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The "Global War on Terror" and its Implications for Muslim-Western Relations

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The Global War on Terror and the Metaphysical Enemy[*]

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1. The ideological scenario

At the beginning of the 21st century, a comprehensive analysis of the notion and practice of the so-called "global war on terror" and the role that has been "assigned" to Islam in this antagonistic, almost hypocritically Manichaean, post-September 11 scenario has remained a desideratum – in spite of all the proclamations to the contrary. My preliminary philosophical reflections focus on the aspect of the "metaphysical enemy" in the context of the actual discourse on terrorism and the global order.

It means stating the obvious if we point to the fact that the term "terrorism" is overwhelmingly used in a *polemical* context. Very rarely is it referred to in a *descriptive* framework that would allow a correct analysis of this specific phenomenon of violence as basis for the formulation of (legal) *norms*, which alone will enable governments to deal with the problem *rationally*. Although no legally agreed definition exists up to the present moment,[1] there appears to be consensus on a kind of conventional (or pragmatic) definition

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[1] For details see the author's article "The United Nations, the international rule of law and terrorism," in: Hans Köchler, *Global Justice or Global Revenge? International Criminal Justice at the Crossroads.* Vienna and New York: Springer, 2003, pp. 319-344. (Indian edition: New Delhi:

according to which "terrorism" means the use of force against civilians for political ends;[2] as such, it is further argued, terrorism constitutes a serious violation of basic principles of humanity, and in particular of international humanitarian law.[3] The General Assembly of the United Nations has characterized terrorism as "criminal acts intended or calculated to provoke a state of terror in the general public, a group of persons or particular persons for political reasons."[4] Thus, it has been suggested by scholars to treat terrorist acts as crimes against humanity or as the equivalent of war crimes, committed in times of peace (i.e. in situations which cannot be characterized as "war" in the conventional sense).[5] The main reason why no consensus has been reached on a legal definition lies in the divergence of the interests of states and their being guided by a policy of double standards according to which "one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter," and the refusal of the political establishment of many states to admit even the conceptual possibility of "state terrorism."[6]

Manak Publishers, 2005.)

[2] See, for instance, the U.S. definition of "terrorism as "the unlawful use of force or violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives." (*Terrorism in the United States, 1997*. Counterterrorism Threat Assessment and Warning Unit, National Security Division. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, 1997, p. i.)

[3] For an analysis of the different notions of "terrorism" and the moral and legal implications see Edwin R. Micewski, "Terror and Terrorism: A History of Ideas and Philosophical-Ethical Reflections," in: *Strategic Insights*, Vol. IV, Issue 8 (August 2005).

[4] Resolution 54/110 of 2 February 2000, operative Paragraph 2. – On the lack of an operative definition of "terrorism" in the practice of the Security Council see Ben Saul, "Definition of 'Terrorism' in the UN Security Council: 1985-2004," in: *Chinese Journal of International Law*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (2005), pp. 141-166.

[5] See A. P. Schmid who proposes to consider an act of terrorism as the "peacetime equivalent of a war crime." (*Report to the UN Crime Prevention Office*, 1992, quoted according to "Definitions of Terrorism": United Nations, Office on Drugs and Crime, www.odccp.prg/odccp/terrorism_definitions.html, visited on 20 November 2003.) – Unless otherwise indicated, all URLs given in the footnotes relate to documents that were retrieved at the time of writing the final version of this article (February 2008).

[6] On the question of state terrorism and the distinction between acts of terrorism and national liberation see Hans Köchler (ed.), *Terrorism and National Liberation*. Studies in International Relations, XIII. Frankfurt a.M. / Bern / Paris / New York: Peter Lang, 1988.

In the framework of international power politics in which the term is used today, "terrorism" has become a reified concept that signifies an enemy for whose actions no motivation other than "doing evil" is being admitted. The term has become a kind of *value label* employed in a specific context of (often undeclared) political interests, with the purpose of de-humanizing the adversary and, thus, gaining the moral high ground in confrontations that are often driven by economic interests, not by a commitment to moral or legal principles. Accordingly, the construct of a "global war on terror" attributes to "terrorism" a kind of *mythical* dimension, personalizing something which is a method of violence or tactic – as distinct from the acting subject against whom alone a war can be fought. Thus, the collective effort described as "war" in this sense implies a rather strange *reification* of actual conflict situations the causes of which those who claim to act in self-defense refuse to analyze.[7]

Traditionally, and in particular since the period of decolonization, the term "terrorism" was frequently used to de-legitimize the resort to force as part of resistance against foreign occupation or national liberation struggles – irrespective of whether the acts are directed against civilian or military targets. The establishment discourse (whether by scholars, politicians or the corporate media) in countries involved in colonial or other forms of occupation or wars of aggression has always reserved the use of the label "terrorist" to the resisting side (i.e. to non-state actors), while steadfastly avoiding its application to the actions of regular armies. It goes without saying that such a "policy of double standards" is unacceptable in terms of philosophical ethics. Any inconsistency in the usage of the term has to be scrutinized as to the hidden

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[7] See the ironical commentary on the conceptually flawed notion of the "war on terror" and its possible totalitarian consequences by Jon Carroll: "The fight against terror is eternal. Terror is not a nation; it is a tactic. As long as the president is fighting a tactic, he can use any means he deems appropriate." (*San Francisco Chronicle,* Monday, January 2, 2006.)

interests that direct the selective application of the term as a tool of legitimation on the one hand and de-legitimation on the other.

