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Regions of Risk: Western Discourses on Terrorism and the Significance of Islam

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Terrorism is a word that everyone across the globe has become familiar with in the wake of the events of 11 September 2001. The rhetoric about these events, however, is more than mere commentary seeking to understand the cause of or apportion blame for such attacks and forms part of a much wider western discourse invoked to describe unfamiliar cultures and landscapes. In fact, terrorism is only the most recent in a long line of dangerous *conditions that have come to represent how certain areas of the non-western world are usually imagined and subsequently depicted as* regions of risk. *This article argues that "tropicality," "development," and "vulnerability" form part of one and the same essentializing and generalizing cultural discourse with "terrorism" that historically denigrate large regions of the world as disease-ridden, poverty-stricken, disaster-prone and terrorist-spawning.*

Terrorism is a word that everyone across the globe has become familiar with in the wake of 11 September 2001. It is not, of course, a new phenomenon; there were 11,415 such incidences recorded between 1977–2001 (Figure 1). Despite a statistical trend that shows a non-uniform but a relative decrease in the actual number of such attacks over this period, the rising rate of casualties, especially fatalities, gives cause for much less optimism. The nature of terrorism has changed; its activities are more lethal. Prior to 1990, most terrorist organisations had clearly defined political objectives that were best achieved through agendas that balanced inflicting sufficient bloodshed to gain international media attention but not such as to completely alienate public support. Recent attacks, on the other hand, seem carefully planned to cause the maximum possible injury. Aside from the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, the 1998 bombing of the U.S. embassies in congested downtown areas of Nairobi and Dar es
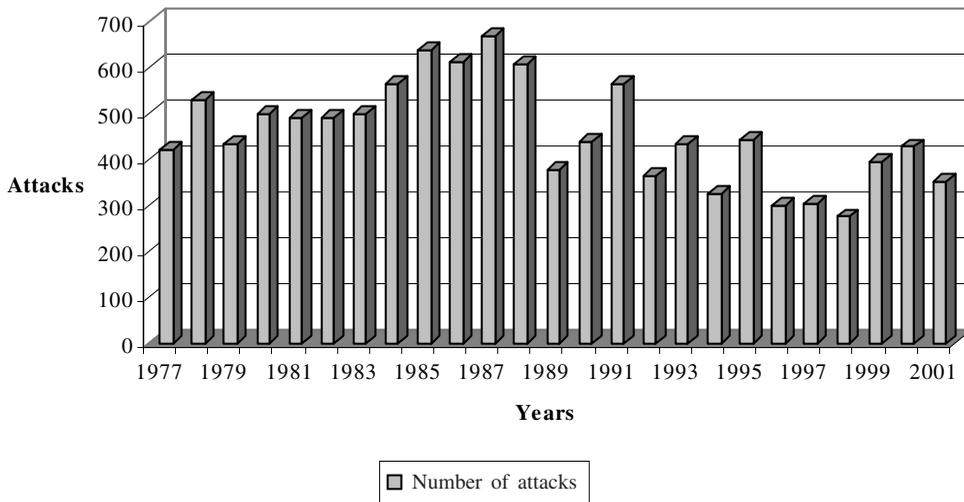
Figure 1. Number of terrorist attacks worldwide, 1977–2001. (*Source*: *International Terrorist Incidents Over Time, 1977–96* (Department of State, 1996a) and *Total International Terrorist Attacks, 1981–2001* (Department of State, 2002a).)

Salaam caused over 300 deaths and left more than 5,000 wounded. There have also been a number of other such attempts that clearly had the same objective in mind: the thwarted 1993 attempt to bomb the Lincoln and Holland tunnels in New York; the uncovered 1995 plan to bring down 11 U.S. airliners in Asia; and the 1999 millennium plot foiled by a fortuitous arrest at the Canadian border.

The rhetoric about these events, however, is more than mere commentary seeking to understand the cause of or apportion the blame for such attacks. It actually forms part of a much wider Western discourse invoked to describe unfamiliar cultures and land-scapes. Terrorism, in fact, is only the most recent in a long line of "dangerous" conditions that have come to represent how certain areas of the non-Western world are usually imagined and subsequently depicted as *regions of risk*. This article is an attempt to trace the historical roots and development of that discursive framework, one that is as long as has been Western encounters and contacts with those regions, and one that the reader will undoubtedly already be familiar with though in somewhat different guises. It is also a discourse whose condition of danger for Westerners and their interests has been used to justify interference and intervention in another's affairs. Although terrorism shares with previous discourses the same essentializing and generalizing cultural depiction of large regions of the world as regions of risk, it also possesses certain novel properties of significance. Its close association of menace with Islam and the ability of the new danger to transcend its imagined geographical boundaries make terrorism a potent discourse for influencing action as recent developments in Afghanistan and Iraq bear witness.

