with Afghanistan. *Dominion*, 26 September, p. 1.

taking action – no one in Peshawar, the article said, seemed able to believe that bin Laden could have instigated the attacks. Appearing away from the numerous pictures of protestors, however, and as the sole article to give an insight into what might lie behind their actions, while providing some all-important context, the article did not detract significantly from the overall impression of irrational and unwarranted behaviour on the part of the protestors.

Out of context, the angry and militant appearance of the protestors not only gave an impression of irrationality, but also provided an image of a kind of threat. A continuing threat was also implied in the characterisations of bin Laden, the Taleban, and, particularly, ‘the Afghans’; but, in addition to this, through repeated references to threats from the enemy unknown. On 15 September, a front-page article headed, ‘Police thwart two more hijackings’, described up to ten people of Middle Eastern descent having been detained at Kennedy Airport in New York, and was accompanied by a photo of a Middle Eastern-looking man detained there. Despite the sensational heading, however, the article reported only that authorities *might* have thwarted two separate hijacking attempts. On 17 September, ‘Spectre raised of germ war, or worse’, referred to a looming threat of biological or chemical attack. The fear of such an attack sent ‘shivers down your back’, Christopher Shays, head of the United States House Government Reform Subcommittee on National Security, was quoted as saying, while emphasising that it was not a question of *if* there would be a biological or chemical weapons attack but *when*, and of what magnitude. While less likely, even nuclear attacks remained a possibility, Shays was quoted as saying.<sup>59</sup>

The ‘real fear now’ was ‘chemical’, a front-page article quoted an unidentified United States government adviser as saying on 24 September. The same article also referred to Japan’s news agency, Jiji, as having quoted (unidentified) United States sources predicting there would be a second round of attacks by the end of the week; this time, however, the means of terrorism

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<sup>59</sup> *Dominion*, 17 September, p. 8.

would be even 'more cruel and shocking'. The article nevertheless acknowledged that the United States embassy in Tokyo would not confirm the report, and that the FBI had neither seen the report nor wished to comment on it. An article on page four of the same issue, headed, 'Allies warned of attacks this week', referred to the same claims by Jiji news agency – describing them more extensively, however, and mentioning only at the very end of the article that the FBI had not seen or commented on the report.<sup>60</sup>

Further attention was drawn to an apparent chemical threat in, 'Bio-terrorism: America's 'worst nightmare'', on 27 September which was about preventative measures taken in America subsequent to the attacks.<sup>61</sup> Accompanying the article were large, elaborate diagrams outlining the effect on the human body of biological and chemical weapons such as anthrax, botulism, small pox, plague, mustard gas, and sarin. 'Bogus licences raise chemical attack fear' appeared on the front page on 28 September, described unidentified investigators as fearing they may have uncovered evidence of a plot to wage chemical warfare in the United States. Twenty men had been arrested on charges involving bogus licences to transport hazardous materials and, referring to unidentified officials, the article said that a chemical attack would 'most likely' be delivered in the form of a truck bomb. The same article also quoted United States Attorney-General, John Ashcroft, as telling Congress that terrorism was a 'clear and present danger to Americans today', and that intelligence information available to the FBI indicated the 'potential for additional terrorist incidents'.<sup>62</sup> On page two of the same issue, New Zealand Foreign Minister, Phil Goff, described the 'new-generation wave of terrorist attacks' as the 'greatest threat to international security'.<sup>63</sup> The notion of terrorist plots continuously underway or being planned was also conveyed in 'Global manhunt foils plotters' which suggested that the United States government had foiled two further terrorist attacks and that evidence had been

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<sup>60</sup> *Dominion*, 24 September, p. 4.

<sup>61</sup> *Dominion*, 27 September, p. 4.

<sup>62</sup> *Dominion*, 28 September, p. 18.

<sup>63</sup> *Dominion*, 28 September, p. 19.

gathered about several other plots to harm United States interests.<sup>64</sup> 'New York 'a police state now'', also on 29 September, described New York as a city 'under siege', with its leaders 'bracing themselves' for a second assault – this time, 'possibly a chemical or biological attack'.<sup>65</sup>

### **'The Lion Roars'**

That the response to the attacks would involve violence was immediately apparent. No one would want to get in the path of the 'lion in his roar', it was claimed on 13 September;<sup>66</sup> the culprits would be punished, United States defence officials were quoted as saying on 14 September, with the 'very large hammer' that the United States would bring to bear – that was not a threat, one official said: it was 'a fact'.<sup>67</sup> Between 13 and 17 September, headlines such as: 'Bush vows to hunt down terrorists';<sup>68</sup> 'US threatens hammer of vengeance';<sup>69</sup> 'US to throw all its might into payback';<sup>70</sup> 'America mourns victims, plans retribution';<sup>71</sup> and 'US ready to 'smoke out'' enemies',<sup>72</sup> all appeared prominently. As the latter article claimed, quoting George Bush, the United States was getting ready to smoke its enemies 'out of their holes'. Epitomising the supportive tone in which the retaliatory response was reported was, 'Time to fight back', on 15 September. Reprinted from the *New York Post*, the article argued that while it was not altogether certain who had carried out the attacks, to know in a 'general sense' (i.e., motive, capability and will) was enough. Now was the time, it argued, for a 'random application of American power'; tangible attacks on targets of opportunity – and that was 'just for starters'.<sup>73</sup> Similarly, a headline on 17 September claimed, 'Suddenly

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<sup>64</sup> *Dominion*, 29 September, p. 23.

<sup>65</sup> *Dominion*, 29 September, p. 20.

<sup>66</sup> *Dominion*, 13 September, p. 9.

<sup>67</sup> *Dominion*, 14 September, p. 2.

<sup>68</sup> *Dominion*, 13 September, p. 5.

<sup>69</sup> *Dominion*, 14 September, p. 2.

<sup>70</sup> *Dominion*, 15 September, p. 1.

<sup>71</sup> *Dominion*, 15 September, p. 2.

<sup>72</sup> *Dominion*, 17 September, p. 1.

<sup>73</sup> *Dominion*, 15 September, p. 12.



Bush must be warrior president' – did he have 'the right stuff', the article asked.<sup>74</sup>

On a more specific note, on 15 September a front-page article outlined that plans for a United States military campaign would involve forces on land, sea, and in the air, and would potentially include the use of elite special forces and long-range bombing strikes – a campaign that would continue, Deputy-Defence Secretary, Paul Wolfowitz, was quoted as saying, until the 'roots of terrorism were destroyed'. It was also reported on the same date that Congress was close to approving the launching of 'military strikes in retaliation for the attacks' (with President Bush vowing to 'whip terrorism', and pledging to wage 'the first war of the 21<sup>st</sup> century').<sup>75</sup> It was not, however, until 17 September that Afghanistan began to emerge as an actual target of the response; with a front-page article describing the United States as readying its forces to 'strike back' at those behind the attacks – 'while Afghanistan's hardline Taleban rulers called on Muslims to start a 'holy war' if attacked by the West'. On page four of the same issue, an article also referred to Westerners and Afghans fleeing Afghanistan ahead of 'expected United States attacks on Osama bin Laden and his Taleban protectors'.<sup>76</sup>

From this point, Afghanistan was depicted more and more clearly as the target of the fast-approaching military response. On 18 September, 'Striking back', appearing with a large military map, considered ways in which the United States might best launch an attack on Afghanistan.<sup>77</sup> On 20 September, a front-page article outlined that, should the Taleban not hand bin Laden over to the United States, it would face the 'full wrath of the world's most powerful armed forces'. That the Taleban's target status was already becoming a *fait accompli*, however, was indicated by the article, 'How the Taleban might be destroyed' – appearing on the same day, accompanied by a military map.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> *Dominion*, 17 September, p. 5.

<sup>75</sup> *Dominion*, 15 September, p. 2.

<sup>76</sup> *Dominion*, 17 September, p. 4.

<sup>77</sup> *Dominion*, 18 September, p. 9.

<sup>78</sup> *Dominion*, 20 September, p. 4.

On 21 September, the front-page article, 'US air armada poised to strike', described the United States as ready to attack Afghanistan and as not interested in the Taleban's attempts to negotiate a possible hand-over of Osama bin Laden: the President had rejected the offer of talks, it said, and made clear that it was 'time for actions, not negotiations'.<sup>79</sup> A front-page picture on 22 September of a resolute-looking George Bush flanked by clapping officials was supported by the caption, 'The hour is coming'. 'Be ready', the President was quoted as saying, to thunderous applause: 'The hour is coming when America will act, and you will make us proud'.<sup>80</sup>

In the lead-up to the military campaign in Afghanistan only three, small articles were in any way questioning of the planned military action. On 20 September (under the much larger article, 'How the Taleban might be destroyed'), an article headed, 'US urged to limit campaign', described European diplomats and officials as uncomfortable with the planned United States intervention. The danger, one diplomat was quoted as saying, was that Washington may be in 'over-kill mode, without realising the complexities of Afghanistan and the potential to destabilise the region'.<sup>81</sup> On 22 September, 'Goff urges US restraint, not revenge', described New Zealand Foreign Minister, Phil Goff, as calling for moderation in the United States response.<sup>82</sup> While United States polls suggested overwhelming support for military retaliation, he said, the consequences of such action needed to be considered; indiscriminate retaliation would risk turning 'murderers into martyrs', and serve to undermine the international effort against terrorism. The third article, reprinted from an Arab newspaper (Dubai's *Gulf News*), urged that proof be provided before any military attack.<sup>83</sup> Featuring a little more prominently, protestors gathered in Wellington were pictured (beneath a picture of a United States attack aircraft leaving for the Mediterranean) on the front-page of the 21 September issue. Shown holding signs such as, 'Don't support bombing

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<sup>79</sup> *Dominion*, 21 September, p. 1.

<sup>80</sup> *Dominion*, 22 September, p. 1.

<sup>81</sup> *Dominion*, 20 September, p. 4.

<sup>82</sup> *Dominion*, 22 September, p. 4.

<sup>83</sup> *Dominion*, 29 September, p. 14.



my precious friend', and 'Moderation', the picture was nevertheless not accompanied by a proper article – rather, there was simply an extended caption which referred to the protesters' wish that there be no military response to the attacks. An article on 20 September, headed, 'Still keeping left', also referred to Green MP Keith Locke's opposition to military action against Afghanistan. The article's principal focus, however, was the leftist political ideology and history of the Green MP rather than the war against Afghanistan – on which Locke naturally had views, and which the article referred to.<sup>84</sup>

Of comparatively low prominence, the articles urging caution or shedding doubt on the need or justification for war did not detract from the overwhelmingly supportive depiction of the planned military action, despite the fact that the actual objectives of the action were not clear. On 25 September, a front-page article, headed, 'The Noose Tightens', reported that only now was the United States administration exploring ways to 'topple' the Taleban – in contrast, the article said, to its statements the previous week that it did not intend to overthrow the regime. Now, the President's National Security Advisor, Condoleezza Rice, was quoted as saying that the people of Afghanistan would be better off without the 'very repressive and terrible' regime.<sup>85</sup> That the military objective was still not clear, however, was implied in the following day's editorial, which argued that the Taleban was 'so interconnected with bin Laden's al Qaeda network' that the West 'could assist the northern Afghanis' in their 'struggle with the Taleban'. Musing that if the outcome of this was the overthrow of the Taleban (and the destruction of al

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<sup>84</sup> *Dominion*, 20 September, p. 9. In the very early aftermath of the attacks, on 14 September, the *Dominion*'s editorial, headed, 'But how will they respond?' had urged caution in the response. While some form of surgical strike was essential, it had argued, sending Cruise missiles to blast targets in Afghanistan would bomb the benighted country back into the stone-age and further increase bin Laden and the Taleban's standing in the Muslim world (p. 10). As the campaign progressed, however, the *Dominion*'s editorials expressed full support for the military response – epitomised in the 26 September edition's 'Need to fight fire with fire', which described the American response as 'impeccable' (p. 12).

<sup>85</sup> *Dominion*, 25 September, p. 1.

Qaeda), the editorial argued that this would be 'so much the better' – no-one would lament for too long the end of those 'mad mullahs and their forces'.<sup>86</sup>

The positive and 'ready-for-action' tone of the majority of articles was not subdued even by the acknowledged uncertainty as to where bin Laden actually was. On 26 September, a front-page article said bin Laden's whereabouts 'remained a mystery'; on 27 September, another front-page article, 'US attack 'within a week'', described the action as about to commence while also stating that military planners nevertheless had 'little idea where Osama bin Laden was hiding'. Again, on 25 September, in 'The noose Tightens', bin Laden's whereabouts were described as being a 'matter of dispute'.<sup>87</sup>

Moreover, while a military response had been clearly identified from as early as 15 September, it was still being fleetingly implied that the actual status of the enemy was not certain. On that same date, Defence Secretary, Donald Rumsfeld, had been quoted as saying that 'at the right moment', the United States would decide what it intended to do 'by way of characterising individuals like Osama bin Laden and whether or not in our judgment they have or do not have a direct relationship to [the terrorist attacks]' – but that that time had not yet come. On 17 September, in an article promoting the need for a military response, the enemy was referred to as one who 'refuses to show his face'.<sup>88</sup> That the enemy was not necessarily known was again indicated in an article on 22 September (which, again, was promoting the need for war), in which the enemy was described as having been identified 'so far largely by vivid description rather than name'.<sup>89</sup> Even more curious was an article appearing at the very end of the month. Headed, 'Hijackers linked to bin Laden', it reported that United States law enforcement officials had said that 'some of the hijackers' had links to bin Laden and al Qaeda. While other United States administration officials had long insisted that bin Laden was

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<sup>86</sup> *Dominion*, 26 September, p. 12.

<sup>87</sup> *Dominion*, 25 September, p. 1.

<sup>88</sup> *Dominion*, 17 September, p. 5.

<sup>89</sup> *Dominion*, 22 September, 'Weekend Magazine', p. 2. The reference was in the context of a supportive discussion of the developing war. The article was focused on two of the president's 'closest advisers' (Dick Cheney and Colin Powell), on whom it said the success of the 'first war of the 21<sup>st</sup> century' was dependent; and ended by saying that the conflict had 'months and years to run'.

behind the attacks, this was the first time, the article noted, that any United States law enforcement officers had 'drawn a connection' between the attackers and the bin Laden network.<sup>90</sup>

The confident and supportive manner in which the imminent military action against Afghanistan was discussed in the majority of articles extended to the increasingly broadening military objectives of the United States. On 18 September, a front-page article, headed, 'Angry US dusts off assassination order', reported that in preparing to 'retaliate against terrorism' the United States was considering lifting a previously imposed ban on government involvement in overseas assassinations, and that Vice-President Dick Cheney had declared that the United States would use 'any means' to quash international terrorism – even 'unsavoury' methods such as the hiring of foreign agents linked to human rights violations to carry out the 'mean, nasty, dirty, dangerous business' of spying on extremist groups.<sup>91</sup> On 21 September, in 'US insists on free hand', it was reported that the United States (Attorney-General John Ashcroft was quoted) believed that a 'variety of foreign governments' had been involved in supporting and protecting 'the networks that conduct these kind of events'.<sup>92</sup> Similarly, on 25 September, 'US setting up forces worldwide', described the United States as posting its military forces around the world to fight a 'war on terrorism' that would involve more than just Afghanistan: Afghanistan, Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld was quoted as saying, was only the first priority – the United States was positioning its capabilities around the globe so that, when the President decided he had a 'set of things he would like done', the administration would be in a position to carry those things out.<sup>93</sup> Further, the article, 'US insists on free hand', described the United States as having 'made clear' that it would exact 'military revenge' on terrorists for years to come without consulting the United Nations.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> *Dominion*, 29 September, p. 23.

<sup>91</sup> *Dominion*, 18 September, p. 1.

<sup>92</sup> *Dominion*, 21 September, p. 5.

<sup>93</sup> *Dominion*, 25 September, p. 5.

<sup>94</sup> *Dominion*, 21 September, p. 5.

The underlying notion that, essentially, any form of violent retaliation was appropriate in the wake of the attacks was epitomised in the *Dominion's* editorial of 25 September. As the United States tightened the 'ring of steel' around Afghanistan and prepared to strike at terrorists 'wherever they exist', the editorial maintained, New Zealand must stand alongside the United States in support of 'whatever action is necessary' to 'root out' the terrorist cells that had carried out such diabolical acts. The editorial's support for 'rooting out' the terrorists reflected similar phraseology throughout the month: the terrorists would be 'hunt[ed] down', the headlines claimed on 13 September;<sup>95</sup> 'smoke[d] out', they declared on 17 September;<sup>96</sup> root[ed] out, it was claimed on 25 September;<sup>97</sup> and 'flush[ed] out', on 26 September. The 'rooting out' of the terrorists would be carried out by what was referred to as a 'global coalition'; however, while the United States was described as trying to build an international coalition that included allies, Russia, China and Muslim states, the underlying impression was that the campaign was being led by the West against an opposing 'other'. As had been claimed, most explicitly by the *Dominion* editorial of 14 September, the attacks had been against Western civilisation, and it was the *West*, therefore, that needed to respond. The assumption that the response would principally be a Western one was also indicated in the 17 September article, 'US ready to 'smoke out' enemies', which referred to Taleban calls for Muslims to start a holy war if attacked by 'the West'.<sup>98</sup>

Allies or potential supporters, however, were portrayed in either a neutral or positive light regardless of their known history or behaviour – or, alternatively, support was encouraged despite states' acknowledged unsavoury behaviour. Pakistan, for example, clearly emerging as a key ally in the developing Western campaign, was consistently referred to in neutral

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<sup>95</sup> *Dominion*, 13 September, p. 5.

<sup>96</sup> *Dominion*, 17 September p. 1.

<sup>97</sup> *Dominion*, 25 September, p. 5.

<sup>98</sup> *Dominion*, 17 September, p. 1.

terms.<sup>99</sup> The Afghan Northern Alliance, briefly mentioned in an article on 26 September, was described as a collection of fighting units drawn from ethnic groups which had been 'persecuted' by the Taleban.<sup>100</sup> The article was accompanied by a picture of earnest-looking Northern Alliance members shown 'taking aim at Taleban troop positions' – and the article was also headed with the caption, 'Targeting Terrorism'. While an article reprinted from Karachi's *Dawn* newspaper later in the month warned against Western alignment with a power-seeking Northern Alliance, this was the only reference to any less-than-positive traits, and no further elaboration was given.<sup>101</sup> Indonesia's poor human rights record, on the other hand, was openly acknowledged. On 22 September, an article reprinted from *The Washington Post* argued that despite the 'ugly record of human rights violations' of the Indonesian military, if Indonesia was to prove 'willing to fully commit to America's cause' the United States should give it strong political, economic, and military support.<sup>102</sup>

This would all be carried out under the aegis of the 'war against terror'; 'war on terrorism'; or 'campaign against terrorism' – terms used repeatedly (without quotation marks) in reference to the response. Characterised in this way as being against 'terror', whatever aspect of the response being referred to was therefore, by definition, accorded legitimacy.<sup>103</sup> The use of such terms

<sup>99</sup> It was reported as early as 14 September that Pakistan's General Musharraf had assured President Bush and the United States government of his country's 'fullest cooperation in the fight against terrorism'. Saudi Arabia too, it was reported, had pledged its 'full cooperation to fight terrorism'. It was also noted on 15 September that United States Secretary of State, Colin Powell, had hinted at the possibility of incentives for Pakistan's cooperation – in the form of the easing of sanctions imposed against Pakistan and India for their involvement in nuclear testing in 1998 (p. 2). The waiving of sanctions against both Pakistan and India was confirmed on 24 September. In a memorandum to Colin Powell, President Bush was reported as having said: 'the application to India and Pakistan of the sanctions and prohibitions ... would not be in the national security interests of the United States' (p. 4).

<sup>100</sup> *Dominion*, 26 September, p. 4.

<sup>101</sup> *Dominion*, 29 September, p. 14.

<sup>102</sup> *Dominion*, 22 September, p. 12.

<sup>103</sup> The phrase 'war against terror' appeared on 15 September, p. 2; 'war against terror' on 18 September, p. 9; 'war against terrorism' on 19 September, p. 2; 'war on terrorism', 20 September, p. 1; 'campaign against terrorism', 21 September, p. 1; 'war on terrorism' and 'war on terror', 22 September, p. 1; 'war against evildoers', 22 September, p. 2 – 'Weekend Magazine'; 'war on terrorism', 25 September, p. 1; 'war on terrorism' (twice) on 25 September, p. 5; 'campaign against terrorism' (twice) on 25 September, p. 5; 'campaign against terrorism' on 28 September, p. 2; and 'war against terrorism' on 29 September, p. 2.

extended even to prominent headers labelled 'TARGETING TERRORISM' (as noted previously), which appeared in bold capital letters from 25 September at the top of all pages discussing the response; again, serving to subtly legitimate whatever action was being described.<sup>104</sup>

### **'Called to Defend Freedom'**

The boundaries, then, were effectively limitless in the 'war on terrorism'; pretty much anything was deemed to be justified. As the *Dominion's* editorial argued on 26 September, the West needed to 'fight fire with fire' in responding to the attacks – to be 'unleashed from the normal shackles' which applied in liberal Western democracies.<sup>105</sup> Not only were United States' plans for 'vengeance', 'payback', and the use of dire means portrayed supportively (both explicitly and through the characterisation of all Western actions as being part of the 'war against terror'), but they were also correspondingly referred to as being about 'peace', 'justice', and 'freedom'. On 14 September, White House spokesman Ari Fleischer was quoted describing the developing coalition as a collection of 'freedom-loving countries' joining in the fight against terrorism.<sup>106</sup> On 18 September, a front-page article (describing the United States' determination to use 'any means' at its disposal, including overseas assassinations) quoted President Bush saying that the new 'war' must be won so that 'our children and grandchildren can live peacefully'.<sup>107</sup> A front-page article of 19 September, outlining that the President wanted Osama bin Laden 'dead or alive', also quoted him as saying, specifically within the context of his plans for bin Laden, that he wanted 'justice'.<sup>108</sup> A front-page article on 20 September again referred to Bush's vow to gain 'justice' through his 'war on terrorism'; and on 21 September, the landing of

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Similarly, the *Dominion's* editorial on 25 September used the phrase 'anti-terrorist drive' in reference to the action – undefined and open-ended – it supported.

<sup>104</sup> The 'Targeting Terrorism' headers also served to further cement the enemy-status of those portrayed as the enemy, implying as they did that their being 'targeted' was a direct result of their involvement in 'terrorism'.

<sup>105</sup> *Dominion*, 26 September, p. 12.

<sup>106</sup> *Dominion*, 14 September, p. 5.

<sup>107</sup> *Dominion*, 18 September, p. 1.

<sup>108</sup> *Dominion*, 19 September, p. 1.



the United States air force in the Persian Gulf was described as setting in motion 'Operation Infinite Justice' – the name bestowed upon the rapidly advancing venture.<sup>109</sup> On 22 September, a front-page article described President Bush as having 'made clear' that his administration was dedicated to 'bringing to justice' those responsible for the attacks, and an article later in the same issue was headed, 'Joining forces for peace'.<sup>110</sup> Finally, on 24 September, accompanying a front-page article describing the United States as 'closing in' on the Taleban, was a large map outlining the 'military build-up': inserted in one corner of the map was a picture of the President, hand raised in earnest gesture, saying, 'We are a country awakened to danger and called to defend freedom'.<sup>111</sup>

And now, it was claimed, the defence of freedom would serve as a dichotomous divide of the world. On 14 September, a United States Department official calling for 'all the freedom-loving countries' to unite to fight against terrorism, claimed that 'For Washington, the world falls into two categories – those for and against the United States'. On 22 September, the front page was dominated by President Bush's declaration: 'Either you are with us or you are with the terrorists' the bold headline claimed (under the caption, 'Bush's Ultimatum'). From this day forward, all nations would have to take sides in the President's global 'war on terrorism'. Reinforcing the message, the *Dominion's* political cartoon of the day was of a picture of 'Uncle Sam' drawing a 'line in the sand' – dividing the world into those 'For', and those 'Against'.<sup>112</sup> All nations, then, would now be required to declare their interest in 'Operation Infinite Justice': those in support would be part of the so-called 'campaign against terror' – and those against, the enemies of the United States.

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<sup>109</sup> *Dominion*, 21 September, p. 1. After protests by Islamic clerics that 'Infinite Justice' could only be dispensed by God, not the United States military, the name was abandoned and substituted with the name 'Operation Enduring Freedom'. *Monthly Review*, 'Notes from the Editors', November 2001, [www.monthlyreview.org/nfte1101.htm](http://www.monthlyreview.org/nfte1101.htm).

<sup>110</sup> *Dominion*, 22 September, 'Weekend Magazine', p. 2.

<sup>111</sup> *Dominion*, 24 September, p. 1.

<sup>112</sup> *Dominion*, 22 September, p. 15.

