

A BRIEF HISTORY OF ANTI-AMERICANISM: FROM CULTURAL CRITICISM TO TERRORISM

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This article provides an historical examination of anti-Americanism from its beginnings to the current day. I argue that anti-Americanism is not a comprehensive or coherent belief system or ideology, but rather a series of criticisms and prejudices regarding America that have haphazardly been labelled anti-Americanism. Chronologically the term is first associated with European cultural laments about American manners and uncouthness and then, as America becomes a global power, more politically and economically based criticism comes to the fore. Finally, in recent times what has been labelled 'anti-American terrorism'² has reared its head. This article does not pretend to be a comprehensive overview of all forms of anti-Americanism across the globe as each nation has its own story to tell. What I have drawn on are the dominant or most noted types of criticism of America throughout history.

This history is based on what other commentators and scholars have labelled anti-Americanism, a position that has its distinct advantages given there is no widely agreed upon definition of the term.³ Scholarship on the topic has been largely patchy and impressionistic, particularly until very recently. The most detailed study of the subject - Paul Hollander's *Anti-Americanism* (1995) - is a one-sided attack on anti-Americanism as an irrational position largely adopted by the misguided left. Similarly lacking in balance is Stephen Haseler's *The varieties of anti-Americanism* (1985), which counsels America to largely ignore the criticisms of foreigners (whom Haseler principally sees as being envious of America's global power). Arguably the best book written on anti-Americanism during the twentieth century is *The rise and fall of anti-Americanism* (1990), an edited collection of French scholarship on the topic. In this volume Marie-France Toinet suggests that the use of the term anti-Americanism 'is only fully justified if it implies systematic opposition - a sort of allergic reaction - to America as a whole.'⁴ A broader definition is offered by Alvin Rubinstein and Donald Smith who see anti-Americanism 'as any hostile action or expression that becomes part and parcel of an undifferentiated attack on the foreign policy, society, culture and values of the United States.'⁵ Bringing us much closer to the common use of the term is Robert Singh's suggestion that anti-Americanism is rather like Justice Potter Stewart's famous definition of pornography - we instinctively 'know it when we see it'.⁶

Because there is no agreed upon definition, what differentiates anti-Americanism from reasonable criticism of the US is often confused or, in

fact, deliberately distorted. Calling a stance anti-American is often a way of trying to silence debate - a tactic arguably employed by Senator Richard Alston when he attacked the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's coverage of the 2003 Iraq War. On the other hand, America is widely disliked in many countries with anti-American comment being commonplace.⁷ Another conceptual problem is that an aversion to America often coexists, within a nation or an individual, with an embracing of America. This ambivalence - the coexistence of attraction and disdain - has been long felt. For example, Alexis de Tocqueville, generally considered an admirer of American democracy, wrote, 'I know of no other country, where, by and large, there exists less independence of mind or true freedom of discussion than in America'.⁸ For many Europeans, America represented a bright new beginning, a return to the innocence and perfection of the garden of Eden; something reflected in early American place names such as New Haven, New Jerusalem, New Hope, Providence and Eden. However, this new world naturally had its doubters and disparagers from its beginnings, and more so as it became a rival and later a cultural and political threat. Cornelius de Pauw, in the late eighteenth century, 'complained that the discovery and conquest of the New World was "the greatest tragedy" ever to befall humanity.'⁹

To give order to the strong and critical opinions that have long existed regarding America, this article will engage in an historical discussion that separates these attacks into four phases of anti-Americanism. The first phase extended from the inception of America as a European settlement to the end of World War II. In this period anti-Americanism was largely culturally-oriented criticism premised on European superiority and American cultural inferiority. The second phase was that of the Cold War (1945-1989). What was called anti-Americanism in this period was more politically and ideologically oriented criticism. This tended to be leftist, ranging across a broad spectrum from Soviet propaganda to the street protest 'leftism' of various anti-Vietnam War protest movements. In this period the false and disingenuous labelling of objections to American policies as 'anti-Americanism' became more prominent. The third phase of anti-Americanism started in 1989 with the end of the Cold War. This period saw a greater emphasis on the ill effects of American capitalism and Americanisation and continues on today with the focus on anti-Americanism as a dominant component of anti-globalisation. The last phase of anti-Americanism started on 11 September 2001 with the arrival of terrorist anti-Americanism as a significant and widely discussed force. What is important to stress is that these phases are not hermetically sealed off from each other; early forms of criticism continue across various phases and often reinforce one another. The other key point to make is that although

this periodisation is mine, I will be discussing what others have labelled anti-Americanism in the existing literature, which is largely western-centric.

