

Orienteering Terrorism: Representations of Terrorism in 'the West'

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A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of

The University of Manitoba

in partial fulfillment for the requirements of the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

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Winnipeg, Manitoba

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## ABSTRACT

Since the terrorist attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001, a vast discourse on contemporary terrorism has emerged within ‘Western’ media. This thesis analyzes the discourse of contemporary terrorism, and highlights how the postcolonialist critique of Orientalism pioneered by Edward Said is still relevant within the discourse. This is accomplished by analyzing books that have been published post-9/11 and which have been reviewed in the journal *Foreign Affairs*. A primary goal of this thesis is to facilitate the de-reification of the socially constructed concepts of both ‘the East’ and ‘the West’ which currently dominate representations within the discourse, as well as to highlight some of the key features of the discursive field on contemporary terrorism. The binary representation and stereotyping within the contemporary discourse provides a one-dimensional representation of the issue of terrorism, and by questioning the conformity of these representations we can critically examine one of the most important social issues within our society.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to thank my advisor Christopher Powell for the invaluable guidance and feedback he has provided me throughout this intellectual journey. I would also like to thank Tina Chen and Sonia Bookman for graciously serving on my thesis committee.

Thank you to my family for their support throughout my education.

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## Introduction

It is by now an often used axiom, that the events of September 11, 2001, changed our world forever. Terrorism, which was once a topic that was relegated to an afterthought within the social sciences, became thrust into the mainstream following the shocking attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. In the days, months, and years that followed, extensive literature began to accumulate on this “new” threat. Fields such as terrorism studies that had operated within the margins now experienced unprecedented exposure within the academic community. Although the United States was the country directly affected by the attacks that morning, a multitude of ‘Western’ countries such as Great Britain, Canada, Australia, and Spain soon joined their American allies in fighting the so called “War on Terror.” Afghanistan would be the battleground for this contemporary battle between ‘East and West’.

The conflict between ‘East/West’ or ‘Orient/Occident’ is not new and conflicts can be traced back through history, from the ancient Greeks fighting the Persian empires of Darius I and Xerxes I; to the Crusades; to the fall of Constantinople to the Ottomans in 1453. When the ancient Greek city states were fighting the Persians, it is unlikely that they viewed their conflict simply in ‘East’ vs. ‘West’ terms. It is more likely that the roots of their conflict were more complex, with factors such as resources, wealth, and pride playing a predominant role. It is only through the reinterpretation of these ancient battles by contemporary scholars that a “clash of civilizations” or an ‘East/West’ causal link is established. It is important to study how these purportedly ancient conflicts, which are rooted within the history of both ‘the East’ and ‘the West’, have influenced modern relations between ‘Occident’ and ‘Orient.’ This thesis will study how the framing of

historical conflicts in terms of an 'East' vs. 'West' divide is itself a manifestation of Eurocentric discourse.

The goal of my thesis is to analyze the discourse of contemporary terrorism, and determine if the postcolonialist critique of Orientalism pioneered by Edward Said (which helps put the relationship between 'East/West' in perspective) is still relevant within the discourse, as well as to de-reify the inherited division between 'East' and 'West'. If this separation of 'Occident' and 'Orient' still exists within the discourse, has this representation of Orientalism evolved or has it remained consistent with Edward Said's initial formulation? This is an important area to study because although the proliferation of scholarly research post-9/11 on terrorism has been immense, critical analysis of the representation of terrorism and terrorists in 'the West' has been lacking. My research uncovered a small body of literature on the subject with the most promising coming from the area of critical terrorism studies. I intend to contribute to this expanding area of literature within critical terrorism studies by focusing exclusively on the relationship between 'East/West' within the contemporary discourse of terrorism and looking for its 'Orientalist' qualities as these were conceptualized by Said. I will do this by analyzing books that have been published post-9/11 and which have been reviewed in the journal *Foreign Affairs*. By critically studying this relationship we can get an accurate portrait of the discourse on contemporary terrorism, and a better understanding of the motives and objectives of the organizations and individuals involved.

The first chapter of my thesis consists of a literature review of the scholarship that has been published on Orientalism. Using Edward Said's postcolonialist critique of Orientalism as a starting point, I map out his major theoretical arguments, as well as

some of the main critiques his work has attracted within the academic community. I also look at how Orientalism has become reconceptualized in contemporary times, with new research pointing to the emergence of a shift in the Orientalist framework and the emergence of neo-Orientalism within the discourse. This section also features an introduction to the field of critical terrorism studies, and outlines the key principles which guide this new discipline.

The second chapter features an outline of my project's methodology. Here I provide information on the methods utilized in the discourse analysis and conceptual definitions for key terms that are used throughout this thesis. I begin by discussing how the term discourse has been employed by scholars, and how it will be used throughout my paper. I also discuss how my sample was selected, and how I recorded data from my sample. It also includes details on how I undertook a primary coding of the data, followed up by a more focused secondary coding that further refined my results.

In the third chapter, I present the results of my discourse analysis. This chapter is organized into seven main sections, with each section corresponding to one of the seven major tropes identified in my analysis. Each trope will include relevant examples to help demonstrate the character and composition of the trope, and how it manifested within the discourse.

The fourth chapter provides analysis on the results outlined in the previous chapter and starts to identify the broader implications that this project may have within the intellectual community. I begin this chapter by introducing the reader to a number of conceptual definitions that are utilized while analyzing the discourse and the discursive field on terrorism. I then begin to map out the architectural framework of the discursive



field, and break down its structure into three distinct levels. These levels together form the composition of the overall discursive field of terrorism analyzed in this thesis. Following this exercise, I provide a critique of the discursive field, and outline the implications that its structure and composition have for the representation of terrorism in contemporary society. In this chapter I also highlight the existence of the binary representation of terrorism in the sample analyzed in the form of a stereotyped 'East/West' division that has come to dominate the discourse. I then end the chapter with a discussion on the existence of Orientalist characteristics within the literature and how they have remained relatively consistent with Said's initial critique of the framework.

## Chapter One: Theory

### **What is Orientalism?**

The discipline of Orientalism has a long history, having been established by imperial powers to facilitate the accumulation of knowledge of their colonial possessions. The Orient<sup>1</sup> traditionally has been referred to as a geographic location spanning from the ‘Near East’ (North Africa, Palestine, etc.) to the ‘Far East’ (China and the other Southeastern Asian countries). However, it is important to note that terms such as ‘Near East’ and ‘Far East’ are relative, and countries like Saudi Arabia and India are only East when being compared and examined from a European or North American vantage point. This helps to illustrate the Eurocentric origin of these terms. Therefore, throughout my thesis, I will denote Eurocentric terms such as ‘the East’, ‘the West’, ‘Occident’, and ‘Orient’ in quotation marks to distinguish to the reader the origins of these words, and to promote critical reflection in an attempt to de-reify them. Although it would be ideal to utilize more appropriate and less Eurocentric terms in my project, these terms are a fundamental part of the discourse under analysis and must be critically engaged in order to promote their de-reification. If this de-reification is to take place, the question about how these terms are utilized throughout the discourse and how they help frame representations that needs to be addressed. Said echoes Berger and Luckmann when he reflects that terms such as ‘Orient’ and ‘the West’ “correspond to no stable reality that exists as a natural fact. Moreover, all such geographic designations are an odd combination of the empirical and imaginative” (Said 1979: 331).

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<sup>1</sup> The term ‘Orient’ derives from the Latin word for ‘the East’.

In ‘the Occident’<sup>2</sup>, institutes of ‘Oriental’ study were established at some of the most prestigious universities in Great Britain, France, Germany, and America. These scholars -- referred to as Orientalists -- examined ‘Oriental’ culture, religion, language, and other traditions in order to advance the ‘West’s’ understanding of these distant and often “mystified” peoples. Although the history of Orientalism<sup>3</sup> is an interesting and compelling subject of research, this thesis intends to study postcolonialist critiques of Orientalism within a critical framework. The Orientalist framework was first pioneered by postcolonial theorist, Edward Said in his 1978 treatise *Orientalism*. In this work, Said developed a critique of the Orientalist framework and outlines it genealogically throughout the book.

### **Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1978)**

Edward Said’s groundbreaking book thrust him into the intellectual spotlight, as *Orientalism* was introduced to the academic community. There were those who thought of it as a monumental breakthrough, while others disregarded it with skepticism. But still more than thirty years after its initial publication, Said’s book continues to evoke passion amongst its most ardent supporters and critics. Furthermore, the very meaning of the word “Orientalism” which had remained relatively unchanged until the period of decolonization following the Second World War, would forever be altered by Said’s work and by other postcolonial theorists who followed in Said’s intellectual footsteps.

This is fitting, as Said thought of *Orientalism* as a means to an end, rather than an end in

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<sup>2</sup> Conversely, ‘Occident’ is derived from the Latin word for ‘West’.

<sup>3</sup> Although the term “Orientalism” is itself based on the original term ‘Orient’ I will refrain from using it in quotations. Since I will be mapping out its critique by scholars such as Edward Said, the term itself has already undergone a de-reifying process. In contemporary times Orientalism has even begun to be seen in a negative light, and has been linked to cultural hegemony, imperialism, and Eurocentricism.

itself, or more of an intellectual starting point instead of a finish line (Said 1979: 350 and Varisco 2007: 11).

By the turn of the twenty-first century, Alexander Macfie observed that the term “Orientalism” itself had been reconceptualized,

to mean not only the work of the Orientalist and a character, style or quality associated with the Eastern nations, but also a corporate institution, designed for dealing with the orient, a partial view of Islam, an instrument of Western imperialism, a style of thought, based on an ontological and epistemological distinction between orient and occident, and even an ideology, justifying and accounting for the subjugation of blacks, Palestinian Arabs, women and many other supposedly [*sic*] deprived groups and peoples (Macfie 2000: 2).

The fact that the term “Orientalism” and the profession it had underpinned for generations had changed and the motivations of the Orientalists and their profession cast in doubt after Said’s exposition helps to illustrate the agency that individuals have in creating and recreating the concepts and cultural institutions that govern our lives (Varisco 2007: 32). In a Foucauldian sense, Said had critically attacked the dominant interpretive framework of Orientalism, and attempted to de-reify the relationship between Orientalism and the production of knowledge. This example helps to illustrate the emancipatory potential of Foucault’s conception of the relationship between power/knowledge. As Said bluntly summarized in *Covering Islam*, “The underlying theme of *Orientalism* is the affiliation of knowledge with power” (Said 1997: xlix).

Many early Orientalists saw themselves as practicing their vocation as a means to illuminate a land and a people far different geographically, socially, and religiously than themselves. By researching how these individuals lived, the Orientalists believed that they were helping to advance human knowledge by gaining a better understanding of

other peoples' cultures and ways of life. However, Said held a different opinion and claimed that the 'Orient' was in fact a 'Western' invention, and had since antiquity been viewed of as a land of exotic landscapes, mysticism, barbarism, and was the antithesis to 'the Western world'. Said expands on this argument, stating "I have begun with the assumption that the Orient is not an inert fact of nature. It is not merely *there*, just as the Occident itself is not just *there* either" (Said 1979: 4). This statement illustrates how Said came to view 'the Orient' as not merely a naturalized feature, as many in 'the West' have viewed it, but rather as a socially constructed entity. Said also argued that it was not only 'the Orient' that is socially constructed, but both 'the Occident' and 'the Orient' (Said 1979: 331). This innovative view of the dichotomization of 'East/West' is often overlooked in Said's work. Said's ability to bridge the gap between 'Occident' and 'Orient' and point towards a common, socially constructed origin of both terms helped position his critique within the intellectual community. As Macfie (2000: ix) points out, what made Said's work enduring and significant was the fact that Said was able to tackle the important question that philosophers and social scientists have been struggling with since antiquity—the nature of perception or, more basically, the relationship between "self" and "other".

It is also important to point out that although Said identified concepts such as 'the Orient', 'the West', etc., as cultural constructs, he also believed that these constructs had socially and politically significant consequences. Said and Foucault would agree that Orientalism was an integrated discourse that was used as a tool of 'Western' imperialism to integrate knowledge of 'the Orient' – created in 'the West' – as a form of cultural imperialism (Macfie 2000: 4). Said's main concern was to analyze Orientalist discourse

as a socially constituted body of theory and practice that was designed and implemented, deliberately or unintentionally, to serve the best interest of ‘Western’ imperial ambitions (Macfie 2000: 6).

For Said, Orientalism was a, “style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between ‘the Orient’ and (most of the time) ‘the Occident’ ” (Said 1979: 2). Even though the distinction between ‘Occident and Orient’ was socially constructed and not an embedded fact of nature, the institution of Orientalism is real and has a profound affect on the relationship between ‘the Occident’ and ‘Orient’. To Said, Orientalism is a form of ‘Western’ domination over ‘the East’, which gives ‘the West’ an aura of authority and power over it (Said 1979: 3). Here Said takes a Foucauldian approach to Orientalism as a discourse when he states, “that without examining Orientalism as a discourse one cannot possibly understand the enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage—and even produce the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period” (Said 1979: 3). As Zachary Lockman observed,

For Said, Orientalism was very much a discourse in the sense Foucault used the term: a specific form of knowledge, with its own object of study (“the Orient”), premises, rules, conventions and claims to truth. Orientalism as a form of knowledge simultaneously was produced by, and perpetuated, certain power relations, in this case the power which Western states and authoritative individuals exercised (or sought to exercise) over the Orient (Lockman 2004: 186).

Said argued that Orientalism perpetuated and created hegemonic power relations of the strong over the weak. Said also agrees with Foucault and other post structuralists when he discussed the role of representation in cultural discourse. Lockman points out that

Said used Foucault to traverse “new intellectual terrain” in *Orientalism* (Lockman 2004: 202). Said believed that “it needs to be made clear about cultural discourse and exchange within a culture that what is commonly circulated by it is not ‘truth’ but representations” (Said 1979: 21). This remains consistent with Said’s subtle and underappreciated view of the role of social actors’ agency in the negotiation and creation of truth and knowledge. It also demonstrates the power that these representations have on the social environment.

Through the discourse of Orientalism, Said discussed how the production of knowledge by Orientalists in ‘the West’ has led to ‘the Orient’s’ pacification. The accumulation of knowledge of the “other” had helped turn Orientalism into an instrument of cultural domination. As Said stated, “knowledge of subject races or Orientals is what makes their management easy and profitable; knowledge gives power, more power requires more knowledge, and so on in an increasingly profitable dialectic of information and control” (Said 1979: 36). No longer would ‘the Occident’ require a military presence and physical intimidation to control ‘the Orient’ (although it did use these on occasion); but a new form of hegemonic control--control of knowledge--could be used. For Said, the contemporary Orientalist was not an “objective” intellectual, who stands apart from his cultural and political biases, but instead, was responsible for representing ‘the Orient’ as it had been “Orientalized” (Said 1979: 104). The imperialist skeleton of Orientalism was unveiled by Said as he showed how, “the contours of Orientalist discourse were profoundly shaped by a Western will to dominate the Orient” (Lockman 2004: 188). Above all, Said insisted that the discourse of Orientalism is a discourse of domination (Varisco 2007: 5).

Said also discussed the role of Orientalist texts in the domination of 'the Orient.' The creation of Orientalist Studies departments at Western universities gave the authors of Orientalist texts an aura of authority and validity, which experts within the government and academic community respected. "Most important, such texts can *create* not only knowledge but also the very reality they appear to describe. In time such knowledge and reality produce a tradition, or what Michel Foucault calls a discourse, whose material presence or weight, not the originality of a given author, is really responsible for the texts produced out of it" (Said 1979: 4). In this case, the Orientalist discourse created the power and authority which Orientalists' texts received, promoting a body of texts that is more powerful than any single Orientalist author, and more importantly establishes a tradition of knowledge that is perpetuated diachronically.

In *Orientalism*, Said also discussed how the dichotomization of 'the East/West' was established and maintained. He believed that certain ideas and cultures predominate over others and in this sense a cultural hegemony is created. Said claimed that it is this cultural hegemony at work which gives 'the West' the power to dominate and control 'the Orient' (Said 1979: 7). Said points out that such a belief system supported the idea that, "if the Orient could represent itself, it would; since it cannot, the representation does the job, for the West, and *faute de mieux*, for the poor Orient (Said 1979: 21)." The notion that 'the East' is inferior to 'the West', and therefore cannot represent itself, is a current which permeates Said's critique of Orientalism. It also is closely linked with the relationship between the creation of knowledge and power. As discussed earlier, a Foucauldian approach to the discourse on Orientalism can illustrate how the regime of truth (or body of knowledge) can be used in order to control.



Furthermore, Said argued that “Orientalism was ultimately a political vision of reality whose structure promoted the difference between the familiar (Europe, the West, “us”) and the strange (the Orient, the East, “them”). This vision in a sense created and then served the two worlds thus conceived. Orientals lived in their world, “we” lived in ours” (Said 1979: 43-44). The ethnocentrism of ‘the Occident’ in viewing ‘the Orient’ was one of the many tools that Orientalism used to control ‘the Orient’.

This distinction between “us” and “them” and its need for continuous articulation is central to Said’s theoretical argument. He believed that the polarization of these categories – especially between ‘the Occident’ and ‘Orient’ – served to make the ‘West’ appear more ‘Western’; and the ‘East’ more ‘Eastern’ (Said 1979: 46). This is all done without adequate knowledge of “the other” – adequate as in the accurate, and unbiased representation of “the other” – and instead is based on representations that are skewed by political and cultural dogmas. Said would not know it at the time of penning his treatise, but this dichotomy between ‘East and West’ would continue to dominate representations, and would become an axiom for contemporary scholars such as Samuel Huntington and Francis Fukuyama. Said foreshadowed Huntington’s *Clash of Civilizations* thesis when he discussed Henry Kissinger’s compartmentalization of the world into dualisms such as ‘East/West’ and ‘Developed/Developing’ world and stated, “the traditional Orientalist, as we shall see, and Kissinger conceive of the difference between cultures, first, as creating a battlefield that separates them, and second, as inviting the West to control, contain, and otherwise govern (through superior knowledge and accommodating power) the Other” (Said 1979: 47-48). Statements like these illustrate how the discourse of Orientalism is filled with essentialist references to ‘the East’, and in particular ‘the Orient’s’ main

religion Islam--which is portrayed as a monolithic entity that represents the entire umma<sup>4</sup>. This helps lay the foundation for the conflict between “us”, ‘the Christian West’, and “them”, ‘the Muslim East’.

One way that ‘the Orient’ is represented in ‘the West’ is through the media. Representations of ‘the Orient’ in ‘Western’ media often reaffirm stereotypes of ‘the East’ and lead to a perpetuation of cultural biases. Said believed that the assimilation of modern electronic media has led to the standardizing of cultural stereotypes and the conceptualization of ‘the Orient’ as the mystified other (Said 1979: 26). The modern media is just one way that the cultural hegemony of ‘the West’ is articulated through Orientalism.

Orientalism portrays ‘the East’ as a region whose culture, religion, and peoples are strange and barbaric. This portrait of ‘the Orient’ is based on centuries old myths and legends, which have little or no connection to modern realities (Said 1979: 85). Unlike ‘the West’, whose essence is defined in terms of a perpetual progression towards democratic industrialization, Islam and ‘the Orient’ are viewed as a stagnant entity that is on the decline or unable to engage with “modern” society (Varisco 2007: 19). ‘The West’, therefore, was propelled by a sense of duty to ‘Westernize’ or “civilize” ‘the Orient’ so that it would conform to a more ‘Western’ ideal. The benevolent ‘West’, in its “enlightened” quest for the homogenization of world culture, paid little attention to the fact that the vast geographic region considered to be ‘the Orient’ contained many different groups of people, each with their own identities and culture. As Said wrote, it was Orientalism’s responsibility

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<sup>4</sup> ‘umma’ is an Arabic term that refers to the entire religious community of Islam. It should also be pointed out that there are two main denominations, Shia and Sunni, within Islam, as well as many smaller sects.

to restore a region from its present barbarism to its former classical greatness; to instruct (for its own benefit) the Orient in the ways of the modern West; to subordinate or underplay military power in order to aggrandize the project of glorious knowledge acquired in the process of political domination of the Orient; to formulate the Orient, to give it shape, identity, definition with full recognition of its place in memory, its importance to imperial strategy, and its 'natural' role as an appendage to Europe; to dignify all the knowledge collected during colonial occupation with the title 'contribution to modern learning' when the natives had neither been consulted nor treated as anything except as pretexts for a text whose usefulness was not to the natives... (Said 1979: 86).