## Chapter Two: Deconstructing 'September 11<sup>th</sup>'

This chapter will identify and analyse the constructed nature of the events of 11 September 2001.<sup>1</sup> It is argued here, as outlined in the introduction, that the events were 'constructed' in the sense that while the discourse and images surrounding the events appeared to be descriptions of reality they were *representations*, infused and driven by certain assumptions and ideologies. This is not to dispute, of course, that the events themselves actually occurred. On 11 September 2001, four hijacked aeroplanes deliberately crashed into several buildings, causing the deaths of several thousand individuals. But that these events were represented as an 'attack on civilisation' was a construction, not a 'fact': and indeed, this is not the way the attacks were perceived in many parts of the world. Yet such is the power of constructions that the lines between reality and representation may, in terms of significance, be negligible – as, it will be argued, was so in this case.

Firstly, however, it is important to outline the context in which the attacks occurred. Since the end of World War II, a general 'Western' view of the world was one in which everyone was aspiring – or ought to be aspiring – towards a Western, capitalist society. The United States, emerging after the war as the world's most powerful state, economically, militarily, and ideologically, came to be seen as the 'ideal society'. It became the standard against which other societies were measured, and the world was divided into those who were 'developed', and those who were not.<sup>2</sup> While there had been competing models of modernity, with the fall of communism in 1989 the last major ideological and practical threat to the Western model was seen to have collapsed. Francis Fukuyama's book *The End of History*, written in 1992, epitomised the notion that the world had in fact now reached a final point: Western 'modernity' was not only the dominant force in world politics but

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<sup>1</sup> As conveyed throughout the month of September, in the capital's *Dominion* newspaper.

<sup>2</sup> Philip McMichael, *Development and Social Change*, California: Sage Publications, 1996, pp. 113, 115.



effectively the only force – i.e., the *conclusion*. History, understood as the evolution of human societies through different forms of government, Fukuyama argued, had ‘culminated in modern liberal democracy and market-oriented capitalism’.<sup>3</sup>

While overt colonialism was now less evident, the sense of superiority evident in the view epitomised by Fukuyama – that the ways of the West represent not only the right way but the *only* way – displayed a continuation of imperialist thought. Throughout colonial times, the European West had seen the non-Western ‘other’ as inherently backward and inferior, and itself as having both the right and responsibility to dictate how the non-West should live. European values were liberal, humane and correct; those of the ‘other’, barbaric, uncivilised, and inadequate. Thus, it was the duty of the West to modernise, to instruct, and to ‘civilise’ the non-West.<sup>4</sup> Decolonisation through the later 20<sup>th</sup> century arguably represented a departure from Western domination only in part. The new world order from 1945 would be based on trade, in which the still dominant West would attempt, largely successfully, to impose its economic and ideological framework on the rest of the world. The world, then, was still hierarchically divided – historical notions about ‘us’ (in the West) and ‘them’ (in the non-West) had never really disappeared. The whole world, Fukuyama argued, would now become like the West, because that was the only logical, indeed scientifically determinable, way forward.

The United States, then, supreme representative of Western ‘modernity’ and presumed to be unchallengeable, suffered a most unexpected and, within this context, almost unbelievable assault on 11 September 2001. The way in which the West responded to the attacks, portrayed in the *Dominion*’s

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<sup>3</sup> Fukuyama summarised his argument in *The End of History* in his later article, ‘Has History Started Again?’, *Policy*, Jun-Aug, 2002, <http://www.cis.org.au/Policy/winter02/polwin02-1.htm>, p. 2. While Fukuyama’s perspective was generally the prevailing one, an alternative, less optimistic view was advanced by writers such as Samuel Huntington (‘The Clash of Civilisations’, *Foreign Policy*, Summer 1993), and Bernard Lewis (‘The Roots of Muslim Rage’, *Atlantic Monthly*, September 1990). While adhering to the reductionist notion of ‘them’ and ‘us’, unlike Fukuyama, these writers argued that ‘Islam’ posed a looming threat to the West.

<sup>4</sup> McMichael, pp. 100-115.

coverage throughout the remainder of the month, consistently reflected this ideological and historical context in which they occurred. This was evident in the nature and quality of the attention given to the victims; the representation of the attacks as being against 'civilisation', and the characterisation of the United States as a purely benevolent force in international affairs; the (related) refusal to consider any possible reasons for the attacks; the stereotypical, 'Orientalist' portrayal of 'the enemy'; and, finally – which all the constructions ultimately supported – the immediate and unquestioned resort to a violent response.

### **'Worthy Victims'**

While the extraordinary level of coverage following the attacks appeared to be in response to an exceptional, even unprecedented, level of death and human suffering, if the event is compared to others in which suffering has occurred on a similar scale or worse it becomes apparent that the disproportionate attention given to these victims was largely due to their classification as particularly 'worthy'. In their critique of the United States' mass media, Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky maintain that, in representing the interests of a dominant elite, the media typically treats victims of violence according to their perceived 'worth', which is determined according to how they fit within the geopolitical spectrum.<sup>5</sup> Those deemed to be 'worthy victims' (for example, victims of enemy states), will be featured prominently and dramatically, they will be humanised, and their suffering conveyed with a level of detail and context that generates sympathy and outrage amongst readers, and draws support for retaliatory measures against those responsible.<sup>6</sup> Those considered 'unworthy', on the other hand (for example, victims of

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<sup>5</sup> Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*, London: Vintage, 1994. While the focus of this study is on mainstream discourses rather than an exercise in media analysis, Herman and Chomsky's analysis of 'worthy' and 'unworthy' victims can be equally well applied here.

<sup>6</sup> Herman and Chomsky, p. 35.

'client states'), will be given comparatively little attention, regardless of how terrible their plight.<sup>7</sup>

While Herman and Chomsky's analysis is expressly concerned with worth as it is defined politically – the media portrays those abused in enemy states as worthy, but victims of its own, or affiliated governments, as unworthy – the principle is also evident in a racial/geographical sense, and in this sense particularly draws on a deep, though largely unconscious, Western sense of superiority. A comparative analysis of the *Dominion's* coverage of deaths in Rwanda, 1994, and Bhopal, 1984, serves to illustrate the starkly contrasting level of attention that is typically given to victims in non-Western societies. Between the months of April and June, 1994, following a plane crash in which the presidents of Rwanda and Burundi were both killed, it is estimated that 800,000 Tutsi Rwandans were murdered in brutal, hand-to-hand attacks by Hutu soldiers, police, and civilians.<sup>8</sup> Described by William Shawcross as a period among 'the most bloody in human history', the attacks were carried out as part of a well-planned campaign of genocide, and involved, by one calculation, a daily killing rate five times that of the Nazi death camps.<sup>9</sup> Barriers on all roads prevented the victims from being able to escape.

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<sup>7</sup> As an example, Herman and Chomsky compared United States media coverage of a single victim of communist oppression (Jerzy Popieluszko) with that of one hundred religious victims in Latin America in the 1980s. The media treatment of the two categories of victims differed vastly, both quantitatively and qualitatively. With communism being America's principal enemy at the time, Popieluszko's plight received massive coverage, his experiences were outlined in substantial detail, and expressions of outrage and demands for justice were quoted generously. The Latin Americans, on the other hand, were victims of 'client states' of America, and thus, despite their great and equally undeserved suffering, the media coverage was minimal and low-key, and their deaths discussed in a way which did not encourage sympathy or outrage. For every media category; articles, column inches, front page articles and editorials, along with the number of TV news programs, and numbers of evening TV news programs, the coverage of the Popieluszko case exceeded that of the entire set of Latin American victims taken together. Sources used in this case were the *New York Times*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, and CBS news. Herman and Chomsky, pp. 37, 40.

<sup>8</sup> The presidents had been returning from discussions in Tanzania on the power-sharing Arusha Accord, which was to have reduced the Hutu regime's hold on power. It is believed that plans for the elimination of Tutsis had been in place for months prior to this event. Within an hour of the plane crash, the campaign of slaughter by the Rwandan Presidential Guard, extremist militia, and elements of the armed forces (FAR) against Rwandan Tutsis and moderate Hutus began. 'The Genocide', Human Rights Watch, [www.hrw.org/reports/1995/WR95/AFRICA-08](http://www.hrw.org/reports/1995/WR95/AFRICA-08).

<sup>9</sup> William Shawcross, *Deliver Us From Evil: Warlords and Peacekeepers in a World of Endless Conflict*, London: Bloomsbury, 2000, p. 105.

Children were slaughtered along with the adults, and at some sites, such as Kibungo, Cyahinda, and Shangi, thousands of people were massacred within hours.<sup>10</sup> Force commander for the United Nations Assistance Mission to Rwanda (UNAMIR), General Romeo Dallaire, wrote at the time of scenes he experienced daily: of 'standing knee deep in mutilated bodies, surrounded by the guttural moans of dying people, looking into the eyes of children bleeding to death with their wounds burning in the sun and being invaded by maggots and flies'; of walking through villages where 'the only sign of life was a goat, or a chicken, or songbird, as all the people were dead, their bodies being eaten by voracious packs of wild dogs'.<sup>11</sup>

Yet throughout the month of April, the *Dominion's* coverage of what was occurring in Rwanda involved only one front-page article – a very small article highlighting the deaths of nineteen Rwandan Catholic nuns and priests. From this point, articles on Rwanda failed to appear with any particular prominence. Furthermore, the headlines were devoted almost entirely not to the suffering and horror of what was occurring, but to how it was affecting Western interests – which happened to be deserting the region en masse.<sup>12</sup> The targeted, systematic nature of the killings was never referred to; rather, it was consistently implied that deaths were a result of renewed warfare between Hutus and Tutsis – of rival ethnic conflict rather than the planned mass executions of civilians.<sup>13</sup> Only one article, appearing on 26 April, provided any graphic description or personalisation of the slaughter that was being

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<sup>10</sup> Human Rights Watch, [www.hrw.org/reports/1995/WR95/AFRICA-08](http://www.hrw.org/reports/1995/WR95/AFRICA-08), p. 3.

<sup>11</sup> Shawcross, p. 119.

<sup>12</sup> For example: 'Convoys leave Kigali's blood-soaked streets' (11 April, p. 4); 'West evacuates lawless Kigali' (12 April, p. 5); 'UN may pull out as gangs menace Kigali' (15 April, p. 5); 'Foreigners get time as fighting rages in Rwanda' (16 April, p. 5); 'More peacekeepers leave as toll mounts' (22 April, p. 4); 'UN to reduce Rwanda troops' (23 April, p. 8).

<sup>13</sup> On 9 April, for example, the campaign was referred to as 'violence between Rwanda's Hutu majority and Tutsi minority tribes'; on 11 April, as 'bloodletting' – 'the result of a decades-old struggle between minority Tutsis and ruling Hutus'; on 12 April, as 'tribal slaughter'; on 16 April, as an 'orgy of ethnic violence', and one of Africa's worst 'outbreaks of tribal violence' in decades; on 23 April, a 'bloody civil war'; and on 25 April, as 'violence' which had 'erupted' since the shooting down of the presidential plane. As Shawcross emphasises, while there may have been historical ethnic components to the crisis, there were also clear political drivers (p. 105). It is interesting to note that those responsible for the brutal killings of Belgian United Nations soldiers were clearly identified in the *Dominion* as Rwandan government troops. *Dominion*, 26 April 1994, p. 5.

carried out. In 'Doctor tells of 3-day massacre at hospital', Rony Zacharias, of Medecins sans Frontieres (Doctors without Borders), described the killing of up to 150 patients at the hospital in which he worked, and of a landscape and river littered with bodies; of multiple corpses of men, women and children floating in full view down the river on the Rwandan/Burundi border.<sup>14</sup> The articles were rarely accompanied by photos, and the few pictures that did appear were consistently focused on armed men rather than the human suffering that was occurring.

While the genocide in Rwanda could be considered problematic as a comparative example due to its ongoing nature and association with a civil war, a more immediate and sudden incident of mass death occurred in Bhopal in 1984, yet was given similarly limited coverage in the *Dominion*. On 2 December 1984, a pesticide factory owned by American company Union Carbide leaked over forty tons of Methyl Isocyanate (MIC) and other lethal chemicals, releasing deadly gasses into the atmosphere and causing the deaths of thousands.<sup>15</sup> In the early hours following the event, Bhopal was left, journalist, Larry Everest, has said, 'look[ing] like a battle zone in a chemical war'. In his book, *Behind the Poison Cloud*, Everest describes survivors wandering through the carnage, desperately seeking family and loved ones lost in the chaos. Bhopal's dead lay in alleys, ditches, roadways, or still trapped in their huts, their bodies in the contorted positions of sudden death. People were, in the words of one resident, 'just lying in the road like dogs and cats'. On reaching the local hospital, Bhopal resident Dr Upadhyaya had found people everywhere; 'in the halls, on the floors, outside on the lawns, in every corner of the hospital'. Most of them were weeping, moaning, or crying, and

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<sup>14</sup> *Dominion*, 26 April 1994, p. 6.

<sup>15</sup> The official estimate of the Indian government in 1986 was 1,754, however, Larry Everest suggests popular estimates in Bhopal at the time ranged from 5,000 to 10,000. Larry Everest, *Behind the Poison Cloud: Union Carbide's Bhopal Massacre*, Chicago: Banner Press, 1986, p. 16. Current estimates, such as that of the Bhopal People's Health and Documentation Clinic (BPHDC), are that 8,000 people were killed, and more than 500,000 maimed. PRN (Pusat Racun Negara), The National Poison Centre of Malaysia, [www.prn2.usm.my/mainsite/bulletin/nst/2001/nst46.html](http://www.prn2.usm.my/mainsite/bulletin/nst/2001/nst46.html).

all had lost family – a daughter, a son, a mother, or a father. ‘None of the families were complete’, Dr Upadyaya said.<sup>16</sup>

On 5 December, the *Dominion* carried a front-page article on the Bhopal disaster. With claims the death toll could reach 2,000, the article described the gas leak as one of the ‘world’s worst’ industrial accidents. The large numbers of bodies all over the region were heavily emphasised throughout the article: bodies lay ‘strewn’ in the city’s main hospital with the mortuary full; corpses were being put in the city’s small police hospital; dead bodies were lying in houses; ‘scores of bodies’ lay within a fifteen kilometre radius around the plant; the local cremation ground had run of firewood to burn the bodies. ‘Blinded people, frothing at the mouth’, were described as being brought to hospitals by cart, truck, bus and taxi, and ‘cries of agony and sobs’ echoed through the hospital corridors throughout the city. Most of the victims were children, the article claimed, due to their low resistance.

Yet despite the mass of deaths, including – or even especially – of children, this was the only article on the incident that was to appear on the front page of the *Dominion* throughout the month of December. Even the sole front-page article had not taken pride of place, appearing as it did at the bottom of the page, below articles on such matters as New Zealand’s superannuation review, lawyer Karen Soich’s rejection by the Law Society, and Maori Affairs Minister Koro Wetere’s claims that Maori were no longer discriminated against in the workplace. Apart from the initial references to the number of bodies and to the agony of those being brought to the hospital, there was never any significant attention given to the suffering of those affected.<sup>17</sup> As with the

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<sup>16</sup> Everest, p. 15.

<sup>17</sup> Articles covering the event throughout the rest of December were as follows. On 6 December, an article appearing in the international section referred to the estimated death toll; to ‘truckloads of bodies’ still arriving at a major cremation centre; and to a Union Carbide director’s denial of reports (apparently printed in a Calcutta newspaper) that the gas could cause cancer in the long term if inhaled. On 7 December, another international article discussed the legal and political implications of the accident. The incident was not mentioned again until 12 December, with an article, ‘Gas disaster compensation cases mount’, again referring to some of the legal consequences, and also to a World Health Organisation toxicologist’s claims that victims ran no risk of paralysis or kidney or liver disorders, that pregnant women and fetuses would suffer no damage, and that the main effects on survivors



events in Rwanda, no feature articles examined the tragedy in Bhopal, and no pictures accompanied any of the articles on one of the 'world's worst' industrial accidents.

There is no doubt that the terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001 were extraordinary, spectacular, and completely unprecedented in their nature in respect of the fully-loaded passenger planes crashing into heavily populated buildings, and that this in part explains the level of attention given to the incident and its victims. It is also important to acknowledge that victims of terrorism have traditionally attracted greater levels of attention than victims of more 'ordinary' types of tragic events, even where both sets of victims are Western. Zulaika suggests that individuals can relate more easily to the injustice of terrorist acts such as innocent passengers dying in a hijacked aeroplane than, for example, civilian casualties in war, due to the fact that such deaths are more personalised.<sup>18</sup> The overwhelming impression given in the media attention to the victims of the terrorist attacks in America, however, was that the horror of it was due to the scale and nature of the death and suffering – as if violence and tragedy on such a scale and with such severity had not before occurred. This is patently not the case.

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would be eye and respiratory problems. On 13 December the legal consequences were again discussed in 'Second Bhopal suit filed'. A smaller, accompanying article referred to foreign chemical warfare experts probing the scene, which had apparently provided 'an opportunity for evaluating the gas's potential as an agent for chemical warfare'. Following this, any references to Bhopal were in relation to the reopening of the factory in an attempt to neutralise the remaining gases.

As a matter of interest, despite the repeated references, reported in the *Dominion*, to claims that the toxic effects would be limited, the death toll in India has continued to rise, with estimates that the total number of deaths now exceeds 16,000, and a Bhopal survivor's organisation (BGPMUS) estimating that between 10 and 15 people are still dying every month from related complications ([www.prn2.usm.my/mainsite/bulletin/nst/2001/nst46.html](http://www.prn2.usm.my/mainsite/bulletin/nst/2001/nst46.html)). A report filed in December 2000 has estimated that some 200,000 are still experiencing debilitating chronic illnesses as a result of exposure to the gasses, with the majority suffering from 'respiratory illnesses such as fibrosis, bronchial asthma, chronic obstructive airways disease, emphysema and recurrent chest infections'. Pulmonary tuberculosis is also significantly higher among the exposed population than the national average, with the effect of the gas making people's lungs more susceptible to infection ([www.prn2.usm.my/mainsite/bulletin/nst/2001/nst46.html](http://www.prn2.usm.my/mainsite/bulletin/nst/2001/nst46.html)).

<sup>18</sup> Zulaika points out, for example, that America's CBS network provided as much coverage to the 50 hostages held in the Teheran embassy as to the 150,000 American soldiers in Vietnam during the peak of the war in 1972 (pp. 6, 7). The politics of representation, however, are also very much involved in the way in which 'terrorism' is typically portrayed to the public, as Zulaika discusses. Joseba Zulaika and William A. Douglass, *Terror and Taboo: the Follies, Fables, and Faces of Terrorism*, New York: Routledge, 1996.



## Attacks against 'Civilisation'

The planes crashed not only into civilian targets on American territory but targeted and hit the New York City's World Trade Center, supreme symbol of Western free-market capitalism. The attacks, then, were quickly characterised not as hijacked plane attacks on a New York office block and the United States defence force but as attacks against 'civilisation'. Drawing heavily on the notion of 'them' and 'us'; or the West versus the Rest,<sup>19</sup> the assumption of a distinctly divided world was particularly evident in editorial references to Iran and Iraq as being explicitly outside of civilisation. While 'we' were civilised, 'they' were effectively our opposite: sinister, wicked, and 'uncivilised'. Constructed in this way, the attacks were rendered irrational by their very nature – there could be no logical reason for an attack on 'civilisation'. There was, as such, no consideration of *why* they might have been carried out, other than that they had been motivated by the perpetrators' irrational hatred of Western principles. To have considered why Western civilisation had been attacked (outside of the above paradigm) would, indeed, have accorded a degree of rationality to the acts, and thus weakened the construction of the West as the standard for enlightened modernity.<sup>20</sup>

In the construction of meaning, however, the failure to consider relevant facts can be at least as significant as descriptive commentary. While the United States was portrayed as representative of 'civilisation' and a benevolent and noble actor on the world scene, the coverage was, for the most part, silent on American foreign policy. Apart from references to its apparent role as the 'world's policeman', it was as if the United States was somehow outside of history.<sup>21</sup> Outside of history, however, is something that the United States

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<sup>19</sup> As Tariq Ali puts it in *Clash of Fundamentalisms*, London: Verso, 2002, p. 273.

<sup>20</sup> While Trotter had offered some criticism of the notion of 'Western enlightenment', he did not go so far as to ask why the attacks might have occurred. *Dominion*, 14 September 2001, p. 10.

<sup>21</sup> Similarly, while Trotter had referred to the 'hostility' with which the West and the United States was regarded, his comments were in the context of innuendo rather than being direct statements about United States foreign policy. *Dominion*, 14 September 2001, p. 10.

most categorically is not. As David Wallechninsky has commented in his article, 'Why Do They Hate Us?' the United States is intricately involved with almost every other nation on the planet, and has a long history of supporting repressive dictators throughout the world.<sup>22</sup> In Chile, a CIA-backed coup against the democratically elected government of Salvador Allende in 1973 led to the deaths of over 30,000 people. In El Salvador, tens of thousands were killed by the 'death squads' of the United States-sponsored regime throughout the 1980s. In Guatemala, at least 150,000 people were killed and 50,000 'disappeared' after a CIA-sponsored overthrow of the Arbenz government in 1954.<sup>23</sup>

The United States has played a similarly direct role in supporting dictators and human rights abuses in (amongst others; the list is certainly not exclusive) Nicaragua, the Congo/Zaire, Grenada, the Dominican Republic, Indonesia, and Brazil, however, it is its involvement in the Middle East that has resulted in particularly strong opposition. As Azzam Tamimi has written, anger at the United States, and some of its European allies, was widespread among Muslims in many parts of the world at the time of the attacks. The United States was resented in particular for its unconditional support for Israel, its

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<sup>22</sup> David Wallechninsky, 'Why Do They Hate US?': 11 October 2001, <http://www.ucolick.org/~de/WTChit/Wallechninsky.html>, pp. 1, 2.

<sup>23</sup> Sunera Thobani, 'War Frenzy', 16 October 2001, <http://www.ucolick.org/~de/WTChit/Thombani.html>, p. 2. Such governments also inevitably carried out torture against their victims, as highlighted by a recent *Dominion* article, reporting (matter-of-factly) on a court case in which two former army generals had been found responsible for massacres and brutality carried out under El Salvadorian regime in the early 1980s. The suit had been brought to the North American court on behalf of three El Salvadorian torture victims, who were awarded NZ\$111 million in compensation. The former generals found responsible had both been trained by the United States military at its School of the Americas, where torture manuals had been used. One of the victims, Carlos Mauricio, a former professor who fled El Salvador after having been tortured for two weeks by police in 1983, still suffers from eyesight problems as a result of the torture. Juan Romagoza Arce, another of the plaintiffs who now runs a community health clinic in the United States, is unable to perform surgery due to permanent numbness caused by the torture. The third plaintiff, Neris Gonzalez, was raped repeatedly by soldiers when she was eight months pregnant. Her child died shortly after it was born. *Dominion Post*, 25 July 2002, B2. Of the Guatemalan 'disappeared', Efraim Bamac Velasquez, had been married to an American lawyer, Jennifer Harbury, who spent years trying to find out what had happened to her husband. Harbury has since written that her husband, a supporter of the guerrillas, was murdered by a Guatemalan military officer considered a CIA 'asset', who was paid \$44,000 for the information he obtained from him by means of torture. Chalmers Johnson, *Blowback*, London: Little, Brown & Company, 2000, p. 14.

role in the suffering of the people of Iraq, and the presence of its troops in Saudi Arabia.<sup>24</sup> A *Wall Street Journal* survey of professional Muslims carried out immediately after the attacks illustrates that such views cannot be dismissed as merely those of 'radicals' or 'fundamentalists'. The participants, wealthy and privileged Muslims in the Gulf region (bankers, international lawyers, and businessmen with close links to the United States), consistently expressed anger at these aspects of the United States' behaviour in the Middle East.<sup>25</sup>

Such was the impact in Iraq of the United States-sponsored sanctions against it that there had also emerged widespread Western opposition to them. This included senior United Nations figures such as Dennis Halliday, United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator in Iraq, who resigned in 1998 in protest against the sanctions; Hans von Sponeck, his successor, who also resigned in protest in 2000; Jutta Burghardt, head of the United Nations World Food Programme in Iraq, who resigned from her position in 2000; and Scott Ritter, an ex-weapons inspector for the United Nations.<sup>26</sup> After having spent more than thirty years with the United Nations, Halliday resigned, calling the sanctions a 'bankrupt concept' causing 'unacceptable human suffering' among the civilian population.<sup>27</sup> Halliday also drew attention to the fact that the sanctions were encouraging the alienation and isolation of the younger

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<sup>24</sup> Azzam Tamimi, 'Fight the Right War', *Times Higher Educational Supplement*, 21 September 2001.

<sup>25</sup> Noam Chomsky, 'The New War Against Terror', transcribed from audio recorded at The Technology and Culture Forum at MIT, 18 October 2001, <http://www.zmag.org/GlobalWatch/chomskymit.htm>, p. 18.