In the unipolar power constellation of the 21st century, i.e. in the absence of a distinct <u>ideological</u> enemy stereotype, "terrorism" has become a label for acts that are perceived to be part of an epic "confrontation between civilizations."[8] Western, especially U.S., leaders frequently – and almost ritually – refer to "terrorists" as enemies of democracy, peace, even mankind (or civilization) as such, without ever allowing reflection on the possible causes of the actions thus qualified. In a speech on 5 September 2006, President George W. Bush emphatically stated: "we're engaged in a global war against an enemy that threatens all civilized nations."[9] Against this eschatological background which evokes deep fear and triggers hostile emotions, politicians refuse to ever consider what may motivate certain groups to resist what they perceive as "invasion" of their civilization by Western-dominated "coalitions of the willing" (often in a combination of economic, military and media power as is the case with the ongoing project for the creation of a so-called "New Middle East").[10]

This collective denial of reality on the part of the Western establishment has become a central aspect of what, since 2001, has been portrayed and propagated as the "global war on terror" – which, by now, is made to appear as an all-out effort at collective self-defense, but without a

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[8] See the author's article: "The 'Clash of Civilizations': Perception and Reality in the Context of Globalization and International Power Politics," in: Felix Kalandarishvili et al. (eds.), *Materials of the Tbilisi International Forum "Globalization and Dialogue between Civilizations."* Tbilisi, Georgia: International Forum "Globalization and Dialogue between Civilizations," 2004, pp. 62-70.

[9] *President Discusses Global War on Terror*, Capital Hilton Hotel, Washington, D.C. The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, September 5, 2006, at www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2006/09/20060905-4.html.

[10] For details see tee the author's paper: "Civilization as Instrument of World Order? The Role of the Civilizational Paradigm in the Absence of a Balance of Power," in: *Future Islam*, "Insight," New Delhi, July/August 2006, www.futureislam.com (Online Journal).

clearly defined operative goal.[11] In sharp contrast to its extremely broad scope, this admittedly long-term (eventually – though non-admittedly – perpetual) struggle lacks even the most basic reflection on the reasons <u>why</u> the world finds itself in this kind of *self-diagnosed* confrontation.[12]

We notice, in particular:

(a)   a steadfast refusal to deal with the *specific causes* of armed resistance against the presence of foreign forces in countries such as Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia, etc. The stereotyped answer (according to which the "terrorists" are "enemies of freedom" or "enemies of democracy") can only satisfy the most naïve of observers of international politics;

(b)   a total rejection of all calls to reflect, for instance, on the *legality* and/or *moral admissibility* of military intrusions of Western countries into the Muslim world;

(c)   and, more specifically, a refusal to investigate – *sine ira et studio* – the "key" terrorist events of recent times – and in particular the "defining moment" of the "global war on terror," the atrocities of September 11, 2001. Instead of dealing with the contradictions and inconsistencies in the official version of events[13] and the numerous gaps in

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[11] For an early critique of U.S. military doctrine in connection with the "global war on terror" see the brilliant analysis of Jeffrey Record, *Bounding the Global War on Terrorism.* Strategic Studies Institute, United States Army War College, Carlisle, Pennsylvania, December 2003.

[12] In the sense of "diagnosed by those who initiated it."

[13] See *The 9/11 Commission Report. Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States.* Authorized Edition. New York / London: W.W. Norton & Company, no year [2004]. – For a comprehensive and scholarly critique of the official record see David Ray Griffin, *The 9/11 Commission Report: Omissions and Distortions.* Northampton, Mass.: Olive Branch Press, 2005. – For a critical evaluation of the events and their instrumentalization for the

terms of factual information, a "dogma of political correctness" has been promulgated according to which 19 Islamic-inspired Arab hijackers, directed by an elusive "Al-Qaeda" ("base")[14], succeeded in carrying out the acts all by themselves.[15] Several other cases of recent history where the political establishment stubbornly refused to investigate the real causes of terrorist incidents could also be mentioned here.[16]

In this context of international realpolitik (or more precisely: power politics) which deliberately ignores the real causes of conflict, the "terrorist" – as enemy – acquires an abstract dimension, representing "the other" vis-à-vis the self-proclaimed civilized world. In other words: the terrorist is becoming the "metaphysical enemy" who threatens humanity (civilization) as such. As rightly observed by a U.S. analyst, this leads to an *irrational* reaction at the

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"global war on terror" see the statement by the former Chief of Staff of the Russian armed forces, General Leonid Ivashov: *"International terrorism does not exist,"* published by Non Aligned Press Network, 17 January 2006, at www.voltairenet.org/article133909.html.

[14] On the misleading interpretation of the Arabic term in the sense of an organizational entity see Jason Burke, *Al-Qaeda. The True Story of Radical Islam.* London etc.: Penguin Books, 3rd ed. 2007, Chapter 1.

