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# **Public Administration and the Search for Meanings of 9/11**

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## **ABSTRACT**

*This paper presents, first, a critique of the response of the literature in public administration to the enormous tragedy of 9/11/01. That literature—more accurately, a proxy that was selected for that literature—reflects several flaws. Public administration's focus, the paper suggests, is narrow and rigid, it tends not to generate creative frameworks with which to view a significantly changed policy environment. It continues, instead, to be fascinated with policies as they are handed down and reveals no curiosity about the pressures that shape them. In its response to 9/11, it remains largely concerned with the description of how public agencies reacted to that tragedy and presentation of thoughtful proposals for organizational coordination that might improve performance and produce better results at a lower cost in the future. Second, the paper provides alternative ways of interpreting the tragedy of 9/11. The motivations of terrorists that the dominant view expresses, and public administration literature accepts, may not be definitively known for some time. It is possible that they were neither impressed by American material goods nor its political freedoms, but infuriated by its accumulated record of foreign interventions. The paper identifies the consequences of this and other alternative interpretations for public administration. And, third, the paper reveals that, with the exception of one article, the treatment of civil liberties in recent public administration literature leaves a lot to be desired. It is remarkably abstract and distant, and the minority whose civil liberties were most threatened remains virtually invisible.*

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

The enormous human tragedy of 9/11/01 has understandably been condemned the world over. The killing of innocent civilians has aroused sympathy for the victims and anger toward those who murdered them.

On that day a massive national effort was launched both to take action and to search for its meanings. The first included the

war on terror and it does not have an end in sight, and the second began by asking, “why do they hate us?”, and that too is unlikely to end any time soon. Framing the questions in that fashion severely limited the search for meanings, and the taking of a series of actions culminated in the expansion of the national security state. Justifications for an imperialistic role for the United States are openly being offered now (e.g., Kaplan, 2003). Sometimes the two—taking action and searching for the meanings of 9/11—were mixed. While the search for meanings has received some attention in certain publications, most of the time the information and analysis presented focused on the actions taken and/or proposed at home and abroad.

I write this paper because I feel disappointed by what, and how little, has appeared in the major publications in public administration (PA) in response to 9/11 so far. I offer, consequently, a critique of the literature in PA that appeared in response to that tragedy, offer an alternative to it, and draw attention to the flaws in that literature in addressing civil liberties. These purposes will be elaborated on a little later.

When thinking of 9/11, I wonder how a dramatic national event with monumental consequences could have been turned, as it largely has been in PA, into recommendations for more coordination among organizations at different levels of American government. Let me be more specific. First, 9/11 was clearly of central importance to PA, since that tragedy drew attention to possible failure of intelligence agencies; it required massive response on the part of city, state and federal public employees who performed in a heroic manner; and it led to the expansion of national security personnel, funding, and broad legislation. That notwithstanding, no convincing evidence has emerged so far that these events broadened or deepened our frameworks to view this tragedy in significantly new ways. No new paradigms were offered, for example, a fact which acquires greater significance when one recalls that in calmer times—which were frequently described then, it seems awkward now to remember, as

“turbulent”—such practices were not uncommon (e.g., Farmer, 1995, and Fox and Miller, 1996). When considering recent publications, one notices that although their substance has certainly changed, their frameworks, institutional preferences, and the tools relied on, with rare exceptions, remain familiar: constitutional democracy; improving performance and accountability; applying rationality; and producing better results at lower costs.

Second, it is widely believed that the study of PA is interdisciplinary, but the nature of interdisciplinarity that now dominates the field emphasizes some aspects of social sciences and leaves out other disciplines. If PA scholars had remained in touch with, and incorporated major concepts developed in, such fields as cultural studies, literary theory, and comparative politics, they would have been far better equipped to respond in different ways, understand at different levels, and interpret, perhaps even influence, the policies that are now being made and executed. It is obvious that the concept of orientalism, and the discourse that it generated, is among them. It is probably worth pausing for a brief moment to identify some aspects of it.

Orientalist discourse, as it gradually took shape during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, had made “an assumption that the Orient and everything in it was, if not patently inferior to, then in need of corrective study by the West” (Said, 1978; pp. 40-41). Such study, as well as the power in many cases to change the reality that was being studied, was a unique Western privilege. Said continues,

Yet what has, I think, been previously overlooked is the constricted vocabulary of such a privilege, and the comparative limitations of such a vision. My argument takes it that the Orientalist reality is both antihuman and persistent. Its scope, as much as its institutions and all-pervasive influence lasts up to the present. (p. 44)

Said presented a thorough review of orientalism's developments and its critique in his seminal work (Said, 1978). His recent death was mourned the world over. Recently, there has been a full-scale revival of orientalist scholarship; see, for example, Berman (2003) and Lewis (2002).

Ignoring the pervasive influence of this discourse, among other developments in cultural theory, now haunts PA literature and keeps it unaware of its prejudices and its constricted vocabulary. If dramatic events like 9/11 do not provoke exploration of new theoretical frameworks, analytical categories or linguistic styles—all the tools, that is, that are expected to help in breaking out of the routines of “normal science”—the prospects for disciplinary growth and creativity, not just the fashionable talk of churning out new paradigms, are dim.