Regions of Risk

The process by which large areas of the globe were depicted as regions of risk predates the twentieth century.[1] David Arnold describes how the growth of a branch of Western medicine that specialized in the pathology of "warm climates" was a conspicuous ele-ment in the process of European contact and colonization from the earliest years of

overseas exploration. He refers to the manner in which Western medicine came to demarcate and define parts of the world where these diseases were prevalent (Arnold, 1996, 5–6). The very earliest European accounts describe equatorial regions in almost ecstatic terms but more unfavourable attitudes that accord value only in terms of human utility rapidly came to prevail as the seventeenth century unfolded (Thomas, 1983). As the European encounter with these regions intensified during the eighteenth century through the slave trade, plantation agriculture, and the colonial experience, so, too, did the perception that disease, putrefaction and decay ran rampant in the moist warm air of the Tropics (Anderson, 1996; Curtin, 1989, 87–90). A more scientific reasoning prevailed by the nineteenth century, especially a growing conviction that geomedical boundaries restricted races to what were termed their "ancestral environments" (Harrison, 1996). Arnold argues that the growing body of scientific knowledge on these regions produced not only a literature on warm climates but also invented a particular discourse that he refers to as *tropicality* (Arnold, 1996, 7–8, 10). One of the most distinctive characteristics of this discourse was the creation of a sense of *otherness* that Europeans attached to the tropical environment: the differences of plant- and animal-life, the climate and topography, the indigenous societies and their cultures, and the distinctive nature of disease (Arnold, 1996, 6). In this first rendition of risk, then, Western medicine effectively defines equatorial regions as a zone of danger in terms of disease and threat to life and health. The medical discoveries of the late nineteenth century, the elaboration of germ theory, and the realization that bacteria and not climate were responsible for disease, credited Western medicine with the means of effecting a "cure" to the regions' inherent dangers, an impression that persisted throughout most of the last century.

Whereas large parts of the globe were gradually depicted as a region of risk and then progressively rendered less of one by the conceptual geography of Western medicine, the dominant position of disease as the primary delimiting condition was superseded (though never completely replaced) by a new discursive framework in the years following World War II.[2] Cold War rivalry between the United States and the former Soviet Union for global dominance led Western theorists to formulate new kinds of policies designed to solve what were deemed the pressing social and economic conditions of Africa, Asia, and Latin America. But in attempting to "win the hearts and minds" of the people who lived in these regions, Western investment and aid policies effectively divided the world conceptually in two between donor and recipient nations, and between developed and underdeveloped countries. Development conveys just as much an essentializing sense of otherness as the concept of tropicality, stripping peoples of their own histories and then inserting them into preconceived typologies (Crush, 1995, 9). Michael Watts argues that all models of development share common "organicist notions of growth" and "a close affinity with teleological views of history" (1995, 47). Regardless of their ideological persuasion, development has always been conceived of in terms of a linear theory of progress from traditional to modern, from backward to advanced. Thus modernization theory posits that undeveloped societies evolve into developed modern nations along paths chartered by the West: economically through a stages-of-growth model (Rostow, 1960) and politically from authoritarianism to democracy (Huntington, 1968).

In particular, Arturo Escobar charts the manner in which this *developmentalism* became the predominant discourse after 1945 and how, as a consequence, many societies began to be regarded in terms of development and to imagine themselves as underdeveloped, a state viewed as synonymous with poverty and backwardness. As with tropicality previously, the discourse of development creates much the same "imaginative geography"

between Western Europe–North America and especially the equatorial regions. Terms such as first world–third world, north-south, center–periphery all draw attention to the manifest disparities in material gratification between the two, while simultaneously reducing the latter to a homogenized, culturally undifferentiated mass of humanity variously associated with powerlessness, passivity, ignorance, hunger, illiteracy, neediness, oppression, and inertia (Escobar, 1995, 9).[3] In this second description of risk, the concepts inherent in development similarly cast most of the non-Western world as a dangerous zone. But it is one where poverty and all its manifestations have replaced disease as the principal threat to Western well-being. How to achieve development and so overcome underdevelopment becomes the fundamental problem facing most societies, and one where the "cure" is envisaged in terms of modernization through the agency of Western investment and aid.

While *natural disasters* are not a conceptual term in the same way that tropicality and development are, the regions in which such phenomena most frequently occur have been incorporated into a discourse about hazard that sets them apart from other implicitly "safer" areas. No single term has yet emerged that defines such areas but there is an implicit understanding that the place in question is somewhere else and denotes a land and climate that have been endowed with dangerous and life-threatening qualities. More recently these qualities have come to be increasingly expressed in terms of a society's *vulnerability* to hazard. Proponents of vulnerability as a conceptual explanation take the position that while hazards may be natural, disasters are generally not. The emphasis, instead, is placed on what renders communities unsafe, a condition that depends primarily on a society's social order and the relative position of advantage or disadvantage that a particular group occupies within it (Hewitt, 1997, 141). Vulnerable populations are created by particular social systems in which the state apportions risk unevenly among its citizens and in which society places differing demands on the physical environment (Cannon, 1994, 14; Hewitt, 1983, 119; Hewitt, 1995; Wisner, 1993, 134). Central to this perspective is the notion that history prefigures disasters, that populations are rendered powerless by particular social orders that, in turn, are often modified by that experience to make some people even more vulnerable in the future (Blaikie et al., 1994, 5–6).

The discourse of vulnerability, however, no less than the previous concepts of tropicality or development, also classifies certain regions or areas of the globe as more dangerous than others. It is still a paradigm for framing the world in such a way that it effectively divides it in two, between a zone where disasters occur regularly with great loss of life and property and one where they occur more infrequently or the losses are proportionately less (Hewitt, 1995, 121–122). Moreover, the former has much the same geography as that of the Tropics or the third world but the dangerous condition is now identified as one of hazard rather than disease or poverty. In this more contemporary rendition of risk, then, large parts of world are denominated as particularly vulnerable to the effects of hazard. Although this discourse is primarily about the condition or state of people, the disproportionate concentration of those vulnerable in certain regions endow their environments with qualities that make of them dangerous places. As in both previous cases, the "cure" for this menacing condition is primarily conceived of in terms of the transfer and application of Western expertise, though this time in the form of meteorological and seismic prediction, preventative and preparedness systems, and building and safety codes.