[15] This official conspiracy theory – the most influential one worldwide – is dramatized – and popularized – in the book by Lawrence Wright, *The Looming Tower. Al-Qaeda's Road to 9/11.* London etc.: Penguin Books, 2006. – A somewhat more nuanced, though, in our view, still deficient analysis of Al-Qaeda (as regards the 9/11 events) is given by Jason Burke, *Al-Qaeda. The True Story of Radical Islam.*

[16] The Lockerbie tragedy is a case in point. Up to the present day, the government of the United Kingdom has rejected calls for a public inquiry into the circumstances of the explosion of Pan Am flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland, on 21 December 1988. As international observer, appointed by the United Nations, of the Lockerbie trial in the Netherlands the author has outlined the flaws in the proceedings and called for a revision of the court's verdict. Eventually, in June 2007, the Scottish Criminal Cases Review Commission, apparently sharing the author's original concerns, referred the case back to the appeal court. For details see Hans Köchler and Jason Subler (eds.), *The Lockerbie Trial. Documents Related to the I.P.O. Observer Mission.* Studies in International Relations, XXVII. Vienna: International Progress Organization, 2002.

collective level, a régime of fear that is "more theological in nature."[17]

The Manichaeism of good versus evil is the basic characteristic of a "war" that is propagated as a *universal*, *comprehensive* and *final* effort at the same time.[18] The earlier terminology of an "axis of evil," used by the U.S. administration to demonize states with governments the United States intended to "change" (e. g. Iraq, Iran) and to justify its war on terrorism,[19] is clear proof of the political instrumentalization of the "moral" dimension in international affairs.[20] It is this dangerous <u>dualist</u> view at the level of morality that brings in a "transcendent" dimension of "evil" as something which is portrayed as totally alien to civilization, thus outside the realm in which human beings exist. This antagonistic approach, demonizing any potential competitor for regional hegemony, evokes a perception of an almost "metaphysical" danger, a threat to the very "civilization" the advocates of this war claim to represent.

The adjective "metaphysical" is understood here in the traditional sense of "<u>beyond</u> the empirical (natural) realm" (according to the literal

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[17] John Feffer, "The core misconceptions in the 'war on terror'," in: *Asia Times Online*, Hong Kong, 13 July 2007, www.atimes.com.

[18] Cf. the famous dictum of U.S. Vice-President Dick Cheney, made at a policy meeting on the North Korean issue on 12 December 2003: "We don't negotiate with evil; we defeat evil." (Quoted according to "Stop Playing Football with Korean Powderkeg, Russia Warns," *Executive Intelligence Review* [EIR], Washington, 5 March 2004.)

[19] See [George W. Bush], *The President's State of the Union Address*. The United States Capitol, Washington, D.C. The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, January 29, 2002, at www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/01/20020129-11.html. Referring to Iraq, the U.S. President said: "States like these, and their terrorist allies, constitute an axis of evil, arming [sic!] to threaten the peace of the world." – For a critical evaluation on the part of one of the targeted states see, *inter alia*, Majid Tehranian, "Axis of excess. Are we at the edge of a global civil war among civilizations?," in: *The Iranian*, 12 March 2002, at www.iranian.com/MajidTehranian/2002/March/Axis/index.html.

[20] In the meantime, the term has been replaced by other derogatory characterizations such as "rogue state" – with a view of widening its application. See John R. Bolton, Under Secretary for Arms Control and International Security, *Beyond the Axis of Evil: Additional Threats from Weapons of Mass Destruction. Remarks to the Heritage Foundation*, Washington, D.C., May 6, 2002. U.S. Department of State, at www.state.gov/t/us/rm/9962.htm.

meaning of the Latin word "transcendence") <u>and</u> in the metaphorical sense of (a) "incomprehensible" (representing evil of an unimaginable dimension) and (b) "threatening" – as the paradigmatic "other" – humankind as such. In this eschatological setting, the terrorist has become an elusive enemy who is permanently beyond reach and, thus, necessitates "perpetual war," requiring, in turn, a constant mobilization of the masses.

2. Islam as the "metaphysical enemy" and the West's departure from Enlightenment values

At the beginning of the 21st century, in the era for which a "clash of civilizations" has been proclaimed even before September 11, 2001,[21] Islam occupies the place of the "metaphysical enemy." Whether one is prepared to admit it or not, the *instrumental role* of the events on this fateful day – when it comes to attribute that place to Islam and the Muslims – has by now become a well-established historical fact, whatever the actual causes of the events may be.[22] The vilification of an entire civilization (or religion) and the stereotyping of this civilization for the purposes of the imperial strategy of the only remaining superpower after the Cold War – justified by reference to that country's "national interests" – cannot be denied any longer – especially if one looks at the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq and the destruction of public

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[21] Samuel Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?," in: *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 72, No. 3, Summer 1993, pp. 22-49.

[22] We would like to emphasize here yet again that the factual record, including the chain of events that led to the five catastrophic incidents on that day, is not yet established. The official report of the U.S. Congress's "9/11 Commission" is full of contradictions and omissions; no public – and transparent – criminal proceedings have been initiated, to date, against those who were apprehended as the supposed masterminds behind the attacks, namely Ramzi Binalshib and Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, something which implies that the public has systematically been denied the right to know the truth about the 9/11 attacks. – The official explanation has been challenged, among others, by David Ray Griffin: *The New Pearl Harbor: Disturbing Questions about the Bush Administration and 9/11.* (Foreword by Richard Falk.) Northampton, Mass.: Olive Branch Press, 2004.

order in these two countries.