America: Uncultured but Cocksure

Criticism of America started to form into a set of proto-anti-American ideas and stereotypes in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century as the US became something more than a colonial or religious outpost. The earliest forms of anti-American comment tended to be cultural criticism of the lack of taste, grace and civility in American habits and everyday life. European writers, such as Charles Dickens and Frances Trollope built up a picture of Americans as rude and indifferent to manners or polite conversation.¹⁰ The French diplomat and bishop Talleyrand (1754-1838) anticipated two centuries of European commentary when he declared ‘thirty-two religions and just one dish’.¹¹ And summing up the criticisms of nineteenth-century European intellectuals about America’s lack of civility and taste, Norwegian writer Knut Hamsun commented that ‘America is a very backward country culturally’.¹² However, what infuriated Europeans the most was that this American backwardness and uncouthness was combined with what they regarded as a cocksure arrogance. Reflecting on this, Simon Schama writes, ‘By the end of the nineteenth century, the stereotype of the ugly American - voracious, preachy, mercenary, and bombastically chauvinist - was firmly in place in Europe.’¹³ In short, Americans were seen as overconfident and self-important, and according to Schama it was this American ‘egocentricity’ that most aggravated Europeans.

The assertion of European superiority has long been a theme of trans-Atlantic relations, with America being the anti-Europe. The German-Israeli historian Dan Diner describes America as

*the counter-world to Europe, a complementary continent of occidental civilization and a screen upon which to project all the images and metaphors arising from its contrast to Europe; a screen upon which to project isolated portions of self-hatred owing mainly to modernity, but blamed only on the New World.*¹⁴

The early forms of anti-Americanism pitted an idealised version of European culture against a stereotype of an uncultured but brazen America.¹⁵ This battle between so called high and low culture, and the later more nationalistic battle over the Americanisation of other cultures have remained central themes of anti-American discourse. Beyond plain rivalry, nineteenth century criticism of America also held a belief that American materialism and industrialism were a peril to European sensibilities and

lifestyles. In these critiques, Europe is depicted as the aesthetic bulwark against rampant American materialism and industrialism.¹⁶ Although no longer being just upheld by a conservative elite, this nineteenth-century critique of a cultured Europe and a philistine America is still visible today in the anti-globalisation movement. The protests of the French farmer and anti-globalisation celebrity, Jose Bove, are a good example of the continuation of this long tradition of European anti-Americanism.¹⁷

Some would say little has changed regarding how Europeans view their trans-Atlantic cousins, except that the stereotypes are now provided by Hollywood and American sitcom producers, rather than by European novelists and commentators. However, during the twentieth century, criticism of America became much more politically oriented with America's emergence after World War I as a global power much resented. The French in particular found it galling that, on top of their late entry into the war, the Americans had come out such clear global winners. Tony Judt in his intellectual history of early- and mid-twentieth century France suggests that anti-Americanism developed from a general critique into a recognised 'ism' in the 1930s in France. He argues that, like earlier nineteenth-century criticism, this 1930s anti-Americanism was largely conservative in its origins with strong Romantic overtones. American society was criticised for becoming something akin to Chaplin's *Modern Times* writ-large, with its materialism and industrialism seen as a real threat to the beauty and variety of western culture.¹⁸ For most of these critics, Europe was and always would be the soul of western civilisation; however, for some anti-Americans the Orient was romanticised as the antidote to the American way.¹⁹ Important criticisms of American materialism, corporatisation, and conformity that emerged in this period were pushed to the sidelines post-WWII with the discrediting of the European right and the rise of the communist threat.²⁰

Furthermore, in the 1930s a particular strand of anti-Americanism had become an extension of anti-Semitism. In the minds of certain critics, Jews were associated with rootless modernity and capitalism, with the worst outcome of these forces being America. Summing up this tendency, Judt translates French right-wing columnist Robert Brasillach's answer to the question of what separated France from America as 'The answer is threefold: its hypocrisy (a frequent charge), its dollars, and international Jewry.' Judt goes on to write, 'As the last bastion of Jewish power in the world, the United States was the enemy of revolutionaries and reactionaries, anti-modernists and socialists alike.'²¹ This list of enemies points to the plasticity of America as a target for criticism, blame and grievance.

America: The New Imperialists

Criticism of America after WWII tended to be more leftist, with communism being in many ways the opposite and natural enemy of the American creed. Seymour Martin Lipset has written that America is more than a country - it is a creed or in fact an 'ism'.²² In part this reflects that during the Cold War, America, like the Soviet Union, symbolised an ideological approach to economic life and, to a lesser extent, political life. These two nations and their belief systems were often pitted against each other in a 'you are either for or against us' fashion reminiscent of the rhetoric of the current Bush administration. Thus at its simplest level to be pro-Soviet was to be anti-American (or in American domestic parlance un-American). Although this is a very reductionist approach, it is one largely adopted by Hollander in his *Anti-Americanism*. Recruitment to the pro-Soviet cause, however, was undoubtedly hindered by the behaviour of the Soviet regime. Nonetheless communist parties in Europe, particularly in France, had some success arguing that America was intent on global military and economic domination and needed to be opposed. Possibly the most noted early Cold War 'anti-American' rallies were large protests organised by the French Communists against the Korean War. These included a sizable anti-war gathering when the American military commander General Ridgway visited Paris in 1952. The French Communists lambasted Ridgway, dubbing him the 'Bacterial General' based on their claims that America was engaged in germ warfare in Korea.²³ By the time of the Vietnam War a much broader range of leftist parties, in Europe and elsewhere including Australia, were heavily involved in organising anti-war activities, which were frequently criticised as being anti-American.