Such views were also present in the New Zealand context. Shortly after the attacks, a New Zealand reporter had struck up a conversation with an Iraqi taxi driver, who told him in despair of the children who had died in Iraq, including his own nephew. 'Why not cry for him?' he asked, 'Why not cry for us?' Crying himself, the taxi driver exclaimed that Iraqis were being bombed every day – but that you never see it on the TV, or read about it in the newspaper. While he wept for the people of New York, he said, he wept for all people who have died – including those at the hands of the United States. Peter Malcouronne, 'The wolf is hungry', in *New Zealand Political Review*, November/December 2001, p. 12.

<sup>26</sup> 'The UN Sanctions Against Iraq', *New Internationalist*, [www2.gol.com/users/bobkeim/Iraq/sancintro.html](http://www2.gol.com/users/bobkeim/Iraq/sancintro.html).

<sup>27</sup> Dennis Halliday, quoted in 'Sanctions Have an Impact on All of Us', Institute for Public Accuracy, 12 November 1998, [www.accuracy.org/halliday.htm](http://www.accuracy.org/halliday.htm), p. 2.

Iraqi generation, and pushing people to take 'extreme positions'.<sup>28</sup> Hans von Sponeck, at his own resignation, maintained that he could not be expected to remain silent in the face of what he recognised to be a 'true human tragedy that needs to be ended'.<sup>29</sup> It is estimated that sanctions against the country throughout the 1990s contributed to the deaths of half a million civilians, through disease, malnutrition, and inadequate medical care.<sup>30</sup>

In 2000, Chalmers Johnson, ex-United States navy officer and academic, argued in his book *Blowback* that the imperial nature of the United States was likely to be building up 'reservoirs of resentment' throughout the world.<sup>31</sup> Pointing to a 1997 report by members of the American Defense Science Board which claimed that historical data showed a 'strong correlation between U.S. involvement in international situations and an increase in terrorist attacks against the United States', Johnson argued that 'the innocent of the twenty-first century' would reap some of the consequences of the recent decades of United States' actions.<sup>32</sup> All around the world, he said, it was possible to see 'the groundwork being laid for future forms of blowback'. Resentment was so strong that Americans were 'simply waiting' for 'blowback' to occur.<sup>33</sup> At the time of the attacks, then, the United States was an imperial power whose foreign policies had generated considerable resentment throughout the world, resentment on such a scale that informed observers believed some form of future reaction to be inevitable. That this was the case makes the failure to even consider the role of the United States in world affairs even more significant, and is an aspect of Western behaviour strongly criticised by the late Edward Said. As a representative example, Said argues that throughout the Iranian hostage crisis in 1979, American President Jimmy Carter behaved as if he thought Americans were 'by definition innocent and in a sense outside

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<sup>28</sup> 'World: Middle East UN Official Blasts UN Sanctions', BBC Online Network, 30 September 1998, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle\\_east/183499.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/183499.stm), p. 3.

<sup>29</sup> 'WCC Appeals to the United Nations to Lift Sanctions on the Civilian Population of Iraq', World Council of Churches, 18 February 2000, [www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/news/press/00/02pu.html](http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/news/press/00/02pu.html), p. 1.

<sup>30</sup> Chalmers Johnson, *Blowback*, London: Little, Brown & Company, 2000, p. 9.

<sup>31</sup> Johnson, p. 5.

<sup>32</sup> Johnson, pp. 9, 33.

<sup>33</sup> Johnson, pp. 9.

history'. Refusing to relate the hostage-taking with what some foreigners felt about the United States' long-standing support for local dictators, the assumption was that anyone who disliked America and held Americans captive was 'dangerous and sick, beyond rationality, beyond humanity, beyond common decency'.<sup>34</sup> The refusal of the American President to acknowledge the grievances of Iranians who had endured a dictatorial regime under the United States-backed Shah represented, Said argues, what appears to be an 'official national tendency to be oblivious to certain realities'. As Said so pertinently emphasises, regardless of one's perspective on the hostage-taking, it must at least be acknowledged that (a) 'they' are there, and (b) that so far as 'they' are concerned 'we' (Americans) are what we are, plus what they have experienced and known of us. While there is clearly no obligation for 'us' to like or approve of 'them', neither side commands reality 'so totally as to disregard the other'.<sup>35</sup>

This, however, is precisely the way it appeared following the attacks of 2001, which were represented as coming wholly out of the blue from crazed fanatics whose only possible motive could have been an irrational hatred for America. Anything the United States might have done was deemed, by implication, to be inherently appropriate: any action carried out against it was simply outside the realms of analysis. To ignore the fact that so much of the world felt resentment towards the United States for reasons that related to its *behaviour* in this way is to assume that the West is entitled to act in entire disregard for any potential consequences. Regardless of whether or not America's foreign policy has been morally acceptable – and there is much to suggest that aspects of it have not been – it must at least be acknowledged that those who are affected by its policies will have a perception of America that relates to how its actions have impacted on them. Acknowledgement of these facts does not seek to imply that the attacks were in any way justified; they are, nevertheless, a particularly relevant part of the *context* in which they occurred. To ignore them is to perpetuate the notion that America's behaviour ought to be immune

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<sup>34</sup> Edward Said, *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World*, London: Vintage, 1997, p. lxvi.

<sup>35</sup> Said, p. lxvi

from all critical attention; that it is somehow so inherently blameless that one has not even the right to identify it.

It is entirely possible, of course, that the attacks *were* carried out by crazed, fanatical men motivated by an irrational determination to curb American values of freedom and decency, and that they had nothing whatsoever to do with American foreign policy. Given the context, however, of America's role in the world and the targets hit, it must be acknowledged that it is also quite possible that other factors, which have been extensively focused on by many in the non-West, and even in the West, could have provided at least partial motivation. As Arundhati Roy has commented, if the attacks were against 'freedom', why was the Statue of Liberty not hit? Middle Eastern correspondent Robert Fisk has also pointed out that the suicidal will of one of the hijackers, Mohammed Atta, was written -- presumably not coincidentally, Fisk notes -- during the period of an Israeli massacre in Lebanon, April 1996.<sup>36</sup>

### **Osama bin Laden**

Yet the construction of the attacks as being against 'civilisation' made the question of 'why' impossible to ask. Further, it made it necessary for there to be an enemy against whom the West could focus its response: a need which was fulfilled by Osama bin Laden. While Osama bin Laden was constructed as perpetrator of the attacks, this was despite a lack of any evidence presented. As was noted on 28 September 2001 in a report by Australia's Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Group, while President Bush had promised to provide evidence indicating bin Laden's culpability, 'no specific evidence' had at this time far been made publicly available to support claims against 'any group or state'.<sup>37</sup> As long-time Middle Eastern specialist Peter Marsden has commented, Osama bin Laden was 'simply one among many' who could

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<sup>36</sup> Robert Fisk, 'Lost in the Rhetorical Fog of War', *The Independent*, 9 October 2001, <http://www.ocolick.org/~de/WTChit/Fisk5.html>.

<sup>37</sup> Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Group, 'Blackest September: the 2001 Terrorist Attacks on the United States', 14 September 2001 (updated 28 September), <http://www.apf.gov.au/library/intguide/fad/usterror.htm>.



have planned the attacks – there was no shortage of people throughout the Islamic world who would have been capable of orchestrating sophisticated terrorist attacks.<sup>38</sup> That evidence was not required to cement Osama bin Laden's status as perpetrator supports Murray Edelman's claim that enmity lies in the eye of the perceiver. Rather than the commonplace belief that it is those who do or threaten harm who are perceived as enemies, in the construction of enemies there may be evidence, or there may be none. There need be 'no logical empirical link between the experience of grievance and the attribution of a cause for it', Edelman says, for 'it is not the harm that matters but the attribution'.<sup>39</sup> While bin Laden may well have been responsible – and certainly, at the very least he had threatened harm against Western targets in the past – he 'became' responsible for the attacks of 11 September 2001 through the way in which he was constructed, regardless of the lack of evidence or critical analysis of his role. So strong were the constructions surrounding Osama bin Laden's status as perpetrator that, as Phil Goff was to note after his own trip to the United States, the matter of Osama bin Laden's guilt had not even arisen: he simply *was* the perpetrator.<sup>40</sup>

In line with the failure to ask 'why' in a more general sense, there was almost no attention given to why Osama bin Laden might hold a grudge against the United States. Throughout the period, only two articles paid any attention to this at all, despite bin Laden having been interviewed extensively over the years.<sup>41</sup> On 14 September, an article featured in the back pages referred fleetingly to his becoming a 'vocal critic of the Saudi royal family's decision to allow in American troops to the country after the Iraqi invasion of

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<sup>38</sup> Peter Marsden, *The Taleban: War and Religion in Afghanistan*, New York: Zed Books, 2002, p. xi. As Michael Burgess, Coroner of the Queen's Household regarding the inquest into the death of Princess Diana has accurately stated: 'speculation and speculative reports are not themselves evidence, however frequently and authoritatively they may be published, broadcast, or repeated'. 'An Accidental Death or Murder Most Foul?', *Dominion Post*, 8 January 2004, B4.

<sup>39</sup> Edelman, pp. 78, 86, 87.

<sup>40</sup> Goff was reported as saying that New Zealand 'needed no convincing that Osama bin Laden was behind the US terror attacks', and that the matter of Osama bin Laden's guilt 'had not arisen' during his visit. Tracy Watkins, 'Army Boss Denies Kiwi SAS Forces are in Afghanistan', *Dominion*, 29 September 2001.

<sup>41</sup> Noam Chomsky, Interview by Radio B92 Belgrade, retrieved 3 March 2003 from <http://www.ucolick.org/~de/WTChit/Chomsky.html>, p. 1.



Kuwait.<sup>42</sup> The article also referred to bin Laden's claim that the United States was 'the biggest terrorist', although it did not elaborate on his reasoning. Following this, a feature article on 25 September, headed 'A black day for America', provided a series of direct quotes from bin Laden. The header was sarcastic and dismissive, presenting the quotes as 'the world and its woes according to Osama bin Laden'. The quotes were provided without context or elaborative discussion, and as such failed to make much sense, particularly for those with limited historical or political awareness.

Osama bin Laden is a Saudi Arabian millionaire who became a militant Islamic leader in the war in Afghanistan against the Russians – one of the many religious extremists who were recruited, armed, and financed by the United States CIA and their Pakistani intelligence allies. In 1990, bin Laden, along with many of his followers, turned against the United States after it established permanent military bases in Saudi Arabia, where the holy shrines of Mecca and Medina are based.<sup>43</sup> Mecca is the birthplace of the Muslim prophet Mohammad. It was from Medina that he launched the Muslim religion, and where he died, in 632. Revered by Muslims, these are regarded as their most holy cities; hence bin Laden's opposition to American troops in the country.<sup>44</sup> Bin Laden is also bitterly opposed to the corrupt and repressive regime in Saudi Arabia, and despises the United States both for its support for this regime and others in the Middle East – including Israel, in its brutal military occupation of Palestinian territories. He also holds the United States (and Britain) responsible for the suffering of Iraqis under the United Nations sanctions, and has spoken of the killing of '600,000 Iraqi children' as a 'crusade against Islam'.<sup>45</sup> <sup>46</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> *Dominion*, 14 September 2001, p. 11.

<sup>43</sup> Noam Chomsky, Interview by Radio B92 Belgrade (undated).

<sup>44</sup> Malcolm Booker, *Background to the Gulf War*, Sydney: Left Book Club, 1991, p. 2.

<sup>45</sup> Robert Fisk, 'Talks with Osama bin Laden', 17 September 2001, [http://www.thecriticalvoice.com/laden\\_interview.html](http://www.thecriticalvoice.com/laden_interview.html). Fisk's report of an interview with bin Laden, published on 21 September 1998, was relayed in this article.

<sup>46</sup> It is interesting to note that 'al Qaeda' did not feature prominently throughout this period. While there were several references to Osama bin Laden's 'al Qaeda network' and the fact that it apparently operated 'in 60 countries' (22 September, p. 1; 25 September, p. 5), there was almost no discussion or analysis of it. The lack of analysis was probably due to the fact that it was barely known at the time. Prior to the events, terrorism expert Rohan Gunaratna

## The Taleban/'The Afghans'

Despite the lack of evidence, and without much attention to his likely motivations, Osama bin Laden was quickly focused on as the individual responsible for the attacks. The great need for the West was to find an immediate, personified enemy: it has indeed been suggested that if Osama bin Laden didn't exist, America would have had to invent him.<sup>47</sup> Yet while bin Laden represented an ideal personified enemy, the attacks against the most powerful Western nation and symbol of 'civilisation' required a geographically hittable target for which bin Laden, having avoided death or capture in the past, was not quite so suited. The Taleban, on the other hand, contested leaders of a vulnerable country, did suit this purpose and were quickly portrayed in conjunction with bin Laden as the enemy. While bin Laden had no 'Luftwaffe to shoot down ... submarines to sink, [or] marching army to wear down by attrition',<sup>48</sup> the Taleban could be confronted directly and violently.

The focus on the Taleban's negative characteristics following the attacks; denounced as 'fundamentalist zealots' who had imposed 'horrifying hardships on their people', illustrates Edelman's claim that 'problems' come into discourse and therefore into existence as reinforcements of ideologies, not simply because they are there. Prior to the attacks in America, the Taleban's human rights practices were not a principal concern of the West. As Shawcross has written, since the end of the Cold War, the country's continued warfare and ruthless rule by the Taleban had been 'obscured by Western

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had been about to release a book on terrorist organisations, and had asked his publisher whether he should add an extra chapter on 'al Qaeda'. His publisher's response was that he should not bother. 'Al-Qaeda wasn't well known, and it was so nebulous', says Michael Dwyer of Africa, Asia and Middle East specialist publisher C. Hurst and Co (Karen Gold, 'Academic troops shore up the information', *Times Higher Educational Supplement*, 17 May 2002). Indicating the constructed nature of the enemy – and its further development since the events – the group has since come to be a household name. It is now commonly held directly responsible for not only the attacks of 11 September 2001, but for almost all subsequent terrorist-related attacks or activities.

<sup>47</sup> Arundhati Roy, 'The Algebra of Infinite Justice', *Guardian*, 29 September 2001, <http://www.ucolick.org/~de/WTChit/Roy.html>, p. 5.

<sup>48</sup> *Dominion*, 14 September 2001, p. 3. (See Chapter One, p. xx).

indifference'. Even a massacre by the Taleban in 1998 of up to 8,000 of their enemies in Mazar-i-Sharif – in which victims were shot in the streets, their homes, or hospital beds, boiled or asphyxiated, or crammed into metal containers in the sun – failed to cause a stir. The West was preoccupied at this time with matters such as Monica Lewinsky and her affair with American President Bill Clinton, the United States bombing of a chemical factory in Khartoum, and the situation in Kosovo, in which deaths were still being numbered in the scores rather than in the thousands.<sup>49</sup> As one journalist has pointed out, before the attacks in America the Taleban were not regarded as oppressive enough even to justify offering refuge to those who sought asylum from them – Australia, for example, had turned away four hundred and thirty-three Afghan asylum seekers, dismissing them as scroungers.<sup>50</sup>

Yet now the regime's negative characteristics served to establish, or at least enhance, its enemy status, and became the justification for its overthrow by the West. For the most part this was not stated outright, however, towards the end of the month the connection was made more explicit, with Condoleezza Rice quoted as saying that the Afghan people would be better off without the 'very repressive and terrible' regime. The *Dominion's* editorial argued similarly that the situation would be 'so much the better' should the regime be overthrown.<sup>51</sup> International law, however, requires more than brutal behaviour to justify the overthrowing of a regime. Furthermore, if the Taleban's behaviour towards its citizens was part of the justification for its removal, what of other, comparable or even more brutal regimes? Any number of countries listed in Amnesty International's 2001 report would qualify for 'regime removal' if human rights abuses against their citizens were to be a qualifying factor.<sup>52</sup>

In addition to the Taleban, however, the people of Afghanistan as a whole were also represented as enemies in the aftermath of the attacks. In

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<sup>49</sup> Shawcross (writing prior to the attacks of 2001), p. 12.

<sup>50</sup> Gary Younge, 'A New Balance of Power', *Guardian*, 20 September 2001.

<sup>51</sup> *Dominion*, 25 September, p. 1.

<sup>52</sup> Amnesty International Report 2001, London: Amnesty International Publications, 2001.

'Americans love Pepsi-Cola, but we love death' – in which Afghans were clearly constructed as wanting to fight; wanting, even, to die – the views of two individuals were portrayed as representing those of all Afghans, and it was implied that their pro-war stance represented an inherent Afghan aggressiveness rather than a natural response to an imminent invasion of their country. Even their 'delight' in their country's victory against the former Soviet Union was used against them; serving, apparently, to demonstrate their unacceptable propensity for aggression. That it might be natural for citizens to take pleasure or pride in victories against intervening nations was not acknowledged in relation to 'the Afghans'. Exemplifying the hypocrisy of this stance was an article directly beneath it which, headed 'Military assembles its hi-tech hardware', described and showed some of the weapons the United States military was planning to wield in the 'gathering campaign against terrorism'.<sup>53</sup> While the West was busy preparing to invade Afghanistan with its hi-tech weaponry, Afghans were apparently supposed not to display any inclination to resist.

One of the most significant consequences of the construction of enemies, Edelman argues, is that it makes it psychologically and ethically possible to hurt or kill them.<sup>54</sup> The negative characterisation of 'Afghanistan' following the events of 11 September 2001 served this purpose, with the invasion of the country being portrayed as serving not only to avenge the attacks but to obliterate evil. Indeed, such was the apparently inherent Afghan propensity to violence and aggression that they even *wanted* us to attack them. Distinctions between civilians and fighters were not made: all Afghans were 'fighters' – such was their 'way of life'. Characterising Afghans in this way, as harbouring only common traits, is illustrative of classical forms of prejudice, in which diversity is not perceived within a stigmatised group: the group is deemed to exercise only 'typical' and 'representative' behaviour.<sup>55</sup> As Edelman notes, focusing on the apparent 'sameness' of a group prevents

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<sup>53</sup> *Dominion*, 25 September 2001, p.11.

<sup>54</sup> Edelman, p. 88.

<sup>55</sup> As'ad AbuKhalil, *Bin Laden, Islam and America's New "War on Terrorism"*, Seven Stories Press: New York, 2002, p. 24.

observers from relating to the characters as human beings, and as such serves as a propaganda function by focusing on the trait that can be used to mobilise allies.<sup>56</sup>

In World War II, Japanese Americans living on the West Coast of the United States were similarly constructed as a dangerous enemy. Rather than this being a conscious lie on the part of those who held this perception, however, Edelman argues that the process was more likely to have been generated by the 'more common and potent construction of an enemy who serves people's interests by winning them wealth, status, or ideological justification'.<sup>57</sup> Similarly, a perception following the attacks of the Afghan people as vicious fighters could have been accepted largely unconsciously. Anyone thinking critically about the situation would have had to acknowledge that Afghanistan was inhabited by more than just 'fighters' – even, that is, in the unlikely event that all Afghan *men* were inherently violent, aggressive and dangerous. Furthermore, the propensity of a people to violence (even if this were somehow the case) clearly does not in itself justify violence against them. On a less conscious level, however, enemy construction makes it, as Edelman argues, 'psychologically and ethically possible to hurt or kill the enemy', making such language 'manifestly a form of action, not a tool for describing a situation'.<sup>58</sup>

The constructed nature of Afghanistan and 'the Afghans' is particularly evident when it is acknowledged that, in their fight against the Soviet Union, the Mujahedin throughout the 1980s were provided with direct support by the West, particularly the United States. Then, the Mujahedin were portrayed in the mainstream Western media and general discourse as heroic freedom-fighters, despite their known human rights violations,<sup>59</sup> and their eventual

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<sup>56</sup> Edelman, pp. 77, 78.

<sup>57</sup> Edelman, p. 69.

<sup>58</sup> Edelman, p. 88.

<sup>59</sup> Fisk, for example recalls his notes from the 1980s in which he reported on Afghan mujahedin fighters burning down schools and cutting the throats of Afghan Communist schoolteachers, because the government had ordered boys and girls to sit together in mixed

success in ousting the Soviet Union was much celebrated.<sup>60</sup> In the aftermath of the attacks against America, however, the role of the United States in supporting the Taleban – and indeed Osama bin Laden – was mostly ignored, and the Mujahedin that had been previously championed were vilified as vicious, terrorist fanatics.<sup>61</sup>

Further to all this, it is important to note that not one of the terrorists was of Afghan origin: almost all – 15 out of 19 – were from Saudi Arabia.<sup>62</sup> In fact, by the time military action had begun against Afghanistan on 8 October, not one Afghan had been identified as a suspect.<sup>63</sup> This, however, was almost impossible to ascertain from the *Dominion's* coverage. Indeed, only two articles referred to the hijackers at all. The first held photographs of three of the suspected hijackers and discussed the surprise and horror of 'terror experts' at their suburban, bourgeois living arrangements prior to the attacks (clearly, they were not expected to be so like 'us'). The article did not consider their backgrounds prior to their arrival in America.<sup>64</sup> The second and final article to discuss the hijackers was a haphazard collection of various pieces of information, including that relating to 'living suspects' and individuals suspected of planning future attacks. Vaguely interspersed with such matters as 'The stolen identities', 'The Internet man', and 'The mystery man', were references to aspects of some of the hijackers' backgrounds. It was mentioned only once, and in relation to just two of the hijackers, that their

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classes. Fisk, 'Talks with Osama bin Laden', 17 September 2001, [http://www.thecriticalvoice.com/laden\\_interview.html](http://www.thecriticalvoice.com/laden_interview.html), p. 2.

<sup>60</sup> Marsden, p. 3.

<sup>61</sup> In a *Dominion* article of 1984, the Soviet media was referred to dismissively as portraying the Mujahedin as 'bandits' and proponents of 'fanatical Islamic creeds sponsored by Pakistan'. Now, this is how the Western media would portray them – without, that is, the emphasis on Pakistan, now emerging as a Western ally. 'Russians Know Little of Afghanistan War', *Dominion*, 5 December 1984, p. 9.

<sup>62</sup> Gordon Campbell, 'One Year On', *Listener*, 7 September 2002, p. 16.

<sup>63</sup> Marsden, p. xiii. This is not to argue that there was therefore necessarily *no* connection of the hijackers with Afghanistan. It does, however, illustrate that other countries could also have been implicated in the attacks, but that facts, such as this, that were not particularly suited to the dominant constructions tended to be given minimal attention or omitted completely (or, possibly, that so little was known about the hijackers at the time that their origins were simply not known, which would in itself raise questions about the legitimacy of focusing on Afghanistan as the target of military action).

<sup>64</sup> 'Bourgeois bombers horrify terror experts', *Dominion*, 18 September 2001, p. 5.



'home' had been Saudi Arabia.<sup>65</sup> The final reference to Saudi Arabia was by leftist columnist Chris Trotter who, critically, pointed out that its role in the terrorist attacks was not being considered. The issue, he said, could not be discussed because 'American companies depend too much on the continued flow of Saudi oil, while American politicians have become too cosy with the Saudi rulers'.<sup>66</sup> While the majority of hijackers were from Saudi Arabia, then, it was Afghanistan, not Saudi Arabia which was to be invaded. Hence, the exclusive focus on Afghanistan – along, that is, with 'Muslims' in general.

### **'Muslims'**

Appearing for the most part without any particular relevance to the articles they accompanied (many of which were less than half the size of the pictures themselves), the prominent photographs of Pakistani Muslim protestors throughout the period drew strongly on historical – and not so historical – perceptions of the Muslim 'other'. The pictures provided an image of an enraged, Muslim enemy, and drew on what Said considers to be a long-standing attitude of the general Western public to Islam, Arabs, and the Orient in general – even if only in the subliminal consciousness, and generated by endless characterisations of Muslims as 'enraged' and 'violent'.<sup>67</sup> The typical portrayal of Muslims as either oil suppliers or potential terrorists, and the Islamic world's presentation through a series of crude, essentialised caricatures, Said argues, makes it, among other things, vulnerable to military aggression.<sup>68</sup>

Not only are Muslims typically portrayed in this way, however, but the reasons for any aggressive behaviour are also frequently obscured, as indeed they were in the aftermath of the attacks, in which the mass of images were

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<sup>65</sup> 'FBI tries to unravel tangled web of terror', *Dominion*, 20 September 2001, p. 5.

<sup>66</sup> Chris Trotter, 'The Tangled Web of Infinite Justice', *Dominion*, 28 September 2001, p. 4.

<sup>67</sup> Said, pp. 6, 22. Citing Zachary Karabell, Said says the response of United States college students to questions about what they think of when the word 'Muslim' is mentioned is inevitably: 'gun-toting, bearded, fanatic terrorists hellbent on destroying the great enemy, the United States'. Said, p. xxvi.

<sup>68</sup> Said, p. 28.



provided largely without context. That the behaviour of the protestors was in reaction to something *we* were doing; that is, planning the invasion of a fellow and neighbouring Muslim country, was mostly ignored. Their behaviour, stripped of context, appeared therefore to represent an irrational, religiously-fuelled anger rather than a political or human reaction. As Said says, such a representation implies that Muslims react not to policies or actions but because 'it is historically, and perhaps genetically, determined that they should do so'.<sup>69</sup> While the West and its citizens are seen and expected to react to issues and events (the attacks against America are a good example), Muslim responses are presented as highlighting what Muslims somehow *are*.<sup>70</sup> Such demonisation and dehumanisation of a culture on the grounds that it is 'enraged' at modernity, Said argues, involves the turning of Muslims into the objects of a 'therapeutic, punitive attention' – in the aftermath of the attacks, serving to heighten the focus on the need for a violent response.