There exists, then, a Western discourse about the historical and cultural geography of risk that both creates and maintains a particular depiction of large parts of the world as dangerous places, and that often serves as justification for Western interference and intervention in the affairs of those regions. Of course, the matter has never been pre-

sented quite so crudely. Between the seventeenth and early twentieth centuries, this discourse was about "tropicality" and Western intervention was known as "colonialism." Post–1945, it was mainly about "development" and Western intervention was known as "aid." In the 1990s, it was about "vulnerability" and Western intervention was known as "relief." Nor have the conditions that supposedly rendered these areas of the globe unsafe remained constant over time: the historical nature of danger has transformed once primarily disease-ridden regions into poverty-stricken ones, and now depicts them as disaster-prone (Table 1).

Table 1
Regions of risk as Western discourse (1)

Concept	Period (century)	Condition	Cure/technology
Tropicality	17th–19th/early 20th	Disease	Western medicine
Development	Post–WW II	Poverty	Western investment/aid
Natural disasters	Late 20th—	Hazard	Western science

The succession with which danger was initially identified as purely climatic, then as more political, before once again emphasizing the environmental reflects wider changes in the course of Western history. The creation of the Tropics as the abode of dangerous diseases justified the establishment of high colonialism during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in terms of Western medicine and gave substance to the rhetoric of the French *mission civilatrice*, the British "White Man's Burden" and the "ethical policy" of the Dutch. Similarly, the creation of the third world following World War II as poor and underdeveloped was largely the product of the political rhetoric of the Cold War's attempt to win the "hearts and minds" of peoples and formed part of the unremitting struggle against Communism. The emergence of natural disasters as the primary discourse of the 1990s reflects not only the successful conclusion of superpower rivalry, at least from the Western standpoint, but also provides a useful rationale for blaming the poverty and inequitable distribution of material goods of the people living in these regions squarely on Nature. It has permitted Western governments to talk and act in international fora as if disaster, poverty, disease, and the environment are entirely unrelated issues that need not be tackled concurrently but can be dealt with separately according to a timetable largely determined by Western governments.

The Discourse of Terrorism

Disease, poverty, and hazard are not so much stages in the development of Western discourse about non-Western areas of the globe as strands in which one aspect of risk is emphasized more than another though all remain present at any time. Thus the reappearance in the last decades of the twentieth century of antibiotic-resistant strains of known diseases, the spread of the AIDS pandemic, and the emergence of new viruses like ebola fever and SARS for which there are no known cures, have seriously shaken the notion of Western security (Brookesmith, 1997). Once again, those regions of "warm climates" from which these new threats are seen to emanate are depicted as dangerous and life-threatening to Western peoples, giving a new lease on life to the notion of tropicality in the twenty-first century (Altman, 1998). Similarly, the debt-crisis of the 1990s and the

moratorium on repayments by certain developing countries and the political instability that this causes, most recently in Argentina, remind the Western public of the growing poverty gap between rich and poor countries.[4] But the events of 11 September appear to have caused another permutation in this Western discourse, adding yet a fourth new rider to the present-day horsemen of the apocalypse in the shape of terrorism. Not, of course, that terrorism is a completely new phenomenon with which to assail the Western psyche. What is novel, however, is its elevation to be the dominant Western discourse about the non-Western world and its relocation primarily to within the boundaries that define those areas of the globe. Moreover, it poses a more immediate threat to the West. Unlike disease, poverty, and hazard, terrorism is much more "exportable," bringing the condition of *criminality* from those areas to the *homeland* to use terms that have come to be closely associated with the elaboration of this discourse.

The term terrorism like everything else about this discourse of risk has it etymology in the West dating back to the Terror of the French Revolution and the Jacobins who described themselves as its agents in the late eighteenth century. Various groups such as the Anarchists or Fenians, who resorted to a program of assassination and violence to achieve their political goals over the course of the nineteenth century, have been described at times as such. The eighteenth and nineteenth century discourse about piracy, too, shares many of the same characteristics. The terms terrorist and terrorism, however, come much more to the fore after World War II in the former European colonies like Palestine and Algeria where they were used to describe the "dirty wars" waged by independence movements. By the 1960s, terrorism was very much part of the lexicon of an educated urban youth radicalized by an ideology of socialist liberation in both Latin America (Tupac Amaru in Uruguay or FARC in Colombia) and within the developed world (Bader Meinhof in Germany or Red Brigades in Italy). Though the terrorist remains a prominent feature of the neo-independence struggles among the religious or ethnic minorities of Europe such as the Irish and the Basque (IRA and ETA), terrorism is generally perceived to have shifted its center of gravity and to be closely associated now with non-Western areas of the globe. The United States *Office of Counterterrorism* particularly identifies the Middle East/West Asia, South Asia, Southeast Asia, North Africa, The Horn of Africa, and Andean Latin America as the main areas of terrorist activity. Foreign nationals identified with those same areas even commit many of the attacks that take place within the developed world. In particular, Middle Eastern, West Asian, and North African groups are held responsible for much of the terrorism that takes place in Europe: the Algerian Armed Islamic Group (GIA) for bombing incidents in France in 1995 and 1996 and the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) for attacks carried out mainly against Turkish-owned businesses in Germany.[5] Just as the non-Western world was previously portrayed as disease-ridden, poverty-stricken and hazard-prone, more or less the same regions are now depicted as "terrorist-spawning."