Not all post-WWII criticism of America was leftist and an interesting case in point is French political opposition to American foreign policy in the early Cold War. French commentary and politics from the 1930s through the early Cold War era have created the broadly held view that anti-Americanism is significantly a French tradition, buoyed in France in particular by a resentment of American power and America's emergence from another major war stronger rather than weaker.²⁴ The right-wing Gaullist Party and its leader General de Gaulle (the French President from 1958-1969) challenged American policy in a number of areas including the US push to rearm Germany under a European Defence Community (EDC) proposal in the early 1950s. De Gaulle also opposed proposed changes to the NATO troop command, with this issue leading to France's partial withdrawal from NATO. De Gaulle's decision to recognise Communist China in 1964, his opposition to American policy in Vietnam, and his criticism of Israeli conduct in the 1967 war also put him clearly at odds with

the US. These conflicts represented both a difference of outlook and interests; furthermore they were part of an attempt to reassert French independence and honour,²⁵ all of which seen through American eyes made the French a difficult ally.

Gaullism in post-war western Europe was unique; it certainly had no other right-wing parallels, beyond rather marginalised groups or individuals such as the conservative British MP Enoch Powell. Generally in western nations it was left-wing parties and movements that propagated anti-Americanism, a fact made more prominent by the rise of the Korean and then the Vietnam anti-war movement. These movements helped created a new and virulent critique of America opposed to what was seen as the unjustified and imperialistic use of American force. In the case of the Vietnam War protesters tried (and were drawn to) a variety of means and tactics, certainly not all of which were anti-American; nonetheless some undoubtedly were, as the *Washington Post* columnist E. J. Dionne regretfully remarks in this quote about the American anti-Vietnam War movement:

*Critics of American foreign policy have nearly always been labelled 'anti-American' by their foes; being cast into the political darkness is one of the risks of dissent. But rarely have dissenters cooperated so willingly to validate the claims of their enemies. By embracing anti-Americanism as a noble cause, the farther fringes of the New Left divided and set back the anti-war movement.*²⁶

As John Kane has persuasively written, the Vietnam War was a time when the image of a virtuous America lost much credibility both internally and amongst friends and allies.²⁷ The Vietnam conflict has undoubtedly also had a long political legacy. What was interpreted in Australia as the anti-Americanism of the anti-Iraq War movement of 2003 has, from its slogans to its general worldview, a good deal in common with the anti-Vietnam War movement. This is not surprising given the impact the anti-Vietnam War movement had on the generation of Australian baby boomers. The conflict was also a watershed for Australia as a country with an independent voice on major foreign policy issues. Jean Bethke Elshtain similarly notes the parallels between the anti-Vietnam and anti-2003 Iraq War protests in the US.²⁸ However, one important difference was that many of the anti-Vietnam War protesters were sympathetic towards Ho Chi-minh and his government whereas in 2003 Saddam Hussein's regime had very few supporters. Despite the obvious significance of the Vietnam War, two of the most detailed works on anti-Americanism - Hollander's *Anti-Americanism* and Richard Crockatt's *America Embattled* - barely discuss the anti-Vietnam War movement. This seems a clear weakness and reflects the rather

haphazard scholarship on anti-Americanism. Instead of Vietnam, Hollander pays considerable attention to objections to American policy in Nicaragua in the 1980s,²⁹ and also looks in detail at criticisms of America in the United Nations forums in the 1970s.³⁰ Both of these cases illustrate the lack of good will and trust between America and foreign governments and foreign opinion makers. Hollander particularly focuses on American and European pro-Sandinista supporters whom he largely depicts as being driven by a combination of knee-jerk anti-Americanism and socialist fantasies (principally that Nicaragua would prove that socialism works brilliantly when given a real chance). In Hollander's account this outlook has little to do with the reality of American foreign policy or the behaviour of the Sandinista leadership but instead reflects the psychological needs of many of the Sandinistas' western supporters. This critique is reminiscent of the neoconservative criticism of New Class liberals in America as promoters of the causes of the poor for their own self-aggrandisement.³¹ For all Hollander's criticism of the one eyed anti-Americanism of the pro-Sandinista movement, his account is far from being a neutral or comprehensive assessment of the rights and wrongs of US policy in Nicaragua. Instead it is a polemic against a certain type of leftist sympathiser whom Hollander is seeking to discredit; in so doing he seeks to discredit anti-Americanism as a political outlook.

