

# Culture, Crisis and America's War on Terror

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he global war on terror] . . . has entered  
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d Jackson puts it, 'a discourse can be con-  
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the photographs reproduced in chapter 2,  
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vitably has a limited shelf-life: it will be  
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t war into Iraq that, to many, showed that  
ith contradictions. Was Iraq part of the  
on terror' really about freedom, or about  
the claim to be on the side of civilisation,  
eally square with an invasion? Of course,  
that there were contradictions in the dis-  
eedom' and the USA Patriot Act – but it  
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und it marks the return of crisis. But it is  
different ways. That crisis might be such  
aning by a new decisive intervention, in  
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by a decisive intervention, as at box 8,  
s the same as box 3. But of course that is  
A particular narrative might be able to  
If there is a form of crisis, that narrative  
it will have to adapt in part to that dis-  
ossibility is shown at box 9. Adaptation

my's face', *The Washington Post*, 9 September  
, p. 159.

leads to stabilisation, which in terms of the 'war on terror' has been the  
period in which the 'discourse strikes back', the subject matter of  
chapter 6. However, stabilisation will decay into contestation, and that  
is at box 10, which, in terms of content, is the same as box 6.

This new, complex, social crisis process is therefore a series of cycles,  
as shown in figure 7.1, which also maps on to it the case of the 'war  
on terror' demonstrated throughout this book.

### The 'war on terror'

The 'war on terror' 'began for America on September 11, 2001 . . .'<sup>27</sup>  
On the fourth anniversary of the second American 9/11, the President  
told his citizens that 'America answered history's call to bring justice  
to our enemies and to ensure the survival and success of liberty. And  
that mission continues today.'<sup>28</sup> 'History's call' – or rather, the dis-  
course constructed from the decisive intervention, and the policy pro-  
gramme that followed – created a template that could be applied to  
America's interaction with others, whether they be foreign nationals,  
or American 'traitors', such as John Walker Lindh, the so-called  
American Taliban.<sup>29</sup> It was a template to be called upon in times of  
national crisis. Hurricane Katrina's devastation of New Orleans and  
the Gulf coast, and the lacklustre response of government at various  
levels, had led to much criticism of the President by that fourth anniver-  
sary. He responded by making a link between the hurricane and the  
American response on 11 September 2001. In both there had been  
sorrow and misery; government investment and a determination to  
succeed, to 'win'; an outpouring of international compassion; and a  
call for national togetherness.<sup>30</sup>

Those unhappy with the policy programme – above all, over the war  
in, and occupation of, Iraq – struggled to find alternative narratives.  
Most often, an old template came to hand: that of Vietnam. In the

<sup>27</sup> President George W. Bush, 'President proclaims national days of prayer and remembrance', 9 September 2005, at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/09/20050909-10.html> [9/2005].

<sup>28</sup> President George W. Bush, 'President's radio address', 10 September 2005, at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/09/20050910.html> [9/2005].

<sup>29</sup> See Dave Lindorff, 'John Walker Lindh, revisited', *Counterpunch*, 5/6 June 2004, at <http://counterpunch.org/lindorff06052004.html> [9/2005].

<sup>30</sup> For example, 'President's radio address', 10 September 2005, cited in note 28.

the world. Terrorist operations have been thwarted. And whatever view is taken of the war in Iraq, at least the possibility of new weapons of mass destruction being developed in that country has been halted. Thus, the capabilities of al-Qaeda have been massively degraded.

Although all of this may be so, it does not follow that capabilities have actually been undermined. The occupation of Iraq has provided plenty of opportunities for training in terrorism, for recruitment, and for securing weapons. And since the second American 9/11, recruitment has developed in parts of the world that were new to the bin Laden enterprise: the attacks on London in 2005 were carried out by British nationals. Capabilities have therefore changed.

