Review article

9/11 and the terrorism industry

TIM DUNNE*

Shocked and awed: how the war on terror and jihad have changed the English language. By Fred Halliday. London: I. B. Tauris. 2011. 337pp. Index. Pb.: £12.99. ISBN 978 1 84885 031 6.

The impact of 9/11 on politics and war: the day that changed everything?. Edited by Matthew J. Morgan. Basingstoke: Palgrave. 2009. 264pp. Index. £60.00. ISBN 978 0 23060 763 7.

The impact of 9/11 on business and economics: the business of terror: the day that changed everything?. Edited by Matthew J. Morgan. Basingstoke: Palgrave. 2009. 288pp. Index. £60.00. ISBN 978 02 3060 837 5.

The impact of 9/11 and the new legal landscape: the day that changed everything?. Edited by Matthew J. Morgan. Basingstoke: Palgrave. 2009. 300pp. Index. £60.00. ISBN 978 0 23060 838 2.

The impact of 9/11 on the media, arts, and entertainment: the day that changed everything?. Edited by Matthew J. Morgan. Basingstoke: Palgrave. 2009. 288pp. Index. £60.00. ISBN 978 0 23060 841 2.

The impact of 9/11 on psychology and education: the day that changed everything?. Edited by Matthew J. Morgan. Basingstoke: Palgrave. 2010. 320pp. Index. £60.00. ISBN 978 0 23060 843 6.

The impact of 9/11 on religion and philosophy: the day that changed everything?. Edited by Matthew J. Morgan. Basingstoke: Palgrave. 2009. 320pp. Index. £60.00. ISBN 978 0 23060 844 3.

Securing Africa: post-9/11 discourses on terrorism. Edited by Malinda S. Smith. Farnham: Ashgate. 2010. 218pp. Index. £55.00. isbn 978 0 75467 545 7.

The United States and NATO since 9/11. By Ellen Hallams. Abingdon: Routledge. 2009. 176pp. Index. £80.00. isbn 978 0 41555 368 1.

Tim Dunne

Muslims in the West after 9/11: religion, politics and law. Edited by Jocelyne Cesari. Abingdon: Routledge. 2009. 264pp. Index. Pb.: £24.99. ISBN 978 0 41577 654 7.

Terrorism: a critical introduction. By Richard Jackson, Lee Jarvis, Jeroen Gunning and Marie Breen Smyth. Basingstoke: Palgrave. 2011. 332pp. Index. Pb.: £23.99. ISBN 978 0 23022 118 5.

It is not difficult to sustain the claim that 9/11 generated a step-change in academic research on terrorism. There are now about six non-fiction books published per week with terrorism in the title.[1] The quantum of such books exceeded the entire pre-2001 figures within just a few years of the attacks on the Twin Towers and Washington DC. New journals have been created and countless conferences and workshops have been convened. Out there in academia and in knowledge communities the world over, terrorism is a subject that is being talked about, conceptualized, uploaded and published. In light of this, it is not surprising that the term 'terrorism industry' is now in use.[2]

What is the proper response to the sheer quantity—and diversity—of products generated by researchers in this industry? Some people might favour a strategy of avoidance. After all, if you take terrorism titles out of bookshops, campuses and airport lounges, there are plenty of other dimensions of world order to puzzle over. Another strategy might be to engage selectively in the expectation that, as is the case with most industries, the law of diminishing returns is operative.

If selective sampling of products is your preference, then I have a suggestion for how to grasp an understanding of the significance of 9/11 and the 'war on terror', while reading just two of the several thousand available: start the 9/11 decade with the late Fred Halliday's *Two hours that shook the world*,[3] and end it with his reference book *Shocked and awed: how the war on terror and jihad have changed the English language*.

Two hours was published only months after Al-Qaeda's attacks on New York and Washington. In it Halliday pointed to the critical legacies of colonialism and the Cold War in fuelling the resentment that manifested itself in the violent spectacular of September 11. The 2011 book *Shocked and awed*[4] chronicles the neologisms of the war on terror; it provides thousands of references organized thematically. The collection reflects the compiler's incredible breadth of knowledge about real people in real places—exponentially more knowledge than many theorists possess who claim to capture the dynamics of 'the political'.