Arguably world opinion softened towards America in the late 1970s with this being particularly noted in France where anti-American sentiment seemed on the wane.³² Even while the French Minister of Culture took the culturally significant step of imposing quotas on American television programmes and films, some noted former socialists amongst the French intelligentsia were moving toward a more pro-American stance. These included Bernard-Henri Levy and Andre Glucksmann who denounced French radicals for naively sympathising with Maoist China and other brutal regimes. According to a number of accounts, the French left in general was shaken by the 1974 publication of Alexander Solzhenitsyn's *Gulag Archipelago*, which 'severely undermined residual sympathies for the Soviet Union, just as the later revelations about communist behaviour in Cambodia shook liberal sympathies for Third World socialism.'³³ It was in this milieu that Levy emerged as an intellectual celebrity in France, where he continues to be very well known and one of the leading anti-anti-Americans.³⁴ At the national political level the French Socialists led by President Francois Mitterrand supported the US-NATO policy of installing Cruise and Pershing missiles in western Europe. This sympathetic outlook towards American strategic policy in Europe stood in stark contrast to the policies of the West German SPD and the British Labour Party, both of which strongly opposed these weapons being placed in their respective countries.

In Britain and West Germany in the 1980s, the presence of American bases and nuclear weapons became issues of considerable public antipathy and longstanding protest such as at Greenham Common.³⁵ However, at the same time the conservative Kohl and Thatcher governments staunchly defended their alliance with the US throughout the 1980s. A backlash against American bases spread to a number of places including the Philippines³⁶ and more recently to Japan and South Korea. Chalmers Johnson has written ominously about the potential the latter two countries hold for anti-Americanism in his book *Blowback* - a title, and term, that has become synonymous with recent claims of anti-Americanism. The term blowback was first used in a political sense by the CIA in reference to involvement in the 1953 overthrow of the Iranian Prime Minister. 'The word', writes James Risen, 'has since come into use as shorthand for the unintended consequences of covert operations.'³⁷ Johnson and others have suggested the CIA support of the Afghan mujahideen and Osama bin Laden is a case in point of anti-American blowback.³⁸ As this last example suggests, criticisms of America's use of its military and political power have continued beyond the end of the Cold War and remain a major source of what is often labelled anti-Americanism. The key difference in these current foreign policy debates and conflicts is that the Soviet Union no longer exists as an alternative pole or source of support.

The Post-Cold War World: Are we all Americans now?

The end of the Cold War was widely predicted to usher in a new era of harmony on political and ideological matters. Hollander predicted that there would be a reduction of anti-capitalist sentiment which for him is one of the key strands of anti-Americanism.³⁹ However, rather like predictions of the 'end of ideology' a generation earlier, these pronouncements turned out to be premature with America's victory in the Cold War not guaranteeing it global support. Rather new issues have led to unparalleled disagreements between former NATO allies with the 2003 Iraq conflict being the most obvious example. At a general level the end of the Cold War led us into what has been widely dubbed the age of globalisation which continues through to today. The anti-Americanism of this period is frequently associated with the anti-globalisation movement and its fears of a world dominated by American capitalist interests and American culture.⁴⁰ These anti-globalisation concerns are often broader than American dominance, but nonetheless the rhetoric and protests of these movements more often than not single out American multinationals, American influence on the IMF and World Bank, and America's failure to sign the Kyoto protocol when looking to blame any particular country. Similarly, it is America that is most at fault for world poverty, environmental degradation, and global conflict. Some of

these criticisms are fair and justified, others are indiscriminate and are rightly called anti-American. Amongst many in the anti-globalisation movement, 'America' has become a code word for all the various ills of the world, reminiscent of its use in the mid-nineteenth century, when '*America* was already a synonym in certain French circles for whatever was disturbing or unfamiliar about the present.'⁴¹

With a backdrop of widespread scepticism about America in the post-Cold War period, the attacks of 11 September 2001 elicited an ambivalent response from the rest of the world, something which took many Americans by surprise. Reflecting the noted insularity of their society,⁴² Americans seemed largely unaware of how America and Americans were viewed around the globe. In the wake of 9/11 the president and society were to ask 'why do they hate us?' in reference to terrorists and their supporters. The answer to this question, however, is possibly much more straightforward than trying to puzzle out why anti-Americanism is often just as predominant among America's so-called allies as its enemies. The answer to this second predicament is borne out of the history of grievances and concerns plotted above.