While at no time, of course, were the Pakistani Muslims actually specifically identified as an enemy, this is not likely to have diminished the *impression* that they somehow were. Indeed, Edelman maintains that beliefs in enemies appear to be most powerful when the enemy is not named explicitly but evoked through an indirect reference; the subtleness of an association making it all the more potent.<sup>71</sup> When an enemy is named, on the other hand, it is possible for the claim to be challenged, thereby opening the way for doubts about its veracity. The lack of explicit labelling of the Pakistani Muslims, then, served merely to render the construction unchallengeable. Similarly, the constant references to further, vague but emphatically grievous terrorist threats heightened levels of fear and helped to convince the public of the need to respond with force. As Zulaika argues, the very absence of a concrete denotation turns into 'the most doom-ridden foreboding'. 'Fear breeds fear',

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<sup>69</sup> Said, p. xxxiii.

<sup>70</sup> Said, p. xxii.

<sup>71</sup> Edelman refers to even less direct inferences in the evocation of political enemies. He argues, for example, that references to 'capital punishment' draw attention to the need to restrain blacks and the poor from violence – the subtlety of the association making it all the more potent, with the reference drawing its intensity from the associations it represses. Edelman, p. 73.

he says, 'in the certain expectation that the bomb will, in fact, go off eventually'; the lack of certainty regarding when and where merely raises the level of terror.<sup>72</sup>

## The Response

Almost as soon as the attacks in America occurred it was clear that there would be a violent, military response. This was not put forward as a decision, however, but as a matter so natural and inevitable that it appeared more like a predestined process than a chosen policy. This apparently 'natural' response was despite a myriad of potential problems and contradictions, which included the contrasting lack of international action following other, worse crises; the unexplored status of the response under international law; the less than desirable character of the emerging allies; the knowledge that such action would result in the deaths of large numbers of Afghan civilians; the lack of clear objectives; and the aggressive, widening nature of the planned military action.

While the military response appeared to represent a natural reaction to the outrageous attacks committed against thousands of innocent civilians, the international community has rarely responded to violence and suffering with such unity and immediacy. In the case of Rwanda, the international community's reaction was in stark contrast to that of the attacks against America. Within a week of the genocide, 1,500 well-trained French, Italian and Belgian troops, along with several hundred US Marines, had arrived in the country to evacuate expatriates – after which they left immediately, leaving the poorly equipped United Nations force to deal with the situation alone. The world's reaction to the Rwandan crisis was, in the view of United Nations general Romeo Dallaire, one of 'complete apathy'.<sup>73</sup> A report later carried out by Human Rights Watch similarly lambasted the 'sloth' with which the world had reacted, and maintained that the United States had been

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<sup>72</sup> Zulaika, p. 9.

<sup>73</sup> Shawcross, p. 115.

principally interested in saving money, Belgium in 'saving face', and France in saving her ally, the genocidal Rwandan government.<sup>74</sup>

This was despite the fact that, in the case of Rwanda, there were clear obligations on the part of the international community to respond to the genocide. Under the 1949 United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, signatories are required to 'prevent and punish' genocide, which is considered a crime against humanity.<sup>75</sup> While human rights groups, Amnesty International, Boutros Boutros-Ghali (then United Nations Secretary-General) and the pope all identified the campaign in Rwanda as genocide, the major Western powers purposefully refrained from using the term, wishing to avoid the responsibilities this would bring under the United Nations Convention.<sup>76</sup> Further highlighting the contrasting levels of interest in the respective cases, unlike the situation in Rwanda, in which international intervention would certainly have saved lives, the connection between the removal of the Taleban regime and the prevention of subsequent loss of life in the United States was much less direct. That is not to say that the removal of the regime categorically did *not* help prevent further attacks against Western targets; rather, that in the case of Rwanda there was continued, identifiable, massive loss of life that was, in contrast, effectively ignored.

The removal of a foreign regime also clearly requires some form of justification on the basis of international law. Consideration of international norms and principles as they might have related to the planned military action against Afghanistan, however, was entirely absent in the media coverage. The overthrowing of an apparently 'host' regime subsequent to a terrorist attack

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<sup>74</sup> Alison Des Forges, 'Leave None to Tell the Story', cited in 'U.N. Inquiry into Rwanda Praised', Human Rights Watch Press Release, 7 May 1990, <http://www.hrw.org/press/1999/may/rw5799.htm>.

<sup>75</sup> The convention defines genocide as acts committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group. Shawcross, p. 115.

<sup>76</sup> Shawcross, p. 115. The United States not only used its influence to prevent effective United Nations intervention in Rwanda, but, when asked by Boutros-Ghali to jam the extremely inflammatory and influential radio broadcasts calling on Hutus to kill and 'hunt out' their enemies, it refused, claiming that it would be too expensive. Shawcross, p. 119.

had not previously been typical international behaviour. Ways of dealing with terrorist attacks – which, albeit, had not before occurred on such a scale (those conventionally defined as ‘terrorism’, that is)<sup>77</sup> – had included multilateral reliance on international law and economic embargoes (used successfully in the case of Libya and the men charged with the bombing of the Pan-Am airliner over Lockerbie, Scotland); negotiation (which resulted eventually in the handing over of Ilich Ramirez Sanchez, ‘Carlos the Jackal’, by Sudan to the French government for trial); and, more circumspect, the bombing of suspected terrorist sites (for example, the United States’ response to the 1998 terrorist bombings of American embassy buildings in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam).<sup>78</sup> Yet despite this, and indeed notwithstanding the lack of evidence thus far disclosed, nowhere was there any discussion of why a military response, let alone such a substantial one, was necessary and/or justified in this case, or of how it related to international law.

The complete absence of any consideration of international law is all the more significant given the Taleban’s apparent willingness to potentially negotiate the handing over of bin Laden. The way in which the Taleban’s efforts were represented support the validity of Edelman’s theories about cognitive structuring through the construction of enemies. Edelman suggests, for example, that logical or empirical challenges to enemy constructions can always be countered by ambiguous terms, implicit connections, and substitutable assumptions that will facilitate a readjustment to the construction: the set of beliefs that comprise a cognitive structure ‘systematically rearranges itself to maintain the focus upon an enemy when that claim is challenged’.<sup>79</sup> Responses by the Taleban that might in other

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<sup>77</sup> Herman emphasises the hypocrisy involved in defining as ‘terrorism’ only those acts committed by non-government forces when history has shown the greater terror has consistently been carried out, or directly sponsored, by governments against either their own citizens or those of other states. Edward Herman, *The Real Terror Network: Terrorism in Fact and Propaganda*, Boston: South End Press, 1982.

<sup>78</sup> Johnson, pp. 10, 11.

<sup>79</sup> Edelman gives some examples: if the ‘communists’ that have been allegedly discovered by Senator Joseph McCarthy in the army and the State Department cannot be found, this merely proves their cleverness and deviousness, rather than that they are not there. Likewise, if homicide rates are significantly higher in countries where people are permitted to own guns than in those that are not, this becomes conclusive evidence of the ubiquity of crime in the

circumstances have been seen as representing neutral, or perhaps even appropriate behaviour, were consistently portrayed in negative terms – as confirming, even, their enemy status. In a front-page article in the *Dominion* of 20 September, in which the Taleban were reported as appealing for patience and for the United States to gather complete information and to find the culprits, their requests for proof against bin Laden were portrayed with ‘proof’ being placed in speech-marks, thus implying that it was irrational to request such a thing – given that ‘everybody knew’ that bin Laden was guilty.<sup>80</sup> The following day’s cartoon similarly mocked the Taleban’s requests for ‘evidence’,<sup>81</sup> and on 22 September, ‘Foolhardy attitude’, a reprinted article from *The Times*, described the Taleban’s consideration of the situation ‘as though there were time in hand and bargains to be struck’, as giving the clearest illustration of the ‘intellectual and moral isolation of this cruel and obscurantist regime’ by showing its ‘apparent inability to comprehend the enormity of the outrage that has been committed’. Their stance, the article concluded, thus demonstrated the ‘utter necessity of this unwelcome war’.<sup>82</sup>

Potentially undesirable traits of those emerging as allies in the ‘war on terror’ were largely ignored; that is, if they were not being promoted as acceptable under the new circumstances, as in the case of Indonesia. The Northern Alliance, emerging as key allies in Afghanistan, far from being suitable partners in the apparent pursuit of justice had a well-known history of human rights violations and drug trafficking. The Alliance has been described by

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countries where people do own guns, and the greater need for citizens to protect themselves by acquiring guns. Edelman, p. 81.

Similarly, Lynley Hood refers to historical witch-hunts in which, if no physical evidence was found against the ‘witches’, it would be claimed that they belonged to Satanic cults of such secrecy and power that they were able to carry out their evil acts without leaving a trace. Lynley Hood, *A City Possessed: The Christchurch Civic Creche Case – Child Abuse, Gender Politics and the Law*, Dunedin: Longacre Press, 2001, p. 15.

<sup>80</sup> Interestingly, President George Bush’s vow for ‘justice’ through his ‘war on terrorism’, reported in the same article, was not put in speech marks; and yet which was the more subjective term, ‘justice’, or ‘proof’?

<sup>81</sup> *Dominion*, 21 September, p. 12 (as outlined in Chapter One).

<sup>82</sup> *Dominion*, 22 September, p. 12.

Robert Fisk as a confederacy of warlords, rapists and torturers.<sup>83</sup> As'ad AbuKhalil considers their behaviour to have been so corrupt and cruel that it was their very actions that paved the way for the rise of the purist Taleban regime.<sup>84</sup> As Fisk argued at the time, the Western alignment with the Northern Alliance involved the hiring of one gang of terrorists – *our* terrorists – to rid ourselves of another gang of terrorists.<sup>85</sup> Yet as far as the mainstream *Dominion's* coverage was concerned, the Alliance did not appear to have any history at all.<sup>86</sup>

Similarly, little attention was given to the less than democratic credentials of Pakistan, ruled mainly by military generals since 1958. Quickly offering its support for the American-led campaign, the country's dubiously elected general Pervez Musharraf had ruled the country since 1999, and while perhaps not quite in the league of the Northern Alliance in terms of human rights abuses the government's worsening record of torture and custodial deaths was harshly criticised in Amnesty International's 2001 report.<sup>87</sup> Adding to the irony of the situation was Pakistan's previous support for the Taleban. Such was the significance of the support it had traditionally given, Abdul Lalzad, former deputy director of Kabul University, describes Pakistan as having literally 'created' the Taleban.<sup>88</sup> Likewise, the Revolutionary Association of

<sup>83</sup> Fisk, 'Just Who Are Our Allies in Afghanistan', *The Independent*, 3 October 2001, <http://www.ucolick.org/~de/WTChitFisk2.html>.

<sup>84</sup> As'ad AbuKhalil, p. 55.

<sup>85</sup> Robert Fisk, 'Just who are our allies in Afghanistan?', *The Independent*, 3 October 2001 p. 1. Journalist, John Pilger, has referred to the replacement of the Taleban with 'preferred tribes' as having been carried out in the spirit of Lord Curzon's 'great game' – while both groups were 'terrorists', the only relevant point for the West was that the Northern Alliance were 'our friends'. John Pilger, *The New Rulers of the World*, London: Verso, 2003, p. 107.

<sup>86</sup> Neither was Afghanistan's complex history and society considered in relation to the military plans for the country. Afghanistan is not only ethnically, religiously and linguistically mixed, but it is also a country with a long history of ethnic and tribal warfare, and in which the concept of 'nation' has only recently developed. As late as 1986, Afghanistan was being referred to by commentators as a society in which the state was seen as external to society, and the people's allegiance still directed primarily towards the local community. Marsden, p. 8 (Marsden quotes Olivier Roy, 1986).

<sup>87</sup> Amnesty International Report 2001, p. 184. In the year following the terrorist attacks, Pakistan was showing no signs of movement towards democratic rule. In a flawed referendum held on 30 April 2002, General Musharraf extended his rule, unilaterally amending the country's Constitution and barring its two former prime ministers from parliamentary elections. David Rohde, *New York Times*, 11 September 2002, p. 33.

<sup>88</sup> Abdul Lalzad, 'A Nation Held Hostage by Terrorists', *The Times Higher Educational Supplement*, 12 October 2001, p. 16.



the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA) has referred to Pakistan as the place from which the 'germs of the Taliban' emerged.<sup>89</sup> The Taleban fighters were instructed in *madrasahs* (religious schools) in Pakistan, and then sent to Kashmir and Afghanistan for practical training.<sup>90</sup> In true Orwellian fashion, this matter was given only the most superficial level of attention, and no consideration was given to whether, given the context, there might be some inconsistency involved in Pakistan becoming an ally of the West.

Military intervention in Afghanistan was, of course, inevitably going to involve the deaths of Afghan civilians. It was one of the poorest, most ravaged and war-torn countries in the world and among whose population included half a million maimed orphans.<sup>91</sup> Even before the prospect of war had arisen, aid agencies were warning that millions of Afghans were at risk of starving to death in the coming winter.<sup>92</sup> By the end of September 2001, one million Afghan citizens had fled to the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan in fear of the imminent bombing. With estimates now of seven to eight million Afghans needing emergency assistance, international aid agencies were being forced to leave when needed most, and a humanitarian disaster expected to unfold. As Chomsky has said, the military plans were being made on the assumption that they could lead to the deaths of several million Afghans over a matter of months.<sup>93</sup> Furthermore, in addition to the predicted effects of the disruption of war, the risk of civilian deaths as a direct result of the military campaign was also extremely high. As American writer

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<sup>89</sup> 'Afghani Women's Resistance Organization: bin Laden is Not Afghanistan', Revolutionary Association of Women of Afghanistan (RAWA), 14 September 2001, [www.ucolick.org/~de/WTChit/RAWA.html](http://www.ucolick.org/~de/WTChit/RAWA.html).

<sup>90</sup> Lalzad suggested that after the war in Afghanistan most of the Taleban would return to Pakistan, where the main danger would then lie. Lalzad, *The Times Higher Educational Supplement*, 12 October 2001, p. 16.

<sup>91</sup> Arundhati Roy, 'Is it Justice or Vengeance?', *Guardian*, 29 September 2001, <http://www.ucolick.org/~de/WTChit/Roy.html>.

<sup>92</sup> Geov Parrish, 'US Blocking Aid Efforts to Prevent Mass Starvation', 6 November 2001, <http://www.ucolick.org/~de/WTChit/Parrish.html>.

<sup>93</sup> Arundhati Roy, 'Is it Justice or Vengeance?', *Guardian*, 29 September 2001, <http://www.ucolick.org/~de/WTChit/Roy.html>; Chomsky, 'The New War Against Terror', 18 October 2001, <http://www.zmag.org/GlobalWatch/chomskymit.htm>, pp. 2, 3. Chomsky correctly emphasises that regardless of whether or not such large numbers of people did in fact die as a result of the campaign (actual figures are not known), this does not alter the significance of the campaign having been carried out in the knowledge that such deaths were likely to occur.



Susan Sontag argued at the time, in a country like Afghanistan there were not very many military targets.<sup>94</sup> Yet despite the fact that a military response would cause extreme suffering and certain deaths, and the significant effect it was already beginning to have on the population, the situation was only touched on in the media coverage. The few articles which did (briefly) consider the implications for the people of Afghanistan were focused on the humanitarian and refugee crisis, not the inevitable casualties of the impending military action, and the direct connection of the developing crisis with the planned Western response was ignored, with the blame being placed fully on the Taliban.

Finally, the decision to respond militarily had clearly arisen before the target was identified. As Arundhati Roy has commented, the United States had mobilised its army, its airforce, and its navy and committed them to battle before it had even properly identified or begun to comprehend the nature of the enemy.<sup>95</sup> Afghanistan, however, was being put forward merely as the immediate target. Any form of violent retaliation, it was said, would be possible and indeed appropriate in the unfolding 'war on terror'; the authority of the term serving both to support the legitimacy of the campaign, and to mask the potentially equal if not worse terror it might involve.<sup>96</sup> The United States would carry out 'military revenge' against terrorists for years to come; indefinitely, and regardless of the position the United Nations might hold on its actions. While the United States was, for the time being, tightening its 'ring of steel' around Afghanistan, it was also preparing to strike at terrorists 'wherever they exist[ed]'. Fully supporting the apparent legitimacy of such unconstrained aggression, the *Dominion's* editorial argued that *whatever* action deemed necessary in the hunt to 'root out' the terrorists must be

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<sup>94</sup> Susan Sontag, 'The "Traitor" Fights Back', Interview by David Talbot, 16 October 2001, <http://www.ucolick.org/~de/WTChit/SontagResponds.html>.

<sup>95</sup> Roy, 'Is it Justice or Vengeance', 29 September 2001.

<sup>96</sup> Edelman refers to certain frequently used terms as having the effect of inducing an 'acquiescent posture' towards the acts of public officials. Words such as 'public', 'official', 'due process of law', and 'the national interest', he says, induce a considerable measure of public acceptance, evoking a sacred aura in the way that flags, imposing buildings, inaugurations and judicial robes do (Edelman, p. 98). The frequent use of the authoritative term 'war on terror' in reference to the response is likely to have had a similar, if not more powerful, effect.

supported, unheeding or uncaring of the likely implications of such unchecked behaviour.

Represented as an attack on Western 'civilisation', the attacks in America on 11 September 2001 demanded both a discernible enemy and a tangible, geographical target. The requirement for an enemy against whom the West could focus its outrage was fulfilled almost immediately by Osama bin Laden, and a similar focus on Afghanistan and its occupants as enemies – heightened by a parallel focus on 'Muslims', as well as an ongoing general threat – assisted in the construction of Afghanistan as the appropriate (first) geographical target of the Western military response. The construction of 'the enemy' following the attacks not only bolstered the need for war, but also reinforced the superior status of the West. As Edelman argues, the construction of an enemy serves, inversely, to construct the constructor as its opposite: 'to define the people one hurts as evil is to define oneself as virtuous'. The constructions of the non-Western 'other' in this sense too, then, served to further legitimise military retaliation. In a similar fashion, the attention given to the victims – almost deified with slogans and symbols dedicated to their suffering – also supported the military response. A constant focus on 'worthy victims', Chomsky claims, helps to convince the public of enemy evil – setting the stage for military conflict, all in a noble cause.

The constructions, then, worked to support each other; with a kind of circular reciprocity assisting in the smooth unfolding of the military response. However, the 'need' for a military response was strengthened also by the lack of alternative perspectives represented. Those few that were portrayed had little impact on the overall impression that such a response was entirely natural, appropriate, and unavoidable. Presented, then, not as a possible response to the attacks, or as the best possible response, but as the *only possible one* the way in which the Western response was portrayed indicated a genuinely hegemonic process at work.<sup>97</sup> That there was an overwhelming

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<sup>97</sup> Rist argues similarly about the post-World War II American representation of 'development'. Gilbert Rist, *The History of Development*, London: Zed Books, 1997, p. 76.

need for a powerful Western response is indicated by the fact that military action was clearly imminent before any distinct objectives, or even targets, had emerged. The dominant constructions were, arguably, both driven by this need – and, correspondingly, served to legitimate it. Such was the strength of the constructions that aggressive revenge was able to be simultaneously referred to as being about ‘peace’ and ‘justice’: *any* means would be utilised in this new ‘war on terror’, and at the same time such means – even if openly acknowledged as ‘mean, dirty, and nasty’ – would, somehow, be inherently rightful and just. And now, it was deemed, the world would be divided between those who were ‘For’ and those who were ‘Against’ ‘civilisation’ in the preparation for war. All nations would have to decide whether or not they stood with the United States in its ‘War on Terror’: beginning with the military campaign against Afghanistan. New Zealand was one of those nations.

### Chapter Three: The New Zealand Response

This chapter will discuss the New Zealand government's response to the events of 11 September 2001, focusing principally on its offer of a military contribution. Firstly, it will be necessary to give a brief outline of the liberal internationalist history of the New Zealand Labour Party, and the foreign policy of the Clark-led Labour government prior to the events. The initial parliamentary response to the attacks will then be outlined, including government statements and those of the other political parties, to convey the general discursive climate following the attacks. The government's subsequent offer of New Zealand's SAS troops to the United States campaign, and the debates surrounding this, will then be discussed.

While the New Zealand government depicted its offer as having been made under the authority of the United Nations, there are strong arguments to the effect that the military action against Afghanistan was not United Nations-authorized, and in this respect alone the government's response appears to have represented a shift in its traditional approach to foreign policy. At least as significant, however, was its refusal to stipulate that the principles of international law would apply to any military action its troops might be involved with. While the offer was not made immediately, and on 18 September Jim Anderton, leader of the Alliance Party Coalition partner, maintained publicly that a military response was *not* inevitable, by 3 October all government members were emphasising the apparent 'need' for the use of force, and had voted in support of the United States-led campaign – a campaign not explicitly authorised by the United Nations; outside of the constraints of international law; against an ill-defined, unproven enemy; without clear objectives; and in which a significant number of civilian deaths was a known implication. It will be argued here that while political pressure was placed on the government by the United States to support its 'war on

terror', the government's engagement with the mainstream constructions was, perhaps, the driving factor in its offer of a military contribution.

The foreign policy approach of the Labour Party is commonly described as 'liberal internationalism'. David McCraw, of Waikato University, describes this vision for international relations as having four principal tenets. Firstly, human rights and democracy are considered to be key factors in the development of world peace in foreign policy. Great faith is placed in the capacity of international organisations to promote cooperation between nations, and those espousing liberal internationalism have traditionally supported institutions such as the League of Nations and the United Nations. Thirdly, the ideology is anti-militarist, with arms and alliances less than enthusiastically embraced, and disarmament promoted as a form of security. Finally, liberal internationalism supports the principle of free trade, in the belief that it encourages wealth and peace among nations.<sup>1</sup>

While Labour governments in New Zealand did not fully support free trade until the 1980s, McCraw notes that in most other respects they have strongly subscribed to a liberal internationalist ideology. The first Labour government (1935-49) played a significant role in the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and offered substantial support to both the League of Nations and the United Nations Organisation, and subsequently there was more emphasis given to international organisations than alliances, although these did exist too. The principles of the New Zealand National party, on the other hand, have been more towards 'realism' in foreign policy. While liberal internationalism supports human rights, the reduction of arms, and world peace through international institutions, the principle objective of the realist is to advance the national interest, and it is through military might and security alliances that the maintenance of (a temporary) peace is promoted. Sceptical and sometimes scathing of the efficacy of international organisations such as

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<sup>1</sup> David McCraw, 'The Clark Government and Labour's Foreign Policy Tradition', *New Zealand International Review*, Sept-Oct 2002, Vol 27, p. 1.

the United Nations,<sup>2</sup> realists place great emphasis on cooperation between allies. Members of the National Party were thus horrified at the Lange government's anti-nuclear policy in the 1980s, seeing this as seriously endangering New Zealand's relationship with the United States and Australia as embodied in the ANZUS alliance.<sup>3</sup>

McCraw describes the Clark government's foreign policy prior to the events of 11 September 2001 as having been 'very much what might be expected' from a Labour-led government. In an early public statement on the new government's foreign policy objectives, Foreign Minister, Phil Goff, indicated that human rights issues would be taken seriously,<sup>4</sup> and the Prime Minister stated shortly afterwards that priority would be given to disarmament, human rights, and environmental issues.<sup>5</sup> Throughout its first year in office the government's commitment to human rights was evidenced several times, in particular over both the hostage crisis in Fiji and the actions of the Mugabe government in Zimbabwe. Its strong support for the United Nations was also demonstrated its willingness to criticise even friends and allies of New Zealand where it felt it was warranted; it publicly criticised the United States for defaulting on its United Nations bill, for example, and spoke out against Australia for refusing to cooperate with United Nations human rights investigators. In April 2000, the government announced that it did not agree with the continuation of United Nations trade sanctions against Iraq – although while taking a distinctly independent line on the basis of its human rights concerns, it made clear that it would nevertheless continue to act in accordance with United Nations policy. Despite the strain on the Army at the time, the government further displayed its support for the United Nations by providing an extension of peacekeeping in East Timor.<sup>6</sup> The broad emphasis

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<sup>2</sup> While by the 1990s the Opposition, too, had become generally supportive of international institutions, McCraw maintains that it is Labour's Liberal Internationalism that underlies its strong support for the United Nations.

<sup>3</sup> Mervyn Norrish, 'Introduction', *New Zealand in World Affairs, 1972-1990*, Bruce Brown (ed), Victoria University Press: Wellington, 1999, p. 13.

<sup>4</sup> McCraw, p. 2.

<sup>5</sup> Helen Clark, 'New Zealand Foreign Policy: Pushing the Big Ideas', *New Zealand International Review*, July 2000, Vol 25, i4, p. 9.