Shocked and awed is also a reminder of the power of his wit. A small sample of entries shows how the pen can be both a mighty sword and a source of good humour:

[1] Using Andrew Silke's data: 2,281 by June 2008 compared with 1,310 in total up to 9/11. See Andrew Silke, 'Contemporary terrorism studies: issues in research', in *Critical terrorism studies: a new research agenda*, edited by Richard Jackson, Marie Breen Smyth and Jeroen Gunning (London: Routledge, 2009), p. 35.
[2] Reference to 'the terrorism industry' was foregrounded in John Mueller's 2006 book *Overblown: How politicians and the terrorism industry inflate national security threats, and why we believe them* (New York: Free Press).
[3] *Two hours that shook the world: September 11, 2011: causes and consequences* (London: Saqi Books, 2001).
[4] The publisher's note at the beginning of the book reminds us that Fred Halliday died on 26 April 2010 after the manuscript had been submitted.

few bad apples Claim that prison guards were out of control. Attempt to disown higher-up responsibility for torture and abuse in US-run detention centres. See *Animal House on the night shift*. (p. 69)

Intelligence 'Intelligence' is one of the most abused words in the whole 9/11 story as it is used to apply to unreliable, poorly analysed, often inaccurate information. (p. 16)

terrornomics Pseudo-scientific, newly concocted, field of study analysing the flow of funds to terrorist organisations … One of the most time-wasting ideas to come out of the study of terrorism. (p. 31)

Total information Awareness (TIA) A typical, overrated, overstated and oversold pseudo-scientific Washington project, ridiculous, if not dangerous, in its pretensions, starting with the obvious fact that there is no such thing as 'total information'. (p. 32)

There are many more entries that are less polemical yet serve to show Halliday's vast knowledge of security, particularly in chapter five that has entries on 'Some Islamic and Middle Eastern vocabulary'. Here and elsewhere it is apparent that his entries are more than definitions. In many cases, the reader is given a precis of a concept or debate, or a short guide to a specific event that has been central to the war on terror. Halliday's entries frequently include an academic source or a newspaper article, enabling the reader to understand more about the context of the language usage.

For those who want to delve deeper, there are plenty more products generated by the industry. Perhaps the most ambitious production run of all is the six-volume collection edited by Matthew Morgan. Each presents 'the impact of 9/11' in relation to key academic disciplines and their wider social domains. For a project with this degree of ambition, it is surprising that the editor does not provide much in the way of an account of why he chose these disciplines to frame each book, let alone the subdivision of topics within them. At the end of a short introduction to volume one, we are told that 'the contributing authors of this volume—and the entire series—have deliberately been assembled to bring together divergent perspectives on 9/11 and its aftermath' (p. 5).

The choice of John Mueller to write the high-profile first chapter on 'The long-term political and economic consequences of 9/11' (in *The impact of 9/11 on politics and war*) illustrates one dimension of the diversity promised by Morgan: Mueller is well known for being critical of inflated securitization claims in relation to the threat of global terrorism.[5] True to form, Mueller sets out several 'inconvenient truths' that the public continues to shun. These include the fact that there have been no Al-Qaeda attacks in the United States since 9/11; and that, worldwide, the total number of people killed by 'al-Qaeda types, maybes, and wannabes' since 9/11 stands at about 300 a year, a figure that is lower than 'the yearly number of bathtub drowning in the United States alone' (p. 9).

[5]   His chapter draws upon his book *Overblown*.

Scepticism towards threat hyperbole on the part of officials, particularly during the George W. Bush administrations, is generally to be welcomed. That said, it is also necessary to scrutinize the claims of threat normalizers such as Mueller. Bath-tub deaths are nothing more or less than awful accidents. Other than the shared cause of death—and the patterns of grief experienced by those families affected—the events are disconnected. What made the 2,949 deaths on 9/11 different from a cumulative total of accidental deaths that Mueller is invoking to normalize the comparison is the fact that the victims of 9/11 were killed by *politics*. As a consequence, the social and psychological impact of death by mass terrorist atrocity will be exponentially greater than the societal impact of bathroom fatalities, road deaths, or the perishing of young and old through neglect.