A main contention of Said's was that modern Orientalism did not simply conceptualize itself within our contemporary culture. Orientalism can trace the formations of its institutions, theory, and praxis which were bequeathed by earlier generations of Orientalist scholars (Said 1979: 123). This ties in with Said's Foucauldian approach to discourse analysis, and is an illustration of how discursive fields develop and are maintained.

It is important to realize that Orientalism is not a static and monolithic entity, and is always being redefined and re-conceptualized through an ongoing process of social construction. Unlike its earlier manifestations, contemporary Orientalism has been secularized, and has remained a reflection of the contemporary society in which it operates. For instance, early in his critique, Said used the example of Orientalist departments within Western universities as an epicenter for Orientalist thought and enterprise. Said pointed out, however, that many of these departments been re-labeled as 'Near East Studies' or 'Middle Eastern Studies' departments. Such re-labeling may appear to be a step towards pragmatism and better understanding, although it is more likely the case that the resilient institution of Orientalism has yet again found another way to transform, and to continue to profess its dogmatic and canonical paradigm.

Said claimed in *Orientalism* that one of the problems with Orientalist scholars is their tendency to conceptualize humanity in abstract terms or macro-structural collective terms (Said 1979: 154). Although Said was referring to the propensity of nineteenth-century scholars to commit this fallacy, it is apparent that such practices still proliferate within contemporary society. The media, for instance, is often quick to compartmentalize and generalize; segregating cause and effect into increasingly elegant metaphorical boxes. Instead of looking at a multitude of potential culprits that could be responsible for a terrorist attack – for example – it is the tendency to speculate now, and find out the truth later. As Said stated, “Orientalists are neither interested in nor capable of discussing individuals; instead artificial entities, perhaps with their roots in Herderian populism, predominate...the age-old distinction between ‘Europe’ and ‘Asia’ or ‘occident’ and ‘Orient’ herds beneath very wide labels every possible variety of human plurality, reducing it in the process to one or two terminal, collective abstractions” (Said 1979: 124-125).

### **Criticisms of *Orientalism***

Edward Said’s postcolonial critique of Orientalism is enlightening; however, he does fall victim to the reductive fallacy he so strongly crusaded against. This is especially true in terms of the discussion of religion in *Orientalism*. To Said, the religion of the Orient is Islam. In *Orientalism*, Said failed to adequately acknowledge that although the Orient contains ‘the Middle East’, there are numerous issues and problems facing the Orient that lie outside of this limited geographic location. There is virtually no discussion of the other religious denominations in ‘the Orient’ such as Hinduism and Buddhism. By

failing to discuss the issues facing the other religions within ‘the Orient’ and only focusing on the tribulations that Muslims face; Said is guilty of some of the same analytic errors he faults the Orientalists. Although it was Said’s intention to focus only on the Islamic religion and its unique history with ‘the West’, nevertheless, a more fruitful analysis could have been obtained with a broader analysis consisting of the other main religions in the Orient (Said 1997: xi-5).

Another limitation of the critique of Orientalism articulated by Said is his omission of large geographic locations within ‘the Orient’ in his analysis. For instance, Said failed to discuss the representation of the ‘Far East’ within Orientalism. As well, his discussions on important countries within ‘the Orient’ such as China, Japan, India, and Pakistan are negligible. Although, Said stated that it was not his intention to create an exhaustive review of the entire ‘Orient’, and how Orientalist discourse affected it, this would have strengthened his argument (Said 1997: xi-5). It is fair to assume that the problems that Muslims face in ‘the Orient’ are not identical to those facing Buddhists in Burma or Hindus in India. Nevertheless, such an omission provides scholars a stepping stone on which to test Orientalism’s breadth and resiliency throughout the ‘Orient’, and an opportunity to determine whether what Said discovered in his analysis of *Orientalism* is represented throughout the entire ‘Orient’.

It is also important to note that despite the many critics of his work, Said often viewed his work through a framework of postmodern philosophy, and utilized more critical paradigms such as post structuralism and postcolonialism while the majority of his critics (such as Bernard Lewis and David Kopf) operated under the political realism framework (Macfie 2000: 5). Most of the scholars that fall into this category fail

to recognize the breadth of Said's *Orientalism* as a work of, "Foucauldian discourse, a 'systemic discipline', without which it would be difficult, if not impossible, for European culture to 'manage—and even produce—the orient, politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively'" (Macfie 2000: 6). Perhaps the most salient critiques of Said are those who criticize the methods he employed. Lockman stated that although Said partially incorporated Foucault's methods, he was ambivalent and failed to follow them in a true Foucauldian sense (Lockman 2004: 205). However, it should be pointed out that Foucault himself was ambivalent when it came to his methodology, so Said could be excused for reconceptualizing Foucault's methods.

There are also a number of scholars who argue that Said has not remained true to a Foucauldian approach to discourse analysis, by utilizing a historical term that spans over two hundred years (Lockman 2004: 198; Macfie 2000: 6; Ahmad 1991; 286). Nevertheless, these critiques which attack Said's methodological standing are much sounder and academically valid than those coming from a subset of scholars reflecting a biased political agenda. For instance, Bernard Lewis is often seen on mainstream television discussing his views on Orientalist issues and consistently is engaged in the reification of the status quo. He often refers to Said's work as "anti-West" and "pro-Islamic" which only leads to the further diffusion of the dichotomization of 'East' and 'West.'

This being said, the lasting legacy of *Orientalism* cannot be overlooked. Despite the epistemological and methodological critiques of his work, Said began a de-reification of the unbalanced relationship between "us" and "them". By attacking the institution of Orientalism that stood over parts of the world as a tool for imperialism and cultural

domination for centuries, Said opened the door for scholars to fully encompass emerging critical frameworks such as postcolonialism. Although there is a debate about whether or not Said was the first to usher in the postcolonial theory critique, and credit can assuredly be given to other scholars such as Frantz Fanon, it is without doubt that *Orientalism* has played a significant role in its establishment and evolution since first being published in 1978 (Varisco 2007: 9-10). Said also wanted to move past the canonization of socially contingent concepts such as 'East' and 'West' and the notion of "truth" or "absolute truth" and instead reveal how these concepts came to be, and how they affect our lives. It would be fair to argue that Said's objective to critically illuminate how a socially constructed framework has been able to control and dominate a large population for generations has been largely successful. He provided a starting point for intellectuals, and non-intellectuals alike, to begin a de-reification process; but his goal of emancipating the Orient and its people from the Orientalist framework has not yet been achieved.

### **Beyond Edward Said**

Although Said was the first scholar to articulate a comprehensive critique of Orientalism, this critique has continued to transform historically. What Said introduced in *Orientalism* has been embraced by many scholars, who have taken his idea and developed it into a multitude of new areas—especially within the scholarship of postcolonial studies. Conversely, other scholars do not agree with Said's thesis, and a large discourse critiquing his conceptualization of Orientalism has emerged. One of the greatest questions facing contemporary postcolonial scholars and social scientists is whether or not Said's critique has remained relevant in today's society, or whether it has been

replaced with another paradigm. During the last decade of the twentieth century, and especially following the terrorist attacks of 9/11, a new manifestation of Orientalism has emerged under the moniker *neo-Orientalism* (Boehmer 1998 and Sadowski 1993).

In response to ‘the West’s’ growing animosity towards the Islamic world following 9/11, neo-Orientalism has emerged as a means of controlling and typifying the world of “the other” whose mysterious culture, customs, and religion appear to conflict with ours in ‘the West’ in a time of global unrest. As Mohammad Deyab (2006) explains, the proliferation of neo-Orientalist writings have come as a response to 9/11 and attribute the characteristics of the al Qaeda hijackers to the entire religion. In this sense, Orientalism has not strayed too far from its intellectual beginning as articulated by Said, who pointed to ‘the West’s’ propensity to homogenize the Islamic world as a coherent whole. In this new era of Orientalism, terrorism and Islam have become irreconcilably linked. With the media constantly using words such as “the Muslim world” or “Islam” to discuss large swaths of ethnically diverse and geographically separated regions that constitute this fabricated whole, individuals in both ‘the Occident’ and ‘the Orient’ are beginning to view each other more as binary opposites, instead of as fellow human beings.

One of the main differences that scholars point to between classical Orientalism and neo-Orientalism is the transformation of ‘the Orient’ from weak to strong (Tustad 2003; Bartholomeusz 1998; Sadowski 1993). Within the literature surrounding neo-Orientalism there is an almost constant discussion centered on the particularities of “the essence” of Muslim culture and any inherent proclivities. Deyab (2006: 9) identifies a number of key concepts that are identifiable among “the general ideology” of neo-



Orientalism; mainly, the creation of binary oppositions between “us” and “them” (‘West’ and ‘East’), the breeding of Islamophobia, and the debasement of the Islamic religion and Muslims.

Yahya Sadowski (1993: 14) and Tustad (2003: 594) both discuss the role that classical and neo-Orientalists have had in assigning attributes to ‘Middle Eastern’ societies regarding their inability to democratize. The classical Orientalist model claimed that weak or submissive societies had a tendency to suppress political mobilization and therefore, were naturally more inclined towards totalitarian and despotic governance. The belief at this time that was the attributes of ‘the West’, which featured a strong civil society, were a necessary ingredient in the establishment of democratic government. However, what the classical Orientalist model could not account for was a weak Islamic society seizing state power, such as what occurred in Iran in 1979 (Tustad 2003: 594). This is where the institution of Orientalism demonstrates its resiliency and ability to innovate, when used to explain this strange occurrence the classical model was simply inverted and the institution re-branded as neo-Orientalism.

Both Tustad (2003: 595) and Sadowski (1993: 18) quote two imminent neo-Orientalist scholars John Hall and Daniel Pipes at length regarding the role of sharia law in empowering Muslim societies and hindering the development of democracy in ‘the Middle East.’ Pipes and Hall argue that the tenets of sharia law are so extreme and comprehensive that no government will be able to live up to its standard and Muslims will inevitably view their government as illegitimate. It is because of this that no “organic state” has emerged in Islamic countries and this is what keeps the Arabs subjugated to despotism, and holds democracy at bay. It is at this point that Orientalism

has come full circle. No matter what “the other” does will inevitably be seen as an essentialized characteristic of their subaltern status. Sadowski poignantly highlights this inherent contradiction,

The irony of this conjuncture needs to be savored. When the consensus of social scientists held that democracy and development depended upon the actions of strong, assertive social groups, Orientalists held that such associations were absent in Islam. When the consensus evolved and social scientists thought a quiescent, undemanding society was essential to progress, the neo-Orientalists portrayed Islam as beaming with pushy, anarchic solidarities. Middle Eastern Muslims, it seems, were doomed to be eternally out of step with intellectual fashion (Sadowski 1993: 19).

Within this new incarnation of Orientalism, violence is viewed as an inherited trait that can be traced down from one generation to the next. Within this context, political, economic, and social determinants for conflict are marginalized and the true “threat” emerges (Tustad 2003: 595). “A critical reading of Orientalist and neo-Orientalist sources would question the way the influences of colonialism and imperialism are ignored, as well as the reductionism and essentialism of having identified an anti-modern core in the eighth century that doomed any further political development of the world’s fastest growing religion” (Tustad 2003: 595). Or in the rare case that the issue of European imperialism is broached by the Orientalists (classical or contemporary) it is downplayed as brief and indirect (Sadowski 1993: 20). As with most critical analyses, these types of questions are often not asked, and the discussion of these issues is pushed to the fringes of the discourse where it fails to alter the zeitgeist.

The emergence of neo-Orientalism did not stop with the intrusion into the debate about which societies were more likely to successfully develop democratic systems of governance. Orientalism in its “neo” form also began to “mine the religions of ‘the East’

for their spiritual wealth” (Bartholomeusz 1998: 19). With the inversion of traditional Orientalist dogma, the newly empowered ‘East’ began to illustrate to ‘the West’ a pure and unpolluted edifice of religious purity, that could be emulated and help ‘the West’ achieve spiritual salvation (Bartholomeusz 1998). Furthermore, the decay of ‘the West’ could be halted by utilizing the religions of ‘the East’ and their romanticized and conservative overtones. Once again, ‘the West’ was using ‘the Orient’ as a tool to fulfill its own self interests, this time featuring spiritual imperialism, instead of economic. It is clear from reading classical and neo-Orientalist scholars’ accounts about whether a strong or weak state is necessary for the development of democracy, that there is widespread debate on the issue with no consensus on whether it is a necessary or sufficient condition. One thing that can be said is that the relationship between society, its government, and organizations and interest groups within society is immensely complex and determining a county’s or region’s ability to promote a stable, democratic government through the reduction of any group’s “essence” is erroneous and deceitful.

According to Stuart Hall (1997: 243) the racialization of “the other” through binary oppositions within racialized discourses helps to promote the polarization and dichotomization of human groups. The tenets of neo-Orientalism rely on the use of such binary oppositions to present the relationship between “us” and “the other” in an us-versus-them fashion. The signifying of racial difference between ‘East’ and ‘West’ can be clearly illustrated, as neo-Orientalism attempts to use the religion of Islam as its antithesis, and inherently antipodal to ‘the Western’ way of life. Many neo-Orientalists view ‘the Orient’ and one of its main religions, Islam, as backwards, prone to despotism and violence, and against progress and democracy (Deyab 2006: 5). In this regard, “the

other” (Islam and ‘the East’) is seen as representing everything that ‘the West’ is not. As stated earlier, this notion that ‘the East’ represents what ‘the West’ is not a static process and is constantly being redefined and renegotiated. This places the representation of ‘the East’ into a constant state of flux because at one moment ‘the Orient’ is characterized as being less prone to establish successful democratic institutions because of a weak civil society; then over time, this viewpoint is inverted with Muslims now being “too strong” to support a proper democratic form of governance. These constantly changing subjective justifications can be illuminated by tracing the discourse back to the formation of binary oppositions which permeate representations of racialized others and offer insight into how and why these appear within our society, and change diachronically.

### **Critical Terrorism Studies (CTS)**

Critical terrorism studies is a field that has only recently developed, as a response to the influx of terrorism related research that has proliferated in the first decade of the twenty-first century. In 2008, the journal *Critical Studies on Terrorism* was established to give this emergent field a voice. Richard Jackson, Jeroen Gunning, and Marie Smyth outline three major criticisms of traditional terrorism studies in a paper that they prepared for the 2007 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, which laid the groundwork for this new field. First, the majority of material that has emanated from the field of terrorism studies has lacked methodological consistency and fails to employ adequate research methods, while relying on secondary research that fails to meet the rigorous standards of academic scholarship (Jackson 2007: 244; Gunning 2007: 363; and Jackson et al., 2007: 2-4). Furthermore, the inability of scholars within traditional

terrorism studies to agree upon a definition of the phenomenon of terrorism has led many researchers to simply abandon the process itself, and instead study and utilize a term without defining it (Jackson et al., 2007: 4). This is problematic as “terrorism” is itself a very culturally powerful term that is associated with many negative connotations.

The second core criticism of critical terrorism studies proposed by Jackson, Gunning, and Smith is the “embedded or organic nature of many terrorism experts and scholars; that is, the extent to which terrorism scholars are directly linked to state institutions and sources of power in ways that make it difficult to distinguish between the state and academic spheres” (Jackson 2007: 245). Part of the critical component of CTS is its questioning of the relationship between the academy and the state. Questions about the relationship between funding (most often by the government and other state-centric agencies) to scholars in the field of terrorism studies and how this affects their research’s “objectivity” and validity are of critical importance for CTS scholars. “Employing a Gramscian perspective, it can be argued that the core terrorism studies scholars function as ‘organic intellectuals’ intimately connected – institutionally, financially, politically and ideologically – with a state hegemonic project” (Jackson et al, 2007: 8; Jackson 2007: 245). In this sense, it is important that fields such as CTS are engaged in questioning the independence of research within the field of terrorism studies and help ensure that critical assessment of the phenomenon is promoted.

A third main criticism developed by CTS is that dominant knowledge of the field of terrorism studies has functioned as a type of “problem-solving theory” (Jackson et al., 2007: 8; Jackson 2007: 245; Gunning 2007: 363). This is problematic because terrorism studies takes the current status quo for granted and assumes that any phenomenon that

runs counter to this prevailing framework is flawed and in need of amelioration. This leads terrorism studies to focus on a “state centric approach” to terrorism, which views the issues in a state/other model. CTS questions the validity of this status quo and instead reflects on the role of the state in perhaps helping create the conditions for terrorism to proliferate (Jackson et al., 2007: 11). One of the main goals of CTS is “to bring the state back into it” or more precisely, to bring the issue of “state terrorism” back into the lexicon of terrorism studies, as it has all but disappeared from research in the last few decades (Jackson et al., 2007; Jackson 2007: 250).

Critical terrorism studies is also relevant within the scope of my thesis project because of how it views the relationship between knowledge and power. Richard Jackson clarified this position when he stated,

I would argue that CTS rests firstly upon an understanding of knowledge as a social process constructed through language, discourse and inter-subjective practices. From this perspective, it is understood that terrorism knowledge always reflects the social-cultural context within which it emerges, which means among other things that it tends to be highly gendered and Eurocentric. CTS understands that knowledge is always intimately connected to power, that knowledge is ‘always for someone and for some purpose’ and that ‘regimes of truth’ function to entrench certain hierarchies of power and exclude alternative, counter-hegemonic forms of knowledge and practice. CTS therefore begins with an acceptance of the basic insecurity of all knowledge and the impossibility of neutral or objective knowledge about terrorism. It is also evinces an acute sensitivity to the ways in which terrorism knowledge can be deployed as a political technology in the furtherance of hegemonic projects and directs attention to the interests that underlies knowledge claims (Jackson 2007: 246).

This quotation demonstrates CTS’s commitment to a constructionist and post structuralist understanding of the relationship between terrorism, knowledge, and power. It is also pertinent because my thesis revolves around these three main issues and how they relate to one another. By acknowledging the socially constructed roots of terrorism and

analyzing what effects this phenomenon has on society, CTS can help bring a new critical perspective on terrorism to the forefront.

Lastly, it is also important to clarify that CTS was not established with the intention to impose a rigorous ontological, epistemological, and methodological standard to the study of terrorism. While a core set of ontological and epistemological principles are articulated, these are intended to be a “general guideline” for scholars to follow, and ultimately, it is up to the scholar to frame his/her critical project in a way most suitable for his/her research. The goal of CTS is to propose a critical reflection on the phenomenon and encourage scholars – many of whom have already engaged in a critique of contemporary terrorism studies – to have a more unified and organized outlet for their work. While criticizing relationships between scholars and elites, the goal of CTS is also to provide a more neutral, yet still policy-relevant portrait of terrorism, that can work towards the elimination of the use of terror against civilians by both state and non-state actors (Jackson et al., 2007: 13-14; Jackson 2007: 249). The research that I am undertaking in my thesis unquestionably fits within the framework of CTS, and as such, my thesis may provide another piece of the puzzle, and help this young but growing field of research expand.