Yet what of intentions? What if it is not the case that the terrorist campaign against America and its allies is motivated by a hatred of western values? What if it is motivated by a hatred of American *actions*? That message was clear in Osama bin Laden's video speech released just before the 2004 presidential elections. He said:

I say to you that security is an indispensable pillar of human life and that free men do not forfeit their security, contrary to Bush's claim that we hate freedom . . . we fight because we are free men who don't sleep under oppression. We want to restore freedom to our nation, just as you lay waste to our nation. So shall we lay waste to yours . . . I say to you, Allah knows that it had never occurred to us to strike the towers. But after it became unbearable and we witnessed the oppression and tyranny of the American/Israeli coalition against our people in Palestine and Lebanon, it came to my mind.<sup>38</sup>

There then followed a clear narrative. In 1982, America allowed Israel to invade Lebanon. The US Sixth Fleet bombarded the coast. Many people – women and children included – were killed and maimed. This oppression of Muslims continued: in the mass slaughter of children in Iraq in the sanctions; in the indiscriminate killing of Muslims in Iraq in the 2003 war. Terrorism is therefore about changing American policy, about defending Muslims and Islamic lands, fundamentally, about justice.

One can argue of course with the logic of this position; but it is important to see it as a narrative if it is to be fully engaged. Where are the contradictions in this discourse? How might alternative narratives

<sup>38</sup> 'Full transcript of bin Laden's speech', *Al-Jazeera*, 1 November 2004, at <http://english.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/79C6AF22-98FB-4A1C-B21F-2BC36E87F61F.htm> [9/2005].

be constructed? Osama bin Laden took very great care in the construction of his story. In his 2004 video, he outlined those interviews that he had given that comprise the text of the narrative. He had thought about the genealogy of his struggle. Saudi Arabia was betrayed when the kingdom was created in 1932, by a family who spoke about Islam, but acted solely in their own interests. Then, that same family humiliated Muslims by inviting Americans into the country in 1990, despoiling the holiest sites of Islam. But it was the Americans who were fundamentally guilty.<sup>39</sup> As in 1982, and in the sanctions after the Gulf War, it was American *actions* that were at fault. In an interview in 1997 with Peter Arnett of CNN, bin Laden put this quite clearly:

We declared jihad against the US government, because the US government is unjust, criminal and tyrannical. It has committed acts that are extremely unjust, hideous and criminal whether directly or through its support of the Israeli occupation of the Prophet's Night Travel Land [Palestine]. And we believe the US is directly responsible for those who were killed in Palestine, Lebanon and Iraq.<sup>40</sup>

And again, in an interview with ABC's John Miller, in 1998:

The call to wage war against America was made because America has spear-headed the crusade against the Islamic nation, sending tens of thousands of its troops to the land of the two Holy Mosques over and above its meddling in its affairs and its politics, and its support of the oppressive, corrupt and tyrannical regime that is in control. These are the reasons behind the singling out of America as a target . . . Their presence has no meaning save one and that is to offer support to the Jews in Palestine who are in need of their Christian brothers to achieve full control over the Arab Peninsula which they intend to make an important part of the so called Greater Israel.<sup>41</sup>

And again: in an interview in *Time* in 1999, bin Laden said: 'The Americans should expect reactions from the Muslim world that are proportionate to the injustice they inflict.'<sup>42</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Interview between bin Laden and Robert Fisk for *The Independent* in 1996, at [http://www.robert-fisk.com/fisk\\_interview3.htm](http://www.robert-fisk.com/fisk_interview3.htm) [9/2005].

<sup>40</sup> 'Transcript of Osama Bin Laden interview by Peter Arnett', at <http://www.anusha.com/osamaint.htm> [9/2005].

<sup>41</sup> 'Interview: Osama bin Laden', *Frontline ABC*, May 1998, at <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/binladen/who/interview.html> [9/2005].

<sup>42</sup> 'Wrath of God', *Time Asia*, 153:1, 11 January 1999, at <http://www.time.com/time/asia/asia/magazine/1999/990111/osama1.html> [9/2005].

summer of 2005, those supporting 'Camp Casey' – Cindy Sheehan's camp outside the President's residence in Crawford, Texas – were boosted by the support of Jeff Rogers whose father, William P. Rogers, had been Secretary of State for President Nixon. Rogers explained that his father had come to see that the Vietnam War was a mistake, while in office. The parallel with Iraq was made clear.<sup>31</sup> As Josh Getlin and Elizabeth Mehren put it in the *Los Angeles Times*, the Vietnam War offered many an analogy to the Iraq occupation 'because the underlying argument for that conflict – the need for the United States to fight communist expansion – gradually gave way to a belief that the war was bogged down in a quagmire that was killing thousands of Americans a year'.<sup>32</sup> And so the question – 'Is Iraq the new Vietnam?' – was a crucial one in terms of creating a contradiction within the discourse.<sup>33</sup>