Third, the interest in the vulnerable, those who are the victims of market forces or governmental action, has not received, unfortunately, the attention in PA that it deserves. The continuing influence of that inertia is reflected in part in the way that the issue of civil liberties has been treated recently. With one exception, civil liberties in PA literature, as will be shown later, are treated in an abstract and distant fashion. That topic surfaced for discussion because of the well-founded fear that certain minority groups (Arabs, Muslims, Middle Easterners, as well as those who resemble them) may be threatened after 9/11, but paradoxically, it is these very groups that remain virtually invisible in PA literature! Furthermore, there is a strange disconnect between those muffled voices talking of civil liberties and the vast majority singing the familiar chorus of organizational design, coordination, and rationality. But perhaps that is not so strange when we recall that the generalized understanding of the Orientalized *other* has already set in motion energies that will turn the gaze of scholarly attention in some directions and not in others.

Fourth, attacks in the past, it may be useful to recall, had come fast and furious at even the slightest hint of policy being separate from its implementation in PA literature; the infamous dichotomy, which had begun to resemble a dragon, had been slain over and over, a development that no one could dare to forget. Interest in policy, in turn, meant a variety of concerns that at least included its points of origin, the forces that gave it shape and meaning, and the interpretive powers that were assigned, assumed, and enlarged; and, of late, it had begun to include issues of race, gender, class, sexual orientation, and national origin. Since at least the rhetoric demanded that one stand tall and triumphant over the slain dragon of that dichotomy, the expectation might have been high that attention will be paid to such policy issues when focusing on 9/11. It is surprising, then, that there was is so little of it on this occasion, an occasion when, if PA were serious about questioning the politics-administration dichotomy, it could have accomplished a great deal. Some of the pressing questions that might have been pursued are (a) making major decisions in an environment of crisis, (b) backgrounds of the important actors and their likely impact, (c) effects of bureaucratic routines and standard operating procedures after an initial preference has been expressed at the highest level (and other similar insights provided by Allison [1971]), (d) intersection of such special relationships as oil interests, Religious Right, and military contractors at the highest levels of the Bush administration, and (e) understanding the goals of the terrorists.

It is hard to fathom why PA scholars did not probe such issues. Perhaps there was some comfort in moving in familiar grooves, and these grooves are said to have a tendency to get deeper with time. There is momentum of the past too that pulls in ways that are hard to detect. (I suggest later that the unchallenged acceptance of the official and dominant interpretation, along with all of assumptions that go with it, has also a lot to do with it.) Fortunately, there are exceptions as well. Melvin Dubnick (2002; p. 86), for example, stated, "In their efforts to reflect on the implications and consequences of the

tragic attacks of September 11, 2001, Americans are faced with the added responsibility of having to give meaning to such senseless events.” I build on a similar foundation in this paper in the hope that exploring the diversity of meanings is in itself a desirable goal and, further, that it may lead sometimes to events becoming less senseless.

No one paper, or perhaps even a book, can both celebrate what is valuable in that momentum and those grooves *and* inspire enough creative energy when a national tragedy demands it. I certainly do not expect in this paper to accomplish such ambitious goals. The purpose of the paper is to address some issues and raise others that enhance the possibilities for a plural, open, and perhaps even exciting role that the diverse meanings of 9/11 might open up for PA. The central issue is the expansion of the space for interpretive powers and alternative explanations, not to find ways to implement policies efficiently or at a lower cost. I address these issues by, first, presenting a critique of the response in PA literature to 9/11. The special issue of *Public Administration Review* (2002, vol. 62) serves as a proxy for PA literature. That issue published more articles on 9/11 than are available in any one publication in the field; furthermore, *PAR* is often referred to as the journal of record in PA. Called here the Dominant View, the PA literature reveals the acceptance, with very few exceptions, of the decisions handed down from top officials with thoughtful recommendations about how their implementation might be improved without raising any serious questions about the origins of the crisis as well as any discussion of alternative responses to the ones quickly adopted under the existing constraints. The second way I have tried to address this issue of expanding the space for alternative interpretations and explanations, organized here under Alternative Meanings, consists of reviewing the same events with different possibilities in mind. Fortunately, alternative interpretations and explanations are readily available, although they are often overlooked. The third part, called Civil Liberties, focuses on these liberties in view of their special significance in the post-9/11 period, and because the *PAR*'s special issue devotes a whole

section to it. That part also provides a critique and suggestions for what might have been included. The paper ends with some concluding thoughts.

## **II. DOMINANT VIEW**

The search for meanings of 9/11 began to be framed soon after the tragedy occurred in a language that was exaggerated and hyperbolic; it encouraged wild generalizations that substituted slogans for analysis. Initially, it will be recalled, that President George W. Bush described the crashing of the four airplanes on that day as an act of terror, and promised that those responsible will be brought to justice. Soon after that, he called it an act of war. But even characterizing the attack as a terrorists' declaration of war on America did not seem to be enough. Ratcheting the language up further, the attack, the president (and virtually all the journalists, TV hosts, and most of the analysts) declared, had been launched on freedom, a concept that was left vague and unspecified, but was closely identified with the United States. The terrorists, the president and pundits claimed, resented Americans for having that freedom since they did not have it themselves, and that was why they had struck. Finally, it was civilization itself that was identified as their real target, although that too was left undefined; presumably it stood for both American cherished values and cultivated refinement.