## Chapter Two: Methodology

The main methodological framework I will employ within my thesis project is that of discourse analysis. Within the various social sciences (linguistics, political studies, and psychology) discourse analysis has been practiced through a variety of different manifestations (Seale 2004: 373). Since discourse analysis is such a nebulous entity, most scholars attribute rather general conceptual definitions for it. David Silverman (2001: 177-178) states, “Discourse Analysis (DA) describes a heterogeneous range of social science research based on the analysis of interviews and texts as well as recorded talk.” Such broad and ambiguous definitions of discourse analysis are common as discourse analysis methods are often specifically tailored to the analyst and his/her project. Perhaps the best way to understand discourse analysis, is to reflect on where the practice has emerged from—specifically what is a discourse, and why is it important?

### **What is a Discourse?**

Traditionally discourse has been viewed linguistically as a set of speech or texts related to a specific subject or issue. However, the work of Michel Foucault went beyond this linguistic focus of discourse and look at the relationship between power and knowledge. To Foucault, discourse was primarily a system of representation (Hall 1997). In this sense, discourse has a more specific definition, discourse “refers to groups of statements which structure the way a thing is thought, and the way we act on the basis of that thinking. In other words, discourse is a particular knowledge about the world which shapes how the world is understood and how things are done in it” (Rose 2001: 136). Stuart Hall (1997: 6) offers a similar conception of discourse: “Discourses are ways of



referring to or constructing knowledge about a particular topic of practice: a cluster (or *formation*) of ideas, images and practices, which provide ways of talking about, forms of knowledge and conduct associated with, a particular topic, social activity or institutional site in society”<sup>5</sup> Therefore, discourse is not merely a passive archive of texts describing an object, but is rather a complex system that is constantly defining and producing the categories it describes (Seale 2004: 373). Discourse is then a system that influences and governs how issues can be discussed and represented. It acts as a metaphorical “gatekeeper” by influencing what can be “included” in or discussed on certain issues and what is “omitted.”

Foucault also pioneered “the idea that ‘discourse produces the objects of knowledge’ and that nothing which is meaningful exists *outside discourse*” (Hall 1997: 44). Foucault was mainly concerned not with whether things exist in any objective sense, but rather where meaning comes from (Hall 1997: 45).

A key concept related to discourse is intertextuality. Intertextuality refers to the way that discourse is not merely the significance of a single text, or set of texts, but is dependent on the discursive image of other texts and the meanings associated with the discourse (Rose 2001: 136). For instance, a single Orientalist essay may not be significant in and of itself; however, the accumulation of a past literature on the subject, along with the meanings that experts, institutions, governments, etc. have applied to this discourse give the essay a formidable backing. The concept of intertextuality also demonstrates how a variety of images, texts, and other objects which make up a discourse

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<sup>5</sup> I will be utilizing Hall’s conceptual definition of discourse throughout the remainder of my thesis, when I refer to discourse.

can be studied together by discourse analysis to illustrate the discourse's collective representations and meaning.

Closely related to the concept of intertextuality is what Foucault called a discursive formation. A discursive formation refers to how meaning assigned to a particular discourse can permeate across a range of texts and connect one to the other, and can emerge among various institutions and their actions (Hall 1997: 44). Rose pointed out that whenever Foucault could find a "regularity" of meaning in a discourse that he would refer to it as a "discursive formation" (Rose 2001: 137). Richard Jackson (2007: 398) elaborates on this concept when he states that, "Discourses produce meaning in part through drawing upon the linguistic resources and specific discursive opportunity structures – or the extant cultural raw materials – of a particular social context: texts always refer back to other texts which themselves refer still to other texts, in other words." Looking at the work of Edward Said, we find enough of a connection amongst the texts he analyzes and the actions of specific governments and intellectuals to sufficiently argue for the existence of a discursive formation within the discourse.

Foucault's work was always historically grounded in the specific era that he studied. He believed that the meanings and representations of discourses were only "true" within a specific historical context. As such, he believed that the same phenomenon would not be able to transcend historical eras, and thought that discourse would produce new forms of meaning and knowledge specific to its historical environment (Hall 1997: 46). As discussed earlier, Foucault asserted that things are given meaning and it is the meaning and representations that objects are given that is important, and that the knowledge and meaning associated with discourse fluctuates from

one historically situated moment to the next. As Hall explained, unlike scholars who believed in a trans-historical stability of concepts of knowledge “Foucault believed that more significant were the radical breaks, and ruptures and discontinuities between one period and another, between one discursive formation and another” (Hall 1997: 47).

One area that is important to investigate is the relationship between discourse and power. Unlike many theories of power, which focus on a hierarchical top-down model, Foucault believed that power operated in a more dialectical way. In this dialectical model discourse was not exclusively a form of repression that imposed itself on human actors, but was also a system of creation, as our social world is the byproduct of the operation of discourse. Our identities, relationships, the objects we see in our everyday lives, and the way we understand the world around us are all the result of discourse. “Power is everywhere, since discourse too is everywhere. And there are many discourses, some of which clearly contest the terms of others” (Rose 2001: 137). In this way, Foucault’s conception of power has an emancipatory and critical theme to it, namely that power is not the will of a strong few that is projected down upon the masses, but rather an ongoing interaction amongst competing discourses to negotiate how phenomena will be represented.

For Foucault, knowledge was inextricably linked to power. However, Foucault was not necessarily interested in notions of absolute “truth” but more with how knowledge has become a form of power. In the most basic sense Foucault believed that knowledge was power. As Hall (1997: 49) states, “All knowledge once applied in the real world, has real effects, and in that sense at least, ‘becomes true.’ ” This point is significant, because once representations become imbedded within our social

consciousness; knowledge can obtain the power and authority to make itself true. This concept is consistent with the constructionist framework, and is based on the assumption that once a given typification has been institutionalized by human actors it becomes an “objective” truth in and of itself.<sup>6</sup> By studying the taken for granted assumptions about how we view issues such as contemporary terrorism, we can begin to see how a certain “ideal type” of terrorism has been created within its discourse.

This leads us to another important concept within discourse analysis, known as a regime of truth. This concept is centered around the notion that the most powerful discourses are dependent on certain assumptions and claims of truth about their knowledge. The specific grounds that this truth is situated and articulated—changing historically—constitute what is known as a regime of truth (Rose 2001: 138). These claims may not be true in any absolute sense; however, if society believes that a certain trait is a symptom of terrorism, or that certain individuals are pre-disposed towards committing terrorism it will be viewed as being true, despite not being proven true in any absolute sense. In this way, discourse analysis is an effective tool to analyze a pre-existing discourse, because it attempts to articulate specific regimes of truth, many of which have been taken for granted as the ‘truth’ within our society.

## **Methods**

Now that I have introduced the theoretical background of discourse analysis, it is important to outline the methods that I will employ within this thesis. Seale (2004: 376)

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<sup>6</sup> It is important to note that the constructionist framework’s conception of ‘objective’ truth is only objective in the sense that the interpretations of the individual actor who internalizes such knowledge recognize it as ‘objective’ fact. Not that it is objectively true ‘outside’ of the individual (Berger and Luckmann 1966).

points out that a standardized approach to discourse analysis has not been developed due to the fact that it has been utilized by a variety of researchers for myriad purposes.

Rosalind Gill (1996: 143-144) and Rose (2001: 139) point out that discourse analysis is analogous to a type of “craft skill” and can only be learned by the researcher through trial and error. Therefore, although previous research can provide the analyst with a general background of discourse analysis, it is the responsibility of the individual analyst to frame his or her methodology to reflect the specific issue under study.

When selecting sources for analysis it is important to realize that discourses can be articulated through a multitude of different mediums, such as written texts, art, and verbal communication. The intertextuality of discourse facilitates this broad range of resources which can be studied because discourse is a constellation of meaning that transcends a variety of archives and mediums (Rose 2001: 142). Some, or all of these sources can be utilized by the researcher within his or her discourse analysis, so it is important for the researcher to clearly articulate what the research problem is, and how it will be studied (Seale 2004: 376). Most importantly it is not necessarily the quantity of material that is studied, but the quality of the material. Likewise, the linking of two seemingly unrelated pieces of material can create new insight into our social world, and Rose points out that some of the most interesting discourse analyses have emerged from this practice (Rose 2001: 143).

For my research, the discourse analytic technique employed will closely examine the discourse of contemporary terrorism. Since this is a discourse that has exploded onto the intellectual radar following the 9/11 attacks I will need to focus on a specific subset of the literature that can be manageably studied. I will focus on texts written not only

specifically for an academic audience, but those books that have both an academic and public-policy targeted audience. My research will also examine how the dominant views within the discourse permeate and influence other authors. This research will focus on ‘Western’ texts that have been published in the English language. I will limit my research to include only texts which have been published between 2001 and 2010. Due to the proliferation of research that is being published within the field of terrorism studies in recent years, it is important that I focus my research to those books published post-9/11 (Silke 2004: 25).<sup>7</sup> I will focus exclusively on five books on terrorism that have been reviewed in *Foreign Affairs* journal. The books being analyzed are: *Holy War Inc.* by Peter Bergen (2001), *Jihad* by Ahmed Rashid (2002), *Plan of Attack* by Bob Woodward (2004), *Imperial Hubris* by Michael Scheuer (2004), and *The Looming Tower* by Lawrence Wright (2006).<sup>8</sup> I have chosen this subset to focus on because this magazine has become one of the most influential and most read periodicals of not only scholars within terrorism studies, international relations, and other academic disciplines, but also, amongst many policy makers within the government and other relevant organizations. For the books in my analysis, I chose samples from the early years of the twenty-first century, the middle part of the decade, and the final years of the first decade of the 2000s. By doing this, I hope to capture the zeitgeist and how terrorism was represented. I expect to find dramatically different portrayals of terrorism in the months immediately following 9/11 as compared to the years both preceding and following the War in Iraq. I am

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<sup>7</sup> Although it would be an interesting and worthwhile undertaking to attempt a comparative discourse analysis of the material being published within the field of terrorism studies pre, and post 9/11, it is unfortunately not the purpose of this particular project.

<sup>8</sup> A brief summary of the texts and information on the author will be included at the end of this chapter.

anticipating this change to occur due to a shift in the public's perception of terrorism caused by the ongoing "War on Terror" and the passage of time since the 9/11 attacks.

During my analysis I will attempt to be as reflexive as possible. Any prior assumptions and preconceptions that I have will be kept in check so that I, as a researcher, can attempt to take a look at the material from as neutral a perspective as possible. Since I, as a discourse analyst, cannot argue that my findings will be "true" in any absolute sense, I can only maintain that my interpretations will offer a representation of the phenomenon being studied and how it relates to my own personal and historical location. As a researcher my goal is to relay the information from my sources to the reader in as transparent and neutral a manner as possible. My findings will then have a concrete backing in that they will represent a historical snapshot of the timeframe being analyzed, and attempt to illuminate latent relationships of power that govern our lives.

Foucault stated that, "pre-existing categories 'must be held in suspense. They must not be rejected definitively, of course, but the tranquility with which they are accepted must be disturbed; we must show that they do not come about by themselves, but are always the result of a construction the rules of which must be known and the justifications of which must be scrutinized'" (Rose 2001: 150). Especially since I will be analyzing the literature on contemporary terrorism and determining if the themes which emerged in Edward Said's postcolonial critique of Orientalism are reflected in the contemporary discourse, it is important to make sure that my findings are justifiable.

Seale identifies three main points to focus on while analyzing data in a discourse analysis: "1) identifying key themes and arguments; 2) looking for variations in texts; and 3) paying attention to silences" (Seale 2004: 378). Rose also provides a complementary

framework for analyzing and interpreting the data, namely to: 1) look at your sources with fresh eyes; 2) immerse yourself in the data; 3) pay attention to details; 4) look at the visible as well as the invisible; 5) identify key themes in the data; 6) look for complexity and contradictions; and 7) examine the effects of truth (Rose 2001: 158). Although Seale and Rose highlight a few main areas that can help a researcher analyze a text, Seale maintains that it is up to the discretion of the individual researcher and the objectives of his/her research to adopt tactics which help them engage the text, rather than relying on a pre-existing framework that is outlined in a textbook (Seale 2004: 378). It is in this process that the researcher must also analyze the broader implications that the discourse exudes, more specifically, how has the discourse begun to portray and represent certain subjects and groups? And how has the production of these ideas been affected? The most important thing that myself as a researcher must consider while conducting my research, is to critically reflect on and determine what patterns begin to emerge within the discourse and why.

### **Application of Methods in my Research**

To begin my research, I undertook an initial reading of all five texts in my sample. I did this to familiarize myself with the texts, the author's writing style, and some of the main themes that are introduced within the literature. Following this initial reading, I began a more intensive and scrutinized reading of each text individually. It is at this stage that I began my data collection from the sources in my sample. For the data collection, I kept separate notebooks for each book in which I recorded key phrases, sentences, themes, metaphors, and other information that was or that I felt may be relevant. Following each



chapter, I also recorded my general thoughts and feelings about what information was presented to the reader, and wrote a summary of its main points and arguments. This information is crucial to record, as when dealing with multiple sources, it is difficult to recall one's impressions of a text long after one has read it. Also, at the end of each book, I recorded a summary of the material, and what messages the author attempted to transmit throughout the book. Data collection was an important first step in identifying some of the key aspects of the discursive field of terrorism and how they were represented in the discourse.

Following this initial recording, I went back to the data, and began a primary coding process to help make sense of my recorded material. The coding procedure began with a review of the recorded notes from all five books.<sup>9</sup> It is at this point that a number of themes and patterns began to distinguish themselves from others in the data. For the initial coding I created a colour-coded system that distinguished between: religion; representations of 'East' versus 'West'; discourse of the terrorists; metaphors and literary devices utilized by the authors; references to Osama bin Laden; and 'Western' responses to terrorism; and an "other" category—within my data. Many of the recorded examples were not mutually exclusive, and it was common for certain examples to be coded under numerous categories. This primary coding helped to organize the data into semi-congruent formations and started to point towards certain regularities within my sample. It is important to point out that while engaged in this coding process I was not necessarily interested in the frequency with which certain themes and patterns presented themselves, but with what the content within the data was representing.

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<sup>9</sup> This coding procedure was carried out through the compilation of recorded notes, as well as physically coding passages within the books.

After the completion of the primary coding, I started a secondary coding procedure which refined and developed the major connecting themes in the data with more precision. Following this secondary coding procedure I was left with seven main tropes that emerged from the data collected from my sample. The next chapter of this thesis will identify these seven tropes in more detail, as well as the sub-tropes which compose them, and will provide evidence to the reader on how terrorism was represented within my sample of the discourse.

### **Synopsis of Texts**

*Holy War, Inc.: Inside the Secret World of Osama bin Laden (2001) – Peter Bergen*

One of the first books published following the 9/11 attacks about al Qaeda and its leader, Osama bin Laden, *Holy War Inc.* quickly became a bestseller. The primary thesis of the book is that Osama bin Laden served as a veritable CEO of his terrorist organization that is run like a modern corporation. Bergen argues that al Qaeda utilizes the byproducts of modernity such as the Internet, satellite news, weapons and on September, 11, 2001, commercial airliners to serve its organizational objectives. To Bergen, these objectives are closely linked with archaic interpretations of the Quran and the ideology of jihad that al Qaeda follows. Peter Bergen is an American journalist who in the past has worked for CNN, where he first had the opportunity to interview Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan in 1997. Following the 2001 terrorist attacks, Bergen's book was one of the first released and managed to transform his career. Bergen is now a "terrorism analyst" for many major media networks in 'the West' and has published additional books on al Qaeda and

its former leader Osama bin Laden. Bergen would later provide advance praise for *Imperial Hubris* and his testimonial is included on the back of Michael Scheuer's book.

*Jihad: The Rise of Militant Islam in Central Asia (2002) – Ahmed Rashid*

Ahmed Rashid introduces the reader to the cultural, social, and political history of the five Central Asian states: Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. Following this expansive historical overview, the author begins to examine why fundamentalist militant organizations have proliferated in the region in recent years and what can be done about it. He argues that 'the West' has been complicit in neglecting Central Asia and has overlooked the corruption that has characterized these countries' governments for years. Only recently due to the 9/11 attacks has 'the West' begun to pay attention to the region and its people. For Rashid, the implementation of 'Western' policies that promote free market economy, democracy, free speech, and the protection of human rights are the necessary steps to improve stability in the region and ensure that fundamentalist militant movements do not gain further support. Ahmed Rashid is a Pakistan based journalist who has produced some of the most read books on Afghanistan in both the pre- and post-war eras. He continues to specialize in covering the region, and has published numerous books since the release of *Jihad* in 2002.

*Plan of Attack (2004) – Bob Woodward*

In *Plan of Attack* Bob Woodward provides a first-hand account of the Bush administrations buildup to the 2003 invasion of Iraq. Based on numerous interviews with key members of the administration, Woodward provides the reader with a behind the

scenes look at how the United States first targeted Iraq and the regime of Saddam Hussein and built up a case for invasion. Focusing on WMDs, Woodward illustrates how poor and incomplete intelligence and the hubris of those within the administration led to war. Woodward is critical of the public policy decisions made, but fails to adequately address the questions of why the terrorists attacked America and how government policy currently addresses this phenomenon. Bob Woodward is a Pulitzer Prize winning reporter for *The Washington Post* as well as a bestselling author who gained notoriety for his work in exposing the wrongdoings of the Nixon administration in the Watergate scandal.

*Imperial Hubris: Why the West is Losing the War on Terror (2004) Michael Scheuer*

Based on the accounts and experiences of a retired CIA agent, *Imperial Hubris* is meant to illustrate to the American people and politicians within the government that ‘the West’ is in fact losing the “War on Terror.” Scheuer argues that radical Islamists commit acts of terrorism and violence against ‘Western’ targets as a response to the actions and policies implemented by ‘Western’ nations. Throughout the book, Scheuer relies on his training and experiences as a CIA agent to formulate opinions and to offer advice on how the American government can prevent further attacks—and destroy the terrorists. Michael Scheuer worked for the CIA in the Counterterrorism Center that was in charge of tracking Osama bin Laden in the late 1990s. Scheuer is now a well known public figure, and appears regularly on major American newscasts as a terrorism expert.

*The Looming Tower: Al Qaeda and the Road to 9/11 (2006) – Lawrence Wright*

Lawrence Wright offers a detailed account of the history of the people involved on both sides of the 9/11 attacks. Ayman al-Zawahiri and Osama bin Laden's personal history is highlighted, along with some of the key players in the FBI who were tasked with catching the terrorist masterminds. This gives the reader an intimate look at the lives of the key players on both the law enforcement and terrorist ends of the conflict. Religion plays a pivotal role in Wright's narrative and he attempts to explain the rationale behind the perpetrators actions, and why the intelligence community failed at its task of preventing the attacks. Wright utilizes a back-and-forth style in presenting his narrative to the reader, with his object of focus changing from chapter-to-chapter. He attempts to illustrate to the reader, what he believes the key motivations for the terrorists are, and how this came to be. Lawrence Wright is a staff writer for *The New Yorker* and has written numerous non-fiction books. Following the publication of *The Looming Tower* Wright has become a regular contributor in the television and radio media who consult him regularly about al Qaeda and terrorism.

## Chapter Three: Results

During the discourse analysis a number of patterns and tropes emerged from within my sample. The goal of this research was to look closely at the data in the works under investigation and map out emerging themes, tropes, consistencies and disparities within the data, as well as, to identify possible relationships (if any) amongst these groups, and their context within the broader discourse. However, it is not sufficient to merely identify possible clusters of data that have emerged, as this would provide a rather narrow insight; the goal of my analysis is to locate these constellations within the discourse, determine their consistency during the period under analysis (2001-2006), and to illuminate the structure of the tropes outlined in this chapter and how they manifested within the discourse. Once I have identified the main tropes I will interpret their impact and relationship with the theoretical framework I have previously outlined.