Terrorism as a discourse, however, does more than simply signify yet another condition that makes of these areas regions of risk. Unlike previous depictions that represent a more passive state of danger that Westerners only encounter by venturing into those unsafe places, terrorism is associated with a more threatening condition, one that is not confined by its geographical borders but, as the designation suggests, "spawns" or multiplies like an insect horde or mutant cell to contaminate other "safer" regions of the world. One of the most notable features of the rhetoric used to describe modern terrorism is its ability to transcend its locale of origin, its exportability. The condition is not simply terrorism as defined in Title 22 of the United States Code, Section 2656f(d) but "international terrorism" involving citizens or the territory of more than one country and

"terrorist groups" or those practicing international terrorism.[6] President George W. Bush specifically declared war "against all those who seek to export terror . . . and those governments that support or shelter them" in his speech of 11 September (Global War, 2002). The nature of this threat can be found in the terrorists' ability to take advantage of the world's financial institutions for their own purposes, their use of widely available technologies to communicate rapidly, and the dispersed structure of their organizations that renders them less dependent on state sponsors or hosts. Moreover, the "terror" they are able to export increasingly reflects a transnational quality in the form of both their potential to unleash chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear (CBRN) materials and their capacity to launch coordinated cyber attacks on information technology (IT) infrastructure.[7] As Manuel Castells notes in the conclusion to *The Information Age*, terrorism-like crime is set to become globalized and all that has been witnessed so far is "only a modest beginning" (1998, 3, 376).

The exportability of terrorism, the notion that the condition of risk is no longer confined to its geographical origins in the non-Western world has led to the concomitant growth in the concept of "homeland" or those areas of the globe where the risks are much less frequent or their impact far less serious as distinct from those regions where they are both commonplace and have acute consequences. Again, the space thus imagined is basically analogous to the distinction between the West and the rest of the world. Of course, this idea of the homeland has always been implicitly present in the discourse about regions of risk but it is now finding overt expression in the wake of the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. While President Bush decried the outrage committed on American soil in his speech on 11 September, he went on to describe it as an assault "on the heart and soul of the civilized world" (Global War, 2002). In the flurry of legislation that followed these events, particular emphasis was placed on improving what is termed "homeland security." A White House Office of Homeland Security and a Homeland Security Council were created to advise the chief executive on coordinating and implementing efforts to detect, prevent, respond to, and recover from terrorist attacks within the United States. In addition, all aspects of internal security were consolidated into a new Department of Homeland Security in 2002 in what constitutes the most extensive reorganization of government structure since President Truman's *National Security Act* of 1947 established a unified Department of Defense in the face of the Cold War. Funding, too, has been generous with some US $20 billion made available to enhance airline safety standards, food screening processes, public health preparedness, environmental protection, and cyber security, among others. As a Report of the National Commission on Terrorism to the 105th Congress explains: "International terrorism once threatened Americans only when they were outside the country. Today international terrorists attack us on our own soil" (National Commission, 1999).

While terrorism constitutes the new danger emanating from these regions of risk at the beginning of twenty-first century, one reinforced by a concurrent discourse about a "homeland" analogous with Western countries, particularly the United States now clearly identified as its core, the threat it poses is that of criminality[8] (Table 2). The modern terrorist is above all "a criminal" in the eyes of the West. A soldier must owe allegiance to an identifiable state but a "countryless fighter" does not meet the criteria deemed acceptable to modern warfare and so does not have to be accorded any rights under the Geneva Convention. Terrorists are "unlawful combatants" and so can be stripped, shackled, caged, and their fates left to the determination of military tribunals. Terrorists specifically target non-combatants as part of their tactical military strategy or they commit humanitarian crimes by deliberate and systematic campaigns to deprive people of food

Table 2
Regions of risk as Western discourse (2)

Concept	Period (century)	Condition	Cure/technology
Tropicality	17th–19th/early 20th	Disease	Western medicine
Development	Post–WW II	Poverty	Western investment/aid
Natural disasters	Late 20th—	Hazard	Western science
Terrorism	21st—	Criminality	Western democracy

or other necessities of life. Moreover, they are depicted as intimately associated with drug trafficking either as cultivators, manufacturers, or distributors of narcotics. Osama bin Laden is claimed to have financed the development of a highly addictive form of liquid heroin for distribution in Western countries called "The Tears of Allah" (Global War, 2002). So close is this association from the Western perspective that the U.S. State Department actually created an Office of Terrorism, Narcotics, and International Crime.

At first sight, criminality may seem a strange condition to place alongside those of disease, poverty, and hazard as a defining threat but it does share with them certain characteristics. First, an interpretive framework that is solely rooted in European or North American cultural norms; second, a set of defining circumstances that are indigenous to the host societies or an accident of geography; and last, a situation that condones Western intervention to neutralize the potential danger. In the case of terrorism, the Western remedy is to impose what it regards as the opposite of unlawfulness, that is democracy. Of course, the democracy talked about here is one defined in terms of a codified legal framework that enshrines the relationship between states and peoples and their mutual rights and obligations to one another along Western norms. Regions of risk are those where no laws apply or only those laws founded on intolerance and distorted doctrines. In a speech delivered on 8 November 2001, President Bush summed up the difference: "We value the right to speak our minds; for the terrorists, free expression can be grounds for execution" (Global War, 2002). Democracy, on the other hand, is when a mutually agreed-on code that accords respect to individual rights is upheld by the recognized enforcement agencies of a lawfully constituted state. In the international arena, it is one where such values are sanctioned by multilateral organizations and agencies, and imposed, in the last resort, by the armies and military capacity of mainly Western nations.