The misleading and selective presentation of the events of September 11, 2001, with factually wrong incriminations and the subsequent unjust accusations against Islam as a civilization and value system, has poisoned Muslim-Western relations almost beyond a level where they still can be "repaired." The supposition of collective guilt, whether openly stated or just implied, may have made – at the present stage of alienation and confrontation between the two worlds – damage control a "mission impossible."[23]

The actual course of events is proof of this skeptical analysis. Because of the vilification of an entire civilization and the evocation of a threat purportedly posed by that civilization to the West's survival,[24] the "global war on terror" has established a climate of *impunity*, in a way unimaginable since the era of World War II. In the name of a "war against evil," serious transgressions have been committed that fall under the legal categories of war crimes and crimes against humanity, not to speak of the crime of aggression. In this mythical context, where sober analysis of facts and motives has no place, the logic of the – ethically not valid – maxim of "the end justifies the means" appears having taken hold. Even acts of torture and other serious violations of the Geneva Conventions of 1949 are made to appear

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[23] What is urgently required in the present situation is a *public international inquiry* by independent experts. If, because of U.S. influence, the United Nations Organization is not in a position to take an initiative for finding the truth, the member states of the Organization of the Islamic Conference may consider setting up an international investigating commission; through such an initiative, those countries' governments could prove that they are indeed agents of *sovereign* states, not proxies of outside powers.

[24] Phillip Cole has pointed to this exaggeration which serves to legitimize the most serious transgressions of international norms; commenting on the "metaphysical" enemy stereotype underlying the "global war on terror," he speaks of "the imaginary element – the extent to which the threat of global terrorism has been imagined and exaggerated," and he distinguishes from it "the monstrous element – the extent to which the 'evil enemy' is represented as possessing demonic powers they intend to use to destroy us." (*The Myth of Evil.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006, p. 215.)

"acceptable" in terms of a grand strategy of "preventive" self-defense.[25] Especially since the incidents (in 2004) at the Abu Ghreib prison in Iraq – a country which had been falsely accused of complicity in the 9/11 events, not to speak of the possession of arms of mass destruction –,[26] *impunity* for outrageous behavior by soldiers and public officials appears having become acceptable in the eyes of the establishment – something which would not be tolerated in a "regular" war situation. In a kind of Machiavellian logic, the perpetrators of those grave transgressions of international law try to capitalize on the *metaphysical* dimension in which they locate their supposedly noble and inevitable struggle, claiming to act under a Schmittian-type "state of exception."[27]

In structural terms, there exists a certain similarity between the ideology employed to justify the transgression of fundamental norms of humanity in the course of the "global war on terror" and the reasoning of the Argentine generals during the dictatorship of the late 1970s and early 1980s, who were determined to eliminate all forms of dissent and eradicate the progressive forces of that country. The military Junta, explains Frank Graziano, created an eschatological context for their "Dirty War," "reducing complex social realities to binary, archetypal oppositions that were antithetically at odds: Good and Evil, Order and Chaos …,"[28] whereby the

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[25] The phrase of the so-called "one percent doctrine" is symptomatic for the almost totalitarian redefinition of self-defense that results from the obsession with the "global war on terror." See Ron Suskind, *The One Percent Doctrine: Deep Inside America's Pursuit of Its Enemies Since 9/11.* New York, N.Y.: Simon & Schuster, 2006.

[26] For a documentation of the colossal and systematic disinformation strategy applied in the interest of attacking Iraq see Bob Woodward, *State of Denial. Bush at War, Part III.* London / Sydney / New York / Toronto: Pocket Books, 2007.

[27] Carl Schmitt, *Politische Theologie. Vier Kapitel zur Lehre von der Souveränität.* (Reprint of the 2nd edition of 1934.) Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 5th ed. 1990. – See also Jean-Claude Paye, *Global War on Liberty* [La fin de l'état de droit]. Trans. James H. Membrez. New York: Telos Press, 2007.

[28] Frank Graziano, *Divine Violence. Spectacle, Psychosexuality, & Radical Christianity in the Argentine "Dirty War."* Boulder / San Francisco / Oxford: Westview Press, 1992, p. 12.

"'dirtiness' of the 'war' purified rather than defiled its authors."[29]

The silence of mainstream Christian churches, in particular the Roman-Catholic Church, about the moral and purportedly eschatological aspects of the 21st century's scenario of the "global war on terror," or more specifically: the lack of criticism, requires special attention. In an analysis of the rationale behind this form of war, Phillip Cole has made a comparison to the Christians' medieval fear of evil, focusing on the transgressions made – now and then – in the name of humanity: "There are dramatic parallels here with the contemporary war on terror: the normal rules of justice have been suspended or simply ignored as new rules have been written to enable thousands to be detained and imprisoned."[30]

Because the all-out effort in preventive self-defense, if not *revenge* (for acts that are falsely attributed to an entire civilization), is portrayed – and justified – as part of an eschatological struggle of good versus evil that excludes any form of negotiation with the purpose of reaching a peaceful settlement, "war" has acquired an entirely new dimension. Due to what Carl Schmitt has characterized as the "moralization" of the use of force, the "global war on terror" transcends all norms of humanity. If war is conducted as final battle of good against evil, argues Schmitt, the enemy incorporates the absolute "other" who has to be destroyed. No room is left for compromise; the adversary is denied the very human dignity which the defender of a just "new world" claims for himself and which has become the basic principle of today's international humanitarian law. In contrast, Carl Schmitt, in his analysis of the nature of politics, argues for a strictly <u>neutral</u> interpretation of