In this chapter I will identify significant tropes in a case-by-case manner, with each trope having a dedicated section in which I will outline its main features. Each trope section will feature sub-trope(s) that will help to identify how the data was presented within the discourse and how it relates to the overriding trope with which it is associated. It should be noted that the tropes identified (and the sub-tropes within them) are not to be seen as mutually exclusive, but rather form a constellation made up of interconnected occurrences and symbols within the discourse. This constellation structures the discourse on terrorism. Identifying these formations within the discourse and the sub-tropes which compose them will help to illuminate some of the taken for granted assumptions that our knowledge is based on and how it affects our individual interpretations of our everyday reality.

The seven main tropes that were identified were as follows:

- Authors' separation and distinction.
- The binary representation of terrorism in terms of an 'East/West' divide.
- The homogenization of groups.
- Religion.
- The representation of terrorism as a social problem in need of remediation.
- Western-centric representations of terrorism.
- The discourse of the subaltern groups.

These seven tropes are not exhaustive, but represent some of the most compelling and prevalent currents which presented within my sample. These tropes form the foundation for the overall discourse on terrorism and essentially frame how the tropes can act collectively to represent the phenomenon under investigation in a prescribed manner.

Since the reader may not have the luxury of having read the five works scrutinized in this analysis, I will provide the reader with as unbiased as possible a reflection of the context in which the evidence was presented to the reader. Below I will provide evidence for the existence of the seven major tropes and illustrate their non-mutual exclusivity and interconnectedness within the discourse.

### **Authors' Separation and Distinction**

All five of the authors constructed *separations* between the readers and 'Eastern', 'Muslim', or 'terrorist' groups, and also between the readers and themselves. Tropes of separation took three general forms: geographical distance, cultural or social difference as

a form of separateness, and actual textual devices that located ‘East’ and ‘West’ in separate areas within the physical space of the text. One important effect of these tropes of separation is to establish the authors’ expertise relative to and intellectual authority over the reader. Within this relationship, knowledge is passed down from the author to the reader. The author’s intellectual authority derives in part from the fact that the author is close to events and situations which the reader is separated from by a great distance. As with all of the tropes that I examine, tropes of separation overlap with each other, thereby mutually reinforcing each other.

### *Geographical Separation*

All five books assume a ‘Western’ audience. Three authors (Bergen 2001; Scheuer 2004; Wright 2006) discuss how their physical travel to ‘the East’ has enabled them to write as an expert in the field of contemporary terrorism. A fourth (Rashid 2002) invokes his upbringing and residency in ‘the Orient’ and his expertise in terrorism and the geopolitics of Central Asia are instilled in him through his upbringing and residency within ‘the Orient’.

### *Examples*

Bergen (2001) portrays al Qaeda as having a transnational presence across the globe. As a ‘Western’ correspondent, Bergen recounts a long and arduous journey to the mountainous regions of far-off Afghanistan to meet with Osama bin Laden in the mid 1990s as a producer for CNN (Bergen 2001). Bergen also goes into great detail on the precautions undertaken by al Qaeda before the interview took place, complete with



blindfolds, armed checkpoints, threats, and nefarious misdirection (Bergen 2001: 15-18). Similarly, Scheuer also discusses how his personal travels to the Middle East have enabled him to produce informed conclusions on the region and its peoples (Scheuer 2004: 4), comparing himself to famed 'Western' writer T.E. Lawrence.

Rashid (2003) positions himself as an 'Eastern' writer addressing a 'Western' audience. This enables him to present himself as an "insider" an 'Easterner' who is writing to 'the West' on what things are like in the region he lives in. Rashid establishes credibility for himself on the grounds that he lives and breathes the political situation of his country and region on a daily basis.

### ***Sociocultural Separation***

All of the authors included in this analysis engaged in construction of cultural or social separation. Sociocultural differences between 'West' and 'East' separate the 'Western' reader from immediate understanding of 'Eastern' realities. It is implied that the authors' relative closeness to 'Eastern' cultures attests to the truthfulness and accuracy of their accounts. One important aspect of this trope, common to many other tropes, is the uncritical portrayal of 'Western Civilization' as an ideal type of society that should be emulated the world over regarding the societal organization of civil and industrial affairs. As elsewhere, any critical examination of the limitations of 'Western' political or economic systems is consistently absent.

*Examples*

Wright (2006: 372-373) relates a story of the near-capture of top al Qaeda leader Al-Zawahiri after the battle of Tora Bora; with coalition troops closing ground on Taliban and al Qaeda forces in the mountainous terrain of Afghanistan, a number of top al Qaeda leaders were able to slip through the dragnet the Americans had deployed in the region. According to the author, Al-Zawahiri in disguise appeared in a local village on horse back in the waning days of the battle and asked for hospitality from a local villager, Gula Jan. During this time American planes were dropping leaflets with Al-Zawahiri's face and a telephone number that could be called to report his whereabouts along with a potential \$25 million reward for information leading to his capture. Jan eventually recognized Al-Zawahiri, but was unable to phone the number because he did not have access to a phone, thereby allowing Al-Zawahiri to slip away into the darkness of the western Afghanistan night. The form of this anecdote, which is written like a scene in a spy thriller, emphasizes the social distance separating Al-Zawahiri from his American pursuers, and thereby from the reader themselves. This distancing is achieved by insinuating that if Mr. Jan would have had had a telephone – a device that is ubiquitous in 'the West' – that Al-Zawahiri would have easily been captured and brought to justice.

Scheuer (2004: xi, xvi-xxi, 1-9, 15, 27, 46, 68, 91, 128, 158) writes about his experience as a former CIA officer involved with the unit within the Counterterrorist Center in charge of hunting down Osama bin Laden. He also played a key role during the opening months of the War in Afghanistan in 2001, in assisting CIA operatives in their attempts to locate and capture bin Laden who was by then America's number one fugitive. Scheuer positions himself on the front lines of a struggle between the separate

and opposed forces of ‘West’ and ‘East’, making him closer than the reader to an ‘East’ from which both he and the reader are nevertheless decisively separated. He critiques the bureaucratic and institutional complacency of US security agencies that failed to prevent the attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001, but does not critique the deeper geopolitical relations that fuel the conflict.

Bergen (2001) discusses his travels to Afghanistan in the 1990s to interview al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden. During his extensive travels throughout ‘the East’, he remains at all times a ‘Western correspondent’ acting on behalf of ‘Western’ media. Conversely, Rashid (2002) positions himself as a writer whose ‘Eastern’ identity allows him to bridge the social distance between the ‘Western’ reader and a distant and mysterious ‘East’. This social distance is marked by ‘Western’ proclivities towards democracy, secularism, individualism, and a free market economy in contrast with ‘Eastern’ decay into violence and unstable government. Rashid is critical to the extent that he locates the cause of this decay in ‘Western’ ambivalence and inaction, but uncritically accepts the superiority of ‘Western’ values and institutions. All five authors accept, and treat ‘the West’ as superior to the ‘the East’ and only ‘Western’ solutions to the problem of terrorism are presented to the ‘Western’ reader.

### ***Textual Separation and Composition of the Texts***

Authors used physical separation within the space and other textual devices delineate the parameters of the groups, individuals, regions, cultures, and societies involved in the War on Terror.

*Examples*

Wright (2006) provides a clear example of placing ‘East’ and ‘West’ in different spaces within his text. The first three chapters are devoted to the key al Qaeda members he believes were instrumental to the organization’s ascent as a transnational terrorist cadre. The next few chapters discuss al Qaeda’s counterparts working for US intelligence and law enforcement agencies such as the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and the National Security Agency (NSA). Establishing two separate but parallel sets of actors in this way allows Wright to shift back and forth from the ‘terrorist’ side to the ‘Western’ law enforcement side throughout the remainder of the book without blurring the distinction between these two groups.

Scheuer uses graphic symbols to establish a dualism between ‘Eastern’ Islam and ‘the West.’ On the top corner of every page next to the page number, and beside the chapter number on the opening page of every chapter of the book, Scheuer inscribes a crescent moon and star, in the configuration of the symbol for Islam. The use of these symbols constantly reminds the reader of the social and cultural forces at play within the discourse.

***Binary Relationship: The ‘East/West’ Divide***

Since Samuel Huntington (1996) offered his thesis regarding the “clash of civilizations” the acceptance of a perpetual conflict existing between ‘the East’ and ‘the West’ has become a dominant feature of public discourse. More specifically, the discourse of contemporary terrorism has evolved and transformed to become more dichotomized in the post-9/11 era reflecting the changing social climate which regulates, maintains, and

creates discourse. All five of my sources feature evidence which helps support the existence of a binary system of representation within the discourse.

### *East vs. West*

Within the materials analyzed the socially constructed concepts of 'East' and 'West' that have come to dominate representations of "us" and "the other" were ubiquitous and helped canonize the binary relationship that has become a prominent feature within the discourse. This divide has become a naturalized feature of the discourse, and has become one of the primary analytic devices utilized to dissect the issue of terrorism within 'Western' media.

### *Examples*

Scheuer (2004) begins framing his conception of contemporary terrorism into a binary opposition as soon as the reader picks up the book. The subtitle on the cover reads: *Why the West is Losing the War on Terror*. This title positions the reader towards a specific perspective even before they have begun to read his narrative. The author often makes reference to "us" and "we" throughout the book, often speaking on behalf of all of 'Western Civilization.' He also goes a step further in establishing his binary opposition not only between the traditional rubric of 'East/West' but between 'West/Islam', as well. Throughout his book, Scheuer uses terms such as Islam and 'the Muslim world' interchangeably instead of the traditional terminology of 'the East' or 'the Orient.'

Bergen uses the terms 'the West' and 'Western' to help describe the actions and motivations of the terrorists in al Qaeda. He states that Osama bin Laden had become a

celebrity in ‘the Orient’ “as a symbol of resistance to the West” (Bergen 2001: 33) and “for tweaking the noses of the great powers of the West” (Bergen 2001: 34). Within this context Osama bin Laden was viewed as leading a group of men that represent everything that ‘the West’ is not. This tall, mysterious, bearded man who according to popular myth within the international Islamic extremist community, forwent a life of luxury to live ascetically in caves in Afghanistan to fight for a way of life that would seem alien to the average citizen who was socialized in ‘the West.’

In *Plan of Attack*, while discussing the Bush administration’s thought process during the lead up and execution of the War in Iraq, Woodward focuses on the differences between “us” and “them” referring to the United States, on the one hand, and Iraq and the Middle East on the other. Within the administration, high ranking officials such as vice-president Dick Cheney believed that, “the Middle East was not going in the right direction” (Woodward 2004: 112). According to Woodward (2004) when the administration was confronted by envoys claiming that a possible conflict would only exacerbate tensions in the region and broaden the chasm between the Christian and Muslim worlds, it turned a blind eye.

Rashid claims that the geographic area of Central Asia has been largely ignored by ‘the West’ until the 9/11 attacks (Rashid 2002). Throughout the book, Rashid discusses the Central Asian states’ (Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan) long and tumultuous histories and relationships with the non-Central Asian world. Rashid claims that it was ‘the West’s’ prolonged indifference and apathy that has caused the proliferation of Islamist movements within the Central Asian nations’ borders. However, Rashid differs from the other authors with his vision of ‘East’ versus

‘West’ and the power relationship of the actors involved. He believes that ‘the West’s’ policy of inaction has led to this increased instability in the region, and it is up to the more powerful ‘Western’ nations to exert pressure on the despotic regimes of Central Asia to help them modernize. For Rashid, the ability of these troubled states to implement a more “modern” democratic system of government (that closely resembles ‘the Western’ system of government) is the region’s best hope for long-term peace (Rashid 2002).

### ***Religious Identity***

Within my sample, religious identity was used to differentiate the socially constructed entities of ‘East’ and ‘West’ and promote a dichotomous relationship between ‘Islam’ and ‘the East’ on one hand, and ‘Christianity’ and ‘the West’ on the other. Specifically within the discourse on terrorism, religion in the post-9/11 era has become synonymous with the tactic of terrorism and its implementation and proliferation in modern times.

### ***Examples***

In *Imperial Hubris*, Scheuer uses Osama bin Laden as a metaphor to represent the differences between ‘us,’ the Christian ‘West’ and ‘them,’ the Muslim ‘East.’ The author portrays bin Laden as a symbol for the social and cultural differences between ‘the East’ and ‘the West.’ Scheuer writes that the love people had for bin Laden in ‘the Islamic world’ was the pivotal reason why he has emerged as a bastion within the umma that represents their collective history, faith, and beliefs (Scheuer 2004).

Bergen also uses bin Laden to illustrate this difference when he quotes a Pakistani cleric as stating that bin Laden was “a symbol for the whole Islamic world. Against all those outside powers who were trying to crush Muslims. He is the courageous one who raised his voice against them. He’s a hero to us, but it’s America that first made him a hero” (Bergen 2001: 126).

Woodward uses religious identity to separate ‘the East’ from ‘the West.’ Woodward quoted President Bush as stating that, “We believe that Islam like Christianity can grow in a free and democratic manner” (Woodward 2004: 276). His statement points to an essentialized difference in the nature of the Islamic and Christian religions by establishing that Christianity innately promotes democracy and freedom.

Wright also situates 9/11, al Qaeda, and Osama bin Laden within this dualism. Referring to the political climate in the months preceding the September 11, 2001, attacks he stated that, “the tectonic plates of history were shifting, promoting a period of conflict between the West and the Arab Muslim World; however, the charisma and vision of a few individuals shaped the nature of this conflict” (Wright 2006: 332). One such individual that is featured prominently in the first section of the book is the Islamic scholar Sayyid Qutb. Qutb is referenced in three of the five books under analysis (Bergen 2001; Scheuer 2004; and Wright 2006) as one of the main ideological forefathers of the global radical Islamist movement. Qutb was an Egyptian teacher, who journeyed to America in the late 1940s for advanced schooling and this is where he would witness in person what he believed was the ugly edifice of Western culture. Wright introduces Qutb as an individual

who was worried about the advance of an all-engulfing Western civilization. Despite his erudition, he saw the West as a single cultural



entity. The distinctions between capitalism and Marxism, Christianity and Judaism, fascism and democracy were insignificant by comparison with the single great divide in Qutb's mind: Islam and the East on the one side, and the Christian West on the other (Wright 2006: 8).

Qutb's beliefs would go on to become the basic tenets of modern Islamist movements such as al Qaeda and Islamic Jihad. Wright is clearly framing the conflict between these extremist groups and 'Western' nations as a conflict between two distinct and incompatible worldviews.

Throughout his narrative Wright consistently presents al Qaeda as a vanguard organization that is leading the conflict between 'East and West' on behalf of the world's Muslim community. He presents al Qaeda as an emergent organization that was formed by its leaders to serve the role of a benevolent protector of the subaltern throughout the 'Orient.' It was, therefore, the responsibility of the organization to possess the means by which to protect the umma. Wright briefly discusses al Qaeda's attempts to procure fissile material to develop a nuclear weapon and its impact on the organization's objectives. Wright situates al Qaeda's position within this conceptualized binary conflict that appears to exist within the discourse on contemporary terrorism as he explains that while al Qaeda is engaging in its 'war on the West' it was the duty of "al Qaeda to create a weapon that would inoculate the Muslim world against Western imperialism" (Wright 2006: 304).

### *Suicide*

Suicide continually emerged as a differentiating issue that separated Muslim societies in 'the East' from Christian societies in 'the West.' Treated in this manner, suicide appeared to indicate the difference in social structure between the two societies. As with

religion and geography, a binary relationship emerges, as only 'Islam' and 'Christianity' or 'East' and 'West' that are incorporated into the discussions of suicide and its relevance within the sphere of contemporary terrorism. Conspicuously absent within the discourse is the differing role that suicide and martyrdom plays within both the Islamic and Christian faiths, as well as within other countries, nations, religions, and various other social groups.

### *Examples*

Scheuer discusses how opinions on suicide differ in Muslim societies, compared to those in 'the West.' "What the West sees as tragic brutality practiced by despairing or deviant individuals is perceived in much of the Muslim world as a heroic act of self-sacrifice, patriotism, and worship, an act to be greeted not with condemnation and revulsion, but with awe, respect, and a determination to emulate" (Scheuer 2004: 135). Scheuer uses the issue of suicide to claim an objective difference in the societies under comparison. In his view, 'the West' views suicide as a moral flaw practiced by a small cohort of deviant and irrational individuals whereas in the 'Muslim world' suicide is viewed primarily as a morally pure and honourable practice that is looked upon with reverence. Claiming that these two societies have polar opposite views on this subject, the author helps to reify these socially constructed categories.

Later in his book, Scheuer discusses how in 'the West' we do not fully understand "the degree of admiration, respect, and even love accorded to" the nineteen al Qaeda hijackers that were responsible for the 9/11 attacks (Scheuer 2004: 134). Scheuer goes on to illustrate how in 'the West' suicide is a taboo subject, and viewed as a last resort by

only the most desperate of individuals within our culture. In general, the practice is not viewed in a positive light and is the prerogative of those who operate within the margins of society.

Wright points to the Islamists' fetishism of martyrdom as a crucial difference between the 'Eastern' and 'Western' ways of life. While discussing the role of the Arab Afghan Mujahideen volunteers who had flocked to Afghanistan following the Soviet invasion of 1979 in order to provide assistance to their fellow Islamic brethren, the author points to the non-Muslim journalists covering the war who found the tactics of the Arab Afghans befuddling. "For the journalists covering the war, the Arab Afghans were a curious sideshow to the real fighting, set apart by their obsession with dying. When a fighter fell, his comrades would congratulate him and weep because they were not slain in battle" (Wright 2006: 107).

### **Religion**

Religion has not solely been used to foster the binary representation of 'East' and 'West' within the discourse; it has also been identified as a causal factor in the proliferation of terrorism in contemporary times. Throughout all five books under analysis, there exists a consistent pattern in how religion is used by all of the actors involved (the media, terrorists, governments, and the public) to govern how terrorism is represented in our society.

### *Islam: Jihad and Other Islamic Terminology and Terrorism*

All of the books featured in this analysis utilized Islamic terms in articulating and constructing concepts and events within the discourse. References to jihad appeared repeatedly and the concept was consistently identified as a factor in the proliferation of transnational terrorism. By linking an Islamic concept to the spread of terrorism around the world, the discourse is projecting Islam as having an integral role in its spread. Other Islamic terms such as martyr, takfir, mujahideen, imam, fatwa, and emir, to name a few, appeared prominently within my sample. The presence of these terms, along with the prominent positioning of jihad within the discourse, represents religion, and more specifically Islam, as having a major role within the issue of modern terrorism. The first part of the next sub-section will be devoted to the representation of the concept of jihad within the discourse, and the second half of the sub-section will focus on the other Islamic terms that have begun to proliferate within the discourse.

#### *Examples*

##### *Jihad*

In the vast majority of instances, jihad was invoked to demonstrate how Muslims were/are obligated to engage in “holy war” if Islam is attacked. This broad definition forms the basis of most conceptual definitions of the term; however, as Rashid points out the term jihad has long been misused, co-opted by social movements in both ‘the East’ and ‘the West’, and associated with the aggressive and violent expansion of Islam (Rashid 2002). All of the five books under analysis utilized the word, and the majority

did not engage in serious discussion of the history of the term and how its exact interpretation is still a raging debate within the international Islamic community.