In facing this apparent contradiction, the 'war on terror' narrative required continued links to be made between al-Qaeda and Iraq. For example, on 22 August 2005, the President said, in a speech to the Veterans of Foreign Wars:

Iraq is a central front in the war on terror. It is a vital part of our mission. Terrorists like bin Laden and his ally, Zarqawi, are trying to turn Iraq into what Afghanistan was under the Taliban . . . Terrorists are trying to block the rise of democracy in Iraq, because they know a free Iraq will deal a decisive blow to their strategy to achieve absolute power.<sup>34</sup>

The occupation of Iraq would help prevent a third American 9/11. It had that vital purpose and, thereby, formed a narrative at least as powerful as the 'new Vietnam' narrative. But in this discursive contest, there was no third way; and, unwilling to support the President for domestic political reasons, and unwilling to take on the establishment

<sup>31</sup> Warren Vieth, 'Bush defends war amid Texas protests', *Los Angeles Times*, 21 August 2005.

<sup>32</sup> Josh Getlin and Elizabeth Mehren, 'War could pivot on US hearts and minds', *Los Angeles Times*, 21 August 2001.

<sup>33</sup> For example, Seymour Hersh, 'Moving targets: will the counter insurgency plan in Iraq repeat the mistakes of Vietnam?', *The New Yorker*, 15 December 2003, at [http://www.newyorker.com/fact/content/?031215fa\\_fact](http://www.newyorker.com/fact/content/?031215fa_fact); Jeff Jacoby, 'Iraq is no Vietnam', *Boston Globe*, 25 August 2005, at [http://www.boston.com/news/globe/editorial\\_opinion/oped/articles/2005/08/25/iraq\\_is\\_no\\_vietnam/](http://www.boston.com/news/globe/editorial_opinion/oped/articles/2005/08/25/iraq_is_no_vietnam/) [both 9/2005].

<sup>34</sup> George W. Bush, 'President honors veterans of foreign wars', 22 August 2005, at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/08/20050822-1.html> [8/2005].

by pressing for a recognition of the implications of the Vietnam analogy, the Democrats were politically paralysed in the period after the presidential election of 2004. They simply had no alternative narrative with which to engage the 'war on terror' and, thus, nothing to say on the subject.<sup>35</sup>

The power of the 'war on terror' trapped the Democrats – and many other political and social institutions – within, silencing other interpretations and policy programmes. In the summer of 2005, New Mexico Governor, Bill Richardson, declared a state of emergency, as the total numbers of immigrants apprehended in three border counties exceeded 40,000 in the year.<sup>36</sup> Yet this was not an urgent problem, apparently, in the 'war on terror'. And neither was the growth in the threat from domestic terrorism: since the bombing in Oklahoma City, the Southern Poverty Law Center has traced sixty actual, planned or thwarted terrorist attacks from white supremacists and militias in the United States.<sup>37</sup> Yet neither migration nor far-right violence seemed to fit the 'war on terror' template.

The 'war on terror', then, was in large part concerned with a battle of narratives. This can perhaps be further illustrated by looking at three alternate readings. The first suggests that the discourse of the 'war on terror' has helped increase the power of its opponents. The second shows how the discourse creates 'extreme' fears, and then constructs those fears into 'realities'. The third argues that within the 'war on terror' discourse there are rhetorical devices and elements of a policy programme concerned with infringing those human rights explicitly supported by the 'war on terror'.

Could it be that the 'war on terror' has actually increased the popularity and power of those ranged against America and its interests? On first reading, this seems ludicrous. The military power of al-Qaeda and its Taliban ally was heavily destroyed in the war in Afghanistan. Significant numbers of al-Qaeda leaders and operatives have been arrested around

<sup>35</sup> Ronald Brownstein, 'Political leaders silence on Iraq War is a dereliction of duty', *Los Angeles Times*, 22 August 2005.

<sup>36</sup> Ralph Blumentham, 'For one family, front row seats to border crisis', *New York Times*, 23 August 2005.

<sup>37</sup> See Andrew Blejwas, Anthony Griggs and Mark Potok, 'Terror from the right', *Southern Poverty Law Center* (Summer 2005), at <http://www.splcenter.org/intel/intelreport/article.jsp?aid=549> [9/2005].