<sup>6</sup> McCraw, pp. 3-5.



on disarmament was also put into effect with the development of a 'Disarmament Division' of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and a portfolio of Disarmament and Arms Control was established.<sup>7</sup>

It was against this background, then, that the New Zealand political response to the events of 11 September would occur: a liberal internationalist government, and an ideologically realist Opposition strongly opposed to the government's foreign policy approach. With the main Labour and National parties, the various other parties within the Mixed Member Proportional parliament sat broadly within either ideological camp, with the Alliance (in coalition with Labour) and the Greens supporters of liberal internationalism; and New Zealand First, ACT, and (arguably) United, of realism.

On hearing the news of the New York attacks, officials and politicians rushed to Parliament House in the early hours of the morning. By 4.00 a.m., Acting-Prime Minister Jim Anderton had called the (acting) United States ambassador and sent a message of sympathy to President George W Bush, expressing the government's horror at what had happened and offering its condolences.<sup>8</sup> Meeting at 2.00 p.m. on 12 September, the New Zealand parliament was the first in the world to convene after the attacks, and in memory of those killed or injured in the attacks, all members stood to observe a minute of silence. Following the minute's silence, Acting-Prime Minister Jim Anderton gave a ministerial statement in which, after discussing what had occurred, he indicated that some initial security measures had already been implemented in New Zealand since the attacks.<sup>9</sup> The government, Anderton said, was 'shocked and outraged at the callous killing of so many innocent

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<sup>7</sup> Alliance Minister Matt Robson was assigned the portfolio, becoming Minister of Disarmament and Arms Control in 2000. Matt Robson, 'Disarmament Must be 'Unstalled' Says Robson', 11 January 2000, [www.scoop.co.nz/mason/stories/PA0001/S00007.htm](http://www.scoop.co.nz/mason/stories/PA0001/S00007.htm).

<sup>8</sup> Hank Schouten, 'Swift NZ response to 9/11 a surprise', *Stuff*, [www.stuff.co.nz/stuff/0,2106,2734633a6160,00.html](http://www.stuff.co.nz/stuff/0,2106,2734633a6160,00.html).

<sup>9</sup> All air services to and within the United States had been cancelled, and New Zealand flights were all safely on the ground, Anderton said. Regional international services such as those to Australia and East Asia were continuing to operate as usual; however, New Zealand aviation security services, the Civil Aviation Authority, and the police had increased security at airports. The New Zealand Police had also reviewed security arrangements for diplomatic missions in New Zealand, Anderton said, and arranged for increased security where this was considered necessary. *NZPD*, 12 September 2001, Vol 595, p. 11614.

civilians', and New Zealanders shared the despair and loss that the 'whole of the civilised world' felt at this time. Emphasising that New Zealanders shared the desire of the international community to find and punish those responsible, Anderton said that New Zealand would stand alongside 'all other democratic countries to do whatever is necessary to remove threats to peace, and the devastating scourge of terrorism'. The attacks, he said, were an 'evil act' carried out by 'evil people' who had conspired to commit a 'cold and vicious act' – not just against the people of the United States, but against humanity itself.<sup>10</sup>

On behalf of absent Leader, Jenny Shipley, Bill English, Deputy-Leader of the Opposition, began by expressing his wish to join the Acting-Prime Minister in condemning the attacks, and asserting the Opposition's support for the government's response. The attacks, English said, both threatened us and defied the values that New Zealanders and Americans alike professed as 'free nations'. The world had changed, he said, and things would never be the same again; however the attacks had shown our own differences to be 'but hairline cracks compared with the abyss that has opened up between all of us and the perpetrators of this extreme terrorism'. The best reason for New Zealand to support international action against those responsible, he said, was that they had attacked a way of life – that was, *our* way of life.<sup>11</sup>

Finance Minister, Michael Cullen, described the incident as having given cause for us all to think about the world in which we lived, and to share the emotions that we inevitably and properly felt as a result of the attacks. Referring to the potential for immediate repercussions in an economic and financial sense, Cullen said these would be less than initially feared, and that such matters, in any case, paled into insignificance compared with the 'horror visited upon thousands of innocent people', and the sense of vulnerability that was now engendered in all of us. The Labour Party, Dr Cullen said, joined

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<sup>10</sup> NZPD, pp. 11614-5.

<sup>11</sup> NZPD, pp. 11615-6.

with the Acting-Prime Minister in his expressions of sympathy and his sense of outrage.<sup>12</sup>

ACT leader, Richard Prebble, also immediately endorsed the sentiments of the Acting-Prime Minister. Expressing his party's sympathy with the victims, Prebble proclaimed solidarity with the people of the United States. The attacks, he said, were an attack on freedom and democracy, and as a 'symbol of democracy and freedom' parliament should not, as some members had suggested, adjourn – rather, the New Zealand parliament should respond to this 'evil act of terrorism' by refusing to close. The government also, he urged, needed to have an open-minded review of all security policy in the wake of the terrorist attacks, and to acknowledge that the best protection against such attacks was intelligence. In closing, Prebble said that he joined with all other party leaders in sharing the grief of the United States, standing with them in solidarity, and refusing to be terrorised. '[W]e will pay any price', he said, 'for freedom'.<sup>13</sup>

Green Party, Co-Leader, Rod Donald, likewise emphasised that the Greens joined with the other parties in expressing their horror and outrage, and that his party joined with the Green Party of the United States in condemning the attacks. They were, he said, a 'human tragedy of enormous proportions', and represented an 'undeclared war' which challenged our 'democratic foundations'. While no cause could justify what had happened, Donald emphasised that neither could it justify indiscriminate retaliation. Even when the perpetrators were identified (and they must then be punished), the Green Party urged restraint so as not to sacrifice more innocent lives in retribution. Describing the day as a 'turning point for humankind', Donald said the Greens were dedicated to 'peaceful solutions to the challenges before us'.<sup>14</sup>

Winston Peters, Leader of New Zealand First, referred to the attacks as 'cataclysmic': one of the type that happens every now and again which 'stops

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<sup>12</sup> *NZPD*, p. 11616.

<sup>13</sup> *NZPD*, pp. 11616-7.

<sup>14</sup> *NZPD*, Vol 595, pp. 11617.

the world ... defies comprehension, and ... unites humanity'. His party, he said, wished to add one small voice to the 'chorus of outrage' coming from throughout the world, and its support for 'any measure' that would offer practical support and an appropriate response. In the face of these 'insane acts, and the murder of thousands of innocent people' we must surely act 'as one', Peters said. He also cautioned, however, that while the criminals responsible for the attacks must be brought to justice, justice also required that we 'examine and then remove the base of hatred and fanaticism that gives rise to such acts'. The immediate response, though, was to 'lend a helping hand', and as such New Zealand First supported the sentiments of the Acting-Prime Minister.<sup>15</sup>

The final speaker, Peter Dunne, Leader of United New Zealand, began by saying that he wished to join with the others in expressing sympathy with the United States, the United States government, and the families who had suffered as a result of the horrific attacks. There was, within the events, a paradox, Dunne said, in that while on the one hand we should carry on living our lives and not bow to terrorism, the events had nevertheless changed forever the way in which we would have to live our lives. We would have to accept 'changes, limits to our freedom, and limits to our capacity to live our lives the way we did yesterday'. Again expressing sympathy for all those affected, Dunne described United as absolutely resolute in its determination that the causes and perpetrators of the attacks be 'root[ed] out'. United supported absolutely, he said, the 'pursuit of democracy, the upholding of freedom, integrity, and principle', and would support the actions of responsible governments to achieve those ends.<sup>16</sup>

Jim Anderton then thanked the members, and requested leave to move a non-debatable motion, which read:

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<sup>15</sup> *NZPD*, Vol 595, pp. 11617-8.

<sup>16</sup> *NZPD*, Vol 595, p. 11618.

That this House records its sense of outrage at the callous acts of violence that took place in New York City, Washington DC, and Pennsylvania in the early hours of this morning, its distress at the resulting horrific loss of life and injuries, and its condemnation of the systematic acts of savagery; expresses its profound sympathy to the injured and to the families of all those who lost their lives; conveys the sincere sympathy of this Parliament and of the people of New Zealand to the people and Government of the United States of America, for the distress and loss they are suffering; and expresses New Zealand's strong resolve to work with all other countries in the international community to stamp out terrorism and swiftly to bring terrorists to justice.<sup>17</sup>

The motion was agreed to, and the Speaker stated that he would ensure it was sent to the Speaker of the United States House of Representatives.

The government's first public response, then, involved an immediate association of sorrow and abhorrence felt at the attacks with the notion of the 'civilised world', a specific linking of New Zealand with this (New Zealand grieved alongside the civilised world), and strong support for the expected response of western democracies. Within this initial response there was a significant consensus across the parties, with all in particular stressing the horrific nature of the attacks, offering support for the United States, and with many identifying (explicitly or not so explicitly) with the notion that there was a sense in which the world was divided – between 'us' and 'them'; and that the attacks represented an attack on 'us', the civilised, democratic West. Subtle but not insignificant differences were nevertheless detectable, with National and ACT's traditional foreign policy perspectives reflected in their more explicit identification with the United States. While Anderton, representing the government, described the events as an attack on humanity and aligned New Zealand with the civilised world, English explicitly aligned the values of the United States and New Zealand. Their values were our

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<sup>17</sup> NZPD, Vol 595, p. 11618.

values, he said, and the attacks represented an attack on our way of life; on the principles for which, as 'free nations', both New Zealand and America stood. Similarly, Prebble also identified the attacks as an attack on freedom and democracy – something government members had yet to do.<sup>18</sup>

More distinct differences were evident, however, within elements of the Greens' response. While identifying with the common outrage at the attacks and describing them as a challenge to New Zealand's 'democratic foundations', unlike the other parties the Greens called specifically for a peaceful response, and expressed concern that retribution could result in the loss of innocent lives. While the Greens' response was in keeping with their political tradition, interestingly, Winston Peters also urged that the causes of terrorism be addressed – although, somewhat contradictorily, Peters also described the attacks as 'insane', and as defying comprehension. Peter Dunne, too, described his party as determined to 'root out' the *causes* of the attacks, although at the same time a more reactive response was evident in Dunne's simultaneously stated commitment to 'rooting out the perpetrators of the attacks'. Despite the differences, however, a strong consensus was evident in the immediate aftermath of the attacks, and full support offered for the initial parliamentary motion. The principal focus was on the gravity of the tragedy, sympathy for the victims, and the need for the government to respond.

By 18 September, however, the government was beginning to come under significant criticism from the Opposition. In a parliamentary debate held on New Zealand's response to the attacks, Bill English now accused the government of having been 'evasive and ambivalent', and 'reluctant and mean-spirited' in its response.<sup>19</sup> In particular, English focused on what he argued was the government's lack of full and unequivocal support for the United States. Maintaining that the Prime Minister was not expressing a willingness to stand 'shoulder to shoulder with the strength of the US', or

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<sup>18</sup> While English did not refer specifically to the principles of freedom and democracy, his reference to the values of 'free nations' certainly implied this.

<sup>19</sup> NZPD, 18 September 2001, Vol 595, p. 11746.



showing a 'natural empathy with the suffering and values of the US', English accused the government of not being able to even 'utter the words' that it supported the United States. The government was deliberately confusing support for the United Nations with support for the United States; however, these were not the same thing, he said. Implying that the government had to choose between one or the other, English said that the government needed to declare whether it was being 'guided by the light' of the United Nations or of the United States – but it would not do so, he maintained rhetorically, because it was sticking to Labour Party tradition which was to act only on the resolutions of the Security Council. When the United States took action against Iraq in 1998, Helen Clark's statements at the time had been that it was 'the Labour Party's consistent view that it should be the United Nations Security Council that invokes force'. This was Labour Party policy, English said: 'interventions according to the resolutions of the Security Council of the United Nations'. Aligning his position with the anticipated United States military response to the attacks, English said that the Clark government was 'what it says it is: an adherent to the international order as governed by the United Nations and the Security Council'. But people rarely fought or died for such 'abstractions', he said; people sought, rather, to defend a way of life and a set of values. The government's 'reluctant' response was disappointing, and it was the responsibility of parliament to do what the government ought to have done much better: to act in New Zealand's 'long-term strategic interest', which was to stand, in good grace, with its traditional allies.<sup>20</sup>

The Prime Minister responded that, to the contrary, she had pledged New Zealand's support for the United States from an early stage; however, in expressing support for the United States, Clark had linked this with support for the United Nations.<sup>21</sup> After issuing her initial press statement, which expressed New Zealand's revulsion at the terrorist attacks, and pledged its support for America, Clark said she had then written to the President in support of the efforts of the United States 'and the international community,

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<sup>20</sup> NZPD, pp. 11746-7.

<sup>21</sup> NZPD, p. 11748.

because the Security Council did meet and pass a strong resolution' – which, she said of the resolution, was 'important in terms of what has happened'.<sup>22</sup> While emphatic in her expressions of support for the United States, Clark did seem unwilling to give it unreservedly, and was clearly at pains to state her corresponding support for the United Nations resolution; indeed, to the point of implying that her support for the United States was *because* of the Security Council's resolution. Neither did the government appear to have made a firm decision on whether to become involved militarily; while Clark described the government as having offered maximum diplomatic and intelligence support it was still only 'looking at' what military support it might offer.<sup>23</sup>

The Prime Minister was nevertheless keen to emphasise the government's alignment with the Western world – New Zealand had made it clear, she said, that it was 'determined to do its bit', and wanted 'to be counted' in the 'campaign against terrorism' (as it was now being referred to by the government). The response of New Zealand, she said, as a 'small and friendly Western country' was 'entirely consistent with the response of other like-minded countries'. Expressing the government's support for the American administration's wide consultation and building of a 'coalition of international support for any response', Clark said that both the United States President and the Secretary of State, Colin Powell, were reaching out to a wide range of potential allies, and that the event had 'brought virtually every country in the world together' – like no other that she herself could remember in her lifetime.<sup>24</sup> That was why the Security Council's strong sentiments were so important, she said. Referring to the resolution passed by the Security Council (Resolution 1368), Clark said that, 'importantly', the Council had

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<sup>22</sup> The Prime Minister was referring to United Nations Resolution 1368, which was passed on 12 September 2001.

<sup>23</sup> While the potential for SAS troops to be offered was specifically mentioned by Clark in her parliamentary statement on 18 September, further indicating a certain equivocation on the part of the government were her statements in the parliamentary question time on the same day. In response to Keith Locke, for example, Clark said that if there was a role for New Zealand's intelligence and military services, including special forces, the government would 'consider that'. Then, in response to another query (this time from Labour member, Rick Barker), the Prime Minister said the government was 'prepared to offer' diplomatic, intelligence, and military support; 'including, if necessary, the special forces'. *NZPD*, p. 11742.

<sup>24</sup> *NZPD*, pp. 11748-51.

expressed its readiness to take 'all necessary steps' in response to the terrorist attacks, and 'to combat all forms of terrorism in accordance with its responsibilities under the Charter of the United Nations, and decided to remain seized of the matter'. The country, she emphasised, stood absolutely solidly behind efforts to deal to terrorism.

Deputy-Prime Minister Jim Anderton's parliamentary statements on 18 September indicated a more significant level of reservation on the potential for military action, and he expressed concern at what he felt was an assumption that a military response was somehow natural and inevitable. Firstly, however, he argued that the response was not a contest between support for the United States and for the United Nations; the government, he said, supported both the American government and its people, and the United Nations Security Council resolutions, which were 'very strong indeed'. However, Anderton then asked where the world had been when 200,000 East Timorese and 'half a million Rwandans' had been massacred. His point, he said, was that no-one should be lecturing about the moral high ground when there was a long history of the world paying little attention to even worse catastrophes. Anderton asked further whether the issue of the response was as clear-cut as was being implied, noting that French Prime Minister, Lionel Jospin, had signalled that France would not automatically support military action: there was, he said, debate around the world about how the matter should be dealt with. The New Zealand parliament needed to approach the issue with more seriousness and less focus on securing political advantage, Anderton argued, describing it as 'sickening' that some politicians were 'gung-ho' about going to war when it was not those politicians who would go to war but New Zealand's young, and their funerals we might have to attend. While professing that the government had a 'supreme obligation' to avoid unnecessary deaths, Anderton nevertheless hinted at the possibility of military involvement under the auspices of the United Nations. The major instrument through which the New Zealand government must work, he said, was the United Nations Charter; behind which New Zealand had stood on 'every single occasion'. When the United Nations Security Council called on the

world and its collective countries to do something, Anderton said, 'this country responds every single time'. While the government had so far offered intelligence support, it would give consideration to the country's ability to assist in 'any other way we can'.<sup>25</sup>

Within a matter of days following the debate, the government had offered to provide the United States with intelligence and special services support. While the Prime Minister would not publicly disclose what this might involve, the *Dominion* quoted (unspecified) American sources as saying that New Zealand's Special Air Service (SAS) could be required to help track terrorist cells in the Asia-Pacific region, and that it could assist in 'lightning strikes to capture or eliminate terrorists in the region'. They might also be included in attacks on countries 'such as Afghanistan', the *Dominion* reported, 'to show that the strikeforce was not just American'.<sup>26</sup> By 28 September, the offer of SAS troops had been formally extended by Foreign Minister, Phil Goff, in Washington. After meeting with Richard Armitage and Assistant-Secretary of State, Jim Kelly, Goff, the *Dominion* reported, had offered New Zealand troops to an operation 'coordinated and led by the United States';<sup>27</sup> and by 29 September, the *Dominion* was describing New Zealand as having offered troops to 'any military campaign arising out of the terrorist attacks'.

As yet, however, there had not been any formal debate in parliament on the commitment of troops. After several requests by Opposition members had been turned down by the Speaker, it was finally agreed that a debate, specifically on the government's offer of SAS troops, would be held on 3 October.<sup>28</sup> The Prime Minister spoke first, moving:

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<sup>25</sup> *NZPD*, pp. 11754-5.

<sup>26</sup> 'SAS may be asked to help in fight against terrorism', *Dominion*, 18 September 2001.

<sup>27</sup> 'SAS offered for terrorism battle', *Dominion*, 28 September 2001, p. 2.

<sup>28</sup> The Speaker initially turned down Opposition requests for an urgent debate on the grounds that a debate had already been held on 18 September. Leave sought by Opposition members for a debate specifically on the offer of SAS troops was objected to by government members (unnamed in the parliamentary debates), and the Speaker had consistently refused to accept that there were grounds for an urgent debate to be held on the matter. *NZPD*, 2 October 2001, Vol 595, pp. 11925-28.

That this House declares its support for the offer of Special Air Services troops and other assistance as part of the response of the United States and the international coalition to the terrorist attacks that were carried out on 11 September 2001 in New York, Washington and Pennsylvania.<sup>29</sup>

The government's offer of military assistance was significant, the Prime Minister said, and had not been made lightly. It was being made, she said, because the New Zealand government, and people, wanted to 'see something done' about terrorism, and wanted to see their country as part of that effort. Emphasising that 'almost 7,000 innocent people' had been killed, the Prime Minister said that it had come after 'years of terrorist attacks by the al-Qaeda network'. Having received a briefing from the United States charge d'affaires, the Prime Minister accepted – as did 'other friends of the United States' – that 'linkages have been made between those terrorists [the perpetrators of the attacks] and the al-Qaeda network'. Referring to al Qaeda as responsible for attacks on United States embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam, the Prime Minister described the group as 'a radical terrorist network that has shown its capability to deliver coordinated acts of hideous violence', and a collection of 'loosely affiliated terrorist organisations operating across a number of countries'. '[T]hose terrorists', as well as the Taleban and 'any other government that harbours those terrorists', Clark said, had been unequivocally informed by President George Bush that they were to 'hand them over, or prepare to share their fate'. New Zealand supported the United States' determination to 'root out al-Qaeda and the other terrorist groups associated with it worldwide.'<sup>30</sup>

While the Prime Minister's emphatic support for the United States president and his direct threats to the Taleban and other (as yet unspecified) countries represented quite a dramatic shift, rhetorically at least, in Labour's traditional

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<sup>29</sup> NZPD, 3 October 2001, Vol 595, p. 12017.

<sup>30</sup> NZPD, p. 11996.

approach to foreign policy, Clark also emphasised that the response would be a broad one, having many aspects and involving as many countries as possible. These included a focus on the financial aspects of terrorism, as well as 'sustained political and diplomatic support for the anti-terrorist effort'. In the New Zealand context, the Prime Minister said, legislation needed to be brought further into line with United Nations anti-terrorist conventions. Support also needed to be given for the establishment of the International Criminal Court, for efforts made against money-laundering and financing of terrorist activities, and for 'trade and economic sanctions in respect of governments like the Taleban that harbour terrorists'. Intelligence, too, was a key area that the government would focus on, and New Zealand would cooperate fully with its established international networks. Action against the 'roots of terrorism' also included, she said, longer-range efforts to address international conflicts such as those in the Middle East. Conditions of underdevelopment and tension bred terrorism, and all countries needed to give attention to their level of development aid and humanitarian policies. So at the same time as offering very strong support for the United States military response, the Prime Minister made clear that the government believed terrorism also needed to be addressed in other, key ways, most of which were reflective of a traditional Labour approach, and many of which were not supported by the United States.<sup>31</sup>

Coming back to the military element of the campaign against terrorism at the end of her speech, the Prime Minister began to incorporate the United Nations Charter and recent United Nations resolutions into her argument for a military response. In linking the military action to the authority of the United Nations, the Prime Minister's statements in support of a military response appeared at this point to be more in-keeping with her party's historical approach. Outlining that she was now referring specifically to the 'part of the campaign that will involve military elements', the Prime Minister said that New Zealand's crack troops had been offered, and that the Security Council had passed resolutions about the terrorist attacks 'so strong that we would be

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<sup>31</sup> NZPD, pp. 11996-11997.



remiss in this House if we did not also declare our support of those resolutions'.<sup>32</sup> Given the strength of the resolutions, Clark said, she proposed that an amendment be made to the motion, to add after the words 'declares its support for', the words 'United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1368 and 1373 and'. According to the advice she had received, Clark said, military action against the al Qaeda network would be authorised under Chapter LI (*sic*) of the United Nations Charter, which provided for self-defence, and it was on this basis that New Zealand would support such action.<sup>33</sup>

Jenny Shipley, on behalf of the National Party, was the next to speak, and she began by offering complete support for the motion put down by the government. Reiterating the party's condemnation of the attacks and support for the victims, Shipley said National stood 'unconditionally side by side with the United States and the international coalition', and that she wished to align the National Party with the United Nations resolutions, Resolution 1373 in particular. The National Party, she said, believed that giving total support for the United States, along with total support for the United Nations resolutions, was an 'absolutely appropriate' response to the events of 11 September.<sup>34</sup> In concluding, Shipley reiterated that the National Party welcomed the government's decision to offer troops and other assistance and that it strongly supported the resolution, but that, in line with New Zealand's tradition of standing alongside the United States in actions that defended freedom, it wished to add, after 'Pennsylvania', the words: 'and totally supports the actions of the United States'.<sup>35</sup>

Deputy-Prime Minister Jim Anderton then spoke in favour of the government's motion, but while his appeal was very similar to that of the Prime Minister he placed somewhat more emphasis on the principles of the United Nations and international law<sup>36</sup> – including saying explicitly that, with

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<sup>32</sup> On 28 September, the Security Council passed Resolution 1373 in further response to the attacks. See Appendix xxx.

<sup>33</sup> NZPD, p. 11997.

<sup>34</sup> Shipley's statement here appeared to contradict her Deputy's earlier assertions.

<sup>35</sup> NZPD, pp. 11997-11999.

<sup>36</sup> It is noticeable that the Prime Minister did not make any reference to international law.

United Nations authorisation and international law making the world a safer place for small countries like New Zealand, New Zealand's military personnel should therefore be involved in conflict 'only within those boundaries'.

Referring to the Security Council's adoption of Resolution 1368, Anderton said the Resolution recognised the rights of 'individual and collective self-defence within the framework of international law'. The Alliance, he said, had a long history of insisting on the observance of international law, and that all military action be authorised by the United Nations. The United Nations Charter authorised the use of military force 'as an act of collective security authorised by the United Nations Security Council', and in accordance with that charter, the Security Council had adopted 'very strong resolutions against terrorists' – resolutions that the Alliance supported.<sup>37</sup> Asking rhetorically what the government's response might involve, his reply, in regards to the military component, was simply: 'military cooperation, where that is necessary and applicable'. After having said this, Anderton immediately referred to the 'major terrorist attack' which had 'killed more than 5,000 innocent people' within a few minutes. We were 'all suddenly vulnerable' to this threat to international security, he said – a threat to which we all 'need[ed] to respond' – and in the tradition of New Zealand cooperation with the international community under the 'international rule of law', he looked forward to support from the whole House for the Prime Minister's resolution, and the amendment put forward by himself.<sup>38</sup>

ACT leader Richard Prebble attempted to align the country with the United States even more closely than had Opposition-Leader Jenny Shipley, arguing that the government's response should be as a formal member of ANZUS. Offering his party's support of both the motion moved by the Prime Minister and the amendment moved by the Leader of the Opposition, Prebble stated that, after having put forward his party's perspective, he wished to move an amendment to the motion. Prebble's motion read: That the amendment to the motion be amended by adding after the words 'United States', the words: 'this

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<sup>37</sup> Anderton used the term 'we' – it was not quite clear whether he was referring specifically to the Alliance Party, or to the government as a whole.