Risk and Islam

The discourse of international terrorism like those before it clearly identifies the same areas of the globe as the origin from where this new threat emanates. But whereas the sources of disease, poverty, and hazard are widespread, mainly contiguous to the whole of the non-Western world though more closely connected at certain periods with one condition or another such as disease with Africa and poverty with Asia, terrorism is disproportionately associated with only a single area. The antagonistic relationship between the West and Islam is one that stretches back over many centuries of alternating crusade and jihad. More recently, it has provided both the model for Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) and the inspiration behind Samuel Huntington's "Clash of Civilisations?" (1993). The historical tensions that have existed for centuries between the West and

Islam only find new expression in the discourse of international terrorism, fueling fears that date back to the sieges of Vienna (1529) and Malta (1565). Not only are these regions of risk the spawning grounds of terrorists but they are the spawning grounds of Islamic terrorists, leading to a conjuncture of threat and faith in Western perceptions. Nor are such views limited to only the media but clearly influence the actions of governments too, despite protestations to the contrary.

Under the U.S. *Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act* of 1996 and the Patriot Act of 2001 (Section 411), the Secretary of State is required to designate any group that threatens the nation's interests and security as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO).[9] Under American law their entry into the United States is prohibited, it is a crime for a person to provide funds or other material support for such a group, and financial institutions are required to block their assets. As of July 2002, there were 35 organizations listed in this respect of which 86 percent were either based or mainly composed of individuals originating in developing countries. The five groups not so designated were either Basque, Greek, Irish, Israeli, or Japanese. However, 23 of the 35 (66 percent) of all organizations had Islamic affiliations, many associated with the Israeli–Palestinian conflict (Figure 2). Although an earlier *Report of the National Commission on Terrorism* cautions against terrorist claims to represent or act on behalf of any ethnic group, religion or nation, it is worth noting that the Real IRA was omitted from the list at that time (National Commission, 1999).

Even more indicative of this Islamic bias is a comparison of those states officially declared to be "state sponsors of terrorism" and the less grave category of "not cooperating fully with US antiterrorism efforts." A government that repeatedly provides support for international terrorism either by employing such acts as a means of political expression or by harboring terrorists and thus becoming an accomplice in their crimes is considered to be a state sponsor and added to the list. Sanctions of various kinds are then imposed to isolate it internationally and pressure its government to renounce the use of terrorism.[10] The most stringent measure of these is the 1996 *D'Amato Law* that effectively makes it illegal to invest in such countries. Also under the Export Administration Act of 1979, countries so identified fall under mandatory export controls that ban nearly all kinds of commerce. Any assets it may have in the USA are also frozen, allowing American citizens harmed by acts of terrorism to sue for compensation. In
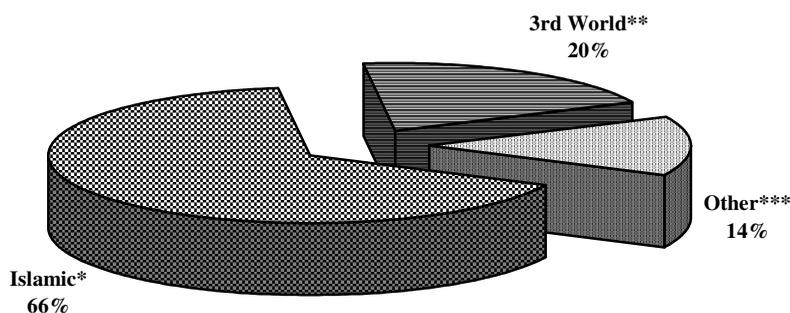

Figure 2. Foreign terrorist organizations (FTOs) as designated by the Office of Counterterrorism as of July 2002. [*Includes the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and the Revolutionary People's Liberation Army (DHKP/C) both of which espouse Marxist-Leninist ideologies though operate in a Moslem nation, Turkey. **Includes the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelan (LTTE) that includes Moslem Tamils. ***Includes the Kahane Chai (Kach) whose stated goal is to restore the biblical state of Israel.] (*Source: Foreign Terrorist Organizations* (Department of State, 2002b)).

1996, Congress passed a further law authorizing the President to designate a second category of states whose behavior was deemed objectionable but not such as to warrant full designation as a sponsor. As a state regarded as not cooperating fully with attempts to combat terrorism, its government is subject to an embargo on defense sales. Until recently, there were seven governments designated as state sponsors, one as not cooperating fully, and a further two recommended for inclusion in the latter—in all ten states. Out of this ten, nine could be described as developing countries and only one, Greece, is a Western nation. Seven of the remaining nine, however, are Islamic states: Iran, Iraq, Libya, Syria and the Sudan as sponsors; Afghanistan as not cooperating fully (only included in this category because the United States did not recognize the Taliban regime as a legitimate government); and Pakistan as recommended for this designation (Figure 3). In other words, Islamic states constituted 70 percent of those governments held responsible for harbouring international terrorism.