Viewing 9/11 as an act of war on the United States, and the systemic trauma generated by the event, explain in large measure how and why terrorism is now debated across so many fields in the social and human sciences. Law is an example of how, in theory and in practice, 9/11 has had a transformative impact. *The impact of 9/11 and the new legal landscape* is the third volume in Morgan's series. In this book, Alan Dershowitz is the celebrated author[6] who writes the opening chapter. Dershowitz makes the case that the United States needs to shift from a security paradigm that is 'reactive' to one that is 'preventive'. How, though, should a country that prides itself on the rule of law, reconcile the claimed need to prevent future terrorist incidents with the freedom of the individuals suspected of causing possible harms? He rightly shows how the preventive paradigm is shaping decisions not just in relation to terrorism, but also in the control of infectious diseases and in decisions about whether force ought to be authorized to prevent humanitarian atrocities.

Dershowitz is discussed elsewhere in the book in relation to the chapter on 'Challenges to academic freedom since 9/11'. The author of the chapter, Peter Kirstein, cites the example of how Dershowitz tried to stop the University of California Press from publishing Norman Finkelstein's book *Beyond chutzpah: on the misuse of anti-Semitism and the abuse of history* (2005), because it represented Dershowitz's *The case for Israel* (Wiley, 2003) as being 'mere propaganda to justify Israel's colonization of Palestine' (p. 60). The dispute became highly personalized and 'the Finkelstein case became a *cause célèbre*' (p. 61). In May 2007 DePaul's University Board on Promotion and Tenure voted against giving tenure to Finkelstein.

Through various illustrations, such as Daniel Pipes's 'Campus Watch' website, which sought to discredit Middle Eastern scholars who were allegedly apologists for jihadist terrorists, Kirstein concludes that there has been a reduction in academic freedom post 9/11, a freedom that 'cannot endure if there is a closing of the American mind' (pp. 69–70).

What unites all six volumes—and is a subtitle common to each—is *The day that changed everything?*. It may come as a surprise to read that a version of this phrase, albeit this time '9/11 changed everything', functions as a similar point of depar-

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[6] The author's short biography notes that 'his writing has been praised by Truman Capote, Saul Bellow, and Elie Wiesel' (p. 7).

ture for a very different collection of essays that feature in *Securing Africa: post-9/11 discourses on terrorism*. The opening essay, by the editor Malinda Smith, situates the book as a critical riposte to traditional thinking on terrorism and security. 'Arguably much of the post-September 11 2001 terrorism research, particularly in orthodox international relations, falls within a conventional, state centric, and problem solving approach' (p. 5). The veracity of this claim is based upon a limited number of citations from the critical terrorism literature. In place of traditional thinking on terrorism, Smith signals that the approach taken in the book draws on critical approaches to terrorism, of the older kind (Noam Chomsky and Walter Laqueur) and 'the recent turn to critical terrorism studies' that draws upon the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory, Michel Foucault, and the Welch [sic] School of Critical Security Studies' (p. 5). I will return to the contribution of the latter in the discussion of *Terrorism: a critical introduction* by Richard Jackson et al.

Errors of syntax, found in the opening essay of *Securing Africa*, are compounded by injudicious statements such as the claim that '[t]he Bush administration's response was to declare a permanent state of emergency and to call for an endless global war' (p. 6). While it is correct to argue that the Bush government implemented many measures that failed to meet any reasonable test of liberalism as a form of government, including torture, rendition, illegal detention and certain acts of invidious ideological hostility towards internal dissenters, this is not an equivalent to a permanent state of emergency. Even granting that there has been a politicization of campus life, these restrictions should not be over-stated; critics of US policy continued to write for *The New Republic* and other august publications; millions continued to visit the country and leave with fairly minimal interference; everyday life carried on for families across America without direct judicial or political intervention. If these features are consistent with a state of emergency, then this would be to give it a meaning with which most political lexicographers are unfamiliar—it would certainly not find its way into *Shocked and awed*.

Apart from weaknesses in the framing of the volume, *Securing Africa* contains many excellent essays. One example is Faraj Abdallah Tamim who teamed up with Malinda Smith to produce an insightful chapter on human rights and insecurities in East Africa after 9/11. They show how the introduction of the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) in Tanzania had the same kinds of impact that comparable legislation has had in many parts of the world, namely heightening the power of law enforcement agencies and diminishing the liberties of ordinary people. Drawing on several illustrative examples, Tamim and Smith show that the PTA, 'ostensibly designed to secure the East Africa region from the threat of political violence and extremism, functioned, instead, to produce new social insecurities and exclusions' (p. 124).