Anti-American Terrorism

The violent anti-Americanism symbolised by the 9/11 attacks has undoubtedly made the subject of anti-Americanism much more serious than the parlour room denunciations of American manners and culture of an earlier era. However while 11 September 2001 marked a new phase of anti-Americanism, the concerns of the previous phase have continued largely unabated. Like most periodised starting points, the beginnings of violent anti-Americanism can be traced to earlier events such as politically motivated attacks on, and murders of, Americans in Beirut from the 1970s onwards, the Iranian hostage crisis of 1979-1980, the 1993 detonation of a van bomb in the underground car park in the World Trade Center, the 1998 car bomb attacks on the US embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam, and the 2000 suicide bombing of the USS *Cole* in Eden Harbour, Yemen. All of these attacks had anti-American motivations as Barry and Judith Colp Rubin argue in their recent book on anti-American terrorism,⁴³ but they were thought of as more random events before 11 September 2001. The term anti-American terrorism was barely mentioned in the pre-9/11 literature and the Rubins and others have animated this earlier history in light of the events of 9/11.

Following 9/11 many theories abounded about why the attacks had occurred.⁴⁴ However, as Elshtain has noted there has been a tendency to not take the terrorists - Osama bin Laden and al Qaeda - at their word and

instead look for deeper and possibly more complicated reasons for the attacks.⁴⁵ For Elshtain this is largely due to the inability of most commentators to take religious messages (such as al Qaeda's declared *jihād* against America) seriously; as a result they see such statements as 'widow dressing'. Instead they seem to believe that the 'the heart of the matter lies elsewhere, in leftover colonial ire or antiglobalist chagrin.'⁴⁶ Elshtain's argument that more attention needs to be paid to the statements and actions of al Qaeda and other radical Islamic organisations is an important addition to the post-9/11 discourse which has often been characterised by commentators and politicians bringing too much of their own political baggage to bear on why the attacks occurred. Although Elshtain is right to highlight the importance of religious motivations, as I will illustrate below, it is the intersection of religious and territorial concerns that most animates the statements and actions of anti-American terrorists.

In analysing 9/11 one of the crucial issues is that of cause and effect. In other words, what actions and political positions taken by the US principally precipitated the terrorist attacks? It seems that government assessments in America, Australia and the UK *and* radical understandings from some leftist academics cast the net far too wide. George W. Bush, John Howard and Tony Blair have all said those responsible for the 9/11 attacks hate America (and like-minded nations) because of their freedoms and liberties - in short because of their way of life. Left-wing scholars have cited colonialism, poverty, globalisation, and twentieth century American foreign policy as the causes of the attacks. However, a series of speeches, interviews and videoed comments by Osama bin Laden and other al Qaeda leaders⁴⁷ reveal seemingly more delimited and specific reasons for targeting America than much of the standard commentary acknowledges. These speeches state their grievances directly and, with considerable repetition, they condemn America for its 'occupying of the country of the two Holy places', for its alliance with the Jews in oppressing and killing Palestinians and occupying the sacred al-Aqsa mosque and Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, and for its policies in Iraq which have led to the death of 600,000 children (later claimed by bin Laden to be 1 million children).⁴⁸ It is these policies that al Qaeda clearly states justify the killing of Americans, with once again the clear aim being America's retreat from the Muslim world. Bin Laden bluntly states, 'What happened on September 11 is nothing but a reaction to the continuing injustice being done to our children in Palestine, Iraq, Somalia, southern Sudan, and elsewhere, as well as Kashmir and Asia.'⁴⁹ While this statement refers to a wide variety of conflicts, the underlying message is consistently the same - let Muslims govern their societies without outside interference.

Bin Laden and others in the al Qaeda leadership seem to believe that America can be forced to retreat and that it has far less stomach for war than the Soviets whom al Qaeda helped push out of Afghanistan. In his 1996 statement entitled 'Declaration of War' bin Laden paints the Americans as cowards, asserting:

when the explosion in Beirut took place [in] 1983. . . . You were turned into scattered bits and pieces at that time; 241 mainly Marines [and] soldiers were killed. And where was this courage of yours when two explosions made you to leave Aden [after the attack on the USS Cole] in less than twenty-four hours!

But your most disgraceful case was in Somalia, where - after vigorous propaganda about the power of the United States and its post-Cold War leadership of the new world order - you moved tens of thousands of international force[s], including 28,000 American soldiers, into Somalia. However, when tens of your soldiers were killed in minor battles and one pilot was dragged in the streets of Mogadishu you left the area carrying disappointment, humiliation, defeat, and your dead with you.⁵⁰

This claim that the Americans can be forced to retreat is repeated by bin Laden elsewhere and is clearly similar to the belief systems of other terrorist organisations such as Hamas that their enemies will retreat if violently hurt. In a recent comprehensive study of suicide terrorism from 1980 to 2001, Robert Pape concludes that the aim in nearly all of the 188 cases during this period was territorial. In most cases territory (or greater self-rule) was ceded in a response to the suicide terrorism, further fuelling the terrorists' belief that terrorism pays.⁵¹ A number of conclusions can be drawn from these findings. Pape argues for a tougher line with terrorists, making it clear their demands will not be met and focusing on improving homeland security to detect terrorist activity. Alternatively, a more interventionist approach to violent territorial disputes could be adopted where a United Nations arbitration process is established. A further alternative is outside armed intervention as occurred in the former Yugoslavia.