As might be expected since the events of 11 September, this anti-Islamic bias has become more pronounced. As part of his self-declared War on Terrorism, President Bush signed Executive Order 13224 on 23 September 2001 blocking the assets of and prohibiting financial transaction with organisations and individuals linked to terrorist groups. As of 9 January 2003, there are 447 entities identified as Specially Designated Global Terrorists (SDGT) covered by this legislation of which 87 percent are in developing countries. However, 354 or 80 percent of the entire list have Islamic affiliations (Figure 4).[11] In fact, all the first 66 names that constituted the original annex designated on 23 September 2001 and the "most wanted terrorist" list added on 12 October are Islamic. Latin American, Tamil, Basque, and Irish groups were not included until 2 November. This bias is even more pronounced in the list of SDGT individuals of whom 309 names or 90 percent have Islamic affiliation: the only other individuals identified are members of the Basque separatist movement, ETA (33 names or 9.5 percent) and the reputed leader of the Philippine's New People's Army, Jose Maria Sison, as the lone representative of the rest of the third world.[12]

This predisposition to regard all things Islamic as the main source of global terrorism and the scourge of the United States and its citizens and assets is all the more surprising in light of the Department of State's own statistics on anti-U.S. attacks between 1996–2001. The figures clearly show that the overwhelming number of such incidences took place in Latin America, 701 out of 895 or 78 percent. Only 33 such attacks or 4 percent of the total took place in the Middle East whereas more than twice that number, 69, occurred in Europe/Western Europe (Figure 5).[13] While undoubtedly some
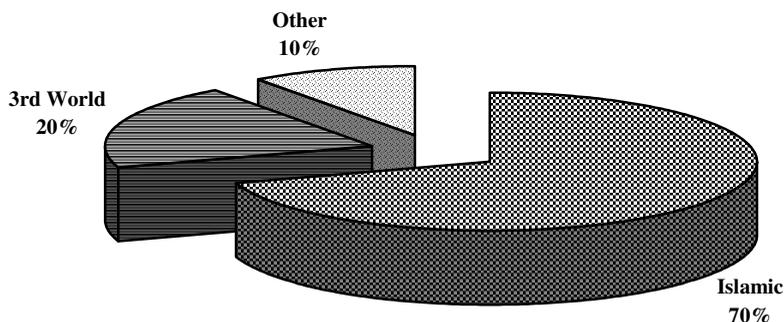
Figure 3. State sponsors of terrorism or states not cooperating fully with antiterrorist efforts. (*Source*: *Report of the National Commission on Terrorism* (National Commission, 1999)).
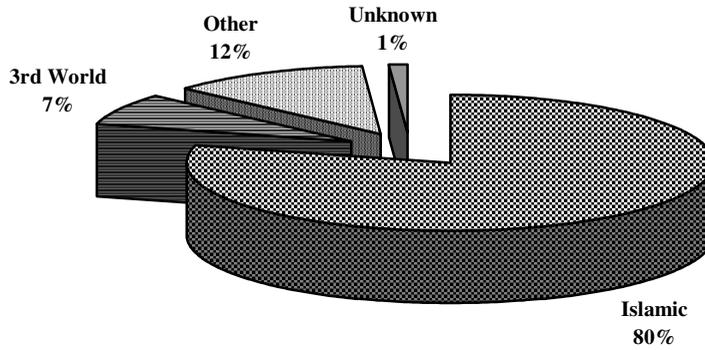
Figure 4. Property and financial transactions blocked under EO13224. (*Source*: *Executive Order 13224 blocking Terrorist Property and a Summary of the Terrorism Sanctions Regulations* (Department of State, 2003)).

of the terrorist acts committed outside of the Middle East, especially in Africa and Asia, were carried out by Islamic groups, the preponderant number of such events in Latin America cannot be accounted for in this way. Why, then, is Latin America not decried as a haven of anti-U.S. sentiment in the same manner as the Middle East and Latin American terrorist leaders pilloried in the public media? Only Fidel Castro came anywhere near to generating such opprobrium and he is still always branded as a dictator, not a terrorist.

Finding a plausible answer to this question may lie in the differing nature of terrorist attacks and the theatricality that transforms some into international spectacles. In the first place, not all acts of terrorism generate the same intensity of emotion; those that involve loss of life, especially those directed against "soft targets" or civilians, inspire particularly strong feelings of moral indignation and apprehension. In fact, the number
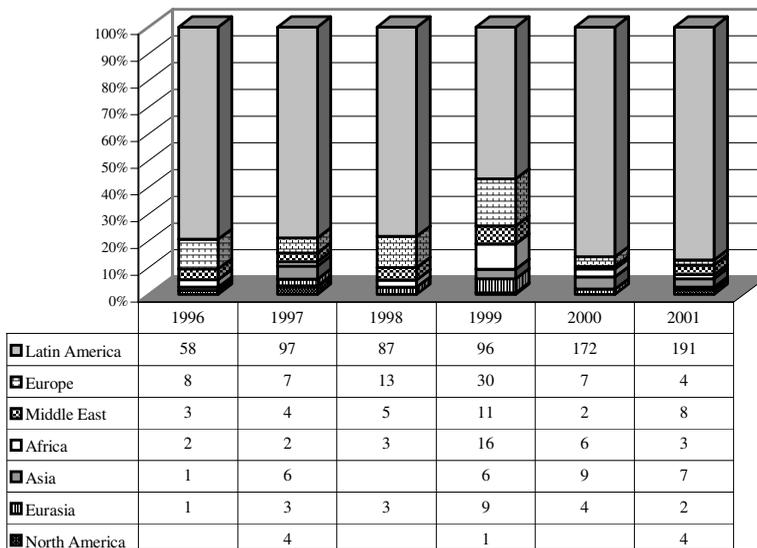