In all of this, bin Laden's focus was on American actions, not on American values. Michael Scheuer, the former CIA agent who was the 'head of the CIA's bin Laden unit', put this very clearly.<sup>43</sup> 'Is it possible . . . that US actions could easily be viewed by Muslims as attacks on Islam, its people, and its lands? That is, is it possible that Muslims perceive US actions in the Islamic world in a manner like that with which they perceived Soviet actions in Afghanistan? Unfortunately, the objective answer must be yes . . .'<sup>44</sup> One can argue with the use of the term 'objective' here, but the point is clear: American actions, not values, are the target. And it was related to a point made by Sir Michael Jay, Britain's top foreign policy official: war in Iraq would 'fuel extremism' in the British Muslim community, he predicted, over twelve months ahead of the bombs in London in July 2005.<sup>45</sup>

Therefore, greater involvement in the Islamic world – occupations in Iraq and Afghanistan, support for and pressure on governments such as those in Egypt and Saudi Arabia, perceived pro-Israeli policies – all of these will give validity to Osama bin Laden's narrative. Now there may be good reasons for all of these American policies: but they have consequences. And to the extent that all of these have been part of the discourse of the 'war on terror', that discourse has supported the very narrative that it seeks to undermine.

A second alternative reading of the 'war on terror' suggests that it creates fears, and then looks to see them realised. From the end of 2001 and into 2002, fears were raised that America would be subjected to terrorist attacks by Americans against iconic targets. Men arrested in Detroit for planning a variety of terrorist attacks – including Disneyland in California – were found guilty; only to be released when the prosecution's evidence was found to be flawed.<sup>46</sup> A US District

<sup>43</sup> From 'Inside 9/11', *National Geographic*, shown in August 2005. Available on the website <http://channel.nationalgeographic.com/channel/inside911/> [9/2005].

<sup>44</sup> Michael Scheuer (Anonymous), *Imperial Hubris: How the West is Losing the War on Terror* (Washington, DC: Brassey's, 2004), pp. 10–11.

<sup>45</sup> Sir Michael Jay, Permanent Secretary at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, in a note dated May 2004 to Foreign Secretary Jack Straw, reported in 'Straw plays down Iraq war warning', BBC, 20 August 2005, at [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk\\_politics/4196440.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/4196440.stm) [9/2005].

<sup>46</sup> See Bennett L. Gershman, 'How juries get it wrong – anatomy of the Detroit terror case', *Washburn Law Journal*, 44 (2005), at <http://washburnlaw.edu/wlj/44-2/articles/gers.pdf> [9/2005].

Judge held: 'In its best light, the record would show that the prosecution committed a pattern of mistakes and oversights that deprived the defendants of discoverable evidence (including impeachment material) and created a record filled with misleading inferences that such material did not exist . . .'<sup>47</sup> Perhaps it was unsurprising that the prosecutors went beyond their brief: the Attorney General, John Ashcroft, was sanctioned by the courts for his comments on the guilt of the men before trial.<sup>48</sup> Then there were fears that those attacks would involve weapons of mass destruction. Jose Padilla seemed to illustrate this combination of threats perfectly. But there has been no evidence that Padilla actually had any such weapons: the plot was, in the words of FBI Director, John Mueller, in the 'discussion stage'.<sup>49</sup> It took three and a half years for Padilla to be charged, and then it was with conspiracy to murder, and membership of a terrorist support cell.<sup>50</sup>

Such instances were repeated at lower levels throughout America. One woman listened to a conversation between three Muslim-American men in a Georgia diner. She told police that they were making jokes about the destruction of the Twin Towers, and that she thought they were making plans for a new attack. On her evidence, and her recording of the vehicle number plate, the three men were held by police in Florida for seventeen hours while searched and interrogated. Nothing was found, and they were released. The three were medical students about to attend a course in Miami, from which they were barred, for their 'notoriety' would get in the way of 'patient care'. In this case, Brendan Miniter wrote in the *Wall Street Journal*, 'the justice system worked'.<sup>51</sup> Army captain James Yee was accused of espionage, passing messages to and from al-Qaeda to those held in Guantanamo

<sup>47</sup> District Judge Gerald Rosen quoted in 'Judge tosses Detroit terror case', *CBS News*, 2 September 2004, at <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2004/08/31/terror/main639871.shtml> [9/2005].