Abu Hamza, a radical sheikh based in North London, characterizes jihad as, “a compulsory obligation for all but the elderly, the blind, and women” (Bergen 2001: 179). Characterizing jihad in such black and white terms situates the concept firmly within the primary religious doctrines of the Islamic faith. Making jihad a ‘compulsory obligation’ inherently locates it amongst The Five Pillars of Islam for both the Sunni and Shia sects of the religion. Instead of being a justification for the defense of Islam as articulated by Rashid, this more doctrinal based conception makes it the duty of all physically capable Muslims to carry out. Michael Scheuer expands on this when he states,

In the context of the ideas bin Laden shares with his brethren, the military actions of al Qaeda and its allies are acts of war, not terrorism; God, as contained in the Koran, and the saying and traditions of the Prophet Mohammed, the Sunnah (Scheuer 2004: xviii).

Jihad’s existence within Islamic scripture does not make it sufficient for the concept to propagate throughout the umma. Scheuer discusses this and states that it is not just the existence of the concept of jihad, but individual Muslim’s direct relationship with God and the broader history of the Islamic religion that makes the concept of jihad powerful and penetrating (Scheuer 2004). Under this logic, since Muslims have a close and direct relationship with God, any duties and obligations are more likely to be fulfilled by the religion’s followers. Scheuer clarifies this point,

It is doctrinally incumbent on each Muslim – as an unavoidable personal responsibility – to contribute to the fight against the attacker to the best of his [*sic*] ability. In such a jihad there is no Koranic requirement for a central Muslim leader or leadership to authorize warlike actions. Once Islam is attacked, each Muslim knows his [*sic*] personal duty to fight... bin Laden is waging a defensive jihad against the United States; he is inciting others to join, not because he orders them to, but because God has ordered them to do so in what He revealed in the Koran (Scheuer 2004: 7).

Lawrence Wright (2006: 95) quotes Abdullah Azzam<sup>10</sup> whose self described slogan was: “Jihad and the rifle alone; no negotiations, no conferences, no dialogues.” This passage from one of the most respected founders of the jihadist movement is a strong indicator of how the jihadists have fused religion and violence together. It also illuminates how within the jihadist movement there is little thought of negotiation or compromises; to the strict adherents of the jihadist doctrine their worldview is black and white and ordained by God himself.

The concept of fighting a ‘defensive jihad’ is discussed in four out of the five texts that were analyzed (Bergen 2001; Rashid 2002; Scheuer 2004; and Wright 2006). This term situates defensive jihad as an act that is being undertaken by the subaltern, or the group that is being attacked by an aggressive belligerent. As Scheuer points out, under the doctrine of defensive jihad, it is interpreted that Islam is under attack and the solution is to take up arms in the religion’s defense. Wright (2006: 105) discussed how the Afghan/Soviet War played a catalytic role in the evolution of the jihadist doctrine, and the Arab mujahideen who flooded into Afghanistan to fight on behalf of their religion believed that, “For them, the war against the Soviet occupation was only a skirmish in an

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<sup>10</sup> Abdullah Azzam was a Palestinian born Islamist who traveled to Peshawar to assist in the fight against the Soviets during the Afghan/Soviet War. This is where he met Osama bin Laden and would act as his protégé during the conflict and together the two would establish the Service Bureau, which provided monetary assistance to the mujahideen during the conflict.

eternal war. They called themselves jihadis, indicating the centrality of war to their religious understanding. They were the natural outgrowth of the Islamist exaltation of death over life.”

Bergen (2001), Scheuer (2004), and Wright (2006) all discuss how al Qaeda has been engaged in what it perceives to be a ‘defensive jihad’ and give brief descriptions on why many Muslim scholars interpret jihad as being primarily authorized only when a Muslim nation is being invaded. They then proceed to detail how al Qaeda has an alternative conception of jihad, and insists that it is ‘the West’ and its vanguard of globalization which has been assaulting and invading the Muslim ‘East’ for decades and that it is the duty of individual Muslims to bear arms on behalf of their religion, and God.

Rashid (2002) is the only author who offers a nuanced history of the term as one of reflecting the inner struggle that the individual faces against temptation and sin while on earth. He interprets jihad not as a call for violence but as continual inner reflection on one’s own life and the choices that he/she makes. Rashid goes on to state that

I (will) explore the meaning of jihad – so often perceived simplistically in the West as a holy war – and how the new jihad movements arose. But Westerners are not the only people who misconstrue the idea of jihad. How the new fundamentalist and militant Islamic movements have distorted its greater meaning of an inner struggle to be a good and devout Muslim has much to say about the conflicts currently tearing Central Asia apart (Rashid 2002: ix-x).

Rashid outlines the role that jihad has played throughout Muslim history ranging from the era of Muhammad – to modern times. Rashid (2002) also outlines how during the early Muslim history of conquest, Muslim tribes would implement new religious, political, and social reforms that were primarily the result of jihad.

Most of the books under analysis (Bergen 2001; Scheuer 2004 and Wright 2006) bring up the justification that al Qaeda has used for its attacks on Western targets by stating that a defensive jihad is permissible because of the infidels (Westerners) occupation of the holy land (Saudi Arabia). Bergen (2001) cites Middle Eastern scholar Bernard Lewis, who validates al Qaeda's claims that Islam permits the use of force to drive infidels from the Arabian Peninsula, and that the Prophet intended for there to be only one religion (Islam) in the holy land. "Bin Laden can therefore rely on sayings of the Prophet as support for his stance that 'the United States is occupying the lands of Islam in the holiest of territories, Arabia' " (Bergen 2001: 98).

Woodward (2004) also discussed the role that the presence of the United States military played in galvanizing the Muslim world to the call of jihad by its apparent occupation of Saudi Arabia<sup>11</sup>. To Woodward this helped fuel the global Islamist fundamentalist movement that had been gaining momentum since the 9/11 attacks.

Wright (2006) situates the motivations of Osama bin Laden and his band of Arab fighters in contributing to the Afghan jihad by highlighting bin Laden's motivations for fighting as a 'spiritual experience.' The followers of this jihadist ideology point to Muslims being alienated, humiliated, dispossessed, subjugated, and dominated in the modern world as an affront and assault against their beliefs and religion, and use this to legitimize their actions. The concept of a marginalized 'Muslim world' trying to recapture a past faded glory by means of jihad is a current which permeates all of the books under analysis.

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<sup>11</sup> This 'occupation' of Saudi Arabia as viewed by some extreme Islamist organizations indicates that the mere presence of U.S. troops on the Arabian Peninsula is reason enough for a call to jihad. American troops had been stationed in a remote desert camp preceding the first Gulf War and had remained for the next decade.



### *The Terminology of Terror*

All of the authors in this analysis utilized terms that emerged from the sacred texts of the Islamic religion, the Quran and Hadiths, to describe the actions and motivations for the terrorists. Besides jihad, another Islamic term that is featured prominently throughout the books is fatwa<sup>12</sup>. It is most often used to evoke religious legitimization of terrorist organizations' objectives and actions. For instance, Osama bin Laden was well known for issuing fatwas on al Qaeda's attacks on 'Western' targets that offer justification for engaging in violence that often claims the lives of innocent civilians. Unlike in 'the West' where individuals, corporations, and a variety of other groups engage in the same practice that we refer to as a press release, when al Qaeda or other Islamic organizations engage in the same practice it is often referred to in 'Western' media as a fatwa. Fatwas are also used within the discourse by groups to 'justify' or announce their attacks and feature a theological rationalization for jihad (Wright 2006). However, there is debate within the Islamic community on who has the authority to issue a fatwa, and what can/cannot be included in one.

Bergen (2001) points out that while stationed in Afghanistan, the Taliban's spiritual leader Mullah Omar, who was responsible for providing sanctuary to Osama bin Laden and his cadre of jihadists, questioned his authority to issue fatwas after they quarreled over bin Laden's continued threats against the United States, even after Omar instructed bin Laden to soften his fiery rhetoric against 'the West.' Omar even insinuated that bin Laden did not have the religious authority to pronounce fatwas. Wright (2006)

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<sup>12</sup> In general terms, fatwa refers to: a religious edict or pronouncement that is often issued by Islamic clergy.

also indicated that based on his research many rank-and-file members of the Taliban did not believe that bin Laden had the religious schooling necessary to authoritatively issue fatwas—or a holy war for that matter.

### *Islam the Omnipotent*

Throughout my sources, Islam is portrayed in a different light than other religions. When compared with the other monotheistic religions (Christianity and Judaism), Islam is portrayed as an entity that transcends the secular and spiritual worlds; while the others do not penetrate the everyday lives of its followers to such an extent. As Jamal Khalifa (Osama bin Laden's childhood friend and future brother-in-law) is quoted as stating, "Islam is different from any other religion; it's a way of life" (Wright 2006: 79). Islam is represented as a dogmatic and all-encompassing force that directly affects the daily lives of its followers – influencing almost every thing they do. In fact, one author states that it is this devotion and love for God which is missing in Western Christendom that makes 'the West's' Islamic foes not less dangerous – but more dangerous (Scheuer 2004).

### *Examples*

Wright discusses the background of the nineteen hijackers who were responsible for the 9/11 attacks. He paints the reader a picture of a collection of individuals from multiple countries who shared a common Islamic identity that superseded all others. As Wright (2006: 305) explained, to these young men "Islam provided the element of commonality. It was more than a faith—it was an identity." The fact that Islam is 'more than a faith' is

a phrase that keeps reappearing within the discourse on contemporary terrorism and one that is indicative of how Islam is represented in ‘Western’ media.

The transcending power of Islam is portrayed within *Imperial Hubris* as an integral part of every individual Muslim’s identity, a part of their identity that is unwavering and of primary importance. Scheuer quotes Bernard Lewis who believes, “Islam is not only a matter of faith and practice...it is also an identity and a loyalty—for many an identity and loyalty that transcends all others” (Scheuer 2004: xviii). In this passage Scheuer is trying to represent Islam as more than a religion—in a ‘Western’ secular view—but as a principal framework that regulates the lives of its followers. The author later goes on to qualify this by outlining how this conception of Islam differs from its ‘Western’ Christian counterparts. Scheuer (2004) goes on to discuss how through his travels (rather limited by even his own accounts) throughout ‘the Muslim world,’ it did not take long for him to determine that Muslims view their life and their relationships with others through an omnipresent and omnipotent Islamic paradigm. He muses that one only has to spend a few minutes talking with a Muslim in the Middle East to determine that the views espoused by bin Laden and other radical Islamist leaders are not the representation of a fringe minority within Islam, but is instead a reflection of the average Muslim’s love of God, and submission to religion (Scheuer 2004).

Later in the book, Scheuer cites the Islamic religion as a causal factor in the proliferation of transnational terrorism in the twenty-first century. He argues that most people in ‘the West,’

Have not fully factored in the role Islam plays in the thinking, plans, flexibility, patience, and endurance of bin Laden and his allies. This situation exists because some in the West discount the power of religion, know little about the religion of Islam, or recognize Islam’s motivating role but are afraid to raise the issue in debate for fear of being labeled a racist or bigot. The latter concern is the deadly enemy of an effective American debate to formulate a strategy to destroy the Islamists’ threat (Scheuer 2004: 115).

### *Suicide/Martyrdom*

Religion plays an important role within the discourse in illustrating how martyrdom is a practice with a long history within the Islamic religion. The role of religion in validating martyrdom acts by Islamic terrorists appears in the majority of the works (Bergen 2001; Scheuer 2004; and Wright 2006), further leading the reader to view the Islamic faith as the antithesis of religion in ‘the West’. It should also be pointed out that within the terminological lexicon that terrorists use within the discourse ‘martyrdom’ is used in lieu of suicide.

### *Examples*

Bergen describes the nineteen hijackers who committed suicide by flying their commandeered planes into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon within his book. The Islamic terrorists responsible for 9/11 “saw themselves as *shuhadaa*—martyrs in the name of Allah—and their attacks as acts of worship” (Bergen 2001: 27).

Scheuer discusses how the nineteen hijackers of the 9/11 attacks, vilified in ‘the West,’ were viewed by their brethren in ‘the East’ as martyred heroes, who willingly gave up their lives in an altruistic gesture on behalf of Islam (Scheuer 2004). Scheuer (2004) also discusses how groups like al Qaeda find justification for suicide attacks through the use of Muslim history, and it is this history of self-sacrifice and repelling the infidels (or non-Muslim invaders) that helps to glean sympathy and support from a small segment of the Muslim population. It should be noted that the author does not proclaim that it is only a fraction of certain Muslim sects that support the theological arguments for martyrdom propositioned by al Qaeda and other Islamic terrorist groups, but that these pro-martyrdom sentiments are embraced by the majority of Muslims and considered the norm (Scheuer 2004).

Wright discusses Muslims’ obsession with martyrdom and attempts to outline the social, political, and economic realities that are encouraging young Arabs to commit suicide on behalf of their religion. Wright (2006) points to the repressive regimes and economic disparity within the ‘Arab World’ that has alienated the population from their temporal lives and forced them to look for meaning outside of their everyday reality. He concludes that the meaning these individuals longed for in life, they can achieve in death by sacrificing themselves on behalf of a greater good – religion. The author then goes into detail outlining Islam’s role in attracting martyrs by offering individuals what is unobtainable to them on earth, for instance:

Martyrdom promised such young men an ideal alternative to a life that was so sparing in its rewards. A glorious death beckoned to the sinner, who would be forgiven, it is said, with the first spurt of blood, and he [*sic*] would behold his place in Paradise even before his [*sic*] death. Seventy members of his [*sic*] household might be spared the first of hell because of his sacrifice. The martyr who is poor will be crowned in heaven with a jewel more valuable than the earth itself. And for those young men who came from cultures where women are shuttered away and rendered unattainable for someone without prospects, martyrdom offered the conjugal pleasures of seventy-two virgins...they awaited the martyr with feasts of meat and fruit and cups of the purest wine (Wright 2006: 107).

Wright later uses the 1993 suicide bombing of the Egyptian Embassy in Islamabad, Pakistan, to clarify the intertwined relationship between Islam and martyrdom. He paraphrases Ahyman al-Zawahiri, leader of al-jihad (the Egyptian group responsible for the attack) who opined that,

Other Muslims did not condemn them (the suicide attackers) at the time because they were acting for the glory of God and the greater good of Islam. Therefore, anyone who give his life in pursuit of the true faith—such as the bombers in Islamabad—is to be regarded not as a suicide who will suffer the punishment of hell but as a heroic martyr whose selfless sacrifice will gain him an extraordinary reward in Paradise (Wright 2006: 219).

### ***Humiliation***

Throughout my sample, a common theme manifests that centers on individual Muslims' sense of collective humiliation regarding the state of their religion in the modern world. Humiliation is a sub-trope that appears often. Humiliation is consistently represented as a naturalized by-product of contemporary Islam and is often closely linked with Muslims' sense of alienation and anomie within the fast-paced "modern" world.

*Examples*

Scheuer points to the sense of humiliation which propagates the 'Muslim world' when he includes a passage by Osama bin Laden: "How great [the Muslims'] humiliation and disgrace have become since we stopped following [the Prophet Mohammed and his companions] and came under the rule of the disgraceful leaders" (Scheuer 2004: 150). With this passage, Scheuer begins to explain how in his opinion adverse socioeconomic and geopolitical conditions within Middle Eastern countries are directly related not only to poor government, but also the result of embracing apostate leaders who are not following "true" Islamic jurisprudence. The sense of humiliation that followed this negative turn would therefore only be alleviated on a return to the pure tenets of Islamic religion (Scheuer 2004).

Wright identified humiliation as having played an important role in creating a negative collective identity amongst the world's Islamic community. This negativity fostered a sense of dissent and anger against 'the West' which was viewed as being responsible for the continued humiliation of Muslims across the Middle East (Wright 2006). Wright (2006: 150) elaborates on this position when he states, "The West, particularly the United States, was responsible for the humiliating failure of the Arabs to succeed... The sense of humiliation he expressed had more to do with the stance of Muslims in the modern world."

Rashid (2002) discusses the emergence of an 'Islamic revival' in the umma in the last decades of the twentieth century. Starting with the Iranian Revolution of 1979 and the overthrowing of the Shah and his 'Western' supported authoritarian regime, the people within the 'Arab world' have started to proactively react to this sense of collective

humiliation by starting to exercise their individual agency and promoting social reform. Unlike Wright and Scheuer who view this humiliation as a negative trait which fosters further rebellion and instability within the ‘Islamic world,’ Rashid views this humiliation as a potential starting point from which the international Islamic community could begin to take control over its future, and overthrow the shackles of its colonialist past.

### **Homogenization of Groups**

A major trope that emerged throughout the five works under examination was the tendency to homogenize groups. Organizing social actors into groups makes it easier to help prescribe descriptive meaning to events as they occur and to help predict future events in our social world. The two sub-tropes which follow will demonstrate the two main variations in how the homogenization of groups was manifest within the discourse, primarily by grouping and representing Islam as a threat to ‘the West,’ and by obfuscating the boundaries between Osama bin Laden, the organization he founded and led—al Qaeda—and the numerous other Islamist extremist groups throughout the world.

### ***The Islamic Threat***

Many of the books represent Islam as a monolithic whole (Bergen 2001; Woodward 2004; Scheuer 2004; and Wright 2006). When discussions of the Islamic religion arise, Islam is often portrayed as a singular congruent entity that resonates with over a billion Muslims around the globe and is at odds with ‘the West.’



### *Examples*

In the Preface for *Imperial Hubris*, Scheuer helps to illuminate the apparent tendency of ‘Western’ media to homogenize and overgeneralize when he summarizes some of the main problems facing the US and its “confrontation” with Islam:

The military is now America’s only tool and will remain so while current policies are in place. No public diplomacy, presidential praise for Islam, or politically correct debate masking the reality that many of the world’s 1.3 billion Muslims hate us for actions not values, will get America out of this war” (Scheuer 2004: x).

Throughout the book, Scheuer capitalizes on the use of ‘Western-centric’ terms such as the ‘Muslim world’ and the ‘Islamic community’ ad nauseam. In the introduction, Scheuer postulates that he believes the United States’ invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan has had the effect of completing the radicalization of the Islamic world; insinuating not only that the ‘Islamic world’ was already mobilized against a common foe, but was also actively engaged in the process of radicalizing itself against its enemy (Scheuer 2004).

Scheuer continues to homogenize the Islamic faith into a single cohort when he states:

Coeducational schools, pornographic movies, Jews, alcoholic drinks, man-made laws, gay rights, abortion-on-demand, salsa dancing, the secular stat, the denigration and disavowal of moral absolutes, Catholics, Protestants, Hindus, immodest clothing, Buddhists, devil-worshippers, women in universities, the workplace, and politics, atheists, the nation-state, usury, all these things and more are offensive to many Muslims, men and women, across the gamut from Islamic liberals to militants (Scheuer 2004: 8-9).

Scheuer also criticizes U.S. government employees and other scholars who portray al Qaeda and other Islamic terrorist groups as part of “the fringe of the fringe of the Muslim world” (Scheuer 2004: 106).

Bergen discusses the role that “holy warriors” play within jihadist ideology, and the role they have played within contemporary battlefields, such as Afghanistan in the 1980s (Bergen 2001). After reading his opening chapter, the reader is left with a tacit assumption that these mujahideen are unified in a common goal that revolves around a singular Islamic ideology. By representing the mujahideen as a cohesive and unified force, the author helps to perpetuate the homogenization of disparate groups within the Islamic religion.

### *Osama bin Laden, al Qaeda and Islamist Extremism*

Osama bin Laden emerged as the “emir” of an emergent global jihadist movement with his organization—al Qaeda—sitting at the forefront of an intertwined network of transnational terrorist organizations. With increased media coverage, al Qaeda has become saturated with coverage and has become prime suspect in nearly every new terror attack. From the moment a new attack is reported, al Qaeda (or one of its offshoots) is often the first to be implicated for its perpetration.