There might have been the expectation that with time calm reflection will replace the initial emotionally-charged rhetoric. Instead, that original view not only hardened, it began to be defended on the basis of escalating definition of what needed to be protected (human life, freedom, civilization) and policy and political agendas (war, oil, unipolar world, elections) with which they were linked. It also required the corresponding denigration in exaggerated ways of those who were believed to pose the threat. "Evil came to our door," stated President Bush (2002; p. 4). Since then, a variety of government officials have described the terrorist threat to be global, and nothing less than total

victory is now said to be the national goal. A new temperament and vocabulary emerged which facilitated the use of words that encouraged venomous denunciation: *demonic, evil, violent, dangerous, terrorist, suspicious, Islamic*. The tendency to escalate, in language and in reliance on organized violence, is now clearly the dominant and privileged implication of 9/11. Even Vaclav Havel (2002; p. 4), a rare individual who combines refined sensibilities with political experience, was clearly under its spell when he said in a recent speech, “Evil must be confronted in its womb and, if there is no other way to do it, then it has to be dealt with by the use of force.” He did not say what evil was or where its womb was located. Similarly, an American academician, Condoleezza Rice, who was appointed as the National Security Adviser to President Bush, apparently seemed to believe that the terrorists’ commitment to violence was irrevocable and irrational; military developments or other provocations did not influence their behavior. Recently, she insisted that the changed conditions in Iraq had nothing to do with the increased terrorist activity there (*The New York Times*, September 17, 2003, A12). She dismissed the notion that the terrorists would “be minding their own business—drinking tea, having meetings” if American invasion of Iraq had not taken place. “They are fighters, they are jihadists [sic],” she said, and if they were not fighting in Iraq, she stated, they would be in the Gulf, Southeast Asia, perhaps even the U.S. (I think she meant jihadis, Muslims who undertake jihad.)

The dominant meaning is not likely to loosen its grip in the foreseeable future. Quick military victories in Afghanistan and Iraq have reinforced it. Some see in it an opportunity to erase the memory of Vietnam, and others view it as an attempt to increase the influence of the military-industrial complex. Most feel helpless or alienated when confronting the repeated messages of fear and patriotism in media now owned by a shrinking number of owners.

The dominant meaning is also reflected in a kind of essentialization that would be considered contemptible in other contexts. For example, those who would immediately challenge the idea that the behavior of a group should be understood in reference only to its cultural, racial or religious characteristics, have felt perfectly comfortable in doing just that during the last two years in reference to one distinct religious minority. I don't know anyone, for instance, who has wondered what is it about the Christian religion or white race that produces children or youth who go with guns to schools and start killing other kids and their teachers. Similarly, how often have op-ed pieces appeared, or dinner table conversations in many households turned to, exploring a connection between the Christian faith of Timothy McVeigh and his terrorist attack on a federal building in Oklahoma City? That notwithstanding, the fact that the terrorists were Muslims continues to provide enough justification for many well educated men and women to link the terrorists' behavior with their religion. The assumption that what drove them to such extreme violence was a unified and generic Islam, not an analysis of events, or hurts and grievances that their nations endured, has by now become routinized. Perceptions based on these assumptions, which are both biased and false as Said has so often demonstrated, are repeated so frequently in official statements, media channels, and many scholarly works that they take for many the shape of solid reality and unqualified truth.

While some serious and balanced discussion of the religion of Islam and the Muslims living in a variety of societies has taken place during the last few years, far more frequent has been the daily Islam-bashing, in print and electronic media, journals and books, and movies and TV shows. One of the worst "scholarly" examples of it is Bernard Lewis's (2002) *What Went Wrong?*, as was recently pointed out by Said (2002; pp. 69-74). Instead of opening up possibilities for new meanings and understandings of who "we" and "they" are, another layer of beliefs about the Muslim world is being laid, one that selectively supplies

additional beliefs to confirm the old prejudices to define it primarily in terms of its lacks and deficiencies and absences. All of this is being done in the name of increasing awareness and reducing misunderstandings about Islam! It appears that keeping the oil flowing at a low price had only temporarily dampened the orientalist discourse.

All of the recent literature in PA made no mention of such concerns. Most of it either ignored the reasons, explanations, or meanings of the terrorist attacks while focusing largely on issues of implementation or it explicitly reinforced the version that did not deviate from the dominant view. Here is an example of the first:

As we think about the best approach to creating an affordable and sustainable system of homeland security in the context of competing budgetary claims, we can and should select those programs and tools that promise to provide the most cost-effective approaches to achieve our national goals. (Walker, 2002; p. 97).

The second was represented well by Stephen Sloan (2002; p.124) who went beyond the already inflated official view by suggesting that the terrorists have “declared war against all.” I wonder if he is aware that the number of countries that have not reported any case of terrorism is actually far greater than those that have. But human imagination is remarkably creative; it is quite capable in the present environment of producing highly original definitions of terrorism.

Chester Newland was the only author in that *PAR* special issue who recorded his views on this matter in any detail. They deserve serious consideration. He pushed farther the already very broad boundaries of the Dominant View. He stated in a matter-of-fact fashion that “terrorism seeks to force civilized society to violate its own basic values and disciplines that sustain them,” and, further, that “humane society is among terrorists’

chief targets” (Newland, 2002; p.155). He also offered some explanations for the terrorists’ behavior. “Terrorism thrives on many varied causes, though terrorist acts often are grounded most essentially in personal or borrowed longing for self-justification: *I am!*” (p.154, emphasis in original).

Newland did not provide any evidence for his conclusion that the causes of terrorists were grounded “most essentially in personal or borrowed longings for self-justifications...” In the absence of any evidence, one may speculate whether such self-justification was a widely-felt human need. If so, he left unexplained the most vital part, namely, the connection between such longings and the acts of the terrorists—e.g., why did not others also commit acts of terror? On the other hand, if such longings are rare, he might have speculated about why they occur among the terrorists more frequently than others. Could it be the memories of humiliation and betrayal, misguided understanding of current events, poor child rearing practices, foreign exploitation of resources facilitated by local stooges, or something entirely different? No, there are no such speculations. When the purpose is to condemn the *others* there is no reason to let them speak for themselves, nor is there any need to scrutinize the logical leaps in thinking when trying to understanding why they might have acted in a particular fashion. Whether called scholarship or knowledge, it can come soaked in prejudice, it can be plucked out of thin air, it can be constructed, published, and, most of time, it can escape any serious review or critique.