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[29] Op. cit., p. 218. – For the religious (in this case Christian) and quasi-eschatological connotations of the Argentine generals' reasoning see also Emilio F. Mignone, *Iglesia y dictadura.* Buenos Aires: Ediciones del Pensamiento Nacional, 1986.
[30] Phillip Cole, *The Myth of Evil.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006, p. 215.

the friend-enemy scheme in politics.[31]

Nonetheless, at the beginning of the 21st century, the self-declared guardians of a civilization that prides itself for its Enlightenment heritage declare that civilization as superior to an exclusively religious world view (such as that of Islam) and idealize the "global war on terror" as an unprecedented battle against metaphysical evil. In view of the potentially totalitarian nature of this effort, we have to ask whether the proclaimed global battle of good versus evil does ring in a (new) *post-Enlightenment era*, something which the ideologues of this "war" are not in any way prepared to admit. How, in terms of rationality, should one evaluate an epoch in which the medieval battle against Satan is being recreated as a comprehensive and preventive – thus perpetual – struggle against "terrorism," declared as the invisible "eternal enemy" threatening Western civilization (that is arrogantly equated to civilization as such)?[32] What are the long-term implications of such a strategy? Obviously, if one takes the public proclamations seriously, that very civilization appears determined – in defense of its very principles (as is claimed by its "guardians") – to dispose of the rational heritage of Enlightenment in favor of an unqualified and generalizing "discourse of evil."[33]

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[31] Schmitt cautions that any appeal of a warring party to humanity as such may lead to a situation in which the enemy is denied the very quality of a human being, thus being placed "*hors la loi*": *Der Begriff des Politischen. Text von 1932 mit einem Vorwort und drei Corollarien.* Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1963, p. 55. – In a remark which has gained new topicality today, he alerts the reader about the instrumentalization of references to "humanity" (or "mankind") for imperialistic purposes: "'Menschheit' ist ein besonders brauchbares ideologisches Instrument imperialistischer Expansionen ..." (Ibid.)

[32] President George W. Bush's dictum of September 2001 about a new "crusade" was no slip of the tongue. In a commentary written shortly after September 11, 2001, Peter Ford stated that "President Bush's reference to a 'crusade' against terrorism […] raised fears that the terrorist attacks could spark a 'clash of civilizations' between Christians and Muslims, sowing fresh winds of hatred and mistrust." ("Europe cringes at Bush 'crusade' against terrorists." *Christian Science Monitor*, 19 September 2001, at www.csmonitor.com/2001/0919/p12s2-woeu.html.) – See also James Carroll, *Crusade: Chronicles of an Unjust War.* New York: Metropolitan Books,

3. Dilemmata resulting from a flawed doctrine

Against this rather dubious moral background, the "global war on terror" risks to "miss its target" in two distinct manners. Parallel to the straying from the proclaimed (intended) target is a twofold denial of reality on the part of those who propagate this kind of "epic struggle." Thus, it is no surprise that its advocates are inconsistent, even dishonest, in their legitimation strategy.

(a)   In important respects, documented in major military operations carried out under that label, the "global war" resembles a battle against windmills – namely in those cases where the terrorists (or terrorist groups) who are identified as targets are not, or not alone, the actual perpetrators of the atrocities attributed to them.[34] Unless a complete and truthful record of the causes of terrorist incidents is established in each and every case, such a "war" can never be successful. While the real perpetrators can continue to hide behind a propaganda-smokescreen of false, or widely

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2004.

[33] Phillip Cole, op. cit., p. 1.

[34] A case in point is the sentencing of a lone intelligence officer from Libya for the downing of Pan Am flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland, which has caused the death of 270 people. While this individual most likely is not guilty as charged, i.e. is not the one who inserted the bomb onto the plane via Malta and Frankfurt (according to the "Opinion of the Court": *The High Court of Justiciary at Camp Zeist*, Case No: 1475/99, 31 January 2001), no efforts have been made to date to comprehensively investigate the midair explosion and prosecute the actual perpetrators. The U.K. and U.S. governments have both rejected a public inquiry into the circumstances of this incident, thus preventing efficient measures against possible acts of terrorism against civil aviation in the future. See also fn. 16 above. – An even more serious case, in terms of the destruction caused, are the terrorist incidents of September 11, 2001 in the United States. As has been painstakingly demonstrated by David Ray Griffin and others, these incidents cannot have been exclusively organized by a shadowy network of *mujahideen* from remote places of the globe. The causes officially given for the incidents are not a sufficient explanation for what actually happened on that day, especially as regards the logistics of this highly sophisticated operation and the very advanced infrastructure required for it. (See David Ray Griffin, *The New Pearl Harbor*. – For an in-depth investigation of the four flights involved in the incidents of 11 September 2001 see also the web site of *Pilots for 9/11 Truth*: pilotsfor911truth.org.) An efficient, and credible, counter-terrorist strategy can only be

inaccurate, accusations, the military and intelligence operatives are condemned to wage attack after attack on the basis of second-guessing by the political leadership, thus frequently missing the target, often at the expense of unconcerned individuals (something for which the newspeak of imperial warfare has coined the term "collateral damage"). The most dramatic – and catastrophic – case, to date, of a misdirected operation has been the 2003 attack against Iraq insofar as that country's leadership had been accused of complicity in the terrorist acts of September 11, 2001 (not to speak of the false allegations about "arms of mass destruction").