### *Examples*

Bergen (2001) begins the process of representing “holy warriors” as a unified force that has emerged as a threat to ‘the West.’ In the opening chapter of his book, the reader is presented with a few tacit assumptions which are supposed to enlighten the reader on a possible connection between the numerous Islamic movements operating around the world. To Bergen these individuals are not merely disaffected constituents from

‘Eastern’ countries attempting to push back against the intrusion of unpalatable social and political entities, but are instead members of a broader unified jihadist movement.

Scheuer represents Osama bin Laden as a figurehead of a worldwide Islamist insurgency movement (Scheuer 2004). He also attempts to draw a connection between al Qaeda and other Islamist groups from far off areas such as Chechnya, Yemen, Iraq, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia by representing these ‘Eastern’ countries as a new front in the “War on Terror” and as possible safe havens that al Qaeda may use to base future attacks from.

Scheuer (2004: 91-100) also provides a ten-page list of “al Qaeda victories” through the years 2001-2003 including a July, 2002, grenade attack at an archeological site near Manshera, Pakistan, which wounded 12 civilians. The attack is listed under the ‘al Qaeda victories’ banner yet no clear indication of who the attackers were, let alone their affiliation with al Qaeda is offered by the author. No other evidence to support the attack’s classification is given.

Woodward introduces al Qaeda as one of the main targets for the United States’ War on Terror (Woodward 2004). However, the use of the term “War on Terror” itself implies a broader, if obfuscated scope and in turn helps to indicate a homogenization of the groups and organizations involved in committing terrorist acts. The homogenized representation of Islamic terrorist organizations to counteract ‘Western’ fear is evident in the materials under study, which discuss this possibility and its implications (Bergen 2001; Scheuer 2004; Woodward 2004; and Wright 2006).

Rashid (2002) discusses how the homogenization of Islamic militant groups accelerated following 9/11. He notes how in the Central Asian countries of Kyrgyzstan

and Uzbekistan, governments began a ferocious crackdown on dissident Islamist political organizations within their borders in the months following the attacks. Rashid believes that the Central Asian governments were using the 9/11 attacks as an excuse to eliminate political opposition from within their borders and were using the apparent threat cast by Islamist movements to legitimize their repression. For instance, a group of Uzbeki men who were members of Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami were arrested in October of 2001 and put on trial in Tashkent for belonging to an illegal party (HT) and also being members of al Qaeda. The men denied having any affiliation with al Qaeda and the leader of their group stated, “We do not have connections to Osama bin Laden or any other terrorist organizations, as we pursue different methods of struggle. We are fighting for our ideas through peaceful means” (Rashid 2002: 135). In the climate of a post-9/11 world, al Qaeda was now being used as a means to suppress organizations supporting political reform in Central Asia, and ‘Western’ countries such as the United States saw these arrests, not as a repressive Central Asian regime utilizing political opportunism to secure its hold on power, but as a blow against al Qaeda in the now worldwide “War on Terror” (Rashid 2002).

### **Western-centrism within the Discourse**

The discourse on terrorism featured a Western-centric approach and analysis of the phenomenon being reported. Since the books are the byproduct of 'the Western' media it is not surprising that the books were marketed and written for a 'Western' audience. The materials that were analyzed also featured a common Western-centric portrayal of the organizations and individuals involved with modern terrorism. Groups such as al Qaeda,

which have been located in far-off countries in 'the Orient' like Afghanistan were represented in a consistent manner.

### ***Orientalist Representations of 'the East'***

A majority of the books within the discourse analysis featured Orientalist representations of the countries, places, and people within 'the Orient.' It was not only the 'Western' authors who fell victim to this practice, as Western-centrism was apparent within the work authored by Ahmed Rashid (a Pakistani journalist), as well. The propagation and power of Western-centrism was clearly evident within the discourse.

### *Examples*

Bergen introduces Afghanistan as a mysterious and romantic frontier that has changed little since it was the subject of British rule in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Here is Bergen in the prologue of his book describing Afghanistan,

I never get over the thrill of seeing the country. In my imagination it has always seemed like something out of Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*. It promises mystery, a movement back into a time of medieval chivalry and medieval cruelty, an absence of the modern world that is both thrilling and disturbing, a place of extraordinary natural beauty that opens the mind to contemplation (Bergen 2001: 11).

Michael Scheuer echoes this Orientalist representation of Muslims when he compares the Muslim ummah's "rebels or mujahideen" to the Confederate forces of Robert E. Lee during the American Civil War. "Like Lee's boys, the mujahideen are often dirty, unkempt, bearded, armed with a variety of weapons, rarely paid, and haphazardly supplied. And like Lee's boys, they are aflame with courage, audaciousness,

commitment to their cause, optimism and religious zeal” (Scheuer 2004: 60). Instead of letting the Muslim fighters to be represented based on their own actions, the author insists on comparing them to a group of ‘Western’ rebels from the American Civil War who shared some of the negative traits that have come to be associated with ‘Eastern’ fighters.

When discussing the look and feel of Cairo as a ‘Westerner’, Wright (2006) describes the city in a manner that would reflect that of a nineteenth century Orientalist. He discusses how “donkey carts” and “peanut vendors” were a fixture along with fly covered animal carcasses along the mud thoroughfares. This description of Cairo helps to situate ‘the Western’ reader towards a romanticized and idealized version of what Cairo, and ‘the Orient’ should look like.

Western-centric representations within the discourse on contemporary terrorism also feature a multitude of ‘Western’ references and contradictions. One glaring example is when Wright uses the example of Michael Collins, the “guerilla” leader of the IRA who helped Ireland wage a series of uprisings and a guerilla campaign against the British before most of Ireland was granted its independence in 1921. Wright begins to compare John O’Neill – the FBI agent assigned to capture bin Laden – with Collins, whom O’Neill idolized (Wright 2006). The fact that Collins, a white, Christian, ‘Westerner’ can be viewed as a “guerilla” leader when the organization he represented was engaged in insurgent and terrorist activities against the British occupiers of Ireland illuminates the philosophical division between ‘East’ and ‘West.’

Another ‘Western’ reference that arose during the analysis was the repeated analogy between Osama bin Laden and Robin Hood. Scheuer uses Robin Hood as an analogy to prove that as ‘the West’ attempts to hunt down and kill bin Laden, his

supporters in the ‘Muslim World’ only become more galvanized with their support for bin Laden and his modern band of Merry Men (Scheuer 2004). Peter Bergen utilizes the Robin Hood comparison when he eloquently stated,

For his sympathizers, bin Laden has become a turbaned Robin Hood, hiding out not in the forests of Nottingham during the Middle Ages, but in the mountains of almost medieval Afghanistan, gathering around him his band of unmerry men, armed not with crossbows but with rocket-propelled grenades and C4 explosives, tweaking the noses of the great powers of the West (Bergen 2001: 33-34).

### *Contemporary Terrorism as a 'Western' Creation*

Western-centrism within the discourse has promoted a sense of ‘Western’ superiority, where the success of terrorist organizations is ironically attributed to ‘Western’ factors, and downplays influences and developments initiated in ‘the East.’ In what the intelligence community refers to as “blow back” Islamist organizations such as al Qaeda, that received arms and financial support from Western intelligence agencies during the Afghan/Soviet War to defeat the invading communists, have now turned on ‘the West’ and are using the weapons, tactics, and money supplied by ‘the West’ during the 1980s to help attack it. All five books featured in the discourse analysis at least pay homage to the role that ‘the West’ had in supporting Islamist mujahideen groups in the past.

### *Examples*

Bergen (2001) points to the commonly held misconception within the intelligence community of Osama bin Laden and al Qaeda being an American “creation” before adding that he personally does not believe there is sufficient evidence to indict the US government in its culpability in creating this generation of jihadist terrorists. Rashid

(2002) points to how funding from the United States through its intermediary, Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) agency, has helped al Qaeda expand as an organization in its formative years. Scheuer (2004) proclaims that the United States' support of the Afghan mujahideens fight against the Soviets was the largest covert operation in US intelligence history. While Wright (2006) discusses how US officials in the White House were eager to give the Soviet Union their own Vietnam, and turned to Saudi Arabia as an ally who, together would outfit the rag-tag collection of mujahideen fighters into a military force that could sleigh the Russian Bear. It is important to note that all of the discussions within the discourse revolved around the notion of the United States acting as a catalyst which enabled the Afghans to defeat the Soviets. Within the discourse the victory over the Soviets by the mujahideen is often attributed to the contributions by Western governments and intelligence agencies which enabled the 'Orientals' to defeat a vastly superior modern army.

Following the Soviet withdrawal, the mission that many of these now well funded and armed Islamist organizations had worked for was achieved. Some of the groups disbanded, while other chose to reframe their lists of grievances and objectives towards a new enemy—'the West.' Al Qaeda with the stunning success of its 9/11 attacks is used as an exemplary study of 'blow back', the notion being that if 'Western' governments had not supported anti-Soviet forces during the Cold War, such as the Afghan mujahideen, there would not have been a steep rise in international terrorism today. Compounding 'Western' agency in creating these groups that are now attempting to destroy them, is the 'Western' intelligence communities' abject failure in detecting and preventing the 9/11 attacks. Books like *The Looming Tower*, *Imperial Hubris*, and *Holy*



*War Inc.* all discuss the responsibility of the ‘Western’ intelligence communities’ “failure” to prevent the attack. All three books point to the expansive amount of evidence indicating an upcoming attack that existed in the months preceding. The books in this sample firmly point the blame for not preventing the attacks at the incompetence and negligence of the intelligence community; rather than the success of the individual terrorists and their affiliated organization.

### **Terrorism Represented as a Social Problem in Need of Remediation**

Throughout the discourse on terrorism, terrorism is consistently represented as a social problem that needs to be remedied. Instead of looking at the emergence of terrorism and terrorist organizations as a symptom of a larger and more complex problem, terrorism is often portrayed as a virus that must be eradicated.

### ***State/Institutional Responses to Terrorism in ‘the West’***

The works in this study primarily focused on state/institutional responses to contemporary terrorism. They illustrated how ‘Western’ governments should go about dealing with the issue of terrorism, by mobilizing the resources at its disposal—primarily utilizing state institutions such as police, military, and intelligence apparatus’ to combat this emerging threat. The nebulous and constantly evolving edifice of contemporary terrorism also ensures that the institutions of the state are forced to react to the strategic innovations developed and implemented by transnational terrorist organizations. Another major component of the state/institutional response to terrorism is the inclusion of elected officials in ‘Western’ democratic nations legitimizing their government’s response to the

threat posed by the terrorists, and articulating to the public why they feel that the current methods employed by the state will protect its population from further attacks.

### *Examples*

The premise of *Plan of Attack* concerns the notion of the United States government developing a military policy regarding its “War on Terror” that has led to military intervention in both Afghanistan and Iraq in the last decade (Woodward 2004). There is little discussion on whether the military action taken would in actuality prevent future attacks, aside from Afghanistan where taking away al Qaeda’s training bases within its borders was a transparent objective. That being said, the book takes a “critical” look at the U.S. government’s policy regarding Iraq, however, it does not critically reflect on why terrorism is being viewed as a problem that needs to be quickly and militarily addressed and defeated. The portrayal of terrorism as a viral phenomenon has become common throughout the discourse, as are the state-centric, militaristic, and reactionary methods of dealing with the issue (Woodward 2004). Al Qaeda was also identified as one of the top three national security concerns by the United States government (Woodward 2004).

Following 9/11 American foreign policy shifted, as did the public’s conceptualization of America’s role in the world. “To change that, the country had to be convinced that both its security interests and its ideals were in jeopardy...The goal was no less than to change the American mind-set the same way it had been changed at the beginning of the Cold War” (Woodward 2004: 131). This change in the American mind-set was facilitated by the 9/11 attacks, and terrorism would be used to articulate and

validate this new policy. With the absence of the Soviet Union in post-Cold War politics, terrorism would become the foil in twenty-first century international politics and the 'Western' media would identify terrorism (particularly Islamic terrorism) as the 'new threat' (Rashid 2002).

### *The 'New' Threat of Terrorism*

Terrorism as a tactic has been utilized for centuries by a multitude of both state, and non state actors (Hoffman 2006). However, within the contemporary literature, terrorism is represented as a "new" threat. This "new" threat is explicitly tied to a confrontation between 'East' and 'West,' as the terrorism of the 1960s and 1970s, which featured numerous factions on both the left and right sides of the political spectrum, failed to mobilize the amount of fear and panic that the terrorism of today has. By identifying terrorism as an inherently "new" threat, the discourse on terrorism has positioned the phenomenon to influence foreign and domestic policy regarding state security.

### *Examples*

This representation of terrorism as 'the new threat' was featured when Wright describes senior FBI agent John O'Neill's revelation that the nature of terrorism had changed and that it was now a globalized and murderous enterprise (Wright 2006). What's telling of this discussion within the book, is that the U.S. government (at least senior members within government institutions) conceived terrorism as a "new threat" that has suddenly emerged on the international scene, and not as an evolving and organic tactic utilized by

myriad groups since pre-modern times as a means to advance organizational and political objectives.

Scheuer refers to “the bin Laden problem” in his book and professes the ability to illustrate, through his vast array of personal experiences in dealing with terrorism throughout his career in the CIA, the danger it represents for the United States and its people (Scheuer 2004). Later, Scheuer summarizes his views on the terrorism threat:

In sum, this chapter argues that to make the decisions and allocate the resources needed to ensure U.S. security, Americans must understand the world as it is, not as we want—or worse yet, hope—it will be. While I believe this contention is true for all of America’s dealings with the world, I am not smart or arrogant enough to formulate an all-inclusive approach to U.S. foreign policy. I do, however, have long experience analyzing and attacking bin Laden and Islamists. I believe they are a growing threat to the United States—there is no greater threat—and that we are being defeated not because the evidence of the threat is unavailable, but because we refuse to accept it at face value and without Americanizing the data that comes easily and voluminously to hand. This must change or our way of life will be unrecognizably changed (Scheuer 2004: 167-168).

Bergen represents the terrorism threat posed by al Qaeda as omnipresent. Al Qaeda is portrayed as a vast multinational neo-corporation that has cells and subsidiaries on every continent (Bergen 2001). With Osama bin Laden as its “CEO”, Bergen maintains that al Qaeda is poised to usher in a new era of transnational terrorism in the twenty-first century. After reading *Holy War Inc.*, the implication to the reader is that what happened on September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 was not an anomaly; it was the beginning of something new that ‘the West’ has not seen before.

Western writers do not hold a monopoly on representing terrorism as a problem that needs to be remedied. Rashid (2002: 4) surmised that, “The civilized nations’ battle against terrorism may well define the twenty-first century just as Nazism and the Cold

War defined the twentieth.” Rashid, a Pakistani journalist is a good example of how representations permeate the discourse that transcends physical, social, and geographical boundaries. Again, terrorism is identified as perhaps one of the biggest issues that needs to be addressed within the contemporary world.

### **The Discourse of the Subaltern Groups**

What helps the tropes identified within this chapter to become powerful is not only their proliferation throughout the discourse, but the language, symbols, and communication techniques employed by the terrorist organizations themselves, and the ‘Western’ authors who represent them in their texts. These subaltern organizations often feature overtly Islamic religious overtones in their official correspondence. All of the books featured in this discourse analysis featured either quotes from Islamic terrorist organization leaders and/or copies of organizational literature which help articulate their main goals and objectives.

### ***Fatwas***

Fatwas are carefully written pronouncements by Islamic theologians concerning Islamic jurisprudence (Akbar 2002). Within my sample, most fatwas extol the religious virtues of the Islamic faith and often make historical analogies with past people and events. Especially when discussing military history, the fatwas include references to the Crusades and the time of Islamic conquest and empire during the time of the Prophet and the centuries that followed his death (Bergen 2001; Scheuer 2004; and Wright 2006). The publication of fatwas by Islamic extremist organizations such as al Qaeda, serves a

critical purpose in differentiating the organization from a more secular/modern or ‘Western’ organization, and enables the group to control the message it transmits to the world. Instead of engaging in more contemporary forms of organizational communication, these groups employ methods that have been used since the time of the Prophet. Fatwas offer the terrorist organization a unique opportunity to communicate its position, and provides an outlet to help the organization and the social movement it is apart of establish its own discourse.

### *Examples*

Bergen looks at one of al Qaeda’s first fatwa’s issued in August of 1996 from Afghanistan. The fatwa written by Osama bin Laden and entitled: *The Declaration of Jihad on the Americans Occupying the Country of the Two Sacred Places* features a call to arms for Muslims across the globe to repel the infidels’ military presence within the Arabian Peninsula (Bergen 2001). In the fatwa, which was immediately broadcast by media outlets throughout the Arab and ‘Western’ worlds, bin Laden maintains that:

The Muslims have realized they are the main target of the aggression of the coalition of the Jews and the Crusaders [his term for the West]...the latest of these assaults is the greatest disaster since the death of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him)—that is the occupation of the country of the two sacred mosques—the home ground of Islam...If Allah wills and I live, God willing I will expel the Jews and the Christians from Arabia (Bergen 2001: 94).

Wright also discusses the significance of the fatwa *The Declaration of Jihad on the Americans Occupying the Country of the Two Sacred Places* and how it helped Osama bin Laden cement his leadership position within the world Islamic extremist

community. Wright even concludes that at the time, the threats bin Laden was articulating in the fatwa were so grandiose and beyond the current means of his fledging organization, he could have been categorized as insane (Wright 2006). Wright elaborates on this point further,

Indeed, the man in the cave had entered a separate reality, one that was deeply connected to the mythic chords of Muslim identity and in fact gestured to anyone whose culture was threatened by modernity and impurity and the loss of tradition. By declaring war on the United States from a cave in Afghanistan, bin Laden assumed the role of an uncorrupted, indomitable primitive standing against the awesome power of the secular, scientific, technological Goliath; he was fighting modernity itself (Wright 2006: 234-235).

Osama bin Laden consistently relied on the production of fatwas and other communiqués by his group to help articulate his organization's objectives and more generally – the radical Islamist movement across the globe.

Although Osama bin Laden was only the leader of one (if prominent) organization, his actions came to represent the collectivity of Islamic fundamentalist movements from around the globe. The global media's focus on bin Laden and their thirst for prose from the enigmatic al Qaeda leader often led to media outlets around the globe instantaneously broadcasting al Qaeda fatwas as soon as they were made available. Within the discourse bin Laden emerged as the leader of a global jihad whose job it was to stand up on behalf of all other Islamic extremist organizations. An example of such a statement was bin Laden's response to criticisms of the 9/11 attack that he released via the Internet. In it, bin Laden claimed that the West has for generations been massacring the Palestinian peoples (Scheuer 2004). He then meandered through a plethora of contemporary political problems facing Islamic peoples from around the world including Iraq, Afghanistan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kashmir, Chechnya, Indonesia, Somalia, and the

Philippines. In each case, bin Laden pointed to the “Western Crusaders” as the culprits behind the violence and ill fortune that has beset the ‘Muslim world’ (Scheuer 2004). He clearly articulated his objectives and offered jihad as the primary means by which Muslims could retake the agency in their daily lives which has been robbed by ‘Western’ oppression. These statements were to form the basis for the discourse created by al Qaeda, and were to become a cornerstone of the discourse of a globalized Islamic extremist movement.



## Chapter Four: Analysis

The increase in the amount of material on terrorism published in the years following the 2001 terrorist attacks in New York City and Washington has ushered in a new era of research within the social sciences. Critical analysis of these materials and of how they represent contemporary terrorism is an essential task for social researchers. Within the discourse, a stereotyped binary conception of ‘East’ and ‘West’ emerged as one of the main overriding organizing forces. Edward Said’s postcolonial critique of Orientalism has remained relevant, and the Orientalist framework that he articulated was present within the discourse on contemporary terrorism.