In the following passage, Newman gives the impression that there are other or related causes of terrorism as well.

A most visible and deeply saddening inspiration for expanding global terrorism is the escalation of generations-long, tit-for-tat, more than an eye-for-an-eye conflicts between Israel and Palestine, which have blinded both to the humane roots of their historically great cultures, now plunged into mutual degradation, if not destruction. Thus

[sic], through pursuits of self-aggrandizement and other causes as pretexts for being, terror flourishes. (Newland, 2002; p. 154)

Here Newman would have one believe that self-aggrandizement and other causes of Israeli-Palestinian conflict are serving as pretexts for some undefined phenomenon called *being*, which leads to the prevalence of terror. There are even more serious questions here than those raised above—about definitions (“being,” “pretexts,” “self-aggrandizement”), and the connections assumed from one step to another. Pretexts for being, if it is possible to understand that phrase, sweep aside such major events as the Nazi atrocities during World War II; the active role in the Middle East, first, of the British and then that of the United States; the alliances formed during the Cold War; location of major religious sites in Jerusalem and the surrounding areas; Israel’s security; the personalities of the major actors; and the Israeli occupation of Palestine, and the establishment of a large number of settlements. Perhaps they are folded, in a highly unique way, under “tit-for-tat, more than eye-for-an-eye,” or they are to be found under the rubric of “other causes,” but, then, one cannot be sure of that either. Such confusion reinforces the view that undefined and unsubstantiated negative statements tend to be allowed only about some subjects, in both meanings of the word.

Newland also attributes to the terrorists some other ideas. “Globalization, in particular, is corrupted to appear as an invader clothed as liberator” (p. 154). No terrorists, incidentally, are quoted that support this view, or, for that matter, any of the other views confidently attributed to them. As is widely known, critiques of globalization by now have been offered from virtually all points on the political spectrum. Even mainstream figures, such as the Nobel Prize-winning economist, Joseph Stiglitz (2002), has offered one. And among the supporters of globalization too, its role as the liberator is not so clearly evident.

Here is what Thomas Friedman (1999; p. 373), a well-known columnist for *The New York Times*, states:

The hidden hand of the market will never work without a hidden fist. McDonalds cannot flourish without McDonald Douglas, the designer of the U.S. Air Force F-15. And the hidden fist that keeps the world safe for Silicon Valley's technologies to flourish is called the U.S. Army, Air Force, Navy, and the Marine Corps.

One begins to wonder who is corrupting globalization's role. Why does its role as an invader, or its dependence on the threat of the use of military power, become the corrupted version of what is actually a liberating force only when the terrorists state it, assuming that is what "they" (all of them or some factions, those based around Afghanistan or Indonesia or Saudi Arabia or Algeria ?) do believe?

Since Newman can be located within the framework of Dominant View, it may be appropriate to point out the set of unstated assumptions upon which that framework rests. One of them requires that energies and attention be directed with a sense of urgency to terrorism. Standing alone, unqualified, de-contextualized, and torn from any historical precedents or memory, such terrorism hastens the need to identify military targets. The provocation of 9/11 is thought to be a sufficient reason. But explanations for the rise of terrorism are also offered, in an ideologically conscious manner by an increasing number of scholars, and they are repeated by those who go along with the official position, trusting their government leaders, but adding sometimes minor variations, caveats, or psychobabble. Such explanations almost always export the problem beyond American borders: it is often Islam that is blamed or the culture of certain areas or lack of democracy and/or education. Hand in glove with such a perspective is the firmly held belief that European countries, and particularly the United States, have done no harm abroad; they have exerted a benign influence, helped the poor and

the starving in other countries by providing them foreign aid and accepted refugees and immigrants from such areas. These two elements, evil comes from abroad and the United States and Europe are a force for the good in the world, are the major pillars on which the Dominant View rests.

Alternative explanations will be discussed later, but at this stage it may be noted that the Dominant View either does not entertain the possibility of different perspectives, or when it does it is for the purpose of presenting new evidence, or interpreting the old, for demolishing or considerably diminishing the significance of certain events and forces. Those events and forces are colonialism, the purpose of which was exploitation; a variety of insidious practices introduced or condoned in the so-called Third World countries in the interest of what were once called the imperatives of the Cold War; Western interference in the affairs of such countries where democratically elected governments were overthrown and dictators installed, on some occasions, and dictators removed, when they were no longer useful, in the name of introducing democracy, on others; and financing certain NGOs or other groups with a view to influencing government officials or election results.

There are certain consequences of the PA literature not questioning the assumptions of the Dominant View at least on some occasions. One of them is ignoring the considerations mentioned above. Another is implicitly accepting the view that terrorists are primitive people who are inspired by their cultures and interpretation of their religion to be violent, determined to attack innocent people abroad whose life style they envy, and committed to denying themselves the benefit of learning from Western ideas and generosity. What is expected to emerge from all that is a literature that does not raise any doubts about the policies meant to militarily crush the terrorists abroad and refine the organizational tools that thwart the security threats at home. No wonder the PA literature reflected these values and produced the results that it did.