<sup>38</sup> *NZPD*, pp. 11999-12001.

House notes New Zealand is still legally a member of the ANZUS Alliance and further that the Australian House of Representatives has passed a resolution that the terrorist attack of 11 September is an attack under article IV and V of ANZUS, and therefore this House declares the terrorist attack on America to be under article IV and V of the ANZUS agreement to be an attack on New Zealand'. Describing the attacks as 'an action of great evil', and an 'attack on freedom everywhere', Prebble referred to New Zealand's history of defending freedom. The parliament, he said, must now again support the defence of freedom, and he hoped all parties would support the motion. New Zealand, however, was still a legal ally of the United States and still a member of ANZUS, Prebble argued, and New Zealand should, therefore, consider the attacks as an attack on New Zealand, as had Australia.

The Green Party's Foreign Affairs Spokesperson, Keith Locke, began by emphasising firstly the points of agreement the Greens had with the other parties. The party, he said, joined in mourning for all those who had died in the attacks and, like everybody else, wanted the perpetrators to be brought to justice as quickly as possible. It was not, however, convinced that sending SAS troops to Afghanistan would help bring to justice those responsible, or reduce the threat of terrorism in the world. Not only would military action cause the deaths of more innocent people, he argued, but it would also be counterproductive by causing more anger in the Islamic world. Many in the Islamic world saw America as a major contributor to the suffering of Palestinians, and of Iraqis under United Nations sanctions, and with Saddam Hussein and bin Laden having both been funded by the United States when it served its interests, the United States did not have the 'high moral ground'.<sup>39</sup>

Further, military action in Afghanistan would involve not precise strikes targeting bin Laden but a major assault on the country. The rush to attack Afghanistan 'well before we have all the information on those responsible and their links with Afghanistan or any other country' was one of the most disturbing aspects of the campaign, Locke said. The only circumstances

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<sup>39</sup> NZPD, pp. 12002-12003.

under which New Zealand should assist militarily, he argued, were if it were consistent with international law, under the authority of the United Nations, and clearly targeting proven criminals. Indeed, if it was clearly known who the terrorists were, which country they were in, and the response carried out under United Nations auspices and international law, the Greens would cooperate in a similar manner to the way they had over the conflict in East Timor. The current effort, however, was 'unilateral military action against Afghanistan by America and a few allies', which the Greens could not therefore support. While Locke emphasised that it supported the part of the motion which endorsed the two United Nations resolutions, he indicated that the party had wished to move an amendment that would change the words 'United States and the international coalition' to the words 'a United Nations-led response', and replace the words 'Special Air Services troops' with the word military, but that it had been prevented from doing so by the rules of the House. On behalf of the Greens, then, Locke moved that after the words 'New Zealand', the words 'and in accordance with international law, with the objective of apprehending terrorists and bringing them to trial, but not for revenge or retaliation', be added.<sup>40</sup>

In response to Locke's proposed amendment, Winston Peters exclaimed that he was 'not going to vote for an amendment from a bunch of pinkos!' Arguing that Locke's position was destructive, and mere indulgence in 'petty party politics', Peters said that it was 'treachery of the worst sort to have the United States lose 6,000 people'. While he respected the views of others within the parliament, he said, this was 'with some exceptions': the loss of 6,000 lives in an enormous act of terrorism clearly required a response, however, Locke was interested only in attacking the United States. While the Greens refused to 'raise a muscle' against those who sought to destroy democracy and obliterate freedom – 'to this threat to us, to all Western society' – the bulk of the New Zealand parliament would stand up and support our SAS abroad. New Zealand First, Peters said, was disappointed at the lack of unity and the party-politicking, particularly from the Greens, in the face of

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<sup>40</sup> NZPD, pp. 12003-12004.

those who were 'so evil and inhumane in their approach'. The party supported the government's motion alone, which had been put up by the Prime Minister, and hoped that other parties would do likewise.<sup>41</sup>

On behalf of United New Zealand, Peter Dunne said that he welcomed the debate on the military response, and that his party supported the Prime Minister's motion on the commitment of SAS troops which would assist in the international effort to 'stub out terrorism'. While disappointed the government had not acted sooner to clarify its response, Dunne said he was now hopeful that the debate would indicate the parliament's determination to do all it could to 'root out the evil of terrorism across the world'. In the immediate aftermath of the event, there had been two predominant emotions, he said: firstly, there was that inevitable human emotion of, 'We have got to do something. There has to be a reaction', and this had been coupled with a 'nagging, gut-wrenching sense of fear about what was next'. While the more extreme emotions had now had time to settle, no-one should interpret the renewed sense of calm as anything other than a determination to respond properly. We faced an enemy, Dunne said, about which we knew only one thing: that was, 'it is there, it is virtually everywhere, but it is otherwise totally undiscoverable'. While we knew that conventional military force would not work (the Americans did not want a '21<sup>st</sup> century Vietnam'), we also knew that 'the bin Ladens and the al-Qaeda movement and all of those who are fellow travellers have to be stopped'. The response, however, would not simply entail some 'short, sharp jab' that would be quickly over, Dunne said. We had to get used to dealing with what was now 'normality', so as to prevent 'these shadowy figures' from prevailing – a notion which he did not believe anybody in New Zealand or any other civilised country could abide for one moment. What was now required was the laying aside of prejudices 'in this House and in this world', Dunne said; however, in closing, he reiterated that while he supported the government's motion, he regretted its lack of initial determination and commitment.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> NZPD, pp. 12005-12007.

<sup>42</sup> NZPD, pp. 12007-12008.

Phil Goff, Minister of Foreign Affairs, responding to Peter Dunne's criticism, emphasised firstly that the government had made immediately clear its 'absolute commitment to the international campaign against terrorism', as well as its support for, and solidarity with, the American people. Now, Goff said, the government was endorsing the possible deployment of SAS troops, should they be required, and endorsing the actions that were required of the government through the United Nations Resolutions 1368 and 1363 (*sic*). The attacks, Goff said, represented a threat on a scale and level of danger unprecedented in the modern world, and the fears we now held were fears that 'the blockbuster movies, or what Tom Clancy once put forward as fiction, might indeed become a reality.' In order to deal with this grave new threat it was imperative that the international community approach the threat on all fronts, including dealing with the financing of terrorism, and the exchange of intelligence, a particularly important facet of the campaign against terrorism.<sup>43</sup>

While dealing with terrorism under the law was appropriate where possible, Goff said, terrorists operating outside the scope of any justice system needed to be dealt with by force. Pointing out that in this respect his position differed from that of Keith Locke, Goff maintained that '[o]f course the ultimate use of force has to be contemplated' – where people mindlessly and without concern caused the mass murder of innocent people, 'at a certain point force has to be employed against those individuals'. In saying this, however, Goff emphasised that a military response to terrorism was by no means the only one, or even the most important one. Referring to a recent conversation with United States Deputy-Secretary of State, Richard Armitage, Goff said that the 'campaign against global terrorism' would not be won with a single air strike or dramatic military action, but would be a lengthy one that would require an unprecedented level of international cooperation. The American response, while initially (and understandably) involving 'wild words' had evolved into a

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<sup>43</sup> NZPD, pp. 12008-12009.



‘more measured and carefully considered strategy to deal with terrorism’, one which he himself admired.<sup>44</sup>

While the offer of New Zealand’s troops was a most serious matter, Goff said, it was one that the House must endorse as it was necessary to combat the great threat now facing the world. While in the United States, he had become aware that the terrorists had planned to hijack a further two planes on the day of the attacks, which would have resulted in the loss of even greater numbers of innocent people. One could ‘only imagine the impact’, Goff said, if one of those ‘fully fuelled aircraft had been crashed into a nuclear power plant and the hundreds of thousands of lives that would have been affected by that’. Further, there was information that the terrorists were investigating crop dusting operations, which strongly suggested that chemical or germ warfare was also contemplated as part of ‘this new generation of terrorist activities’. Under these threatening circumstances, in which all humanity was at risk, the House, regrettably, had to be prepared to risk the lives of New Zealand service personnel.<sup>45</sup>

The House then voted on Locke’s proposed amendment to the motion, which gained 17 Ayes, from the Alliance and the Green Party; and 102 Noes – from Labour, National, ACT, New Zealand First, and United New Zealand. With a majority against of 85, the amendment was defeated.<sup>46</sup> Richard Prebble’s proposed amendment was also defeated, resulting in 53 ‘Ayes’; National, ACT, New Zealand First, and United, and 66 ‘Noes’ – 49 Labour, 10 Alliance, 7 Green Party.<sup>47</sup>

The final amended motion, read in full by the Speaker (upon the request of John Carter), read:

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<sup>44</sup> *NZPD*, p. 12009.

<sup>45</sup> *NZPD*, pp. 12009-12010.

<sup>46</sup> *NZPD*, p. 12010.

<sup>47</sup> *NZPD*, pp. 12010-12011.

That this House declares its support for the offer of Special Air Services troops and other assistance as part of the response of the United States and the international coalition to the terrorist attacks that were carried out on 11 September 2001 in New York, Washington, and Pennsylvania and totally supports the approach taken by the United States of America, and further declares its support for the United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1368 and 1373.

On voting that the motion, as amended, be agreed to there were 112 'Ayes': Labour, National, the Alliance, ACT New Zealand, New Zealand First, and United, and 7 'Noes' – all from the Greens.<sup>48</sup>

The government, then, with the backing of all parties except the Greens, had formally offered both military assistance to the United States, and 'total support' for its 'approach' – which, at this stage, appeared roughly to be the ousting of a regime in a remote foreign country, along with the extermination of an obscure, previously little known clique of 'terrorists'. Furthermore, Labour members had voted against the Greens' motion that the response be in accordance with international law, and had refused attempts to move that the campaign be defined as 'United Nations-led'. While this appeared to represent a significant departure from the government's commitment to international law and military action on the basis of United Nations authorisation, the Prime Minister had maintained that the military response was authorised under Chapter LI (*sic*) of the United Nations Charter under the provision for self defence. She also placed significant emphasis on the Security Council Resolutions – saying, specifically within the context of the military response that the parliament would be 'remiss' if it did not support the 'very strong resolutions'. Deputy-Prime Minister Jim Anderton also referred to the United Nations Charter, and specifically linked this with the authority of the Security Council. The Charter, he said, had authorised the use of military force 'as an act of collective security authorised by the United

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<sup>48</sup> NZPD, p. 12017.

Nations Security Council', and, in accordance with the Charter, the Security Council had adopted 'very strong resolutions against terrorists'.

While close scrutiny of the government's statements reveals that neither the Prime Minister nor her Deputy were claiming explicitly that the resolutions authorised the military contribution, their linking of the resolutions to the military response did imply this. Within two days of the debate on the military response, however, Matt Robson, Alliance Minister of Disarmament, stated publicly that, 'Neither of the two resolutions adopted by the Security Council in the wake of the 11 September attacks authorised the unleashing of military force'. Speaking at the University of Otago on 5 October, Robson said he had studied international law at the International Court of Justice, where the application of the United Nations Charter with regard to Chapter 7 interventions had been examined – including, 'quite specifically', Article 51.<sup>49</sup> It was the opinion of the Alliance, Robson said, that the use of military force in the 'present situation' would require the 'explicit and previous authorisation of the Security Council'. Referring to the need for diplomatic, humanitarian, and, 'if necessary, military solutions', Robson did not appear to be arguing against military action under any circumstances. He was, however, explicit in his argument that further action on the part of the Security Council was necessary in order to authorise a military response. He also indicated the Alliance's general lack of support for the attack on Afghanistan, saying that the party did not believe a 'massive military attack on a disintegrating nation will deliver the result the world is seeking'.

Following Robson's claims, the government linked the resolutions with the military response even more directly. Responding to questions in parliament, Phil Goff, on behalf of the Prime Minister (who had, the day before, 'discussed' the issue with Robson), claimed that:

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<sup>49</sup> Matt Robson, 'NZ Minister of Disarmament on the Use of Force to Combat Terrorism: Security Council Endorsement Necessary', 5 October 2001, [www.pnnd.org/matt\\_robson.htm](http://www.pnnd.org/matt_robson.htm).

All members of the Government accept that the two relevant Security Council resolutions, which reaffirm the inherent right of individual and collective self-defence under article 51 of the United Nations Charter, justify appropriate military responses to the terrorist attacks, as well as requiring non-military responses.<sup>50</sup>

In reply to further querying from the Opposition about Robson's position, Goff maintained that: 'the essence of Robson's argument was that the resolutions passed by the Security Council do not justify the unleashing of unrestricted or unlimited military force'.<sup>51</sup> This was clearly not, however, the essence of Robson's argument. Robson had stated, candidly and unequivocally, that neither of the resolutions passed in the wake of the terrorist attacks 'authorised the unleashing of military force', and that the use of 'military force in the *present situation*' would require the 'explicit and previous authorisation of the Security Council'.<sup>52</sup>

While Goff was now clearly maintaining that the resolutions justified a military response,<sup>53</sup> the government was still not actually stating that the

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<sup>50</sup> In addition to this, on the same day, in response to a question from Keith Locke, Goff again implied that the resolutions authorised the military action. Locke had asked whether the Prime Minister believed that Article 51 'gave any nation the unilateral right to go to war with a country on the other side of the world', and referred to the fact that the United Nations Charter 'clearly prescribes that all peaceful means' should be used before military action contemplated. Goff replied that, while peaceful means were the first approach, Locke 'should note that the resolution passed by the United Nations Security Council talks about 'all necessary means'. *NZPD*, 10 October 2001, Vol 595, pp. 12175-6.

<sup>51</sup> Goff's statements were an exact replica of the explanation given by the Prime Minister the previous day (to which Goff had referred). Clark had said in parliament – in response to Bill English's claim that Matt Robson had 'contradicted' the Prime Minister by saying that neither of the resolutions authorised the unleashing of military force – that '[T]he essence of Mr Robson's argument is that the resolutions passed by the Security Council do not justify the unleashing of unrestricted or unlimited military force'. *NZPD*, 9 October 2001, Vol 595, p. 12103.

<sup>52</sup> Robson, 5 October 2001. Emphasis added.

<sup>53</sup> This was again implied on 8 October, the day of the launch of military intervention in Afghanistan. In a speech to a LawAsia conference, Goff said that the United Nations Security Council resolutions, 'passed unanimously', had put a 'multilateral umbrella' over the military response. (The resolutions, he said, 'reaffirm[ed] the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence set out in Article 51 of the UN Charter'. Phil Goff, 'Speech to LawAsia Conference – Fight against terrorism', 8 October 2001, [beehive.govt.nz](http://www.beehive.govt.nz), <http://www.beehive.govt.nz/ViewDocument.cfm?DocumentID=12005>.

Again, on 30 October – in response to Opposition claims that the government's support for the 'war on terrorism' was divided due to Alliance reluctance – Goff replied that 'those troops

resolutions *authorised* the military action.<sup>54</sup> Despite this, that the government was relying, at least in part, on the authority of the resolutions as justification for its military contribution was clearly the impression being given; and this indeed is how it was being perceived by political journalists. On 6 October 2001, John Armstrong, political editor of the *New Zealand Herald*, described the Alliance as 'in conflict with Labour over whether the United Nations resolutions permit the deployment of New Zealand troops in the international campaign against terrorism'.<sup>55</sup> On 27 October, another *New Zealand Herald* article, titled 'Political Review: Alliance at War Over the War', also referred to the 'debate' over whether the resolutions 'sanction[ed] the US action'.<sup>56</sup> While the government's linking of the resolutions with its military offer gave the impression of a response in line with its traditional foreign policy principles, there is enough debate internationally over whether the resolutions justified the response to indicate that its refrain from an explicit reference to authorisation may have been conscious and deliberate. Carsten Stahn, writing for the *European Journal of International Law*,<sup>57</sup> maintains that while the reference in Resolution 1373 to Article 51 was significant, there is 'hardly any ground' to argue that the resolution authorised the military action against Afghanistan by the United States and its allies.<sup>58</sup> The reference to Article 51, Stahn says, was 'remarkably vague', and he points out that, significantly, the resolutions avoided describing the attacks as an 'armed attack', the term specifically required by Article 51 in order to legitimise a military response. Instead, the words 'terrorist attack' were used; and, moreover, these were not expressly linked to Article 51, which was mentioned in a separate paragraph.<sup>59</sup>

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[SAS] were offered under the United Nations resolutions'. *NZPD*, 30 October 2001, Vol 595, p.

<sup>54</sup> Neither did the minister refer specifically to the military involvement in Afghanistan – rather, in a similar fashion to Anderton in his statement of 3 October, to 'appropriate military responses'.

<sup>55</sup> John Armstrong, 'Alliance Questions PM's Ruling', *New Zealand Herald*, 6 October 2001.

<sup>56</sup> Audrey Young, 'Political Review: Alliance at War Over the War', *New Zealand Herald*, 27 October 2001, <http://tiki.knowledge-basket.co.nz/daily/cma/cma.pl?id=3598-121-103-P%3A&cma=d>.

<sup>57</sup> Carsten Stahn, 'Security Council Resolutions 1368 (2001) and 1373 (2001): What They Say and What They Do Not Say', *European Journal of International Law Discussion Forum*, [www.ejil.org/forum\\_WTC/ny-stan.html](http://www.ejil.org/forum_WTC/ny-stan.html).

<sup>58</sup> Stahn, p. 10.

<sup>59</sup> In contrast with the Security Council's avoidance of the use of the term 'armed attack' following the terrorist attacks on the United States, in response to Iraq's attack on Kuwait the

Neither did the resolutions refer to any specific state as being a concrete author of the attacks, or of having the right to self-defence. That the attacks were not expressly attributed to the Taliban regime was a particularly significant omission in light of previous resolutions in which the Taliban had been referred to explicitly.<sup>60</sup> Stahn considers it 'particularly striking' that the elements that could *possibly* be interpreted as an authorisation of self-defence or the use of force, i.e., the statement of 'the need to combat by all means, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts', appeared only in the preamble of Resolution 1373, rather than in the operative part of the resolution.<sup>61</sup>

Describing the Security Council as having 'visibly refrained' from using language that it has used previously in the context of military authorisations, he emphasises that the resolutions contained neither an explicit recommendation nor authorisation.<sup>62</sup> Stahn points comparatively to Security Council Resolution 84 (1950), which authorised military action against Korea and which stated that: 'The Security Council ...3. *Recommends* that all Members providing military forces and other assistance pursuant to the aforesaid Security Council Resolutions make such forces and other assistance available to a unified command under United States of America (*sic*) ... 5. *Authorizes* the unified command at its discretion to use the United Nations flag in the course of operations against North Korean forces concurrently with the flags of the various nations participating'. Similarly, Security Council Resolution 678 (1990), stated that '*The Security Council ...Acting under Chapter VII of the Charter ... 2. Authorizes Member States ... to use all necessary means ...*'<sup>63</sup> In contrast to the very precise and specific directions

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Council issued Resolution 660 (1999) (*sic*) which affirmed 'the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence, in response to the *armed attack by Iraq against Kuwait, in accordance with Article 51 of the Charter*'. Stahn, p. 6 (Stahn's emphasis).

<sup>60</sup> Stahn refers to Security Council Resolutions 1267 (1999) and 1333 (2000), in which the Council condemned the use of Afghan territory 'for the sheltering and training of terrorists and the planning of terrorist acts'. Stahn, p. 7.

<sup>61</sup> Stahn, p. 13.

<sup>62</sup> Stahn, p. 14.

<sup>63</sup> Stahn, p. 13 (Stahn's emphasis).



in these resolutions, the preamble to Security Council Resolution 1373 merely 'reaffirm[ed]' the need to combat terrorism 'by all means'.<sup>64</sup>

While in Resolution 1373, in paragraph 3(c), the Council 'call[ed] upon all States' to 'cooperate, particularly through bilateral and multilateral arrangements and agreements, to prevent and suppress terrorist attacks and *take action against such perpetrators of such acts*', Stahn emphasises that this statement was in the context of measures involving cooperation and coordination between states – not the use of force.<sup>65</sup> Even the statement 'combat by all means', in the Preamble to Resolution 1373, differed from that normally employed under Chapter VII in the operative part of Council resolutions in the context of authorising states to take 'all necessary' means to implement Security Council resolutions.<sup>66</sup> The lack of an explicit authorisation in the operative part of Resolution 1373 also indicates, Stahn says, that the Council did not delegate enforcement powers (under Chapter VII) to a coalition of states.<sup>67</sup> While Stahn acknowledges that the Council did not categorically exclude the possibility of the attacks legitimating a response based on the principles of self-defence, he emphasises that, given all of the legal and factual uncertainties, 'one can hardly assert that the Council has approved the applicability of Article 51 of the Charter to the US-led strikes against Afghanistan'.<sup>68</sup> Rather, he says, we must assume that the Council 'deliberately refrained from making more specific determinations'; declaring

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<sup>64</sup> Stahn notes that, in the case of North Korea, some argued that rather than exercising self-defence the Council had delegated its powers under Chapter VII to the group of states acting under unified command, thereby making the action an exercise of *collective security* rather than collective self-defence, and that a similar perspective surfaced in relation to the authorisation of the use of force against Iraq in 1990. For reasons including those given in the context of his argument against the legitimacy of self-defence, however, he considers that such arguments would not hold much weight in relation to the military action against Afghanistan. Stahn, pp. 12-14.

<sup>65</sup> Paragraphs 3 and 4 of Security Council Resolution 1269 (1999), for example, emphasised the importance of enhanced coordination among states and 'calls upon States to take, *inter alia, in the context of such cooperation and coordination*, appropriate steps to cooperate with each other, particularly through bilateral and multilateral arrangements, to prevent and suppress terrorist acts, protect their nationals and other persons against terrorist attacks and bring to justice the perpetrators of such acts'. Stahn considers the relevant passage in Resolution 1373 to have been 'visibly modelled' on this statement. Stahn, p. 14 (Stahn's emphasis).

<sup>66</sup> Stahn, p. 14.

<sup>67</sup> Stahn, p. 14.

<sup>68</sup> Stahn, pp. 8, 10.

Article 51 applicable only once its preconditions under the Charter were approved.<sup>69</sup>

While the government depicted, with varying degrees of specificity, the resolutions as having authorised the military response while apparently avoiding making the explicit claim, what it did claim unequivocally was that the response was justified on the basis of self-defence, based on Chapter 7, Article 51 of the United Nations Charter. Stahn, however, argues that not only was the military response not authorised by the Security Council resolutions, but that action carried out under the auspices of Article 51 (whether specifically authorised by the Security Council or not) is bounded by the requirements of 'necessity and proportionality'. These constraints, he says, mean that action carried out on the basis of self-defence can easily turn into 'illegal reprisals'. Such action becomes illegal, for example, if it is directed against objects which and persons who are not the source of an 'imminent threat', and this relates to attacks which are later found to have been against innocent civilians, as well as against those who are not the authors of the armed attack.<sup>70</sup> Another problem with reliance on Article 51, Stahn claims, is the requirement of immediacy, which he describes as having particular relevance to the military action in Afghanistan – while force may be justified in the initial stages of a campaign, extended involvement is unlikely to be. Stahn argues that the scope and purpose of the military action in Afghanistan was therefore on shaky ground, and says that it is 'difficult to imagine' that Article 51 validated the overthrowing of the Taleban regime by force and the subsequent establishment of a new government. While he considers such actions were not necessarily unlawful as such, he argues that they were *not* related to self-defence.<sup>71</sup>

While Stahn's perspective is, of course, debatable, many others have argued similarly that the military response was neither legitimately 'self-defence' nor

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<sup>69</sup> Stahn, p. 8.

<sup>70</sup> Stahn, p. 18.