I will begin this chapter by clarifying some of the conceptual definitions that will be utilized in this section. Terms such as *discourse*, *discursive field*, *Orientalist framework*, and *dominant* and *oppositional interpretive frameworks* will all be clearly defined for the reader. Once the core concepts that will steer the theoretical component of my analysis are clear, I will then undertake a level-by-level articulation of how the discursive field on terrorism has been structured within my sample. The first level is constituted by information which forms the base of the discursive field. This ground level is where the majority of material that readers digest is situated, and represents a more ‘concrete’ level—featuring individual examples from within the discourse.

The second level of the discursive field is the cumulative compilation of the main tropes and how they work together to promote, define, guide, and dictate what can and cannot be included within the discourse on terrorism. This secondary level helps to identify and govern how a phenomenon can be represented and operates at a higher level of abstraction than the individual tropes which compose it.

The third, and highest, level that will be discussed within this chapter is the composition of the discursive field on contemporary terrorism in its entirety. The presence and power that this hegemonic entity has attained will be outlined, as well as the parameters of its operability and influence. This level operates at the highest level of abstraction and encapsulates the entire discursive field on contemporary terrorism—including oppositional interpretive frameworks which operate within its periphery and attempt to push and challenge the limitations the field currently imposes on knowledge that emanates from it. After I have made visible the structure of the discursive field, I will then offer a critique of this structure.

Next, I will identify one of the most glaring regularities that manifested within the discourse analyzed—the stereotyping of geopolitical relations and the primacy of an ‘East/West’ divide. By focusing on the creation and ubiquity of this regularity within my sample, I will critically reflect on its relevance and implications in the hopes of initiating a de-reification of this socially constructed entity.

This chapter will also feature a section that highlights the presence of the Orientalist framework, within the discourse on contemporary terrorism, and how that framework has evolved and adapted to the contemporary social environment in which it finds itself. The evidence gathered during this analysis highlights the framework’s resiliency and ability to remain relevant in contemporary times. The appearance of these Orientalist qualities within the literature will be highlighted. More specifically, I will focus on the role of the Orientalist framework in perpetuating an “us” versus “them” binary relationship within the sample discourse and the implications for past, present, and future representations of terrorism in ‘Western’ media. Finally, the future of this

framework and its possible transformation within contemporary society will be highlighted.

### ***Conceptual Definitions***

#### Discourse

As discussed in the methodology section, discourse can be conceptualized in a number of diverse and complex ways. Conceptually, the definition proposed by Stuart Hall (1997: 6) states that, “Discourses are ways of referring to or constructing knowledge about a particular topic of practice: a cluster (or *formation*) of ideas, images and practices, which provide ways of talking about, forms of knowledge and conduct associated with, a particular topic, social activity or institutional site in society. This definition reflects the work done by Foucault who attempted to move beyond the strictly linguistic focus of discourse, and helps to incorporate relations between power and knowledge.

#### Orientalist Framework

When Said began his examination of the Orientalist discourse—the books, texts, and other materials that comprise this discourse—he started the process of systematically identifying the structure of an Orientalist framework that existed within the discourse he was analyzing. It is this Orientalist framework which will be at the forefront of my analysis of the discourse on terrorism. Said (1979) identified a number of features that this Orientalist framework exhibited, mainly: the utilization of a binary classification system which had come to dominate interpretations and relations between ‘Occident’ and ‘Orient’; a tendency to perpetuate hegemonic power relations of strong over the weak—

making the Orientalist framework the tool with which to exert this control over “the other”; a politicized version of reality, whose structure promoted the difference between familiar and strange, or ‘West’ vs. ‘East’; and a form of cultural imperialism used by ‘the West’ to control ‘the East.’

Said identified in his research not only a framework that existed within the discourse he analyzed, but one which could operate within other discourses as well. Macfie summarizes the characteristics of this Orientalist framework as “a style of thought, based on an ontological and epistemological distinction between orient and occident” (Macfie 2000: 2). It is, therefore, not merely the discourse on Orientalism that is controlling representations, but rather, the Orientalist framework operating within the discourse that governs representations of the phenomenon. It is this style of thought, and the framework promoting it that can transcend from one discourse to another.

It is important to clearly identify the features and structure of the Orientalist framework because within *Orientalism* Said fails to clearly distinguish between framework and discourse. This causes the term Orientalism to inherit a double meaning within the book and is a point of methodological confusion for the reader. By clearly differentiating between the discourse on terrorism itself, and the Orientalist framework that operates within it, we can highlight the dynamic relationship between these two concepts. In this chapter, I will demonstrate how the Orientalist framework is active within my sample of the discourse on terrorism.

### Dominant and Oppositional Interpretive Frameworks

Within discursive fields, multiple and often opposing forces interact to influence representations of phenomena within discourses. For the purposes of this analysis, I propose the concept of both a dominant and an oppositional interpretive framework to aid in the analysis of the structure of the discursive field and its relation to the discourse on terrorism. Dominant interpretive frameworks promote a primary perspective of representation which is more powerful than other oppositional frameworks. This helps ensure that the status quo is maintained within the discursive field and that representations of phenomena within discourse have minimal variance. Dominant interpretive frameworks, while temporarily holding a hegemonic position within the field, must continually clash with oppositional interpretive frameworks to maintain their hegemony.

Contrary to dominant interpretive frameworks, oppositional interpretive frameworks are sets of representations regarding phenomena within discursive fields that run counter to or conflict with the dominant framework. An oppositional interpretive framework can be large or small in size, and is an organic entity, whereby it is continually either expanding or contracting in size, influence, and power. However, over time if an oppositional interpretive framework continues to expand its presence within the discursive field it can eventually rise to challenge the hegemony of the dominant interpretive framework and alter the dominant perspective that is promoted. At this point, the oppositional interpretive framework may now take on the role of dominant interpretive framework, while the once dominant framework will either become the oppositional framework, or fade into irrelevancy.

With a strong dominant interpretive framework one will see a small and ineffectual oppositional interpretive framework that fails to gain enough traction to challenge the legitimacy of the dominant perspective. With a weak dominant interpretive framework one will most likely observe an influential oppositional interpretive framework or multiple oppositional frameworks and a fractured and less cohesive representation of the issue. Usually, only developing discursive fields have to face this period of instability and malleability until a dominant path emerges that guides the future of the discourse in a certain direction.

### Discursive Field

For my analysis of the structure of the discourse on contemporary terrorism, I will propose the concept of a discursive field. A discursive field in general terms refers to the discourse in its entirety including the books, texts, and other material that comprise the discourse, the parameters or boundaries of the discourse, and the dominant and oppositional interpretive frameworks that operate within these boundaries. This encompassing concept is derived from the work of Pierre Bourdieu and expands upon his concept of a field.

Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992: 96) introduce and discuss the concept of a field and explain that, “To think in terms of a field is to *think relationally*.” This relationality refers to how we can only find meaning within our social world by looking at relations amongst actors, and not merely at interactions. Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992: 97) elaborate further on their definition of a field and state that, “In analytic terms, a field

may be defined as a network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions.”

Fields follow specific logics and regularities that are not explicitly delineated (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 97-98). The power dynamic amongst the relationship of actors within a field helps determine the composition of the field and the rules which govern it (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 99). This struggle to influence the composition and complexion of the field is paramount amongst interactions within the field as, “[t]he principle of the dynamics of a field lies in the form of its structure and, in particular, in the distance, the gaps, the asymmetries between the various specific forces that confront one another” (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 101). By identifying the regularities, consistencies, and vacillations within the discourse on terrorism, the structure of the discursive field can be delineated. It is the focus on dialectical relationality within fields which makes the utilization of this concept the perfect means by which to analyze the composition of the forces at play within discourse.

The continual and organic operation of a field is reflected in the unstable and constantly evolving position of boundaries within fields. The boundaries of a field are “dynamic borders” and reflect the dynamic interaction between forces within the field and can only be determined by comparing the empirical objects they produce (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 104). Analyzing discourse is one way of dissecting such empirical objects to determine their operation and relations within a field and to identify how these forces promote experiential realities.

Bourdieu and Wacquant also discuss how a dominant discursive framework may operate with impunity in a field. “When the dominant manage to crush and annul the

resistance and the reactions of the dominated, when all movements go exclusively from the top down, the effects of domination are such that the struggle and the dialectic that are constitutive of the field cease” (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 1002). It is in such a circumstance that a dominant interpretive framework may obtain total power instead of having to compete with oppositional forces within the field. It is at this point that the dominant interpretive framework is at the height of its potential power within the discursive field.

The concept of a discursive field is a useful one to implement within my analysis of the discourse on terrorism because an encompassing concept is needed that includes not only the written discourse on the phenomenon, but also the operation and relations amongst both dominant and oppositional frameworks, and the creation and migration of the boundaries of the field. Discursive field is also an appropriate concept to utilize because it focuses specifically on the relationships between actors in the field—especially the interaction amongst hegemonic and oppositional forces.

### ***Level One: Relationships within the Individual Tropes***

During the discourse analysis, the tropes that emerged provided a snapshot of the composition of the discourse on terrorism, and the consistency by which the tropes were represented constitutes the first level of analysis within the structure of the discursive field. Not only are these individual tropes significant, but they also provide a valuable resource in helping to map out and define the parameters of the discursive field. Since a detailed examination of this level of analysis has been provided in the previous chapter, I will offer only a brief synthesis.



### Consistency within Tropes in the Analysis of the Discourse

One of the most important pieces of evidence in identifying a strong, robust, and established discourse is the consistency with which its representations are projected. The authors' separation and distinction, the binary representation of terrorism and the existence of an 'East/West' divide, the homogenization of groups, the role of religion within the discourse, the representation of terrorism as a social problem in need of remediation, Western-centric representations of terrorism, and the discourse utilized by the subaltern groups all played significant roles in maintaining and establishing a broader framework that helped to guide representations of terrorism within my sample. If the representations had been more ambiguous, and their consistency in representation less acute, than the number of tropes identified would have been lessened. However, their strong representation into objectively identifiable categories is indicative of cohesiveness within my sample of the discourse on terrorism.

### ***Level Two: Relationships amongst the Tropes***

The relationship within the data that constituted the individual tropes in this analysis formed the first (or bottom) layer of analysis. The cumulative relationship amongst all seven tropes forms the second level. This second level operates at a higher level of abstraction than the first level. The overlap amongst the seven main tropes and the way they work together to transmit certain assumptions and knowledge claims is a significant factor in highlighting how the discursive field is governed and how dominant interpretive frameworks within it propagate.

### Self-reinforcement amongst the Tropes

One way that the structure of the discursive field is maintained is through the relationship amongst the tropes within it. The interconnectedness and interdependence of the tropes within the literature helps to facilitate a stronger representation within the discourse.

Within my analysis, the seven tropes worked together to form a structural framework that maintained the broader discursive field on terrorism. This framework is a critical component of any well established, mature field. A less mature discursive field would feature a more fractured and less structured set of tropes that in turn would feature more contradictory and less cohesive and consistent representations of the phenomenon. The fact that the discursive field on terrorism features a solid framework is an indication of the power that the field exerts over representations of terrorism in 'Western' media.

The interconnectedness of the seven major tropes serves as a cyclical reinforcement mechanism where the socially constructed themes validate one another, and their repeated appearance is represented as a naturalized by-product of the phenomenon under investigation. For instance, claims about religion are used to homogenize and dichotomize the 'Islamic world' and 'Christian world.' In numerous instances, the reader is presented with this idealized representation of contemporary terrorism. Repetition and reliability amongst major concepts in the discourse helps to solidify the representation of these concepts to the reader in a controlled manner.

Conversely, a discourse that features numerous individual examples of contradicting or competing representations of phenomena would indicate to the reader that there is more variability and less homogeneity within the discursive field.

Within the sample, there is not one trope that supersedes all others, but, rather, the cumulative interaction amongst all tropes makes this foundational framework strong.

The framework for the discourse on contemporary terrorism is solid and helps to maintain the weight of a powerful discursive field that helps to guide expectations and knowledge on the subject.

### ***Level Three: Structure of the Discursive Field***

The third and final level of abstraction that is present is at the level of the discursive field.

This level consists of the discourse on contemporary terrorism in its entirety. It is composed of: the individual examples from the data; the tropes that emerge from examples in the data and the interaction amongst these tropes; and all other interpretive frameworks (no matter their size or power). The boundaries of the discursive field are also included at this third level, and the ability of the field to maintain these parameters is an essential aspect of maintaining the dominant interpretive framework. If the discourse features boundaries that are continually being pushed and challenged from within, this would indicate that the field is either young, weak, or is in the process of reconceptualizing itself and what constitutes its dominant interpretive framework. It may also be indicative of a strengthening oppositional interpretive framework that has leveraged enough power and utility to finally push the dominant framework and perhaps even supplant it as the new dominant interpretive framework within the discursive field. This emancipatory and dialectical conception of discourse was highlighted by Foucault and is a crucial element in the lifecycle of discursive fields. This transformation from

within the discursive field is embodied by criticisms or critiques that are present to varying degrees within discourses.

Criticisms are an important component of any discourse, and can paradoxically serve to strengthen the principles of the dominant interpretive framework within the discursive field. Critiques vary in their complexity, acuity, and breadth. A weak and shallow vein of criticisms serves to strengthen the dominant interpretive framework, while a more nuanced and complex critique that permeates the discourse can be more effective in calling into question some of the assumptions and values that the dominant framework represents. These varying degrees of criticism can be seen in all fields and help to maintain the dialectical nature of the discursive field. My sample of the discourse on terrorism features limited critiques, such as those posited by Woodward (2004) and Rashid (2001). Woodward's main criticisms do not question the operation and boundaries of the dominant interpretive framework within the discourse, but instead focus on the public policy issues that have arose during the War on Terror. Rashid critiques 'the West' for its role in ignoring Central Asia, however, he supports the increased spread of 'Western' principles such as democracy, secularism, individualism, and the free market economy within the countries of Central Asia as a means to modernize the region. These two examples highlight the most common types of critiques that appeared within the sample and illustrate the limited critical analysis on the issue of terrorism that is present within the discourse.

The composition of the discourse on contemporary terrorism is indicative of a strong, established, and mature discursive field and features a dominant interpretive framework that is at the apex of its influence and power. The structure of the discursive

field is strong because the tropes, which form its frame, successfully work together to maintain its weight because they are mutually reinforcing, highly consistent, and interconnected. The base that this frame is situated on features numerous individual examples from within the data and is represented in a consistent manner.

### ***Criticism of the Structure of the Discursive Field***

The strong and established structure exhibited by the discursive field enables the discourse to reify the socially constructed concepts that have come to define terrorism in ‘Western’ media. Foucault has pointed out that it is possible to construct a “counter-discourse” or oppositional interpretive framework that may one day challenge the primacy of the dominant framework. However, this process can take a long time to materialize, especially for a well structured and mature field that is at the height of its power (as the discursive field on terrorism currently is). This will ensure that it will take time and effort by researchers to establish an oppositional interpretive framework that may eventually challenge the dogmatic principles exhibited by the hegemony of the status quo.

The structure of the discursive field illuminates some of the unseen aspects of discourse which operate within our social environment. All discursive fields share the same structural characteristics as those of the discourse on terrorism; however, discursive fields vary in their degree of influence, power, sustainability, and the amount and type of criticisms that are present within them. The most influential discursive fields are able to reify the characteristics that have come to define them, and make these characteristics appear to be naturalized elements of their composition. In essence, the hegemonic forces

exerted by the dominant and powerful interpretive framework serve to orient public knowledge on the phenomenon towards a predestined path. Currently, the discourse on terrorism is promoting binary representations of ‘the East’ and ‘the West’ as well as propagating long held stereotyped representations of the people and places in ‘the East.’ It is only through critical reflection and analysis of the role that discourse, interpretive frameworks, and discursive fields play in our everyday lives that we as individuals may learn about the composition, and structure of the discourses which help us to make sense of our own reality.

Although the dominant interpretive framework operating within the discourse on terrorism is at the height of its power, this does not mean that it is destined to enjoy this perch indefinitely. New scholarship that illuminates the role of discourse and its effect on our conceptualization of the social world can help to de-reify the taken-for-granted assumptions that we rely upon to interpret our social environment. Emergent and sustained scholarship may also lead to the establishment and strengthening of oppositional interpretive frameworks that may eventually openly challenge the primacy of the current dominant framework. Fields such as critical terrorism studies (Gunning 2007; Jackson 2007; Jackson et al., 2007) that are still in their infancy may soon open up doors and possibilities for critical scholars’ work that have not been available in the past. In time, CTS journals and conferences may play an integral role in the formation of a legitimate oppositional interpretive framework. Whether this oppositional interpretive framework continues to grow to a level that may cause a paradigm shift within the discursive field on terrorism is still unknown. Additions to CTS, including studies like this thesis, may have a small role in facilitating social change within the discursive field.

This transition will not occur overnight, and it will take effort from scholars, journalists, and public individuals in order for it to succeed; however, the long-term benefits of a more rigorous and robust understanding of the social phenomena which affect the lives of individuals around the globe is worth the effort.

### *The Orientalist Framework within the Discourse on Contemporary*

#### *Terrorism*

The appearance of the Orientalist framework within the discourse on terrorism manifested in two main ways: the binary representation of ‘East’ and ‘West’, and the stereotyped opposition between familiar and strange. These two main themes appear separately within the sample; however, they are both key components of the Orientalist framework that Said worked to illuminate in his research. The Orientalist framework has not remained stagnant, but instead is a force within the discourse that has managed to adapt and evolve in response to the current political and social realities it operates within. A re-conceptualized neo-Orientalist framework is at work within the contemporary discourse on terrorism, a contemporary or modernized version of the classical.

#### *‘East’ vs. ‘West’ Divide*

An ‘East’ versus ‘West’ divide emerged as the main organizational force within the discourse on contemporary terrorism. The validation of this relationship and the dichotomy it has caused between factions in ‘the East’ and ‘the West’ has only managed to promote hostility and violence towards the marginalized and abstracted “other.” The utilization of a binary classification system within the discourse on contemporary

terrorism, even after the end of traditional colonialism, suggests that the Orientalist framework is a force that still helps to overgeneralize, compartmentalize, and differentiate ourselves from others. The framework's main power is in helping to facilitate a bounded and less rigorous understanding of the social world. Instead of attempting to fully immerse oneself into a certain issue to gain a more complex and nuanced understanding of it, 'Western' values promote a quick-and-easy solution that breaks down the phenomena into easily explainable terms. This tendency towards acceptance of a dominant interpretive framework within discourses enables the dominant framework to exert its power over oppositional frameworks. For instance, the academic community has published innumerable critiques of the representation of terrorism and its ties to Islam and 'the East' as flawed and inaccurate; however, these critiques have failed to exert significant influence from their position in the periphery of the discursive field on contemporary terrorism (Jackson et al., 2007). This thesis suggests that the dominant interpretive framework serves to reify the already entrenched representations of "the other" that have existed since before the emergence of Said's scholarship. Nowhere in any of the books under examination was Said's work mentioned; however, Islamic experts including Bernard Lewis, who Said constantly debated with, were often used to demonstrate the scholarly basis of the claims featured in the data. Only including the dominant interpretive frameworks within the discourse promoted the reification of these main themes and highlighted their power in delineating the mainstream interpretations within the socially constructed realm of our society. My analysis offers a counterclaim that could potentially be integrated into part of an oppositional interpretive framework that attempts to challenge and de-reify some of the socially constructed entities that have



come to dominate our understanding of “the other” within the discourse on terrorism and how this affects our knowledge of terrorism.

The firm establishment of a binary relationship between ‘the East’ and ‘the West’ within the discourse enables ‘the East’ to become represented as the antithesis of modernity. Islam and ‘the East’ are described as backwards, developing, and a host of other pejorative terms when discussions on ‘Eastern’ nations’ development are articulated in the ‘Western’ media. These negative descriptive terms lead us into the other main organizational force within the discourse that is also a key trait of the Orientalist framework: stereotyping.