Even in the familiar territory of policy implementation, a blowback of sorts is another consequence. The limitations of the Dominant View are being revealed in Afghanistan and Iraq in a variety of ways. First, after the predictable military success in contests between highly unequal combatants, American funding for nation-building, which was opposed until recently, may be inadequate in amount and not likely to be sustained over a sufficiently long period of time. Recent reports already reveal that while military spending in Afghanistan was high, funds promised for civilian purposes are shrinking (Rashid, 2002). This imbalance has a familiar ring to it. It may be useful to recall that it was a similar imbalance, between high military spending when armed struggle against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan was being sponsored by the CIA and the almost complete lack of interest in social and political matters after the Soviet defeat, that contributed to the instability in that area and provided the impetus for terrorist activities there in the first place. Second, the United States' military and civilian personnel are likely to be inhibited in cooperating with, even conceding power to, the people who were, until military victory was achieved, demonized, the same people that continue, after their clear defeat and extreme hardship, to reveal remarkable tenacity of faith in their religion and pride in their culture. The opportunity to rid themselves of all that baggage and embrace the American definition of the good, secular life is not being taken advantage of as enthusiastically as expected. Third, these inhibitions on the part of American personnel are further complicated by the fact that the quick military victories have so far produced less respect, and more hatred, for the United States among Arabs and Muslims. In Iraq, a recent survey by the intelligence branch of the Department of State, the results of which are still classified, are said by *The New York Times* (September 17, 2003, A12) to reveal that hostility toward Americans is not grounded only in the traditional Sunni loyalists of Saddam Hussein or, now, in Shiites as well because of the frequent raids in their areas. "As reasons for the Iraqi hostility, the defense officials cited not just disaffection over a

lack of electricity..., but cultural factors that magnify anger about the foreign military presence.”

Operating within the constraints of the Dominant View has significance for both policy making and implementation. The recent PA literature, unfortunately, does not even mention the kinds of concerns suggested above. Implementing policies by improving domestic security organizational arrangements in a geographical and cultural vacuum goes beyond ethnocentricity. Another unfortunate consequence of working within its constraints is that the slain dragon of that old dichotomy appears to be coming back to life again: policy-making, it is now being implicitly granted, is someone else’s business, PA is about implementation.

### **III. ALTERNATIVE MEANINGS**

The Dominant View often inspires images in the media, TV and radio talk shows, and chat rooms of blood-thirsty Muslims, instructed by Islam to kill the infidels at every opportunity. Fortunately, alternative meanings of 9/11 are readily available, even though they are often ignored. Here is one example. Under the supervision of Madeleine Albright, who was not known to be friendly toward Muslims or Islamic countries when she was the Secretary of State, the Pew Research Center and the *International Herald Tribune* conducted a survey of opinion leaders in several countries. As many as “58 percent of the foreign leaders said U.S. policies were responsible for the attacks while only 18 percent of the U.S. opinion leaders interviewed held that view” (Neikirk, 2001; p. 11).

The dominant understanding and interpretation of 9/11 invariably ends up with pointing the finger at some variant or the other of Islam (Wahabi, radical, madrassah-based, fundamentalist, politicized, jihad-oriented, the list goes on) and Muslim culture, beyond the personality and resources, that is, of Osama bin Ladin. Definitive understanding of the terrorists’

motivations and sources of inspiration are not known so far. What can be said with certainty is that they were educated, young, Muslim, men who were nationals of Saudi Arabia and Egypt, and they hated the United States. For many Muslims, which might include the terrorists, the meaning of 9/11, however, is similar to the foreign respondents' views in that survey. To understand their perspective, one does not have to search for vague clues, subtle hints, or hidden messages, one only has to review some events in United States' foreign policy. For many Americans, these events may be long buried in the past and they might even appear trivial, but for most Muslims their memories are both remarkably fresh and painful.

The prominent events range from the overthrow of the democratically elected government of Iran in 1953 to the present support of Israeli treatment of Palestinians, and a great deal in between. The terrorists base in Afghanistan emerged out of a deep sense of betrayal of the *mujahedeen*, some of whom later became the Taliban. It may be necessary to recall that the *mujahedeen* were Afghans, described at one time by President Ronald Reagan as the moral equivalents of the American founding fathers. They fought the American-financed war to oust the Soviets from Afghanistan; they suffered on a massive scale, with their casualties in thousands and dislocation of population in millions. When these sacrifices had paid off and the Soviets had been forced out, the United States abruptly left the scene, leaving them feeling both exploited and abandoned. It is these feelings that were channeled into terrorism later on, and it was American weapons and training that gave them some of its lethal quality. Furthermore, there is deep resentment about the stationing of American troops in Saudi Arabia. For many Muslims, the havoc that American-backed sanctions in Iraq caused its people, now being attributed exclusively to Saddam Hussein's policies, was a matter of very considerable concern already; it is now being reinforced by the events unfolding after the American military victory there. Reassurances from top government officials that American policies are not directed against Muslims, only those

who are terrorists, are often viewed with skepticism among the Muslim communities here and abroad because in virtually all the contemporary international disputes, Muslims are on one side, and the United States is either neutral or it is on the other side: Palestine, Kashmir, Sudan, and Chechnya. The public stance of the United States that combines jingoism and revenge, on the one hand, and claims of innocence and virtue, on the other, generate among Muslims feelings of either cynicism or bitterness. This alternative explanation holds that these harsh memories of humiliation and exploitation of American policies provide the seeds from which we are reaping the current harvest of terror.