<sup>71</sup> Stahn, p. 19.

authorised by the United Nations Security Council.<sup>72</sup> It is also notable that in October 2001 it was being reported with some consistency that the United States was not even seeking Security Council authorisation. The *New York Times*, for example, reported in early October 2001 that the United States government was rejecting United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan's appeals for military action to be subject to Security Council approval.<sup>73</sup> Britain's *Guardian Weekly* also commented on the fact that 'America has not gone to the Security Council for authorisation'.<sup>74</sup> Both newspapers noted that

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<sup>72</sup> In September 2001, the United Nations Association of Great Britain and Northern Ireland's website (UNA-UK) carried an article which maintained that military action required the explicit authorisation of the Security Council, and that this had not been provided in Security Council Resolution 1368. While the resolution had expressed the Council's readiness to take 'all necessary steps' to respond to the attacks, this did not provide the necessary authorisation for military strikes. It was significant, the article claimed, that the phrase had not been referred to by either the United States or the United Kingdom to justify the military response – rather, it was the right to self-defence under Article 51 of the United Nations Charter that had been cited. 'Fight Against Terrorism', UNA-UK, [www.una-uk.org/Comment/fight.html](http://www.una-uk.org/Comment/fight.html). On 23 October 2001, India's respected Madras daily newspaper *The Hindu* similarly described the military action against Afghanistan as 'not within the ambit' of the United Nations resolutions, or in accordance with the United Nations Charter. The Security Council's expressed determination in Resolution 1373 to 'take all necessary steps' to ensure its full implementation did not, it argued (as it had in the case of Iraq after its invasion of Kuwait), 'authorise states' to 'take all necessary steps' to restore international peace and security. Referring to matters of state responsibility and individual criminal responsibility under international law, the article claimed that had the perpetrators been state agents sent by their governments to carry out the attacks, the holding of that government as responsible would be fully justifiable. With the terrorist acts having been committed by non-state actors, however, the action constituted 'unexplored legal territory'. Pointing out that the Draft Articles of State Responsibility of the International Court of Justice held that 'the conduct of a person or group of persons shall be considered an act of a state under international law if the person or group of persons is in fact acting on the instructions of or under the direction or control of the state in carrying out the conduct', it argued that the threshold for holding states accountable for the failure to prevent violations by non-state actors would have to be 'considerably lowered or even abandoned' in order to hold Afghanistan accountable for the terrorist attacks. The article also noted that the Security Council was on record as having rejected claims to the right of self-defence as justification for armed attacks against 'states harbouring terrorists'. While Israel, after bombing the headquarters of the Palestine Liberation Organisation near Tunisia in 1985, had argued that it was justified since Tunisia had knowingly harboured terrorists who had targeted Israel, the Security Council had rejected this, and voted in Resolution 573 to condemn its actions by a margin of 14-0 (with the United States abstaining). 'The War, the U.N. and International Law', *The Hindu*, 23 October 2001, [www.hinduonnet.com/thehindu/2001/10/23stories/13230612.htm](http://www.hinduonnet.com/thehindu/2001/10/23stories/13230612.htm).

<sup>73</sup> Source: Noam Chomsky, 'The War in Afghanistan', Excerpts from Lakdawala Lecture, New Delhi, 30 December 2001, [www.unitedforpeace.org/article.php?list=subs&sub=2](http://www.unitedforpeace.org/article.php?list=subs&sub=2).

<sup>74</sup> Jonathan Power, 'Mr Bush is abusing both the UN and international law', *Guardian Weekly*, 14 October 2001, D4, [http://www.transnational.org/forum/power/2001/10.02\\_BushAbuses.html](http://www.transnational.org/forum/power/2001/10.02_BushAbuses.html).

the United States had not sought Security Council approval because it wanted to be free of any legal constraints.<sup>75</sup>

Prophetically, on 14 September 2001, world-renowned lawyer and human rights advocate Geoffrey Robertson argued that in response to the attacks there would be 'hot blooded 'retaliation' ... legally justified by reference to the primitive 'right' of a state unilaterally to use force in self defence.'<sup>76</sup> There would be no burden on the United States to prove 'more than a suspicion of guilt', he said, and 'no questioning of the presidential proposition that a state is as 'guilty' as the terrorists it happens to harbour.' This was incorrect in law, Robertson argued, and afforded 'no moral mandate' for the killing of innocent and oppressed citizens. Maintaining that an international criminal court was the most appropriate forum for dealing with terrorism, Robertson noted that the opposition of the United States was in part responsible for the fact that the machinery for such a court was not yet in place. Given, however, that the attacks could legitimately be defined as 'crimes against humanity', Robertson argued that the use of force against a sovereign state bearing responsibility for the crime was, therefore, permitted in this case. Force would only be legitimate, however, if the United States and its allies were subject to certain preconditions and limitations under international law. These included: the prior support of the United Nations Security Council (or, failing this, of a majority of its permanent members); the establishment – by 'clear and objective proof' – of the guilt of the targeted state or its agents; and that the armed response would, firstly, be in compliance with international law; secondly, that it be proportionate to the legitimate objectives of the mission; and, thirdly, have a reasonable prospect of securing them. Such were the 'minimum requirements' for any military response, Robertson said, and if Osama bin Laden was accused of being the

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<sup>75</sup> The *New York Times*, for example, reported the United States was not seeking such authorisation because, officials had said, it was insisting that 'its hands not be tied'. Chomsky, 'The War in Afghanistan', 30 December 2001. The *Guardian Weekly* similarly commented on the fact that the United States wanted to be free of any legal precedents or constraints. Jonathan Power, 'Mr Bush is Abusing Both the UN and International Law', 14 October 2001, [http://www.transnational.org/forum/power/2001/10.02\\_BushAbuses.html](http://www.transnational.org/forum/power/2001/10.02_BushAbuses.html).

<sup>76</sup> Geoffrey Robertson, 'There is a Legal Way Out of This ...', *Guardian*, 14 September 2001, [www.guardian.co.uk/wtccrash/ story/0,1300,551607.html](http://www.guardian.co.uk/wtccrash/story/0,1300,551607.html).

perpetrator, the United States must abide by the 'legal requirement of proportionality' by demanding his extradition to face trial 'before seeking to kill him (and many others) by air strikes'.

Such matters were entirely absent from the government's discussion on the military response.<sup>77</sup> Indeed, from 3 October onwards, military action was portrayed as an essential and unquestionably legitimate component of the overall response, and any attempts to debate the issue, whether by the Greens or the Alliance, were either ignored or strongly rebuffed, as in the case of Matt Robson. What, then, drove a government with a rules-based and United Nations-supporting tradition to offer military support to a campaign with ambiguous (at best) United Nations' authorisation? Why did the government vote against the inclusion of international law in its parliamentary motion, and refuse to set criteria that would normally be paramount for its involvement in any such military effort?<sup>78</sup> While there had been no offer of a military contribution in the immediate aftermath of the attacks, by 18 September the government was clearly hinting at the possibility, and the Prime Minister stressed that the government 'wanted to be counted' in the campaign against terrorism. The Deputy-Prime Minister was more reserved in his approach, openly challenging the representation of the events as necessarily requiring a military response, however by 3 October a military contribution had been confirmed. With all government members at this point apparently in full support of a military response, it was now portrayed uniformly as inherently natural and appropriate: as something which *needed* to be done. While expressed most explicitly perhaps by Peter Dunne with his reference to the need to 'do something' – to the feeling that there *had* to be a reaction – the Prime Minister's first statement in justification of the offer was, simply, that it had been made because people 'wanted to see something done'. Anderton,

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<sup>77</sup> While Anderton referred repeatedly to 'international law', he did not specify how the military response related to or was justified by it.

<sup>78</sup> Even with the clearly more explicit authority given by the United Nations Security Council in the case of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990, the Labour government in this instance had been reluctant to become involved, and avoided a military contribution. Ian McGibbon, 'New Zealand Defence Policy', in *New Zealand in World Affairs, 1972-1990*, Bruce Brown (ed), Wellington: Victoria University Press, 1999, pp. 126-127.



too, now referred to the 'need' to respond, and Justice Minister Phil Goff, after elaborating on the threat and fear brought about by the attacks (with emotive references to Tom Clancy novels, armagedon-type movies, and crop-dusting planes), maintained that force 'of course' had to be contemplated in response to the murder of innocent people.

Against whom the war might be fought, however, and what exactly it might involve, was not at all clear. The clearest indication came from the Prime Minister in her expression of support for George W. Bush's determination to 'root out al-Qaeda' and 'the other terrorist groups associated with it worldwide'. Further, the Taleban – and any other government that harboured terrorists – were to hand them over or 'prepare to share their fate'. Anderton referred similarly on 3 October to the need to 'stamp out' terrorism; and Goff, repeatedly, to the need for the use of 'force'. The strongest message coming through was, again, expressed particularly forthrightly by Peter Dunne. The enemy, he said – 'the bin Ladens', 'the al-Qaeda movement', and all of those 'fellow travellers' – simply '[had] to be stopped'.<sup>79</sup> The prevalence of these 'shadowy figures' was something which nobody from New Zealand or 'any other civilised country' could possibly abide. Yet shadowy the enemy remained throughout the parliamentary rhetoric, as did the aims and objectives of the military campaign.<sup>80</sup>

In these respects the New Zealand government's response converged wholly with the mainstream constructions; in others, however, it diverged. With its statements, for example, on the need to address the causes of terrorism, the government effectively asked *why?* although it only went so far in this – unlike the Greens, it did not consider the possibility of any links of terrorism

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<sup>79</sup> While Dunne was not a government minister at the time, his claims reflected the discursive climate surrounding the need for a forceful response particularly well.

<sup>80</sup> It is noticeable that Clark, in her 3 October parliamentary statement, referred to the fact that '[t]hose terrorists' – al-Qaeda, 'a collection of loosely affiliated terrorist organisations operating across a number of countries', the Taleban and any other government harbouring 'those terrorists' – had been informed by President Bush that they were to 'hand them over, or to prepare to share their fate'. *NZPD*, 3 October 2001, Vol 595, p. 11996. The contradiction of terrorists being informed that they must hand themselves over or prepare to share their own fate presumably escaped the Prime Minister, and highlights the constructed nature of the enemy.



to United States foreign policy. There also appears to have been a resistance on the part of the government to the use of the ubiquitous term 'war on terrorism'. Unlike the Opposition, it referred exclusively (in these early stages at least) to the 'campaign against terrorism': indeed, Labour Minister Jim Sutton went so far as to refer to the 'war on terrorism' as that which 'some people like to call it'.<sup>81</sup> It is also noticeable that while members of National, ACT, and United referred repeatedly to the attacks as against freedom and democracy, and on the response as involving the 'defence of freedom', government members did not.

Furthermore, the government was clearly at pains to portray the military response as legitimate under the authority of the United Nations – which, given its history and constituency, would clearly have been preferable to the government to one which was not. Yet it appears that the government, or the Prime Minister, at least, had from an early stage been prepared to act outside the authority of the United Nations if necessary. In response to Green Deputy-leader, Jeanette Fitzsimons, who, on 18 September, asked whether the government had made it clear to the United States that it 'does not support unilateral military action outside the auspices of the United Nations ...',<sup>82</sup> the Prime Minister had replied: 'No, we have not made that plain'.<sup>83</sup> It has since emerged that the government had, in fact been under direct pressure from the United States to support the military response. In January 2002, the *New Zealand Herald*, having gained access to a previously confidential report prepared by the Prime Minister, revealed that in the early days after the attacks the government had been warned by American officials that the way in which it responded would be treated as a 'touchstone' for future relations between the two countries.<sup>84</sup> Yet irrespective of this, would the government,

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<sup>81</sup> *NZPD*, 18 September 2001, Vol 595, p.

<sup>82</sup> Fitzsimons' question finished '... that could only prolong the cycle of terror and violence?' *NZPD*, 18 September 2001, p. 11734.

<sup>83</sup> Clark had then referred to the 'very strong resolution' which had been passed by the Security Council, the fact that the United States was 'determined to take some action', and that the government was 'looking at how we can support an international effort against terrorism'. *NZPD*, 18 September 2001, p. 11734.

<sup>84</sup> The papers show that the Prime Minister was in the immediate aftermath of the attacks urging cabinet members to consider a role for the SAS; and that the cabinet accepted the

clearly supporting the representation of the events as an attack, if not on 'freedom', on 'civilisation', have declined to become involved in a military effort endorsed by most of the Western world? Would it have been genuinely free to refuse even without the veiled threat coming from the American government? Perhaps the attacks against 'civilisation' brought about a degree of inevitability that the government either could not or did not wish to resist. Indeed, Helen Clark was to say later that the military response itself had been 'inevitable'.<sup>85</sup>

It is, ultimately, impossible to know exactly why the government responded to the events of 11 September 2001 as it did. On publication of the cabinet papers disclosing United States pressure on the government, however, the *New Zealand Herald* printed an editorial which, perhaps, most accurately portrays the context in which the government made its decision. It would be unduly cynical, said the editorial, to assume that the government's response had been as a result of American pressure: it was, it argued, more likely that it had simply 'immediately recognised the justice of the American attitude'.<sup>86</sup> The government had 'realised immediately' that a direct attack on the American mainland 'required a military response', and in responding with a military offer, it had done the 'obviously sensible'. Without reference to evidence, targets, objectives or convention, the editorial highlighted a context in which the need to respond with force was *recognised* rather than a decision arrived at after having assessed the facts. In the climate of the time, it argued, there was '*no question*' that 'the terrorism' had to be met with concerted force.<sup>87</sup> Nevertheless, whether it was the pull of politics or the power of discourse that had the strongest influence on the government, while it preferred to refer to the war with the slightly removed and dispassionate

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Prime Minister's recommendation, quickly indicating military support for the 'war on terrorism' before the United States had asked for help. The Prime Minister had stated to her colleagues that '[t]he Americans have made it plain' that they were looking at the issue from one perspective – that countries were either 'in or out' of the response. 'Blunt US Hint Led to Offer of Troops', *New Zealand Herald*, 8 January 2002.

<sup>85</sup> Helen Clark, 'PM Says Today's Military Action Inevitable', *beehive.govt.nz*, 8 October 2001.

<sup>86</sup> 'US Support an Act of Statesmanship', *New Zealand Herald*, 10 January 2002.

<sup>87</sup> Emphasis added.

phrasing of 'campaign against terrorism', it ultimately gave full support for the distinctly American-led 'war on terror'. And first on the list was Afghanistan.

## Chapter 4: Afghanistan and Beyond

The military campaign in Afghanistan appeared to be entirely natural, legitimate, and indeed the only possible course of action in response to the events of 11 September 2001. On the edges of the mainstream discourse in the lead-up to war there were voices proposing an alternative response. American academic Susan Sontag, for example, argued that, while she was not a pacifist, bombing Afghanistan was not the answer.<sup>1</sup> Barbara Lee, the sole American Congressperson to vote against the war, argued that the launching of precipitous military counter-attacks ran 'too great a risk that more innocent men, women and children will be killed.'<sup>2</sup> Dr Najibullah Lafraie, a former Afghan Foreign Minister living in Christchurch, New Zealand as a refugee from the Taleban, maintained that had the United States cut off foreign support for the Taleban (mainly from Pakistan), it would have collapsed without the need for military force.<sup>3</sup> However, as Edelman argues, in the shaping of political consciousness and behaviour it is not reality that matters but the 'beliefs that language helps evoke about the causes of discontents and satisfactions'.<sup>4</sup> 'The link between a problem and the solution is itself a construction that transforms ideological preference into rational government action'.<sup>5</sup>

Notwithstanding its unconstrained, revenge-driven and largely blind nature, the war in Afghanistan emerging from the outrage surrounding the events of 11 September 2001 was constructed as a war in defence of 'civilisation', to which all good nations must subscribe. Despite some early hesitancy, and with significant emphasis placed on the apparent justification provided by the

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<sup>1</sup> Sontag was savagely criticised in the United States for voicing this opinion. Susan Sontag, interviewed by David Talbot, 'The "traitor" Fires Back', 16 October 2001, <http://www.ucolick.org/~de/WTChit/SontagResponds.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Barbara Lee, 'Why I Voted Against War', 5 October 2001, <http://www.ucolick.org/~de/WTChit/Lee.html>.

<sup>3</sup> Dr Najibullah Lafraie, 'Don't Send Our Troops', *The Press*, 24 November 2001.

<sup>4</sup> Murray Edelman, *Constructive the Political Spectacle*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988, p. 105.

<sup>5</sup> Edelman, p.22

United Nations Charter and Security Council resolutions, the New Zealand government was a keen supporter, both rhetorically and practically, in this first stage of the 'war on terror'. As New Zealand's Ambassador to the United States, John Wood said, the attacks of 11 September 2001 were considered to be not only against the United States but on our own society – our beliefs, our way of life, our political systems and our open free market economic system – in a word: civilisation.<sup>6</sup> The government's response was, effectively, the same as that of America, because the attacks were perceived as an attack on a 'likeminded country'; and clearly, 'we wanted to be part of the collective response'.<sup>7</sup>

In its support of the United States in its war to preserve 'civilisation', problematic aspects of the campaign were smoothed over or simply swept aside by the New Zealand government. The Afghan victims were eclipsed in the discourse. The government rarely referred to them at all, and questions regarding them were either brushed away,<sup>8</sup> or emphasis was placed on the Taliban as being responsible for their plight.<sup>9</sup> Without clear evidence, Osama bin Laden, 'al Qaeda' and the Taliban were claimed by the government to be enemies which, with its coalition partners, it was both obliged and entitled to 'root out'. Voting against any reference to international law, and in support of an unconstrained, United States-led campaign not explicitly authorised by the United Nations, Phil Goff said that the offer of troops was 'of course' necessary. The fanaticism of 'the terrorists', he was to say later, meant that

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<sup>6</sup> Ambassador John Wood, personal interview, 9 September 2002, New Zealand Embassy, Washington D.C.

<sup>7</sup> Wood, 9 September 2002.

<sup>8</sup> When queried about the exacerbation of the refugee crisis after the military intervention, for example, Helen Clark responded that she did not have at her 'fingertips' knowledge of what the United States might or might not be doing to alleviate the intensified crisis. Campbell, 'The New Crusades', *Listener*, 29 September 2001, p. 19. She is also reported to have said that Afghan civilian deaths were 'inevitable' in the war in Afghanistan. While it was not meant, not intended, and not targeted, 'everyone is conscious that when bombing raids go in you can't always guarantee [that] carefully selected targets will be hit'. 'New Zealand Government Supports U.S. Bombing Campaign in Afghanistan', CRI Online News (China Radio International), [english.cri.com.cn/english/2001/Oct/34110.htm](http://english.cri.com.cn/english/2001/Oct/34110.htm).

<sup>9</sup> In a statement to the United Nations Security Council on Afghanistan, Phil Goff said that the 'cumulative effect of long term conflict, drought and the repressive policies on the Taliban [had] created an appalling humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan'. Phil Goff, 'Goff Statement to UN Security Council on Afghanistan', 14 November 2001, [beehive.govt.nz](http://beehive.govt.nz).

there was 'no option' to the use of force in Afghanistan.<sup>10</sup> Yet as Keith Locke argued, if any nation subject to a terrorist attack is permitted unilaterally to assault a nation on the other side of the world on suspicion of that country harbouring a suspected terrorist, is this not a situation of anarchy in international relations?<sup>11</sup> As the military campaign in Afghanistan was launched, Arundhati Roy noted poignantly that the 'International Coalition Against Terror' appeared to be the new, amenable surrogate for the United Nations.<sup>12</sup> It is not the intention here to portray the government as having heartlessly contributed to the suffering of Afghan civilians, cynically manipulated a climate of fear and revenge in the drive for war, or flagrantly contravened the United Nations and international law: it is, rather, an attempt to show how the government engaged with and contributed to the dominant constructions in the early aftermath of the events, how this process has operated, and what the implications of this have been.

While the exact impact of the military response on the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan is unknown, human rights organisation Oxfam claimed in November 2001 that fear of military attacks was still driving hundreds of thousands of Afghans from their homes.<sup>13</sup> In July 2002, Global Exchange claimed to have documented the loss of more than 800 civilian lives as a direct result of the military action. The latest accidental killing at the time of the report had involved the deaths of fifty-four civilians at a wedding party – mostly women and children, according to local officials.<sup>14</sup> Human Rights Watch reported in December 2002 that the United States had so far dropped nearly a quarter of a million cluster 'bomblets' in Afghanistan, which had

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<sup>10</sup> Phil Goff, *New Zealand Political Review*, November/December 2001, p. 29. Goff's insistence that there was 'no option' to the use of force against Afghanistan is a recurrent one. Outlining the government's position on Iraq in March 2003, for example, Goff said the government's commitment of combat forces to Afghanistan had been because there was 'no option' to the use of force in the circumstances. Phil Goff, 'Iraq crisis: NZ's position', *beehive.govt.nz*, 13 March 2003.

<sup>11</sup> Keith Locke, *New Zealand Political Review*, November/December 2001, p. 28.

<sup>12</sup> Arundhati Roy, 'War Is Peace, 18 October 2001,

<http://www.ucolick.org/~de/WTChit/Roy2.html>.

<sup>13</sup> 'Making Sense of the Afghan Humanitarian Crisis', Oxfam America, 21 November 2001, <http://www.oxfamamerica.org/publications/art497.html>.

<sup>14</sup> 'US attacks 'killed 812 Afghan civilians'', *Dominion Post*, 22 July 2002, B3.



killed or injured scores of civilians, especially children.<sup>15</sup> In one of the attacks, nine children, aged between nine and twelve, had been killed. Journalists had found small shoes, torn prayer caps and bloodstains on the ground in front of a house which had apparently been the target of the strike, where villagers said the children had fallen and died.<sup>16</sup>

That the campaign in Afghanistan does not involve the clear targeting of proven criminals has been highlighted as one of the principal causes of civilian deaths. As confirmed in a report by MSNBC in February 2002, the enemy is often indistinguishable from those the coalition is supposed to be protecting. Indeed, problems with distinguishing the enemy led United States Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld to acknowledge publicly in early 2002 that it was not always clear who were the 'bad guys' and who were the 'good guys', because of shifting alliances.<sup>17</sup> With the war being waged principally by small mobile units carrying out attacks against suspects on the basis of informal tip-offs, the incidence of wrongful deaths is exacerbated by warlords passing on false information to troops in order to have rival warlords killed off.<sup>18</sup> Human rights organisations have also criticised the Coalition for the direct military and financial support it has given to various warlords in exchange for cooperation in the 'war on terror'. Armed bands dominate the regions outside of Kabul, having stepped into the power vacuum created by the United States-led intervention. Without regard for their human rights records, they are propped up by the United States and its Coalition allies.<sup>19</sup> Human Rights Watch claims that the legitimacy of the Loya Jirga process in Afghanistan has also been thwarted by the warlords, with instances of

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<sup>15</sup> In its 65-page report, 'Fatally Flawed: Cluster Bombs and Their Use by the United States in Afghanistan', the organisation claimed that in using cluster bombs in or near populated areas the United States was not taking all feasible precautions to avoid civilian casualties, as required by international humanitarian law. It had also left an estimated 12,400 explosive duds that were continuing to take civilian lives. 'US Cluster Bombs Killed Civilians in Afghanistan', Human Rights Watch, 18 December 2002, [www.hrw.org/press/2002/12/arms1218.htm](http://www.hrw.org/press/2002/12/arms1218.htm).

<sup>16</sup> 'Afghanistan: U.S. Military Should Investigate Civilian Deaths', Human Rights Watch, 13 December 2003, [www.hrw.org/press/2003/12/afghanistan121303.htm](http://www.hrw.org/press/2003/12/afghanistan121303.htm).

<sup>17</sup> 'Pilotless CIA missile hits senior al Qaeda group', *Dominion Post*, 8 February 2002.

<sup>18</sup> Gordon Campbell, 'Where the Boys Are', *Listener*, 30 November 2002, p. 28.

<sup>19</sup> Sam Zia-Zarifi, Human Rights Watch, 'Afghanistan: Warlords Return', 6 June 2002.

violence, intimidation, and general insecurity undermining the fairness of the selection process.<sup>20</sup>

But that the overriding rhetorical goal of ‘rooting out the enemy’, with little consideration for principles of human rights, international law or due process had been carried through to the physical development of the war was evident from the early stages of the campaign. In November 2001, referring to Taleban and al Qaeda strongholds Kunduz and Kandahar, Donald Rumsfeld was quoted as saying that the United States was ‘not inclined to negotiate surrenders, nor are we in a position, with relatively small numbers of forces on the ground, to accept prisoners’. His hope, he said, was that they (al Qaeda and the Taleban) would ‘either be killed or taken prisoner’: then, he said, they would not be free to ‘make their mischief’ elsewhere. As noted by the *New Zealand Herald* at the time, the implications were clear. With the Northern Alliance set to take Kunduz and unlikely, of its own volition, to suddenly become adherents of the Geneva Convention in their handling of the situation, the possibility of a massacre was high.<sup>21</sup> It has since been alleged that up to 4,000 prisoners were subsequently transferred by the Northern Alliance from Kunduz to another prison in sealed containers – and that those that did not die from suffocation were slaughtered upon arrival.<sup>22</sup> While as members of the armed forces of the previous government of Afghanistan the Taleban are entitled to Prisoner-of-War status,<sup>23</sup> Rumsfeld was quoted shortly after this incident as saying that Taleban fighters who assembled in anything more than ones or twos in Afghanistan would be ‘killed or captured’, and boasted that,

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<sup>20</sup> Zia-Zarifi, Human Rights Watch, 6 June 2002.

<sup>21</sup> ‘US Must Abide by International Law’, editorial, *New Zealand Herald*, 22 November 2001.

<sup>22</sup> Paul Bowden, ‘War on Terrorism’, letter to the editor (Bowden refers to a documentary film, *Massacre at Mazar*), *Listener*, 30 November 2002. Amnesty International has also referred to hundreds of prisoners in Afghanistan reportedly having been suffocated to death in sealed containers. Irene Khan, ‘Security for Whom?: A Human Rights Response’, 10 March 2003, [web.amnesty.org/report2003/message-eng](http://web.amnesty.org/report2003/message-eng).