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
☐ Latin America	58	97	87	96	172	191
☐ Europe	8	7	13	30	7	4
☒ Middle East	3	4	5	11	2	8
☐ Africa	2	2	3	16	6	3
☐ Asia	1	6		6	9	7
▥ Eurasia	1	3	3	9	4	2
▨ North America		4		1		4

Figure 5. Anti-U.S. terrorist attacks by region 1996–2001. (*Source*: *Total Anti-US Attacks by Region* (Department of State, 1997–2002)).

Table 3
U.S. casualties compared to total casualties attributable to terrorism,
1991–2000

Year	U.S. casualties	Total casualties	Percent
1991	23	317	7
1992	3	729	.04
1993	1011	1510	67
1994	11	991	1
1995	70	6454	1
1996	535	3225	17
1997	27	914	3
1998	23	6694	.03
1999	11	939	1
2000	70	1205	6

Source: *Casualties of Anti-US Attacks, 1991–96* (Department of State, 1996b); *Casualties of International Terrorist Incidents, 1991–96* (Department of State 1996c); *Total US Citizen Casualties Caused by International Attacks 1996–2001 Listed by Year* (Department of State, 2002c); *Total International Casualties by Region 1996–2001 Listed by Year* (Department of State, 2002d).

of U.S. casualties (dead and injured) attributable to terrorist attacks prior to 2001 is low in comparison to the international total—in many years negligible. However, in 1993 and again to a lesser extent in 1996 with the explosion at the World Trade Center (WTC) and the attack on the U.S. Air Force base at Dhahran in Saudi Arabia, Americans were clearly singled out as specific targets. Even so, U.S. citizens still account for less than 8 percent of all such casualties—1,784 out of 22,978 victims—between 1991 and 2000 (Table 3).[14] How many of these attacks are directly attributable to Islamic groups is unclear as there is no quantitative data presently available to researchers that break down the figures according to this criterion. But like 11 September, the first attack on the WTC and the ensuing one on the housing complex at the King Abdul Aziz Airbase were very public rejections of the United States's economic and military role in world affairs and accordingly garnered extensive media attention. More to the point, these three attacks *were* carried out by Islamic groups, a feature that was made much of in the subsequent reportage. In the final analysis, the discourse of terrorism is perhaps not so much a matter of statistics as it is one of sentiment: Latin American extremists may commit far more attacks on U.S. interests but they are not portrayed as being anti-American in the same way as are Islamic groups. Whether justified or not, more than any of the previous Western discourses employed to depict parts of the world as regions of risk, that of international terrorism has a particular ethnic affiliation that is difficult to ignore. Nor, of course, has its import been lost on millions of Moslems across the globe.

Conclusion

The present rhetorical preoccupation with international terrorism is not solely the consequence of the mayhem wrought by the attacks on the WTC and the Pentagon of 11 September 2001 but is yet another manifestation of an historical discourse embedded

within a distinctly Western construction of knowledge. Terrorism, natural disasters, development, and tropicality form part of one and the same essentializing and generalizing cultural discourse, one that is used to denigrate large regions of world as dangerous— terrorist-spawning, disaster-prone, poverty-stricken, and disease-ridden, one that depicts the people of these regions as inferiors—criminals, victims, helpless, and infected. One, too, that reposes in Western expertize the necessary qualities to remedy these ills— democracy, technology, investment, and medicine. In this sense, it is not a new discourse at all but one that perhaps evokes centuries-old Western fears about the menace of mighty civilizations to the east and south. After all, for most of recorded history, Europeans (and by association neo-Europeans) have been the poor inhabitants of a relatively cold and wind-swept peninsula of the Eurasian landmass, far from the main centers of wealth and power (Blaut, 1993; Diamond, 1998; Frank, 1998; Pomeranz and Topik, 1999).

Nor is the figure of the international terrorist a completely new figment of the Western psychosis. According to the U.S. State Department, the terrorist is inhuman: someone consumed by a hatred of progress, freedom, choice, culture, music, and laughter; someone who steals food from the starving, uses civilians as human shields, and dooms women to a lifetime of poverty. He is also someone who worships only power and then uses that power to kill the innocent without mercy (Global War, 2002). As described by President Bush in his speech on signing the Anti-Terrorism Bill in the White House on 26 October 2001: "They recognize no barrier of morality. They have no conscience. The terrorists cannot be reasoned with" (Bush, 2001). To the historian, much of this language bears an uncanny familiarity to that used by colonial officials to describe Asian and North African pirates in bygone centuries (Tarling, 1963).[15] And needless to say, past Western responses were no less devastating than the recent "strike on Afghanistan" or the one on Iraq. Spanish accounts of the pirate lair on Balangini (in the Philippines) record the complete devastation of the islands in 1848: the slaying of men, women, and children; the burning of houses; and even the felling of coconut trees to preclude continued human habitation. Even hardened Spanish soldiers were reportedly dismayed as they left the islands a blazing inferno (Montero y Vidal 1882).[16] Piracy as a discourse shares many characteristics with that of terrorism and, in many ways, can be viewed as simply an earlier expression of the same fears and prejudices.