### *Stereotyping*

According to Said (1979) one of the main features of the Orientalist framework was that it offered a politicized version of reality, whose structure promoted the difference between familiar and strange. This politicized version of reality is used to differentiate “us” versus “them” using politically charged terms and to control or dominate the weak actor in the relationship. Stuart Hall (1997) examined the role that politicized differentiation plays within racialized representations, and uses a more apt term in his analysis—stereotyping. For Hall (1997: 249) stereotyping was a means of representation that reduced people, groups, and other clusters to a small number of simple essentialized characteristics that appeared to be fixed by nature. Hall (1997: 258) elaborated on this, and identified three features which form the basis of stereotyping: “stereotyping reduces, essentializes, naturalizes and fixes ‘difference’ ...[A]nother feature of stereotyping is its practice of ‘closure’ and exclusion. It symbolically fixes boundaries, and excludes

everything which does not belong...the third point is that stereotyping tends to occur where there are gross inequalities of power.” These main features of stereotyping make it the appropriate concept for the analysis of the Orientalist framework within the discourse on contemporary terrorism, because all of the key components that Hall identified in stereotyping were active within the discourse.

Within the discourse reasons for poverty, economic stagnation, the proliferation of undemocratic regimes, and sectarian violence in ‘Eastern’ countries are often attributed to the failure of a country and its people to embrace ‘Western’ values and become modernized—or more like “us” (Rashid 2001 and Woodward 2004). This type of rationalization after the fact only helps to strengthen the binary framework that we in ‘the West’ have come to rely upon to interpret “our” relationship with “the other.” Stereotyping was used to differentiate and distinguish between what is good and what is bad. The language incorporated into the discourse helped to promote an idealized and biased representation of ‘the East.’ An example of this is the continued representation of ‘the East’ in Western-centric and ethnocentric forms. Scheuer’s (2004: 8-9) indictment of the Islamic religion as being filled with men and women from across the political spectrum who are opposed to such things as women in universities, gay rights, politics, salsa dancing, abortion-on-demand, women in universities, pornographic movies, and a host of other practices, highlights some of the most glaring stereotyped representations of ‘Orientals’ in the discourse. This type of xenophobia ensures that ‘Easterners’ and their religion are viewed in a negative and pejorative manner. The stereotyped relationship between ‘East’ and ‘West’ features asymmetrical power relations and helps promote inequality and exclusion whereby the ‘Occident’ is controlling representations over the

weaker 'Orient.' It is in this manner that 'the West' can exclude 'the Orient' and the people within it from representing itself.

Stereotyping was also featured in the representations of the physical geography of 'the East.' The sample featured numerous references to a romanticized and idealized picture of 'the Orient' that matched classical Orientalist representations. Afghanistan was consistently portrayed as a far-off mystic land that is a throwback to a times-gone-by era. The people of 'the East' were also represented in a stereotyped fashion, as 'Easterners' were consistently portrayed in an overgeneralized fashion as expressing characteristics of their group. Muslims were reduced to their essentialized "Arabness" and a host of negative traits which were counter to those exhibited by individuals in 'the West.' In the most basic sense, 'the East' and 'Easterners' were described in terms related to their geographical and social location. For example, religion was portrayed as having vastly different meanings for individuals in 'the West' as opposed to individuals in 'the East.' In 'the West' religion was not seen as a major institution within society, as its society was secular and although it has had strong ties with Christianity throughout its history, has progressed and had moved past reliance on religious dogma. 'The East' on the other hand, featured a conservative society that was mired in religious tradition and theocratic rule. In 'the Orient', Islam was represented as being an omnipotent and omnipresent force within daily life.

Another consistent theme within the discourse was the nearly unanimous framing of terrorism as a "major threat" or "new threat." The sample discourse consistently represented contemporary terrorism as one of the biggest dangers that "we" in 'the West' are facing. The elevation of terrorism into the upper pantheon of world issues has

spurred a reactionary scholarship that is based on the 9/11 attacks and views terrorism as an apocalyptic threat to ‘Western Civilization.’ Despite introducing the public to this threat, the materials analyzed do not look into the political, economic, and social climate that the terrorists committing the attacks emerged from, or their organizations. Instead, the discourse features post hoc rationalizations for the perpetrators’ actions which usually entail a spurious religiously based motivation. The information on terrorism provided to the reader is dubious and mostly descriptive. Instead of looking into the history of the use of terrorism as a tactic, terrorism is presented as a naturalized and stereotyped phenomenon that emanates from the Islamic religion.

Looking more deeply at how terrorist organizations form and evolve could provide more useful information to the public about what real threat terrorism poses, and what has led to its appearance and dissipation in the past. By stepping outside of the over-generalized and idealized compartments that have come to characterize the contemporary discourse, individuals can critically assess the issue for themselves, and attempt to acquire a broader, historically grounded, and accurate portrait of the phenomenon that can add to the emergence of an oppositional interpretive framework.

### *Neo-Orientalism*

Following 9/11 the Orientalist framework has evolved into a neo-Orientalist framework as representations of ‘Occident’ and ‘Orient’ began to transform. In contemporary times the discourse on terrorism has become one of the primary means of transmitting representations of ‘the Orient’ within ‘Western’ media. However, the changing environment that we as social actors find ourselves in leaves our socially constructed concepts open to re-conceptualization and re-interpretation. The Orientalist framework is no less susceptible to such transformations.

The neo-Orientalist framework can then be viewed as a contemporary application of the Orientalist framework.<sup>13</sup> Although this newly re-conceptualized framework shares many of the same characteristics as its classical counterpart, it is important to acknowledge how the Orientalist framework has shifted in its representations. Deyab (2006: 9) identifies three main features of the neo-Orientalist framework: the creation of binary oppositions between “us” and “them” (‘West’ and ‘East’), the breeding of Islamophobia; and the debasement of the Islamic religion and Muslims. All three of these features were present within the discourse analyzed.

Another key aspect of the neo-Orientalist framework which differs from its classical application is the inverting of the ‘Muslim world’ from weak to strong. In the classical Orientalist framework the ‘Middle East’s’ inability to democratize and modernize was due to the weak or submissive composition of these societies—leading to the proliferation of despotic and totalitarian regimes in the region (Sadowski 2003 and

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<sup>13</sup> Within the literature, the neo-Orientalist framework is commonly referred to as neo-Orientalism, however, to remain consistent with my conceptualization of the Orientalist framework, and to more accurately portray the traits of this concept, I will utilize the term neo-Orientalist framework throughout this study.

Tustad 2003). Conversely, the neo-Orientalist framework attributed these failures to an “essence” within the Islamic religion itself which was strong, conservative, and violent that was bequeathed from generation-to-generation of Muslims (Tustad 2003). This essence manifested within an empowered and strong Islamic society that was following the basic tenets of its religious and ethnic traditions. Individuals within these ‘Eastern’ societies engaged in terrorism and other forms of violence as a natural byproduct of their association to this essentialized social group. Bergen (2001), Scheuer (2004), Woodward (2004), and Wright (2006) all adopted the neo-Orientalist framework’s re-conceptualization of the role of religion in empowering Muslims in ‘the East’ to maintain their position on the opposite side of its binary relationship with ‘the West.’

It is important to point out that although there has been a reconceptualization of the Orientalist framework, “[t]hese Neo Orientalist writings are not based on any new shifting perception of Islam, but mostly a renewal of the classical Orientalism designed to justify the American imperialism and its aggressive acts towards Middle Eastern and Islamic countries” (Deyab 2006: 4). Elleke Boehmer (1998: 20) argues that neo-Orientalism is itself a testament to how adaptable and multidimensional the relationship is between hegemonic power and subaltern. In other words, the framework has evolved; however, the constant within this relationship is the perpetuated subaltern status of ‘the Orient.’

Based on the evidence presented in this thesis, it can be argued that a neo-Orientalist framework is operating within the sample of discourse analyzed. The architectural structure of this framework operates subtly throughout the discourse, and helps steer the reader towards a naturalized and stereotyped conflict between ‘East’ and

‘West’ that is promoted by a dominant interpretive framework. This dominant interpretive framework currently holds a hegemonic position within the discursive field of contemporary terrorism; however, by critically reflecting and making the latent structure of this entity manifest, we may start a de-reification process that may lead to the emergence of an oppositional interpretive framework which can challenge this hegemony, and eventually usurp it so we can achieve a better understanding of our social world.

## Conclusion

Representations of the tactic of terrorism, and the groups and organizations responsible for its proliferation have become commonplace within ‘Western’ media. The galvanizing events of 9/11 introduced ‘Westerners’ to a new era of geopolitical relations, and to a phenomenon that until then had not received significant attention within the social sciences. This changed instantaneously when commandeered commercial airliners slammed into the World Trade Center and Pentagon—forever changing how “we” in ‘the West’ view terrorism. Overnight, terrorism became the definitive issue within public discourse. Over the next decade, invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq were precipitated by the “War on Terror” and ‘the West’ expanded the war to the geographical locations where the terrorists responsible for the attacks were based. These perpetrators were from a geographically and socially distant region, and were representative of a culture and belief system that appeared to be antithetical to ours. It is only by critically examining the relationship between “us” and “them”, and the socially constructed basis of this relationship, that we can work towards achieving a better understanding of our world, and the people in it.

This thesis has highlighted the structure of the discursive field on terrorism and the dialectical features that both support and challenge the hegemony of the dominant interpretive framework. The de-reification of the socially constructed entities that have been used to represent terrorism is the first step in not only gaining a better and more robust understanding of the social phenomenon that we encounter in our everyday lives, but also in helping to create a legitimate oppositional interpretive framework that may eventually assume the role of dominant interpretive framework within the field.



Our everyday reality is shaped by key elements of a discourse's composition, such as the binary representation of 'East' and 'West' within my sample. This binary representation gets cemented and reified into the socially constructed consciousness of individuals in 'the West' as a naturalized byproduct of our social world. It also promotes stereotyping of geopolitical relations within the social arena.

Said began his project of dismantling the reified edifice of Orientalism when he engaged his readers to question the premise of a naturalized dualism between 'Occident' and 'Orient' in the 1970s. The discourse on terrorism analyzed in this project confirms that the work started by Said has yet to achieve its desired results, as the 'East/West' divide has come to dominate representations within the international political theatre. This thesis illustrates how the Orientalist framework has survived attacks from critics like Said, and has remained an important force within the discourse on contemporary terrorism. Not only has it survived, but it has flourished, with contemporary innovations lifting the framework to new levels, and the Islamic religion emerging as a new symbol of "the other" in the contemporary discourse. Even with a contemporary transformation, the basic tenets of the Orientalist framework as articulated by Said have remained constant—the subaltern status of 'the Orient' and its people.

This thesis has highlighted some of the key characteristics of the discourse on terrorism that were present in the sample analyzed. Identifying what these characteristics are and how they interact and affect the public's knowledge on terrorism was the paramount reason for engaging in this study. By illuminating the taken for granted assumptions which form the basis of our knowledge of events, people, and places within our social environment we can one day hope to achieve a more balanced and fruitful

knowledge of our reality. This thesis chose to focus exclusively on the discourse on terrorism as it was presented in five particular and influential books that have been published post-9/11 and featured in *Foreign Affairs*. The lessons learned from this analysis, however, can provide useful analytic tools to critically assess how we as individuals make sense of our world. Identifying the factors, biases, and other variables which influence these representations within all discourses is perhaps the more important lesson that we can apply to our individual lives.

### ***Critical Terrorism Studies***

This thesis is intended to add to the burgeoning field of critical terrorism studies, with the purpose of helping this perspective accumulate sufficient influence to challenge the hegemony of terrorism studies, and other orthodox perspectives which focus on the issue of contemporary terrorism. It is also my hope that this thesis will add to an emergent oppositional interpretive framework within the discursive field on terrorism, and that one day this oppositional framework may challenge the legitimacy of the dominant framework. This will lead to a more nuanced understanding of the tactic of terrorism, and the myriad complex factors which motivate the individuals and organizations who engage in its practice around the world. What are some of the characteristics that an oppositional interpretive framework that is based on the principles of CTS look like? To answer this question I will briefly provide a blueprint of what this oppositional interpretive framework may resemble.

First and foremost, an oppositional framework that is based on the principles of CTS will feature research that is methodologically rigorous, and which features the use of

empirical research methods. Unlike traditional terrorism studies which features work that is primarily based on secondary research, CTS attempts to meet the standards of academic scholarship. This methodological backing helps to ensure that research within CTS is more balanced and based on discernable facts, instead of conjure and opinion. Another key characteristic of an oppositional interpretive framework based on CTS principles would be the social location of the scholars and researchers contributing to its formation. Unlike traditional terrorism studies, where scholars and experts are often closely aligned with state apparatuses, and intimately connected to the institutions that wield power within our society, an oppositional framework featuring CTS would promote independence and critical analysis by the researchers contributing to it. Ultimately, this oppositional framework would provide a more nuanced representation of terrorism to the public and allow researchers to analyze the complex power relations at work within the field.

Another main component of an oppositional interpretive framework that is based on the principles of CTS would be the re-incorporation of discussions on the role of the state into the discourse. Jackson (2007) highlights how one of the main goals of CTS is “to bring the state back into it” or to move past state-centric models of interpretation which do not challenge the status quo. In this manner, the state would not be the primary actor within the oppositional framework, and the framework would question some of the long held beliefs that have proliferated in traditional discourses on terrorism. One such position that would be challenged would be how currently, often only non-state actors are viewed as being involved in acts of terrorism. This flawed belief has been promoted within the discourse, and within my sample no mention was made of the issue of state

sponsored terrorism or state terrorism. By situating terrorism as a tactic that can only be employed by non-state actors within the discourse, the current dominant interpretive framework helps influence what can and can not be defined as terrorism. For CTS terrorism is a tactic that is utilized by both state and non-state actors. CTS, and any oppositional framework that it inspires, would reopen the debate on what exactly terrorism is, and who and what can be involved in its application within the contemporary world.

CTS attempts to move past the traditional problem solving application of traditional terrorism studies. Within my sample, the representation of terrorism as a problem that needed to be fixed was one of the seven main tropes. CTS attempts to move past the bounded socially constructed representation of terrorism as a problem and the state-centric responses as a solution. As Stokes (2009:87) states, “By subjecting problem solving terrorism studies to epistemological critique, the contingent and socially constructed nature of the dominant models of representation are exposed, as well as the politics that flow from these representations.” Stokes goes even further and argues that social theory is part of the socially constructed and contested realm within which our social affairs operate. In this sense, CTS is open to the re-interpretation of the discourses surrounding political violence along with the dialectic forces at work within discursive fields. The constant interaction and relationality amongst oppositional and dominant interpretive frameworks then fits nicely within the theoretical model that is supported by CTS and can play an important role in the critical analysis of the issue of contemporary terrorism.

Discourse analysis is an appropriate method to utilize within the field of CTS and can help build an oppositional framework within the discourse on terrorism, because CTS values language and discourse as a means of understanding social processes. Jackson (2007) elaborates on this key point and highlights the social-cultural context in which knowledge about terrorism emerges. This knowledge is gendered, Eurocentric, and reflects certain hierarchies of power that are active within the discourse. Lee Jarvis highlights traditional terrorism studies' neglect of constructionism when he stated that

by attributing terrorism an objective existence, mainstream terrorism studies offers very limited space for reflecting on the historical and social processes through which this identity, behaviour or threat has been constituted. With the interpretive, symbolic and discursive contexts of its creation – to say nothing of the power relations traversing these contexts – presumed largely irrelevant for understanding this phenomenon, terrorism remains consistently and artificially detached from the processes of its construction (Jarvis 2009: 14).

It is only by connecting the phenomenon to the processes of its construction and critically examining the hegemonic forces at play, and the power relations within discourse, that a less stereotyped and accurate portrait of terrorism can emerge. The constructionist and post structuralist foundation of CTS helps to ensure that CTS is an excellent paradigm to base an oppositional framework within the discursive field on terrorism on.

CTS was not established to become a rigorous ontological, epistemological, and methodological paradigm, rather, the epistemological principles it promoted were intended to serve as a general guideline for scholars to utilize. Ultimately the decision of how a researcher chooses to frame his/her project is up to them, but CTS was established to give like-minded researchers an outlet for their work, and to provide an intellectual commons where their research could be disseminated. The addition of CTS journals and

conferences will help to ensure that this young discipline may continue to develop and to move from the margins to the mainstream within the discursive field. An oppositional interpretive framework based on the principles of CTS already exists, and with continued application of CTS principles to projects such as this thesis, this oppositional interpretive framework may continue to grow.

### *Past and Future*

My motivation for partaking in this exercise of analyzing the discourse on contemporary terrorism was spurred on by my undergraduate research which focused on social movement theory and terrorist organizations. I was interested in understanding why and how these terrorist organizations could not only establish, but flourish within the international system. By analyzing al Qaeda's ascent as a transnational social movement organization through the theoretical perspective of resource mobilization theory and framing, I was able to identify some of the main processes that al Qaeda employed to facilitate its expansion and survival. Resource mobilization theory is linked more to the wider political processes of society, and focuses on social supports for movements, as well as constraints facing them, including factors such as media usage, social control, tactical dilemmas, and the interplay between external supports and elites. It also examines the various resources that must be mobilized, links between social movements and other groups, reliance on third parties for success, and the tactics deployed by authorities to control or suppress movements. My research not only identified some of the main reasons for the group's success, but identified areas of weakness within its organizational structure.

While conducting this research I realized that there were certain issues and aspects of terrorism that were discussed, while others were not included in discussions and were omitted from the discourse. After completing my undergraduate research, I concluded that there were serious sociopolitical aspects of terrorism that needed to be addressed that were a major part of the phenomenon's dynamic that simply were not discussed in the literature. This is what inspired me to take a closer look at discourse, and the discourse on terrorism to see how our knowledge of terrorism is being influenced by representations in media.

Will this budding oppositional interpretive framework continue to grow with contributions from CTS scholars and rise in influence and power to be viewed as a legitimate alternative to the dominant interpretive framework? Or will it simply fail to mobilize enough support and followers for it to mature into a more robust framework? These questions are not easy to answer, and the future sociopolitical environment will have a profound impact on the future course of the discursive field of terrorism. We are social beings, and the experience of our everyday reality helps us to shape and make sense of our world. It has been over ten years since the attacks of September 11, 2001, and although there have been serious terrorist attacks in London, Madrid, and Mumbai, all three failed to produce the amount of shock, fear, and destruction as 9/11. Any future attack—especially on a 'Western' target—will only solidify terrorism as one of the primary social issues facing 'the West'. The details of any such attack, along with the perpetrators and any possible affiliation with a particular organization or religion, will have a profound affect on steering the future course of the discursive field on terrorism.

Discourses can be used for political purposes and it is the goal of this thesis to question some of the claims which govern our thoughts regarding representations of terrorism. The binary representation and stereotyping within the contemporary discourse provides a one-dimensional representation of the issue of terrorism, and by questioning the conformity of these representations we can critically examine one of the most important social issues within our society. We need to look at how the cultural claims within discourse are used by various actors, and be stubborn in our refusal to accept these cultural claims at face value. Geopolitical relations are nebulous and complex, and relying on ethnocentric and stereotyped interpretive frameworks only robs these relations of their complexity and elegance. At the end of the day, our reality is created by a collective interpretive process as all human interactions are a social construct. This reality is maintained by the agency of individuals who have helped create it, and who will guide its future—for better or worse. Maintaining and strengthening the oppositional interpretive framework based on CTS values can go a long way in ensuring that future representations of terrorism will become more reflexive and less biased, and help to prevent future attacks from occurring as the motivations of terrorists will be identified more clearly. This will help ensure that as a society, we will be able to understand our social world and make it a better place.



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