<sup>23</sup> ‘United States: Guantanamo Two Years On’, Human Rights Watch, 9 January 2004, <http://hrw.org/english/docs/2004/01/09/usdom6917.txt.htm>.

when the Taleban had earlier '[come] out in large numbers', the coalition had 'killed large numbers of them.'<sup>24</sup>

Those who have been captured and not killed, however, have in many cases been transported to Cuba's Guantanamo Bay. Here, neither the Geneva Convention nor the United States constitution applies, and captives are not entitled to legal representation of any sort. None of the prisoners has been charged with any offence; however, establishing guilt or innocence is not, according to the United States Defence Department, what Guantanamo Bay has been set up for. It is, rather, a kind of warehouse for the indefinite detention of those who are defined as 'enemy combatants'. The men held are not charged because they are being 'interrogated', not 'investigated'; the Geneva Convention does not apply because (by presidential decree) the men are not 'prisoners of war'; and the United States Constitution does not apply because they are on 'foreign soil' – despite the fact that it is a United States naval base.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> 'Rumsfeld warns off Taleban', *Dominion Post*, 6 December 2003, B2. It is important to note that while the New Zealand government refuses to divulge any information about Special Air Services (SAS) activities in Afghanistan (in contrast with Australia, Britain, and the United States), investigative journalists have disclosed that New Zealand troops in Afghanistan are under the 'operational control' of United States forces, and therefore have little if any capacity to determine what they will or will not become involved with. Gordon Campbell has reported in the *Listener* that while New Zealand troops have their own 'command' structure, giving them autonomy over such matters as discipline, unit training, and certain administrative procedures, they are obliged to follow the operational directions of United States commanders. Campbell, 'Where the Boys Are', *Listener*, 30 November 2002, p. 29. The extent to which New Zealand forces have been involved in military operations is shown in Nicky Hager's report that in 'Operation Anaconda' – a significant operation carried out in 2002 in which the objective, he claims, was essentially extermination rather than the taking of prisoners – the main job of the special forces, including New Zealand's SAS, was to help direct the bombing campaign. Nicky Hager, 'Our Secret War: What the Government Didn't Want You to Know', *Sunday Star Times*, 16 February 2003, C3. The *New Zealand Herald*, reporting on the operation in May 2002 (without reference to New Zealand's involvement), outlined that Operation Anaconda had involved the dropping of 'more than 2,500 bombs' by United States warplanes on what were said to be 'al Qaeda and Taleban positions'. 'Australian, British and US Troops in New Afghan Offensive', *New Zealand Herald*, 2 May 2002.

<sup>25</sup> Roy Gutman, Christopher Dickey, Sami Yousafzai, 'Guantanamo Justice?' *Newsweek*, 9 July 2002, pp. 74-77. With it being an offence against New Zealand law 'to commit, aid or abet' a grave breach of the Geneva Convention or its First Additional Protocol, it would appear that New Zealand's involvement in the capturing of these prisoners may be in breach of its own domestic law, not to mention the government's firmly stated principles on human rights and international law. In response to questioning from the *Listener*'s Gordon Campbell, the New Zealand Ministry of Defence maintains that, in its view, 'New Zealand is satisfied that its coalition partners in Operation Enduring Freedom are conducting their

Afghanistan, however, was only the first step in the 'war on terror'. This had been made clear from the start. In December 2001 the *Guardian Weekly* reported that Washington was actively looking for new targets.<sup>26</sup> A United States delegation had arrived in Northern Iraq to prepare for possible military action against President Saddam Hussein, the *Guardian* noted – marking the first concrete step towards extending the 'war on terrorism' to Iraq.<sup>27</sup> Yet unlike the 'shroud of mass reverence'<sup>28</sup> which surrounded the events of September 2001, helping both to dictate and legitimise the early military response in Afghanistan, the notion of bringing the 'war on terror' to Iraq did not take hold in the same way. The differences in the two cases are well illustrated by the fact that war against Iraq was portrayed as something which needed to be *decided* upon; not as simply inevitable, as in the case of Afghanistan. Further, the need for some form of justification was a consistent feature in the mainstream discourse – legal aspects of the case, and whether or not the United Nations would and/or should authorise the action were referred to frequently.<sup>29</sup> While there had been virtually no dissent in the lead-up to war in Afghanistan (as noted by political columnist Chris Trotter, any criticism of the United States-led war there had operated 'far beyond the political mainstream'),<sup>30</sup> the lack of consensus on Iraq was reflected in headlines such as: 'US might does not make it right',<sup>31</sup> 'War with Iraq based on double standards',<sup>32</sup> 'It's a war for peace, Bush tells doubters',<sup>33</sup> and 'World divided over Bush's ultimatum'.<sup>34</sup> Cartoons were also frequently critical, mocking the United States' case for war, and portraying it as vying

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operations in accordance with international law'. Campbell, 'Where the Boys Are', *Listener*, 30 November 2002, p. 29.

<sup>26</sup> 'Trigger-happy US Seeks Other Targets', *Guardian Weekly*, 6-12 December 2001, p. 6.

<sup>27</sup> 'US Teams on Sabre-rattling Missions to Iraq and Somalia', *Guardian Weekly*, 13 December 2001.

<sup>28</sup> The term has been used by Simon Schama in his article, 'The Dead and the Guilty', *Guardian Weekly*, 19-25 September 2002, p. 6.

<sup>29</sup> As with the earlier analysis of the constructions, the *Dominion* (now the *Dominion Post*) is drawn on here to indicate the mainstream discourse surrounding the potential for war against Iraq.

<sup>30</sup> *Dominion Post*, 4 April 2003, B4.

<sup>31</sup> *Dominion Post*, 2 January 2003, B4.

<sup>32</sup> *Dominion Post*, 6 January 2003, B2.

<sup>33</sup> *Dominion Post*, 28 February 2003, B1.

<sup>34</sup> *Dominion Post*, 19 March 2003, B6.

for world dominance.<sup>35</sup> The impact war would have on Iraqi civilians was also conveyed with some prominence,<sup>36</sup> and over the space of several weeks, three advertisements were placed by international aid agencies seeking donations for the civilian victims of the looming war.<sup>37</sup>

In line with this changing tide,<sup>38</sup> the New Zealand government took an expressly legalistic and ethical position on Iraq, consistently emphasising that, in accordance with its long-standing principles, there were strict criteria that would govern whether or not it would make a military contribution. In contrast to the unqualified and rapid support it gave for military action in Afghanistan, the government now referred explicitly to its support for a 'rules-based international order', the authority of the United Nations Security Council, and the requirement for a 'sound legal basis' (indeed, in the form of an explicit Security Council resolution)<sup>39</sup> before it would consider contributing to a military campaign. While the use of force was 'very much a last resort', said Goff, if the point did come at which force would have to be

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<sup>35</sup> On 1 January 2003, a cartoon showed George Bush, guns in both hands and ready-to-fire looking towards 'Iraq' – a dilapidated old gun lying unused on the ground – and proclaiming: 'Aha! (cough), Iraq's smoking (cough; cough) gun!'. Slightly to his right was 'North Korea', in the form of an enormous, looming bomb, which Bush was blatantly ignoring. On 14 March, a cartoon showed United States National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice saying: 'To give Saddam a clear message the free world needs to speak out in one voice ... Ours!' On 19 March, a wild-western cowboy representing the United States was shown walking away, guns smoking, after having shown down 'the United Nations', which was left lying wounded/dead on the ground.

<sup>36</sup> On 7 February, Prime Minister Helen Clark was quoted warning of the 'catastrophic' consequences of war in Iraq, and expressing concern that war would result in at least 100,000 Iraqi casualties and that 400,000 more would likely be struck down by disease ('War in March, tips PM', *Dominion Post*, 7 February 2003, A1). On 15 February, 'Iraqi children stalked by horror of war', warned of the 'predictable casualties of any invasion of Iraq: the country's children', and was accompanied by a large picture of an Iraqi baby suffering from leukaemia. On 18 February, 'The ghosts of a bombing tragedy', accompanied by a picture of a victim of American bombs 12 years earlier, wrote of Iraqi fears of more deaths (18 February, B3). On 15 March, Australian columnist, Kerry-Anne Walsh referred to an imminent war that would bear down on a 'small poor country economically and socially decimated by 10 years of US sanctions, where 50 percent of the population are children under 14'. Her article closed with the comment, 'Suffer the little children' (15 March 2003, B2).

<sup>37</sup> 'Help Iraq's innocent victims – the children', Save the Children, 27 March 2003, B1; 'Iraq: You can help!', Christian World Service, 5 April 2003; 'Iraq – People First', Oxfam New Zealand.

<sup>38</sup> As Helen Clark noted in September 2002, New Zealand's response was 'moving very much in line with that of the bulk of the international community'. Helen Clark, 'NZ will only act against Iraq with UN mandate, says PM', *New Zealand Herald*, 9 September 2002.

<sup>39</sup> Phil Goff, 'Iraq crisis, NZ's position', 13 March 2003, [beehive.govt.nz](http://www.beehive.govt.nz), <http://www.beehive.govt.nz/ViewDocument.cfm?DocumentID=16005>, p. 1.



considered a 'further resolution' by the United Nations Security Council would need to be moved 'to explicitly authorise the use of force'.<sup>40</sup> Any military action against Iraq should be 'collectively sanctioned by the United Nations', he repeated on another occasion, emphasising that this was important, as the government 'want[ed] to act within international law'.<sup>41</sup> Similarly, in an interview given just prior to the United States-led invasion in March 2003, the Prime Minister outlined her government's commitment to multilateralism and a 'rules-based international order', including the 'authority of the Security Council'. It went without saying, Clark said, that her government took a 'dim view of all wars that are conducted without UN backing': if there was a war 'without explicit sanction, New Zealand cannot support that'.<sup>42</sup> The government, Clark emphasised on the television programme *Sunday* the following day, did not support unilateral action – 'whether it is supported by one country or a number of countries'.<sup>43</sup>

The importance of clear, achievable objectives was also put forward as a fundamental requirement of any military involvement in Iraq, and emphasis placed on the importance of not becoming involved in military engagements when the objectives were not sufficiently clear. A high likelihood of success was also stipulated as a key criterion (there was, Goff said, no guarantee that military action against Iraq would achieve what its principal objective was deemed to be); and further, there needed to be 'evidence that military action is always a last resort'.<sup>44</sup> The fact that war in Iraq would result in the deaths of innocent civilians was also frequently highlighted by the government as a

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<sup>40</sup> Phil Goff, 'Debate on the Prime Minister's statement – Iraq', 11 February 2003, *beehive.govt.nz*, <http://www.beehive.govt.nz/ViewDocument.cfm?DocumentID=16005>, p.1.

<sup>41</sup> Phil Goff, quoted in Ruth Laugesen, 'Standing Up For What You Believe In', *Sunday Star Times*, 8 September 2002, C4.

<sup>42</sup> It is interesting that the Prime Minister acknowledged the potential for the Security Council to come up with a resolution (on Iraq) 'so vague and ambiguous that it allows the countries intent on war to proceed without endorsement'. This indeed was a scenario she was at the time anticipating – disclosing to her interviewer that she suspected the United States and Britain were probably working on a 'fudg[y] resolution' which would enable them to claim military action was justified. Were this to occur, she said, it would seek 'very weak justification'. Gordon Campbell, 'A Rock and a Hard Place', *Listener*, 1 March 2003, pp. 18-21.

<sup>43</sup> Helen Clark, interviewed on current affairs programme *Sunday*, TV 1, 2 March 2003.

<sup>44</sup> Phil Goff, in Ruth Laugesen, 'Standing Up For What You Believe In', *Sunday Star Times*, 8 September 2002, C4.



reason for restraint. Phil Goff, in public statements on both 11 February and 13 March 2003, said: 'War means people being killed, homes and infrastructure destroyed'.<sup>45</sup> Referring to United Nations estimates, he outlined that military action would result in between 600,000 and 1.4 million refugees, and up to two million citizens displaced within Iraq. Tens of thousands of lives could be lost directly, or as the consequence of famine, disease or land mines, he said. Even without such disruption, half of Iraqis were already not able to meet their basic needs, and hundreds of thousands of children suffered from malnutrition – war extending over many months would 'dramatically worsen' their position.<sup>46</sup>

Yet the same potential for death and destruction existed in the case of Afghanistan. However, while the campaign in Afghanistan has involved the deaths and suffering of potentially thousands of civilians,<sup>47</sup> the killing of 'enemies' apparently unconstrained by the requirements of international law, the capture and transportation of various individuals to a foreign base on which they have no claim to basic civil or human rights, the instalment of a regime with a background of extreme human rights abuses, and the rise to power of violent warlords throughout the country, the early constructions appear to have effectively encased this first campaign of the 'war on terror' in a cocoon of legitimacy. While certain aspects of it – for example, particular instances in which there has been significant loss of civilian life, the imprisonments on Guantanamo Bay, and matters such as the situation in Kunduz and Kandahar (referred to by the *New Zealand Herald*), have received some criticism, the legitimacy of the campaign itself is rarely questioned, and it is widely perceived as entirely uncontroversial.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Phil Goff, 'Debate on the Prime Minister's statement – Iraq', *beehive.govt.nz*, 11 February 2003, pp. 2, 3; and 'Iraq crisis, NZ's position', 13 March 2003, *beehive.govt.nz*, p. 5 (Goff made the same statements in regards to Iraqi victims of war on both occasions).

<sup>46</sup> As noted in earlier references, Helen Clark, quoted by the *Dominion Post* on 7 February 2003, was also outspoken on the likely impact of war on Iraqi civilians.

<sup>47</sup> While there are no official estimates of how many Afghan civilians have been killed in the war, in a letter to the *Dominion Post* in March 2002, John Minto claimed that 5,000 civilians had been killed by the American bombing. John Minto, 'Winners and Losers', letter to the editor, *Dominion Post*, 16 March 2002.

<sup>48</sup> The *New Zealand Herald* editorial on the situation in Kunduz and Kandahar, for example, was indisputably in support of the campaign – its principal concern was that potential mass

Accordingly, New Zealand's military involvement in Afghanistan has not impacted on the widespread perception of the government as fully committed to an independent, United Nations-directed, and distinctly moral foreign policy. The mainstream media consistently refers to New Zealand's 'independent foreign policy'<sup>49</sup> and reports in neutral, if not explicitly supportive fashion on the government's involvement in Afghanistan: on its support for the 'international fight against terrorism',<sup>50</sup> for example; or 'internationally approved operations such as the ... campaign against terrorism [in Afghanistan]'.<sup>51</sup> As reporter Ruth Laugesen, reporting on the government's 'independent line' on Iraq, stated approvingly: the government 'quickly lent moral and practical support to the US plans for a war on terrorism, and its incursions into Afghanistan'.<sup>52</sup>

The government, too continues to speak with confidence of its 'independent viewpoint' in foreign policy – New Zealand speaking its mind is part of 'Labour's tradition of foreign policy'<sup>53</sup> – and emphasises its adherence to 'rules-based systems governing conduct between nations'. A commitment to 'ethically based rules' is a 'key tenet' of the government's foreign policy, Goff says.<sup>54</sup> Emphasising that the United Nations and related organisations are 'central to the making and upholding of such rules', Goff goes so far as to say that the government's response to the conflict in Iraq 'illustrated and explained' the basis of its foreign policy: taking a 'principled position', it was keen to maintain its commitment to the United Nations as the 'pre-eminent body to resolve international conflicts', and to affirm its belief in the

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breaches of human rights in Afghanistan could 'weaken Muslim support for the war on terrorism'. 'US must abide by international law, *New Zealand Herald*, 22 November 2001.

<sup>49</sup> 'Playing our part in terrorism war', *Dominion Post*, editorial, 15 November 2002, B4.

<sup>50</sup> Hank Schouten, 'Anzus faded – like its ink', *Evening Post*, 25 September 2001, p. 9, <http://tiki.knowledge-basket.co.nz/daily/cma/cma.pl?id=2739-121-103-P%3A&cma=d>.

<sup>51</sup> 'Is Australia the 51<sup>st</sup> state?', *New Zealand Herald*, 28 September 2001.

<sup>52</sup> Ruth Laugesen, 'Standing up for what you believe in', *Sunday Star Times*, 8 September 2002, C4.

<sup>53</sup> Goff, quoted in, Laugesen, 'Standing up for what you believe in', *Sunday Star Times*, 8 September 2002, C4.

<sup>54</sup> Goff, 'The Ethics of Foreign Policy', 27 June 2003, [beehive.govt.nz](http://beehive.govt.nz), p: 5.

importance of international law as the 'best guarantor of international security'.<sup>55</sup>

The legal and moral problems associated with the campaign in Afghanistan, then, remain largely the concern of human rights organisations and have not served to discredit the campaign among mainstream public opinion to any significant degree. Further, while the wave of horror and sympathy that spread across much of world in the wake of the attacks of 11 September 2001 has now diminished greatly, and alternative voices now jostle and challenge the notion of the 'war on terror' as it relates to Iraq (New Zealand's voice is prominent among them), this has, somewhat ironically, served to further divert attention from both Afghanistan and human rights issues that have developed or been exacerbated elsewhere.<sup>56</sup> In May 2003, Amnesty International reported that the Loya Jirga (Afghan national council) in Afghanistan had failed to provide for democratic debate, and had entrenched in power individuals and groups accused of grave human rights abuses.<sup>57</sup> The continued lack of control outside of Kabul had resulted in increased lawlessness, factional fighting and repression, and human rights abuses, with reports of violence, torture and ill-treatment by warlords and official authorities common. Ignoring concerns about human rights abuses, however, the United States and its coalition forces continued to fund and arm militias and regional commanders perceived as valuable in the 'war on terror'. Yet the 'failures and lurking dangers in the "war on terror's" first stop', Amnesty argued, was being obscured by the world's focus on Iraq.

More than ever before, the world is now one in which many forms of terror are submerged by or even carried out in the name of Western or Western-supported interests. In 2003, Amnesty International claimed in its annual

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<sup>55</sup> Goff, 'The Ethics of Foreign Policy', 27 June 2003, [beehive.govt.nz](http://beehive.govt.nz), p. 5.

<sup>56</sup> This could be particularly relevant in the case of New Zealand, with the government's refusal to make a military contribution in Iraq reinforcing the notion of it having a distinctly independent, moral position on foreign policy, and helping to divert attention from what New Zealand troops are involved with in Afghanistan (assisted, of course, by the government's refusal to make any public statement on the mission or activities of the SAS in Afghanistan).

<sup>57</sup> Ali Abunimah, 'Making the World a More Dangerous Place', Amnesty International, 30 May 2003, <http://electroniciraq.net/news/printer851.shtml>.

report that the United States-led 'war on terror' had made the world a more dangerous place. While the war on Iraq dominated the international agenda, 'forgotten conflicts' were taking a heavy toll on human rights and human lives. Many governments, the report noted, were using the climate of insecurity as an excuse to crack down on political opponents. Human rights, however, were not a luxury for good times, argued Amnesty's Secretary-General, Irene Khan, but must be upheld at all times. Global insecurity, far from diminishing the value of human rights, actually *heightened* the need to respect them, and governments were not entitled to respond to terror with terror but were obliged at all times to act 'within the framework of international human rights and humanitarian law'.<sup>58</sup> As Khan argues, while the violation of human rights continues, security will be a 'skewed concept', bringing in its wake only greater insecurity. If it is true that for every action there is a reaction, the world should heed the words of Mary Robinson, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, who claims that 'today's human rights abuses are the cause of tomorrow's conflicts'. It is neither morally acceptable nor strategically sound to support or ignore the breach of others' human rights in the pursuit of our own.

In concurrence with Robinson, international relations specialist Robert Patman of Otago University suggests that New Zealand should view the promotion of international human rights in security terms; human rights, that is, in the widest sense, not merely those on most obvious display.<sup>59</sup> Further, Patman argues that New Zealand must uphold the notion of a rules-based international order, and support the United Nations as the embodiment of the multilateral process. In this, however, it can be argued that the onus does not lie solely with government; it is the responsibility of all of us to think critically, and to be attuned to the existence of terror in whatever form it might take. As Edelman says, whether a condition becomes a social problem hinges, by definition, on whether a sizeable part of the public accepts it as one;

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<sup>58</sup> Irene Khan, 'Security for Whom? A Human Rights Response', Amnesty International, 10 March 2003.

<sup>59</sup> Robert Patman, *NZ Educational Review*, 29 May – 4 June 2002, p. 6.

leaders can only act in so far as their audience is receptive.<sup>60</sup> Most political language is stylised and predictable, and is normally what is *expected* by the audience. As the *New Zealand Herald* noted in January 2002, the government's response to the events of 11 September 2001 reflected 'the instincts of the majority of New Zealanders';<sup>61</sup> similarly, in March 2002 the *Dominion's* political correspondent noted that public horror 'demanded a strong response' to the destruction of New York's World Trade Center.<sup>62</sup> Indeed, the Prime Minister's first parliamentary statement in justification of the government's military response was that the government – and the people of New Zealand – 'want[ed] to see something done'.<sup>63</sup>

While we contribute to the 'war on terror' in Afghanistan, a war purportedly being fought in the name of democracy, freedom and human rights, those facing the impact of certain aspects of the war will have their own impression of its nature. 'A human life is a human life', argues Tom Palaima: victims the world over also bleed, suffer and resent their losses.<sup>64</sup> Of the detainees in Camp Delta, Guantanamo Bay, there are known to be five Kuwait citizens who, it seems, left their country at the time of the Western invasion of Afghanistan with the intention of helping Afghans facing drought, famine, and war. Stuck in Afghanistan when the border was closed, the five were turned over to a Pakistani government agent by a local Pakistani who had been providing them with shelter. It is alleged that the men's host knew they were not members of al Qaeda, but was motivated by the financial reward he would receive for his captured 'fugitives'.<sup>65</sup> In February 2002, one of the

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<sup>60</sup> Edelman, pp. 32, 33.

<sup>61</sup> 'US Support an Act of Statesmanship', *New Zealand Herald*, 10 January 2002.

<sup>62</sup> Nick Venter, 'Clark's Warm Relationship with 'Big Battalions' Remarkable', *Dominion Post*, 11 March 2002, p. 2. This is not to suggest that government decisions are merely an uninterrupted flow-on consequence of public opinion. A poll published on 26 October 2001, for example, showed 49 percent of Labour voters were opposed the deployment of New Zealand troops to Afghanistan – no doubt explaining, at least in part, the government's consistent refusal to comment on SAS activities in Afghanistan, and its emphasis on the United Nations' 'authorisation'.

<sup>63</sup> Helen Clark, *NZPD*, p. 11996.

<sup>64</sup> Tom Palaima, 'This is Retaliation, Not Justice', *Times Higher Educational Supplement*, 28 September 2001.

<sup>65</sup> Roy Gutman, Christopher Dickey, Sami Yousafzai, 'Guantanamo Justice?', *Newsweek*, 9 July 2002, p. 77.

men, Abdulaziz Sayer al Shammari, managed to get a letter out of the camp to his father. In the letter, he asked his father to take care of his children, and to tell the Kuwaiti press of his plight 'so that they know the reality as it is'. Saying that he '[couldn't] stand life in this place', and that he had refused food for twenty-seven days, Shammari claimed, 'Some persons in America want to achieve electoral gains on our account.'

The men, trapped indefinitely at Guantanamo Bay, wait, as do their families. While they themselves may never be released, what view can we expect their children, friends and relatives to have of their captors, or of the Western interests they clearly represent? In October 2002, it was reported that two Kuwaitis had opened fire on United States troops carrying out a military exercise on Kuwait's Failaka Island, killing one and wounding another. The gunmen, it was said, were reported to be related to three Kuwaiti men held captive by the United States military at Guantanamo Bay.<sup>66</sup> While we might prefer to see the 'war on terror' as involving an unwavering pursuit of 'justice', the casualties of our campaign, it seems, may not be so easily convinced.

It is through discourse that political worlds are evoked in which persecution is justified,<sup>67</sup> and in which benevolence is 'channelled'. The construction of 'September 11<sup>th</sup>' has, truly, 'changed the world', leading to major changes in the way in which governments act, and how such actions are widely perceived. Discourse, then, is not merely a reflection of reality but a shaper and organiser of that reality, and is significant not just in itself but for people's lived experiences.<sup>68</sup> As such, 'discourses need disciplining, and they need challenging'.<sup>69</sup> The need for such challenge has perhaps never been more important than in the wake of 'September 11<sup>th</sup>'.

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<sup>66</sup> 'Kuwaiti Gunmen Kill US Marine', *Dominion Post*, 10 October 2002, B2.

<sup>67</sup> Edelman, p. 106.

<sup>68</sup> This point is well argued in Jacqueline O'Neill, 'The Unmarried Mother as a Discursive Figure and Historical Agent: From Figure of Sympathy to Figure of Condemnation, 1968-1978', Massey University, 2001.

<sup>69</sup> O'Neill, p. 54.



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