To that alternative meaning of 9/11 could be added another. A group of individuals for a variety of reasons had concluded that the grounding of American foreign policy of containment was deeply flawed; they were deeply committed instead to the projection of US power on a global scale. They formed the Project for the New American Century in 1997; its founders included Elliot Abrams, Richard Armitage, John Bolton, Jeb Bush, Dick Cheney, Richard Perle, Donald Rumsfeld, and Paul Wolfowitz. The Project published in 2000 a report, "Rebuilding America's Defenses," (available at <http://www.newamericancentury.org/publicationsreports.htm>), which provided in some detail the expansive view of the role of the US in the future. It is analyzed, along with other related Department of Defense documents by David Armstrong (2002). Since many of the founders of the Project were later appointed to, and are currently holding, high positions in the current administration, some interpret the meaning of 9/11 as having very little significance for the new anti-terrorist foreign policies that are often, for rhetorical purposes, associated with that date. According to that understanding, 9/11 was not the reason for a sudden departure or a wake-up call; it provided the excuse for transforming the ideological preferences that were strongly held and published before that date into public policies.

The sound of voices that rely on these kinds of analyses has been muffled by the loud proclamations of the dominant meaning, and its substance distorted by questioning the loyalty and patriotism of those who voice it. There are exceptions, of course. One of them is former President Jimmy Carter (2002), who acknowledged the provocative nature of the recent policies. “We have thrown down counterproductive gauntlets to the rest of the world, disavowing U.S. commitments to laboriously negotiated international accords,” he wrote. “Peremptory rejection of nuclear agreements, biological weapons convention, environmental protection, anti-torture proposals, and punishment of war criminals have sometimes been combined with economic threats against those who disagree with us.”

The efforts to seek alternative meanings of 9/11 in recent PA literature are remarkably few, but they need to be recognized. Sloan (2002; p. 125), for example, identifies the need for a different kind of inquiry, but he does not undertake it.

But beyond the conduct of war, what is required in the long-term is the commitment of the international community to identify and seek to eliminate the root causes of a form of armed conflict and political violence that is as old as recorded history and as current as today and tomorrow.

Similarly, the purpose of Dubnick’s (2002, 86)

analysis is to posit four alternative war narratives that are likely to surface during the post-September 11 era. As will be noted, there are indications of each during the months following the tragedy, but none has yet emerged as the dominant post-script.

His narratives are similar in some ways to the one presented here, but they are also different; they do not include the

alternative meanings, for instance. The dominant view overlaps with his first two narratives.

I have wondered why interest in these alternative meanings is so rare in PA. The lingering influence of dichotomy I mentioned earlier comes to mind, which has been often slain but appears to be remarkably resilient. Furthermore, our training as well as the substance of our teaching, in most cases, limits our horizons in some ways, although we are reluctant to admit that—in fact, I have heard strong denunciation of any such allegation on several occasions. Leaving our wounded pride aside for a moment, there is no denying that the amount of interest in various aspects of policy *making* in our publications and our national conference is quite limited. To that list should be added the fact that the tradition of questioning the motives, assumptions, interests, and cultural sensitivity of policy makers is not well developed in PA literature.

#### **IV. CIVIL LIBERTIES**

Soon after 9/11, residents in the United States from mostly Muslim countries were rounded up in large numbers, detained, and interrogated for long periods. They were not allowed to contact anyone immediately after being taken into custody; when they were located by their families, they were moved to other locations, often very far from where they originally lived; they were not informed ahead of time of the evidence that was to be used against them; and for months, many were held in solitary confinement. In a recent broadcast of “60 Minutes,” those interviewed stated that they were tortured and were considering filing a class action suit to collect damages. The exact number of individuals who were so detained has not been released, but it is thought to be between 1,500 and 2,000. The Attorney General’s reason for holding them is that they are “suspected terrorists” but the

grounds for suspicion are apparently so unfounded that not a single one has been charged with involvement in September 11 attacks; and with the exception of four people indicted on support-for-terrorism charges in late August, no one has been charged with any terrorists act. Those arrested on immigration charges—the vast majority—have been effectively “disappeared.” Their cases are not listed on the public docket, their hearings are closed to the public and the presiding judges are instructed to neither confirm nor deny that their cases exist, if asked. Two district courts and a unanimous court of appeals have held this practice unconstitutional...(Cole, 2002, 20-21)

Such governmental harassment, made legal by the USA PATRIOT Act, paralleled, perhaps even encouraged, the non-governmental one that occurred on a larger scale with even more lethal consequences. The actions against Muslims and Arabs, or those who looked like them, ranged from obscene calls to three murders. It was in view of the anticipation of these events, or soon after they began, that the issue of civil liberties began to be raised, and resistance to its violations began to be noticed.

The relative lack of interest in recent PA literature in civil liberties, or sympathy for its victims, may have to do with the inadequate attention to the vulnerable generally, indifference toward an ethnic minority most Americans have little or no contact with, negative representation of them in the media, and/or Orientalist prejudices. It may also be based on the mistaken view that protections that civil liberties provide in the U.S. are limited only to its citizens. In a very recent case (*Zadvydas v. Davis*), the Supreme Court held,

once an alien enters the country, the legal circumstance changes, for the Due Process Clause applies to all ‘persons’ within the United States, including aliens, whether their presence here is lawful, unlawful, temporary, or permanent. (Quoted in Dworkin, 2002, 46)

But attempts continue to be made to threaten American citizens' civil liberties. Two citizens, Yasser Hamdi and Jose Padilla, were arrested and declared by the president to be "enemy combatants"; that is all that was thought to be necessary for

the indefinite, incommunicado incarceration of any US citizen...This proposition is so extreme that even the US Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit, by far the most conservative federal circuit in the country, rejected it. (Cole, 2002; p. 22).