<sup>48</sup> David Shepardson, 'Ashcroft sanctioned for violating gag order in Detroit terror trial', *Detroit News*, 16 December 2003, at <http://www.detnews.com/2003/metro/0312/16/metro-10844.htm> [9/2005].

<sup>49</sup> See 'US authorities capture "dirty bomb" suspect', CNN, 10 June 2002, at <http://archives.cnn.com/2002/US/06/10/dirty.bomb.suspect/> [9/2005].

<sup>50</sup> 'Terror suspect Padilla charged', CNN, 22 November 2005, at <http://www.cnn.com/2005/LAW/11/22/padilla.case/> [12/2005].

<sup>51</sup> Brendan Miniter, 'Arresting developments', *Wall Street Journal*, opinion page, 17 September 2002, at <http://www.opinionjournal.com/columnists/bminiter/?id=110002276> [9/2005].

Bay. Yee, an army Muslim 'chaplain', was widely vilified: he spent seventy-six days in solitary confinement. And yet, less than a year later, all charges were dropped, and he was reinstated to continue his army career without even a reprimand on his record.<sup>52</sup>

The process of naming terrors – the enemy within, with or without weapons of mass destruction – and then identifying those who fit the constructed bill continues. The fear in California is of a combination of Islamicist terrorists and Los Angeles gangs. 'Los Angeles Police Chief William Bratton said he has long believed prisons are fertile ground for terrorists.'<sup>53</sup> The *Los Angeles Times* ran a series of articles on the link, following some arrests, that seemed to illustrate its reality.<sup>54</sup>

American society, then, has become sensitised to the threats that it faces: those in society are encouraged to think the worst. This was well summed up in an opinion piece by Peggy Noonan in the *Wall Street Journal*. Writing about the 'mistake' of closing military bases, she wrote: 'The federal government is doing something right now that is exactly the opposite of what it should be doing. It is forgetting to think dark. It is forgetting to imagine the unimaginable.'<sup>55</sup> The focus was on the threats of foreign terrorists, inspired by Osama bin Laden's narrative, trained abroad who seek revenge on the United States, such as Mohammed Atta and the other eighteen hijackers; Richard Reid, the shoe bomber; and Ahmed Ressam, arrested at the Canadian border in 1999, apparently determined on bombing Los Angeles International Airport. In addition, Americans have become fearful of ghosts within the country, and this is directly attributable to the 'war on terror' discourse. Peter Bergen argued that 'since 9/11 there has been no evidence of sleepers . . . operating in the United States. Either these sleeper cells are so asleep they are effectively dead, or they simply don't exist.

<sup>52</sup> Laura Parker, 'The ordeal of Chaplain Yee', *USA Today*, 16 May 2004. The campaign to secure an official apology to Yee is at <http://www.captainyee.org/>

<sup>53</sup> In Matt Krasnowski, 'Probe fans fears of prison terror plots', *San Diego Union Tribune*, 22 August 2005, at <http://www.signonsandiego.com/news/nation/terror/20050822-9999-1n22prison.html> [9/2005].

<sup>54</sup> See, for example (all in the *Los Angeles Times*), Greg Krikorian, 'Arrest made in possible terror plot', 16 August 2005; Greg Krikorian and Jenifer Warren, 'Terror probe targets a Folsom prison', 17 August 2005; Solomon Moore, 'Radical Islam an issue in prisons', 20 August 2005.

<sup>55</sup> Peggy Noonan, 'Think dark', *Wall Street Journal*, opinion page, 25 August 2005, at <http://www.opinionjournal.com/columnists/pnoonan/?id=110007154> [9/2005].

The onset of the Iraq War and the presidential election both offered perfect occasions for the supposed cells to strike, but nothing happened.<sup>56</sup> The 'war on terror' encourages all to think about that which over ten years before the second American 9/11 Tom Clancy had called 'the sum of all fears'.

A third aspect of an alternative reading of the impact of the 'war on terror' discourse examines the implications for those named as terrorists. As shown above, to be accused of terrorist acts can lead to imprisonment without trial, even if the accused is an American. And even if the accusation is false, it can lead to the destruction of careers, and undoubtedly, of personal relationships. But it has led to worse, and that is because of the nature of the stakes.