Furthermore: in certain instances, *scapegoats* are presented to the public as masterminds – while never being brought before a court of law that alone could validate the accusations.[35] These actions and tactics imply, at the level of political strategy, one of the two kinds of "denial of reality" we have referred to earlier.

(b)   In cases where the factual record is, or appears to be, accurate, the "global war on terror" has, to a large extent, become a battle against <u>symptoms</u>, not <u>causes</u>. This again means that such an effort can never be efficient (neither in military nor in political terms) and cannot produce sustainable results. This particular "missing the target" involves another denial of reality – namely the rejection to distinguish between cause and effect. "To get at the roots of terrorism is complicated. Dropping bombs is simple."[36] Instead of "defeating" terrorism, this strategy will

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developed if the full truth is known.

[35] "Military Commissions" are no courts of law.

[36] Howard Zinn, "A Just Cause, Not a Just War," in: *The Progressive*, December 2001. (Republished by Common Dreams News Center: www.commondreams.org/views01/1109-

generate more terrorist acts. The occupation of the Palestinian West Bank and Gaza since 1967, including the later annexation of Jerusalem;[37] the violent interference into the democratic process in Algeria or Gaza, more recently; the total siege imposed on the population of the Gaza strip;[38] the occupation of Afghanistan (though in reference to a Security Council resolution);[39] the repressive measures against the Moro liberation movement in the South of the Philippines;[40] the armed interference in Somalia, etc., are all operations that have been justified as measures to fight terrorism. However, the aggressive policies enacted in these cases, while neglecting the actual grievances, have in turn become the root causes of many a "terrorist" act, that in each and every case is seen by the perpetrators themselves as heroic act of resistance.[41] As regards the conflict situations listed above, a former official of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) has criticized subsequent U.S. administrations for fighting "Islamist militancy without

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[37] See Hans Köchler (ed.), *The Legal Aspects of the Palestine Problem with Special Regard to the Question of Jerusalem.* Studies in International Relations, IV. Vienna: Braumüller, 1981.

[38] On the legal implications of this measure see *"Starvation Policy against Palestinians Is an International Crime." Declaration of the International Progress Organization.* Vienna, 2 June 2006, P/RE/19734c-is, i-p-o.org/IPO-Palestine-nr-2June06.htm.

[39] On the problematic nature of the legal justification of the foreign military intervention in Afghanistan see Gail Davidson, "International Law and the War against Afghanistan," *Lawyers Against the War*, 17 October 2001, at www.lawyersagainstthewar.org/legalarticles/davidson.html. – Yukihisa Fujita, a leading member of the Japanese Senate, has stated that "the biggest victim of the war on terrorism has been Afghanistan …" (Statement before the Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defense of the Japanese Senate, Tokyo, 11 January 2008; quoted according to an English transcript of the Japanese original, made available by the Centre for Research on Globalization at www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=7803.)

[40] See Abdulhusin M. Kashim, "Muslim Mindanao: The Phenomenology of Hamletization in the Philippines," in: Fatemah Remedios C. Balbin (ed.), *Hans Köchler Bibliography and Reader.* Manila / Innsbruck: Hans Koechler Political and Philosophical Society, 2006, pp. 143-150.

[41] For the distinction between acts of terrorism and (potentially) legitimate resistance see, *inter alia*, Hans Köchler (ed.), *Terrorism and National Liberation*.

understanding the enemy."[42] The diametrically opposed perceptions of the use of force by the different sides (*terrorism* versus legitimate act of *resistance*)[43] should be a cause for concern by those states who bear "primary responsibility" for a peaceful world order, in particular the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council. The violence will continue unabated as long as the countries or entities that see themselves as being "targeted" by terrorist movements refuse to deal with the perceived injustices that often motivate terrorist acts, and as long as those countries categorically refuse to consider questions as to their own responsibility or co-responsibility for those injustices. One fire may be extinguished at a certain place and at a certain moment, but more will flare up in other places and at other moments. The use of force in such a context indeed risks to involve a party in a *cycle of violence* from which there is no escape at the level of military action.[44]

In view of the dilemmata resulting from a flawed doctrine, the goals of the "global war" will have to be <u>redefined</u> – something which may eventually lead to the abolishing of the very notion[45] – and a comprehensive policy will have

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[42] Michael F. Scheuer, "What War on Terror?," in: *The Journal of International Security Affairs*, Spring 2007, Number 12, at www.securityaffairs.org/issues/2007/12/scheuer.php.

[43] Michael F. Scheuer points to the fact that the U.S. administration, for instance, "stubbornly refuses to acknowledge that al-Qaeda is an insurgent organization and not a terrorist group." (Loc. cit.)

[44] On the problems of a purely military approach see also the author's paper: "Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism: Towards a Comprehensive Approach," in: *Hans Koechler. Manila Lectures 2002. "Terrorism and the Quest for a Just World Order."* Quezon City, Philippines: Foundation for Social Justice, 2002, pp. 29-42.