Bin Laden's criticisms of America, like some earlier forms of anti-Americanism, also propound conspiracy theories regarding the Jewish influence over America. In a variety of speeches he talks of the Jewish-crusader or Zionist-American alliance, and in a video dated 2000 he goes much further, describing America as a puppet of Israel. He asserts that

The American government is independent in name only. We believe that it represents and is controlled by Israel. If we take a look at the most important ministries in the current government [the Clinton administration], such as the defense department and the state department, and the sensitive intelligence services and others, we find that the Jews have the final say in the American government. The Jews manipulate America and use it to execute their designs in the world, particularly in the Muslim world.⁵²

Other al Qaeda members reiterate very similar views to bin Laden⁵³ as do other radical Islamic organisations such as the World Islamic Front⁵⁴ and Islamic Jihad.⁵⁵ Along with the Jewish conspiracy theories, these organisations share with bin Laden a central belief in forcing the West out of the Middle East. Ali A. Muhammad, an Islamic Jihad member, describes the organisation's objective as being 'just to attack any Western target in the Middle East, to force the government of the Western countries just to pull out' based on the Beirut experience of America pulling out after the killing of US Marines.⁵⁶

Interestingly these direct speeches and testimony from al Qaeda and other radical Islamic organisations comment little on American society and its freedoms and liberties. Instead their central tenet is the removal of America from the Middle East. Yet President Bush and his supporters maintain that the terrorist attacks are an attack on the American way of life rather than an extreme means of forcing changes in American foreign policy. My analysis here in no way means to excuse the brutality of al Qaeda's terrorist actions. Rather my aim is to highlight the weaknesses of much of the writing on the causes of the 9/11 attacks. At the same time I acknowledge that there are limits to understanding the 'logic' of the actions of such terrorist organisations.

In many regards the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 were quintessential anti-American acts, which satisfy all of the competing definitions of anti-Americanism. In targeting the Pentagon and the World Trade Centre, the terrorists deliberately attacked two famous symbols of American power as well as indiscriminately killing civilians who were predominately Americans. When asked by interviewers to justify the 9/11 attacks, bin Laden claims that the evils committed by America justified a suspension of Islamic laws regarding murder. Furthermore, he states that American civilians are a legitimate target because they vote in their leaders and their taxes fund their military (and help fund Israel's military, which is used to 'massacre Palestinians').⁵⁷ Theodore Zeldin has described anti-Americanism as pathological, arguing that: 'To hate a whole nation, to love

a whole nation, is a clear symptom of hysteria.’⁵⁸ Although al Qaeda’s terrorist anti-Americanism fits this pathology, its outlook even in all its irrationality is arguably more strategically oriented towards a set of territorial aims than Western leaders have generally acknowledged.

Conclusion

From laments about bad manners to denouncements for the supposed occupation of sacred Muslim sites in the Middle East, criticism of America has a varied and broad history. The cultural criticisms I began this examination with have remained a constant in anti-American discourse, particularly as the spectre of Americanisation is increasingly resisted. Once America emerged out of a period of infancy and isolation to being recognised as a ‘great power’ by the rest of the world, political and economic concerns also became a central plank of the anti-American thinking; and finally most recently we have seen the emergence of anti-American terrorism. My historical classification of different periods of anti-Americanism has similarities with Moises Naim’s identification of ‘five “pure” types: politico-economic, historical, religious, cultural, and psychological.’⁵⁹ However, beyond such historical or thematic classifications of anti-Americanism, much work is still required on differentiating real anti-Americanism from what would be better described as criticism. A narrow definition of anti-Americanism that defines it as an indiscriminate attack on America is probably the most useful conceptual starting point.⁶⁰

Most discussion on anti-Americanism lacks a precise definition and as a result the history of anti-Americanism has been recorded and retold in a largely impressionistic fashion. This has contributed to the incoherent nature of much so-called anti-American comment, with the term being used too broadly and thus too regularly. Hating America is a difficult challenge given the variety and contradictions encapsulated within the American nation, thus leaving one to ask *which* America or *what aspect* of American culture or politics is hated. Professed hatred generally relies on a series of stereotypes or caricatures that tells one more about the individual or group passing judgement than it does about America. None of this is to suggest that America is always right, honourable or just, but rather I would suggest the slide into anti-Americanism distinguishes no one. Prejudiced rhetoric weakens otherwise justifiable critiques of America’s many faults. At the same time it hinders the ability to appreciate the promise that America still holds for itself and the world.