In the 'war on terror', the terrorists are the ultimate enemies: they are barbarians, who seek to destroy civilisation itself. And so all means of defeating that enemy are in some ways legitimised. When a group of National Guardsmen were charged with using a stun gun on a captured Iraqi, who was handcuffed and blindfolded, their potential courts-martial were referred to by Lieutenant Colonel Cliff Kent as being for 'suspected terrorist abuse'.<sup>57</sup> The designation of the term 'terrorist' came before any trial; and of course was also being used to indicate that a different standard of treatment was acceptable.

That different standard of treatment was fully part of the policy programme of the 'war on terror'. In a memorandum to the President in January 2002, White House Counsel Alberto Gonzalez wrote that in his opinion and that of the Department of Justice, the Geneva Convention III on the Treatment of Prisoners of War did not apply to those captured al-Qaeda and Taliban fighters.<sup>58</sup> As Donald Rumsfeld put it:

The al-Qaeda is not a country. They did not behave as an army. They did not wear uniforms. They did not have insignia. They did not carry their weapons openly. They are a terrorist network. It would be a total misunderstanding of the Geneva Convention if one considers al-Qaeda, a terrorist network, to

<sup>56</sup> Peter Bergen, 'Beware the Holy War', *The Nation*, 20 June 2005, at <http://www.thenation.com/doc/20050620/bergen/7> [7/2005].

<sup>57</sup> In 'Guardsmen in Fullerton Unit face courts-martial', *Los Angeles Times*, 23 August 2005.

<sup>58</sup> Original at [http://msnbc.com/modules/newsweek/pdf/gonzales\\_memo.pdf](http://msnbc.com/modules/newsweek/pdf/gonzales_memo.pdf) [9/2005].

be an army . . . the Taliban also did not wear uniforms, they did not have insignia, they did not carry their weapons openly, and they were tied tightly at the waist to al-Qaeda . . . there isn't any question in my mind but that they are not, they would not rise to the standard of a prisoner of war.<sup>59</sup>

Thus, those prisoners held in Guantanamo Bay would not have formal, internationally recognised rights. They would not have American rights either, according to the administration, for the sovereignty of the base ultimately lay with Cuba, not the United States. By the end of 2004, the International Committee of the Red Cross issued a report in which it said that the treatment of prisoners at Guantanamo Bay was 'cruel, inhumane and degrading . . .'.<sup>60</sup>

In August 2002, Gonzalez wrote in a confidential memorandum for the President in which torture was redefined to be that which must 'inflict pain that is difficult to endure'.<sup>61</sup> At the time that this legal work was underway, Americans were torturing and murdering prisoners at Bagram Collection Point detention centre in Afghanistan, according to a 2,000-page official army investigation that led to several charges.<sup>62</sup> One of the deaths was of a man held to be innocent of any wrong doing; he was simply in the wrong place, at the wrong time. Later, in Iraq in 2004, a scandal emerged at Abu Ghraib. Seymour Hersh's article in the *New Yorker* was just the beginning: unlike Bagram, there were many photographs showing an extraordinary range of abuse of prisoners.<sup>63</sup> *Newsweek* argued that 'as a means of pre-empting a repeat of 9/11, Bush, along with Defense Secretary Rumsfeld and Attorney General John Ashcroft, signed off on a secret system of detention and interrogation that opened the door to such methods'.<sup>64</sup> By the summer

<sup>59</sup> In 'Secretary Rumsfeld media availability en route to Camp X-Ray', *Dodd News*, 27 January 2005, at [http://www.dod.mil/transcripts/2002/t01282002\\_t0127sd2.html](http://www.dod.mil/transcripts/2002/t01282002_t0127sd2.html) [9/2005].

<sup>60</sup> Josh White and John Mints, 'Red Cross cites "inhumane" treatment at Guantanamo', *Washington Post*, 1 December 2004.

<sup>61</sup> 'Memorandum for the President re: Standards of conduct for interrogation', 1 August 2002, at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/nation/documents/dojinterrogationmemo20020801.pdf> [9/2005].

<sup>62</sup> See Tim Golden, 'In US report, brutal details of 2 Afghan inmates' deaths', *New York Times*, 20 May 2005.