[45] Triggered by the developments in Iraq, a debate has been initiated in the United Kingdom in particular about the usage of the term "global war on terror." It has been suggested that "[t]he 'war on terror' should be reconceived and renamed to place greater emphasis on its police, intelligence, and diplomatic components." (James Dobbins, "Who Lost Iraq?," in: *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 86, No. 5, September/October 2007, pp. 61-74; p. 74.) – In a speech before the

to be developed that includes a reformulation of the norms governing the West's relations with the rest of the world. As far as the recent escalation in the different "theaters of confrontation" with the Muslim world is concerned, some serious soul searching will be required on the part of Western leaders. It simply will not be sufficient to put all the blame on the other side, as Samuel Huntington had done with his famous dictum of the "bloody borders of Islam."[46] Unless the West is prepared to redefine its relations with the Muslim world on the basis of *equality* and *non-interference* (principles which are enshrined in the UN Charter anyway), the self-designated "international community" will be condemned to engage in a perpetual – and futile – military effort, becoming prisoner of its own doctrine of a "global war," a notion that misleadingly suggests the possibility of victory in terms of conventional military theory. This "war," however, can only be "won" if the root causes of those acts of violence the West labels "terrorist"[47] are clearly *identified* and subsequently *addressed* – not only through military action, but with legal, political and socio-economic measures. In the meantime, even U.S. officials admit that the phrase "global war on terror" "may have outlived its usefulness, because it focused attention solely, and incorrectly, on the military campaign."[48]

As an all-out military effort (a new type of post-modern "total war" –

Council on Foreign Relations, U.S. Presidential contender John Edwards also criticized the notion of the "global war on terror," calling it "an ideological doctrine advanced by the Bush administration that has strained American military resources and emboldened terrorists." (Quoted according to Beth Fouhy, "Edwards: Move Past 'War on Terror'." *Associated Press*, 23 May 2007.)

[46] Samuel Huntington, op. cit., p. 35.

[47] The terminological problem ("one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter") is unresolved up to the present day. See [International Progress Organization], *The Geneva Declaration on Terrorism*. Geneva, 21 March 1987. UN General Assembly Doc. A/42/307, 29 May 1987, Annex.

[48] See the article by Eric Schmitt and Thom Shanker, "Washington recasts terror war as 'struggle'," in: *International Herald Tribune*, Wednesday, 27 July 2005. According to this report, the then Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Richard Myers, disclosed in an address before the National Press Club on 25 July 2005 that he had "objected to the use of the term 'war on terrorism' before, because if you call it a war, then you think of people in uniform as

if we follow its persistent description by the U.S. administration since 2001) –, the "global war on terror," based on the above-described two-fold denial of reality, can never be ended. Thus, it is not in any way surprising that this "open-ended" campaign is presented – and propagated – as variation of mankind's eternal battle against evil, a struggle in which the adversary acquires the abstract quality of the absolute "other" who, because of his evasiveness (which corresponds to the vagueness of the underlying enemy stereotype), has to be fought on a perpetual basis. What we witness here is a "vicious circle of legitimation" of a war effort that in itself is part of the cycle of violence referred to earlier.

This "war" is indeed of a self-perpetuating nature, and the nations involved in it will forever have to live in a "state of exception" and fear whereby the citizens are expected to accept the *subordination* of their civil and political rights[49] to the abstract imperative of an almost mythical, comprehensive effort in preventive self-defense.[50] Described (with increasing frequency) as a "war among civilizations" – that is said to be conducted for the sake of humanity[51] –, this conflict has a precedent in earlier "metaphysical" confrontations like the medieval crusades – and will only end (or be phased out) like those: through an "encounter with reality" that will eventually trigger a process of "Enlightenment," a catharsis that the West will have to undergo

being the solution." (Ibid.)

[49] Cf. the author's paper: *The War on Terror, its Impact on the Sovereignty of States, and its Implications for Human Rights and Civil Liberties.* I.P.O. Research Papers. Vienna: International Progress Organization, 2003, at www.i-p-o.org/koechler-war-on-terror-human-rights-2002.htm. – See also Justice Arthur Chaskalson, "Preserving Civil Liberties in an Age of Global Terror: International Perspectives," in: *Cardozo Law Review*, Vol. 29, Issue 1 (2007/8), pp. 11-15.

[50] On the doctrine of preventive self-defense see *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*. Washington, D.C.: The White House, 2002.

[51] Since 2001, the President of the United States has repeatedly made statements in that regard. In a speech before the Heritage Foundation he reiterated this almost eschatological approach: "And in this war on terror we will not rest, or retreat, or withdraw from the fight until this threat to civilization has been removed." *President Bush Discusses Global War on Terror*. The Heritage Foundation, Washington, D.C., The White House, Office of the Press Secretary,

itself (in spite of the insistence by the ideologues of "global war" that it is only the Muslim world that requires such a process of self-reflection).

Specifically, the citizens of Western nations will (a) have to identify the powerful hidden interests behind the defining events of the recent history of international terrorism and (b) have to realize that – in this era of global interdependence[52] – they can only live in security and peace if they embrace the *principle of mutuality.* If Western nations cease to deny the Muslims and Muslim civilization in general the very rights which they claim for themselves, in particular the right to political and "civilizational" self-determination, they may find a way out of the present impasse of perpetual confrontation. A strategy focused on "re-education" by means of armed force[53] (as it can be diagnosed in the project of a "New Middle East"[54]) will only produce more chaos and violence; it may trigger the never-ending cycle of violence which many fear and of which the phrase "global war on terror" has become the ideological expression.