Some of those who are, or are suspected of being, Taliban fighters were captured in Afghanistan and brought to Guantanamo Bay; at one time their number was around 600 (Lelyveld, 2002). After some confusion, the legal cover found for detaining them was to give them the status of "unlawful combatants." The official reason for holding them, in conditions that some have described as resembling a human zoo, was the gathering of intelligence. Virtually all of them are Muslims but they come from more than 30 countries; those from Saudi Arabia are the largest in number. Their detention period could be indefinite. They are not allowed the protections accorded prisoners of war. Justification for keeping them in such a legal vacuum is based ultimately on military strength.

I recall the words of Thomas Szasz (1974; p. 20): "In the animal kingdom, the rule is, eat or be eaten; in the human kingdom, define or be defined."

In the recent PA literature, Shamsul Haque (2002) is clearly the exception. His overview of threats to civil liberties that these changes pose to all who live the United States, citizens as well as immigrants, is highly valuable. He discusses four kinds of rights. (a) The civil rights are challenged because the USA PATRIOT Act grants to the executive branch certain unprecedented powers of "surveillance, including gathering

sensitive personal records, tracking e-mail and internet usage, monitoring financial transactions, practicing sneak-and-peak searches, and using roving wiretaps” (p. 173). (Lisa Nelson’s [2002] analysis of the impact of new technology—she examines Carnivore carefully—that filters information for intelligence gathering purposes is also important here.) (b) The threats to political rights consist of recent changes that affect “the protection of due process under the Fifth Amendment and the safeguards against ‘unreasonable searches and seizures’ guaranteed by the Fourth Amendment” (Haque, 2002; p. 174). Also adversely affected are freedoms of speech and association because of the Act’s “broad definition of domestic terrorism, which may cover political dissent, civil disobedience, and [even] environmentalism...” (p. 174) (c) In regard to minority rights, the stereotypes of Asians and Arabs that have been created in the United States have increased intolerance toward them at home, and probably encouraged repression against Muslims in China, Chechnya, and Kashmir. (Haque does not mention the fact that under the Act, the president has the power to declare terrorist any person or organization, and, having done that, the assets of that person or organization can be frozen. By exercising that power, two of the three largest Muslim charities have been shut down; they are said to be “under investigation.” No charges have been brought against them, and the period for which these funds will remain frozen by government is not known. Giving charity or *zakat* is a religious duty of all Muslims.) (d) Social rights, which refer to entitlements to public services, suffered as well. Budgetary allocations for defense and domestic security have increased while spending on social programs has declined.

This is an incomplete account of the transformation in the civil liberties that has occurred since 9/11/. The issues touched on are grave, and they require urgent and frequent attention. For these reasons, it was gratifying to note that in the special issue of *PAR* six articles appeared in a section set aside for this topic. (Haque’s was not among them; it was in another section.) On closer scrutiny, however, it became clear that one of the six

articles, by Kirilin and Kirilin (2002), brought together interesting data that revealed that citizens' propensity for civic engagement had decreased since 9/11, but it said nothing about civil liberties. Another one, by Spicer (2002), was also not concerned with civil liberties but with the range of government operations. Spicer expressed strong preference for government as a civil association that performed only minimal functions, and acted mostly as an umpire, which was to be clearly distinguished from the dreaded vision of government viewed as a purposive association. He worried that the resources mobilized for fighting terrorism may be redirected later for the achievement of social purposes. I wondered if making food stamps available to the poor had already pushed the government into the dangerous category of a purposive association.

The remaining four articles (by Anthony Lewis, Lisa Nelson, Jon Gould, and Melvin Dubnick) do touch on aspects of civil liberties, some of them very briefly (Lewis contributed a page and a half), others in more detail. The reason for the terribly abstract, anti-septic, and distant feeling I had on reading them was not hard to locate. I was stunned to note that except for a fleeting comment in two articles, to which I will turn in just a moment, there was *no* reference to Muslims or Islam or Arabs in any of the six articles and the introduction in the entire section devoted to civil liberties! Since the obvious needs to be stated, at what decibel level in order to be heard it is hard to tell, it was the fear that Muslims as individuals or as a group may become the primary targets of violence and discrimination that the issue of civil liberties surfaced in the first place. (Non-Muslims are also threatened, but that is not widely known.) Making a passing reference to them while writing on civil liberties in a post-9/11 context is comparable to publishing an article on civil rights in the 1960s while mentioning African-Americans in a cursory fashion!

In one article, Jon Gould (2002) sought to carefully balance civil liberties against the need for government surveillance. He

identified six factors that most Americans are willing to tolerate in order “to uncover those individuals who pose a threat” (p. 76). One of the six dealt with “limiting the search...to more relevant suspects might smack of illegal discrimination.” He stated, “Given the demographics of the September 11<sup>th</sup> hijackers, some might call for intensive screening of young Middle Eastern men who seek to board an aircraft.” He proceeded then to reveal the findings of a poll in which 68 percent of the respondents stated that it would be a mistake to “put Arabs and Arab-Americans in this country under special surveillance” (p. 77). Since Gould moved on after this, and did not mention Arabs or Muslims again, he left behind an incomplete story. No mention was made of the several widely reported cases of Muslims who were not allowed to board airplanes for which they had confirmed reservations. Or any reference to the sweeps in Arab and Muslim neighborhoods soon after 9/11 from which a large number of men were taken into federal custody. What he leaves the reader with is a balancing act generously tipping in favor of civil liberties as reflected in a public opinion poll while completely ignoring their violations in practice.