ENDNOTES

¹ Thanks to John Chiddick and Katherine Delaney for their most useful comments on this article.

- ² See Barry Rubin and Judith Colp Rubin, (eds.), *Anti-American Terrorism and the Middle East*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2002.
- ³ Brendon O'Connor, 'Anti-Americanism,' in Martin Griffiths (ed.), *Routledge Encyclopaedia of International Relations*, Routledge, London, forthcoming.
- ⁴ Marie-France Toinet, 'Does anti-Americanism Exist?' in Denis Lacorne, et al., (eds.), *The Rise and Fall of Anti-Americanism*, Macmillan, London, 1990, p. 219.
- ⁵ Alvin Rubinstein and Donald Smith, 'Anti-Americanism in the Third World,' *Annals (AAPSS)*, vol. 497, May, 1988, p. 35.
- ⁶ Robert Singh, 'Are We All Americans Now? Explaining Anti-Americanisms,' *Fulbright Symposium Paper*, Brisbane, July, 2003.
- ⁷ For anyone who doubts whether the people of a wide variety of nations really dislike America, these recent surveys are worth consulting. BBC, *What the World Thinks of America*, 2003, <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/2994924.stm>>; Pew Research Center, *America's Image Further Erodes, Europeans Want Weaker Ties*, 2003, <<http://people-press.org/reports/display.php3?ReportID=175>>
- ⁸ Toinet, 'Does anti-Americanism Exist?' pp. 223-224.
- ⁹ Dan Diner, *America in the Eyes of the Germans*, Markus Wiener Publishers, Princeton, 1996, pp. 3-4
- ¹⁰ Simon Schama, 'The Unloved American,' *The New Yorker*, 3 March 2003. <http://www.newyorker.com/printable/?fact/030310fa_fact>; For a more complicated view of Dickens' position on America see George Orwell's 'Charles Dickens,' *The Collected Essays*, vol. 1, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1970, pp. 474-475.
- ¹¹ Tony Judt, 'Anti-Americans Abroad,' *The New York Review of Books*, 1 May 2003, p. 24.
- ¹² Knut Hamsun, *The Cultural Life of Modern America*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1969 [1889], p. 15. Similarly in Germany Nikolaus Lenau in the 1830s and Friedrich Kurnberger in his novel *Der Amerika-Mude* (1855) presented a picture of an America lacking in cultural worth that was fairly widely accepted (See Diner, *America in the Eyes of the Germans*, p. 33).
- ¹³ Schama, 'The Unloved American.'
- ¹⁴ Diner, *America in the Eyes of the Germans*, p. 5.
- ¹⁵ Tony Judt, *Past Imperfect*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1992, pp. 188-189.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid*; See also Diner, *America in the Eyes of the Germans*.
- ¹⁷ Sophie Meunier, 'The French Exception,' *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 79, no. 4, July/August 2000.
- ¹⁸ Judt, *Past Imperfect*, pp. 190-191.
- ¹⁹ This tradition was continued throughout the 20th century by those who promoted Third World and indigenous lifestyles as an alternative to western materialism. In America the contrast was often with eastern mysticism and Buddhism, an outlook popularised by the American counterculture from the Beats onwards (see Jack Kerouac, *Dharma Bums*, Deutsch, London, 1959).
- ²⁰ Concerns about American capitalism and modernity continued to be expressed by intellectuals despite the discrediting of French and German Romanticism. Arguably the most significant critiques in the post-WWII period were offered by the Frankfurt School theorists such as Marcuse, Adorno, Horkheimer and Habermas. Such concerns remained rather marginal; nonetheless they were to become an important component of the intellectual heritage of both the environmental movement and later the anti-globalisation movement.
- ²¹ Judt, *Past Imperfect*, p. 194.
- ²² Seymour Martin Lipset, *American Exceptionalism*, Norton, New York, 1996.
- ²³ Alexander Werth, *France 1940-1955*, Henry Holt and Company, New York, 1956, pp. 577-579.
- ²⁴ There was also lingering resentment about the behaviour of American troops. For instance in France it was commonly thought that the American army were more generous in handing

out rations to German prisoners of war than they were to French citizens (see Lacorne, *Anti-Americanism*).

²⁵ Richard Crockatt, *America Embattled*, Routledge, London, 2003, p. 58.

²⁶ E. J. Dionne, *Why Americans Hate Politics*, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1992, p. 52.

²⁷ John Kane, 'American Values or Human Rights?' *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, vol 33, no. 4, 2003.

²⁸ Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Just War Against Terror*, Basic Books, New York, 2003, p. 72.

²⁹ Hollander, *Anti-Americanism*, pp. 259-306.

³⁰ *Ibid*, pp. 343-355.