<sup>63</sup> Seymour Hersh, 'Torture at Abu Ghraib', *The New Yorker*, 10 May 2004, at [http://www.newyorker.com/fact/content/?040510fa\\_fact](http://www.newyorker.com/fact/content/?040510fa_fact) [5/2005].

<sup>64</sup> John Barry, Michael Hirsh and Michael Isikoff, 'The roots of torture', *Newsweek*, 24 May 2005, at <http://msnbc.msn.com/id/4989481/> [9/2005].

of 2004, at least eight separate official enquiries were underway into allegations of serial abuse by the US military.<sup>65</sup>

It was Abu Ghraib in particular that focused concerns on how the 'war on terror' was being conducted. President Bush gave interviews with *al-Arabiya* and *Alhurra* in May 2004 to try to manage the crisis. He said that he viewed 'the Abu Ghraib prison abuses as abhorrent'. And he was cited as saying that 'What took place at Abu Ghraib does not represent America, which is a compassionate country that believes in freedom'.<sup>66</sup> The contradiction in the policy programme was clear for all to see. Yet despite all the revulsion at the acts and the evidence of the abuse, as Elizabeth Holtzman argued, 'it has prompted no investigative commission (in the manner of the 9/11 commission) with a mandate to find the whole truth, or full-scale bipartisan Congressional hearings, as occurred during Watergate. Indeed, it is as though the Watergate investigations ended with the prosecution of only the burglars . . .'.<sup>67</sup>

The pattern is fairly clear: the enemies in the 'war on terror' are so appalling that it has been 'common sense' to change the rules of war and detention so that those enemies might be 'encouraged' to provide vital information. Constructing an ultimate enemy contains the seeds of dehumanisation, and it is that which has become part of the policy programme. Needless to say, the treatment of prisoners by some Americans in the 'war on terror', and the changing legal guarantees of rights, was taken as evidence by those who argued from within the 'no war for oil' discourse that they had been right all along. Not In Our Name declared: 'The true nature of the American occupation has been revealed to the world. It is an occupation of abuse and torture that is dehumanizing and denying all human rights to the Iraqi people'.<sup>68</sup>

Misreading the nature of the 'enemy', and thereby giving discursive resources to that enemy; being consumed with conjuring up fears, and

<sup>65</sup> See 'US military prisoner abuse inquiries', *Canadian Broadcasting Corporation*, 23 August 2004, at [http://www.cbc.ca/news/background/iraqi/prisonabuse\\_inquiries.html](http://www.cbc.ca/news/background/iraqi/prisonabuse_inquiries.html) [9/2005].

<sup>66</sup> The President's remarks in 'Global message', 6 May 2004, at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2004/05/20040506-1.html> [9/2005].

<sup>67</sup> Elizabeth Holtzman, 'Torture and accountability', *The Nation*, 18 July 2005, at <http://www.thenation.com/docprint.mhtml?i=20050718&cs=holtzman> [9/2005].

<sup>68</sup> See the statement at <http://www.notinourname.net/war/statement-prison-10may04.htm> [9/2005].

then constructing evidence of them; and dehumanising the enemy, leading to acts damaging to the strategic direction of the 'war on terror': all had been part of the record of post-second 9/11 America. But above all, the power of the discourse rested in the way in which it affected everyday life. The nation's key icons have been affected. Visitors were unable to visit Liberty Island after the attacks; over four years later, access was still only to the pedestal. Certain vehicles were no longer allowed to cross the Hoover Dam. Vehicles were no longer permitted to stop on the Golden Gate Bridge, due to security restrictions.<sup>69</sup> The 'war on terror' has been reflected to Americans through the television news and the newspapers; in books and novels; on television and in the cinema; and in a multitude of images on sandwich shops, by freeways, in the street and on school buildings. As Marc Siegel put it in *USA Today*, 'Terrorism is everywhere. Only it isn't'.<sup>70</sup> Terrorism is not a more common event than deaths through cancer or traffic accidents, through homicides or drug taking. But it *feels* different. That is the power of a discourse.

<sup>69</sup> On the Statue of Liberty, see <http://www.nps.gov/stli/prod02.htm>. On the Hoover Dam, see <http://www.usbr.gov/lc/hooverdam/crossingguide.pdf>.

<sup>70</sup> Marc Siegel, 'Terrorism is everywhere. Only it isn't', *USA Today*, 9 August 2005.

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