In the other article, Dubnick (2002; p. 89) stated that while the official message coming from the White House and the administration “from September 11 onward has been a clear warning that Arab Americans and Islamics of all nationalities should not be the target of revenge or reprisal,” there was also an “enemy within narrative” that could be heard as well, and the latter message was probably heard very clearly by such agencies as Immigration and Naturalization Service and FBI. It is quite remarkable that even in this one sentence in which the group under attack is identified, Dubnick could not name it accurately. Who are the Islamics? Did he mean Muslims? Islamists?

In both articles, or any of the six for that matter, the authors cannot be accused of expressing any sense of outrage over, or sympathy with, the Muslims and Arabs whose civil liberties were being violated. Maintaining such a distance is in

itself worth exploring, although I will not attempt such exploration here. Clearly, we have a long way to go.

Looking to the civil rights' future, conventional wisdom holds that when the danger is over, better sense prevails, balance is restored, and the rule of law is again respected by the government. But Ronald Dworkin (2002; p. 45) draws our attention to the different nature of the problem that the nation currently faces.

We are ashamed now of what we did then: we count the [Supreme] Court's past tolerance of anti-sedition laws, interments, and McCarthyism as among the worst stains on its record. That shame comes easier now, of course, because we no longer fear the Kaiser, or kamikazes, or Stalin. It may be a long time before we stop fearing international or domestic terrorism, however, and we must therefore be particularly careful now. What we lose now, in our commitment to civil rights and fair play, may be much harder later to regain.

When the PA literature focuses on a variety of issues, there is a sense of comfort and familiarity—with the concepts used, the outcomes expected, the citations relied on, etc. But when the gears shift and the issues now have to include the victims of governmental overreach, there is no easy way to absorb these concerns, and there is a disconnect of sorts, since the language to name and confront it is far less fully developed.

The vitality of Dworkin's analysis for PA deserves to be widely known. Prompt and eager efforts in PA literature to institutionalize the combating of international and domestic fear, which several articles in *PAR* clearly do, may prolong, if Dworkin is right, the danger to civil liberties. The possibility that PA is complicit in this fashion is a serious issue that needs urgent attention.

## V. CONCLUSION

I have wondered what implications would emerge for PA from including *all* these three perspectives. It is an issue that needs exploring in our professional journals and conferences. However, here are some tentative speculations. In our curriculum and research, such inclusion might lead to the incorporation of some discussion of policy frameworks within which administration takes place. The legacy of Cold War, which has rarely been emphasized, might be added for providing a historical backdrop. With the growing interest in terror, some understanding of orientalism would greatly broaden our horizons; and exploring the potential or existing culpability of PA in institutionalizing fear may broaden the interest in constitutional democracy. Some familiarity with American foreign policy could add a dimension of interdisciplinarity that we often overlook. And who can deny these days the usefulness of knowing something about the politics, ownership, distribution, and consumption of oil. While these concerns might be spread across the curricula, they might also breathe new life into international and comparative public administration. In view of the current interest in including non-governmental actors in PA's curriculum, there are a variety of fascinating areas that have opened up: development of the institutions of PA in Afghanistan and Iraq in the context of explicitly acknowledging the national, regional and American interests; the tension between relying on NGOs, on the one hand, and private businesses, on the other; the renewed interest in industrial-military-complex; and the role of monetary payoffs in obtaining agreements of other countries, on one hand, and the support of individuals and groups within foreign countries to facilitate military occupation, on the other.

Few would argue with the proposition that broadening the scope of interpretive abilities is likely to improve our understanding of public policies. I have indicated how frequently we in PA tend to gravitate toward parochial and narrow routines of the past. I have also tried to offer a different framework for

understanding the same events. I entertain the immodest expectation that such a framework when applied might develop the capacity for searching for diverse and varied meanings of events, policies, and even organizational restructuring plans. If there is any merit to this kind of analysis, I have only scratched the surface. Other possibilities were mentioned recently by Louis Menand (2002, 98) although he did so partly in jest.

September 11<sup>th</sup> showed that the United States is hated by many good people around the world because it is an imperial bully; the United States is hated by many bad people around the world because it is a beacon of freedom and opportunity; Islam is a civilization irredeemably hostile to Western values; Islam is a civilization assimilating Western values; globalization has gone too far; globalization has not gone far enough...

The task of sorting out explanations of major events and developments along these lines—call them hypotheses, if you must—in the curriculum of PA can only enrich it. To put it differently, not doing so, will give us in many cases only monolithic versions of received wisdom, silencing many unfamiliar voices, and students in classes trying to stay awake.

It is perhaps appropriate to end with an untidy note that prevents, or at least reduces, the prospects of misunderstanding. First, I have been critical of scholars writing for the special issue of *PAR* dated September, 2002, who did not have access to some information that I have relied on, and that may appear unfair. While that may be true in some cases, my belief is that the general tendencies that I have identified are still valid. However, nothing would please me more than to see convincing evidence that PA literature had already moved in the direction I am suggesting, and that my critique and proposals are unnecessary. Second, nothing in this paper is meant to justify the actions of the terrorists. Those steeped in the dominant view have sometimes made unwarranted inferences of this kind when

encountering dissenting opinions. Third, any kind of analysis, it needs to be readily acknowledged, if pushed to extreme limits, will produce absurd results. Search for diverse meanings does not automatically validate all of them equally. Such search has led in some instances to bizarre conclusions through convoluted reasoning. Jean Baudrillard's statement about 9/11 illustrates the problem: "We can say that they *did* it, but we *wished for* it" (quoted in Menand, 2002; p.101, emphasis in original).

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