³¹ See Brendon O'Connor, *A Political History of the American welfare system*, Rowman and Littlefield, Lanham, 2004, pp. 103-108.

³² This is described as a period of reduced anti-Americanism in France (see Lacorne, *Anti-Americanism*; Crockatt, *America Embattled*, pp. 58-59).

³³ Paul Sheenan, 'Paris: Moses and Polytheism,' *The New York Review of Books*, 24 January 1980,

< <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/7558>>

³⁴ Adam Gopnik, 'The Anti-Anti-Americans,' *The New Yorker*, 1 September 2003.

³⁵ Opposition to nuclear weapons and American bases in Britain has been a long-standing concern of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) established in the UK in 1958. The protests of the 1980s were often referred to as the CND's 'second wave'.

³⁶ Where the end of the Cold War took some of the bite out of European objections to American bases, it had the opposite effect in the Philippines where the opportunity under a new leader not to renew the American naval base in Subic Bay was taken. The issue of bases continues in many parts of the world to be a source of tension. In a recent *Australian* newspaper editorial which is very positive about Australia's defence relationship with America and a proposal to have more American military equipment and personnel in Australia for training purposes, the idea of an American base in Australia is dismissed. The Editorial states, 'Nobody needs to get themselves excited about the prospect of thousands of Marines overpaid, oversexed and over here.' (*The Australian* 'Joint facility can strengthen the US alliance,' 19 January 2004). This repeats a commonly uttered WWII objection to American troops that lingers in popular consciousness across the globe.

³⁷ Quoted in Chalmers Johnson, *Blowback*, Time Warner, London, 2002, p. xii.

³⁸ *Ibid*, pp. xii-xvii. This finding is disputed by Elshtain, *Just War Against Terror*, p. 80; and by Peter Bergen, *Holy War*, Free Press, New York, 2001.

³⁹ Hollander, *Anti-Americanism*, p. 445.

⁴⁰ Benjamin Barber, *Jihad vs. McWorld*, Ballantine Books, New York, 1996; George Ritzer, *The McDonaldization Thesis*, Sage, London, 1998.

⁴¹ Judt, *Past Imperfect*, p. 188.

⁴² Loch Johnson and Kiki Caruson, 'The Seven Sins of American Foreign Policy,' *PS*, vol. XXXVI, no. 1.

⁴³ Rubin and Rubin, *Anti-American Terrorism and the Middle East*.

⁴⁴ Ken Booth and Tim Dunne, eds., *Worlds in Collision*, Palgrave, New York, 2002.

⁴⁵ See the Special Issue of the *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol. 49, no. 3, 2003. This series of articles makes little mention of Osama bin Laden's and al Qaeda's justifications for the 9/11 attacks and instead too often imprints the authors' own politics on why these attacks occurred. The worst offender is an article by Geoff Dow and Winton Higgins that provides a very tangential set of explanations for the causes of the 9/11 attacks (Geoff Dow and Winton Higgins, 'What Have We Done Wrong?' *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol. 49, no. 3, 2003).

⁴⁶ Elshtain, *Just War Against Terror*, p. 86.

⁴⁷ Rubin and Rubin, *Anti-American Terrorism and the Middle East*.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*.

⁴⁹ 'Interview with Usama bin Ladin,' (27 December 2001), in *Ibid*, p. 265. Elsewhere bin Laden condemns the UN promoted division and separation of East Timor from Indonesia (see 'Broadcast by Usama bin Ladin,' (3 November 2001), in *Ibid*, p. 259).

⁵⁰ Osama bin Laden 'Declaration of War,' (August 1996), in *Ibid*, p. 140.

⁵¹ Robert Pape, 'The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism,' *American Political Science Review*, vol. 97. no. 3, 2003.

⁵² Osama bin Laden, 'Al-Qa'ida Recruitment Video,' (2000), in Rubin and Rubin, *Anti-American Terrorism and the Middle East*, p. 178.

⁵³ Suleiman Abu Ghaith, 'Al-Qa'ida Statement,' (13 October 2001), in *Ibid*, pp. 254-255.

⁵⁴ World Islamic Front, 'Statement: Jihad against Jews and Crusaders,' (23 February), in *Ibid*, p. 149.

⁵⁵ 'Testimony of Ali A. Muhammad,' (21 October 2000), in *Ibid*, pp. 209-210.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, p. 210.

⁵⁷ 'Dawn Interview with Usama bin Ladin,' (10 November 2001), in *Ibid*, p. 261.

⁵⁸ Theodore Zeldin, 'The Pathology of anti-Americanism,' in Lacorne, *The Rise and Fall of anti-Americanism*, p. 35.

⁵⁹ Moises Naim, 'Anti-Americanisms,' *Foreign Policy*, January/February 2002.

⁶⁰ O'Connor, 'Anti-Americanism.'