In placing so much emphasis on empire, unilateralism, the clash of civilizations and so on, there comes a point at which critics and apologists of American power converge: both overestimate how much the United States is capable of shaping world order. If there is one obvious lesson from the revolutions of 2011, it is that

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political ideas and social movements can no more be directed by policy planners in the White House than they can by Al-Qaeda strategists.

Back in the publishing houses of the terrorism industry, there have been countless books produced whose title ends in 'since 9/11'. One example is *The United States and NATO since 9/11* by Ellen Hallams. The book is a conventional history of NATO's elusive quest for stability, as the transatlantic relationship lurches from one low-intensity crisis to another. What, you may ask, is so special about the crisis triggered by 9/11? One answer is that 'as America turned to fight the War on Terror, NATO had little validity'.[7] Such a view was favoured by hard-line unilateralists, who regard permanent alliances as inflexible and overly constraining. To them, the lesson of Kosovo was that Europe was an awkward partner, and that 'war by committee' was a disaster. Hallams rightly points out that Realists came to a different view of NATO after 9/11: it was not that history had passed the alliance by, but rather the simple fact that the national interests of the most powerful players were not aligned with the interests of the institution.

The empirical content of the book is comprehensive, which partly compensates for the fact that the theoretical framings are weak. Without a significant theoretical engagement, it is difficult to benchmark 'rifts' from 'tiffs' and how these differ from a full-blown existential crisis. If NATO has experienced transatlantic tensions over its strategy from 1949 to the present, then what is so special about 9/11?

The final chapter, on the 'Prospects for the transatlantic alliance', ends with an interesting short discussion between those who see it maintaining the same broad membership configuration, and those with a more global vision of NATO expanding to include other democracies. The experience of the war in Afghanistan is interesting in this regard; it is forcing the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to institutionalize better forms of cooperation between NATO members and non-NATO participants in the coalition. Arguably, such challenges would be confronting NATO with or without 9/11, though the war on terror has advanced the time period within which the organization has had to come to terms with new security threats in a post-American world.

Another example of the 'since 9/11' genre is *Muslims in the West after 9/11*, edited by the Harvard-based political scientist Jocelyne Cesari. The book is divided into part one on 'Muslims in Europe and the US'; part two on 'Anti-terrorism and international constraints'; and part three 'Influence of international constraints on politics, law, and religion in the West'. In an outstanding opening chapter, Cesari challenges many myths about Islam. The first myth to be slain is the representation of Islam as a unified ideology. The second myth concerns the ways in which Muslims in Europe are constituted as a threat to others in society. And a third myth follows logically from the second, in that policy initiatives are then deployed to separate 'good Muslims' from 'bad Muslims'. To which I would add a fourth myth, that there is something meaningfully shared by all 'Muslims in the

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[7]   Hallams, *The United States and NATO since 9/11*, p. 2, drawing upon Charles Kupchan's op-ed 'The last days of the Atlantic alliance', *Financial Times*, 18 November 2002.

West'. To the contrary: many of the essays show how complex and differentiated Muslim followers are within European countries, and differences between the United States and Europe.

Farhad Khosrokhavar, from the Ecole des hautes études en sciences sociales in Paris, describes the sources of radicalism for 2.4 million French citizens of North African descent. He describes French Muslim radicalization in terms of an 'Islamist effect'. One element is the consequence of youths who have become economic and racial outcasts; the second element is the appeal to 'the sacred cause' of defending Islam against the West. Despite the extent of the political problem in France, Khosrokhavar notes that radicalization in Britain went even further, as the 7/7 bombings evidenced. The grounds for this radicalization had both a domestic and an international dimension: 'the simmering discontent among part of its Muslim youth, due to social conditions, racism and the involvement of the British troops in Afghanistan and Iraq' (p. 234).

The experience of American Muslims in the twenty-first century has been very different, as Louise Cainkar informs us. Her well-researched contribution, drawing on in-depth interviews, argues that 'American Muslims appear to be achieving a greater degree of racial integration than any other American religious group' (p. 178). Domestic political and legal responses to 9/11 destabilized the American Muslim community 'by giving credibility to the notion that there was an identifiable terrorist phenotype and mode of dress' (p. 192). Halliday calls this 'pseudo-speciation'—the conscious naming and demeaning of another religious or ethnic group. Alongside public attacks and media bashing, American Muslims also experienced 'enhanced inclusion' in a range of civil society organizations (p. 190), as the backlash reached intolerable levels for many moderate Americans and institutions with cultural capital. Reading these chapters back to back, it is striking how contrasting the political challenges are: many American Muslims believe in a fairer share of political and economic resources, and see the successful integration of other minorities as a vindication of their approach. The struggle is therefore a domestic one and the project is grounded in universal claims about justice and fairness. In the case of French Muslims, they are fighting against France *and* for a religion that is threatened by the West.