There is, then, an overwhelming sense of continuity about this discourse of terrorism that is very much rooted in Western perceptions of the non-Western world. But, at the same time, there are also distinctive elements particular to its present manifestation. On the one hand, its closer association with only certain areas of the globe that can be defined in purely cultural terms as Islamic is an important one that, compounded by the mass media, feeds the fires of historic rivalry between adjacent cultures and fans the flames of mutual distrust between Moslem and Christian.[17] Moreover, there is also clearly an important definitional issue at stake here between what is deemed the acceptable actions of a movement seeking self-determination or changes in societies and what constitutes a terrorist outrage that is very intractable to resolve. Until a qualifying criteria can be mutually agreed on and a more inclusive list of such organizations drawn up, one that includes the myriad other groups of this nature active in many parts of the world that presently pose no threat to Western interests, Moslems may continue to feel a legitimate sense of grievance. Even more significant than the localization of risk, on the other hand, is that the new condition of danger is now seen as something menacing Western peoples on their own soil, giving rise to a more definitive and exclusive notion of what constitutes the West as the "homeland." In particular, the events of 11 September have

transformed what were previously considered as "regions of risk" into what are now perceived of as "regions of threat." Accordingly, as attitudes continue to harden, more overtly aggressive actions by one side are likely to prompt equally belligerent reactions by the other and, in the process, only confirm Western prejudices that associate terrorism with Islam.

Notes

1. The argument presented in this section summarizes that presented by Bankoff (2001).

2. Not that tropicality has ever been completely eclipsed as a paradigmatic concept: Western governments continue to issue health and vaccination warnings to their citizens traveling to regions regarded as lying within endemic malarial, choleric, or similar zones, as well as imposing stringent quarantine regulations on produce, material, (and migrants) originating from those same areas.

3. Escobar has been criticized for losing sight of the larger issues, especially the manner in which the development discourse fits into the political context of power relations that it helps to produce, maintain, and from which it benefits and that it is not just text but a reality that has political, social, and economic actuality for peoples (Little and Painter, 1995, 605).

4. For a thought-provoking discussion on the lack of economic development in non-Western countries, see de Soto (2001).

5. The Egyptian al-Gama'at al-Islamiyya (IG) is also blamed for the 1995 planting of a car bomb in Rijeka, Croatia.

6. Section 2656f(d), the one employed by the U.S. government for all statistical and analytical purposes since 1983, defines terrorism as premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against non-combatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience (*Asia Times,* 2001).

7. The only recorded CBRN terrorist attacks so far were the release of nerve gas in the Tokyo subway by the apocalyptic Aum Shinrikyo group in 1995 and the anthrax postal campaign in the United States during 2001.

8. The *Homeland Security Act* of 2002 is quite explicit in its association of "homeland" with the United States in a geographic sense (Section 2.1).

9. In October 1997, then–Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright designated the first 30 FTOs, listing an additional group in 1999 (al-Qa'ida) and another (Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan) in 2000. Secretary of State Colin L. Powell included two additional FTOs (Real IRA and United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia) in 2001 and subsequently five more between October 2001 and July 2002 (Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade, Asbat al-Ansar, Jaish-e-Mohammed, Lashkar-e Tayyiba, and Salafist Group for Call and Combat).

10. Designating countries as state sponsors of terrorism imposes four sets of U.S. Government sanctions: a ban on arms-related exports and sales; controls over exports of dual-use items; a 30-day Congressional notification for goods or services that could significantly enhance that country's military capability or ability to support terrorism; prohibitions on economic assistance; and the imposition of miscellaneous financial and other restrictions. The latter include opposing World Bank and other international financial loans, allowing families of terrorist victims to file civil lawsuits in U.S. courts, denying companies and individuals tax credits for income earned in terrorist-listed countries, denial of duty-free treatment for goods exported to the United States, prohibiting any U.S. person from engaging in financial transactions with terrorism listed governments without a Treasury Department license, and the prohibition of Department of Defense contracts above $100,000 for companies controlled by terrorist-listed states.

11. The same criteria for allocating groups were made as applied in Figure 2.

12. The SDGT list of individuals contains multiple entries of the same people identified by different aliases or spellings; for example Osama Bin Ladin's name is repeated at least six times.

13. Algerian and Kurdish groups are responsible for many of the recent attacks in Europe and some of the most active European terrorist organizations are themselves Moslem, most notable the Albanian National Liberation Army (UCK), the Albanian National Army (AKSH), the Liberation

Army of Presevo, Medvedja and Buianovac (UCPMB) and the National Committee for the Liberation and Protection of Albanian Lands (KKCMTSH). So far, however, U.S. citizens or properties have not been the particular targets of any of these groups.

14. Terrorist attacks claimed the lives of 103 Americans compared to 1,681 who were injured in such events.

15. Incidentally, one of the first foreign ventures of the newly proclaimed U.S. Republic was to send several fleets to stamp out piracy among the North African corsairs in what came to be known as the Barbary Wars of 1801–1805 and again in 1815.

16. For an account of the affair in English, see Warren (1985, pp. 190–197).

17. Of course, this tension is not purely one with the West but also manifests itself in Hindu–Moslem tension as witnessed recently in the massacres in Gujarat, India during February 2002.

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