A dilemma for the 'since 9/11' books is in pressing home the argument that 'everything changed', or at least enough changed that it makes sense to see that Tuesday morning, almost a decade ago, as a historical turning point. The advantage of the 'since 9/11' genre is that the object of study is often a particular concept, country, continent or civilization. In other words, the *world* is their object, and not the discursive field of academic enquiry.

The same cannot be said for the growing number of books on terrorism studies. As Lawrence Freedman remarked pithily, in a review in *Foreign Affairs*, 'the development of the field of terrorism studies has, in recent years, appeared to outpace the development of actual terrorism'.[8] Yet where Freedman and other mainstream

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[8] Lawrence D. Freedman, short review of Richard English, *Terrorism: how to respond* (OUP, 2009); John Horgan, *Walking away from terrorism: accounts of disengagement from radical and extremist movements* (Routledge,

scholars believe to see diminishing returns, others see the diversity of products in the 9/11 industry as an opening for critical thinking.

Terrorism: a critical introduction, co-authored by Richard Jackson, Lee Jarvis, Jeroen Gunning and Marie Breen Smyth, is an innovative book that is designed to change how we teach and research terrorism. Central to the argument in the text is a distinction between 'the orthodox study of terrorism' and 'critical approaches to terrorism'. The former is characterized as 'overly descriptive, theoretically unsophisticated, condemnatory and ideologically biased' (p. 14)—though exceptions are noted at several points in the text. Critical Terrorism Studies (CTS), by contrast, 'is theoretically and methodologically rigorous, sensitive to the politics of labelling, self-reflective about issues of knowledge and power, and committed to conflict resolution and human security' (p. 27).

Is the difference between 'orthodox' and 'critical' anything more than a determination of the difference between poor and good scholarship by a small but active group of researchers? Jackson et al. believe that a critical approach can be transformative in research and teaching terrorism. CTS starts by being reflective about representation—how certain incidents are named as terrorism while other kinds of violence are normalized (such as state terrorism). In chapter two on 'The cultural construction of violence', the authors show how the 9/11 attacks acquired meaning through a narrative constituted by powerful actors and institutions. These points are well made and are relatively uncontroversial. What is less persuasive, in relation to 9/11, is the idea that 'it is always possible to interpret acts of violence differently' (p. 70). Alternative narratives of the attacks were almost unthinkable for three reasons: hegemonic powers with massive military superiority have not historically responded passively to the perpetration of mass atrocities on their territory; the meaning of 9/11 was not only framed by American actors—Al-Qaeda had previously declared war on the United States and its allies; and domestic public opinion, mediated but not determined by elite interests, believed that a military response was necessary and just.

When looked at in relation to the terrorism industry overall, *Terrorism: a critical introduction* brings a fresh and well-developed alternative to the traditional literature. A great strength of the book is the way in which it challenges academics writing in this field to be reflective about their analytical categories and normative commitments. It is hoped that the book is read and engaged with by researchers who would not naturally identify with the label CTS, or who perhaps regard disciplinary interventions of this kind as being artificial or exclusionary.

Have these books advanced our understanding of the meaning of 9/11 and the war on terror? On the basis of this selection, one can conclude that the outputs from the latter part of the 9/11 decade are diverse and uneven in quality. What is also apparent is that the literature reflects the politics of terrorism and counter-terrorism. While Al-Qaeda's military struggle with the 'far enemy' was taken to a

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2009); Eli Berman, *Radical, religious, and violent: the new economics of terrorism* (MIT Press, 2009), *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2010, http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/65843/richard-english-john-horgan-eli-berman/terrorism-how-to-respond, first accessed 21 May 2011.

new level with the destruction of the World Trade Center, there has been a step-change in publications on terrorism across several disciplinary areas. Moreover, fault-lines in the social world about how best to respond to new kinds of violence map onto disputes between mainstream scholars who operate with conventional understandings of the terrorist threat and how to combat it, and critically inclined writers who view terrorism as a social practice that is reflective of certain pathologies in world order.