4. Counter-strategies to perpetual confrontation

November 1, 2007, at www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2007/11/20071101-4.html.

[52] On the implications of globalization for world order see the author's analysis: "Philosophical Aspects of Globalization. Basic Theses on the Interrelation of Economics, Politics, Morals and Metaphysics in a Globalized World," in: Hans Köchler (ed.), *Globality versus Democracy? The Changing Nature of International Relations in the Era of Globalization.* Studies in International Relations, XXV. Vienna: International Progress Organization, 2000, pp. 3-18.

[53] Daniel Pipes quite frankly states that "victory" in this confrontation "implies modernizing the Muslim world, and nothing less." ("Reviews/Endorsements" published by Potomac Books, Inc. re. Michael A. Palmer, *The Last Crusade*, 2007 [see fn. below]).

[54] For a description of the project see, *inter alia*, Trudy J. Kuehner, "A New Middle East? A Report of FPRI's History Institute for Teachers," in: *The Newsletter of FPRI's Marvin Wachman Fund for International Education,* Vol. 10, No. 1 (January 2005), Foreign Policy Research Institute, USA, at www.fpri.org/footnotes/101.200501.kuehner.newmiddleeast.html. – The way of thinking behind this approach, aimed at remodeling an entire civilization against its will, is implicitly demonstrated in: Michael A. Palmer, *The Last Crusade: Americanism and the Islamic Reformation.* Mechanicsburg, PA: Potomac Books, 2006. – For a critical assessment of the

In view of the dilemmata, contradictions and self-defeating strategies surrounding the "global war on terror," the existential question in our post-9/11 environment appears to be <u>how</u> the world can escape from the predicament of an ill-conceived and prematurely declared confrontation misleadingly labeled as "war":

– a war that cannot be won[55] or that, as "fight against evil," is unwinnable almost "by definition"[56];

– a war that, it is argued, necessitates authoritarian measures at the domestic level which have already resulted in the loss of highly cherished rights and freedoms, a deterioration in the enjoyment of civil liberties that may bring about a *permanent* "state of exception" (domestically as well as internationally[57]) in the sense of Carl Schmitt's totalitarian doctrine of state;[58]

– a war that is about to make the "clash of civilizations" a self-fulfilling prophecy.[59]

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overall approach see Hans Köchler, "Civilization as Instrument of World Order? The Role of the Civilizational Paradigm in the Absence of a Balance of Power," loc. cit.

[55] See also Michael F. Scheuer ("Anonymous"), *Imperial Hubris: Why the West is Losing the War on Terror*. Washington, D.C.: Bracey's, 2004.

[56] Michael F. Scheuer even speaks of "suicide by semantic stubbornness." ("What War on Terror?," loc. cit.)

[57] The so-called "extraordinary" or "irregular renditions" of terror suspects by U.S. intelligence services, carried out (in blatant violation of international law) with the secret co-operation of major Western countries such as Germany, are a case in point. See e. g. Dana Priest, "Wrongful Imprisonment: Anatomy of a CIA Mistake. German Citizen Released After Months in 'Rendition'," in: *The Washington Post*, Sunday, December 4, 2005, p. A01. – As a general maxim for the evaluation of international counter-terrorist measures Howard Zinn suggests to look at whether a specific campaign consists of "actions that not only deal with the long-term problem of terrorism but are in themselves just." ("A Just Cause, Not a Just War," loc. cit.)

[58] Carl Schmitt, Der Begriff des Politischen. – For a critical assessment see Wolfgang Kempner, Permanenter Ausnahmezustand? Über Carl Schmitt, die Demokratie und das Getriebe der Zeit. Vienna: Institut für Höhere Studien, 1996.

[59] Cf. the author's analysis: "After September 11, 2001: Clash of Civilizations or Dialogue?," in:

Under the prevailing circumstances, mere appeals to the conscience of mankind will not be sufficient to reverse the obvious trend towards escalation. Due to the pervasive indoctrination of the general population, including the so-called "intelligentsia," about the supposed danger of Islam to civilization as such, solemn proclamations of the merits of "dialogue" can in no way be effective.

To understand the magnitude of the problem, we must not overlook the fact that the indoctrination is mainly based on the "official" conspiracy theory about the perpetrators of the 9/11 atrocities.[60] Regrettable as it may be, the official version is still not widely scrutinized – whether due to collective naïveté[61] or sheer opportunism. The detailed and precise questions asked on 11 January 2008 by Yukihisa Fujita, member of Japan's House of Councillors (Senate) and Director of the Senate's Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence,[62] about the 9/11 attacks as the origin of the war on terror are a rare exception.[63] The total silence in the Western corporate media about Mr.

Forum. Popular na papaya ng Malayan komunidad (Universidad ng Pilipinas), Diliman, Q. C., Tomo 3, Blg. 3, 28 March 2002, p. 9. – The author has warned of this development long before September 11; see Hans Köchler, *Philosophical Foundations of Civilizational Dialogue. The Hermeneutics of Cultural Self-comprehension versus the Paradigm of Civilizational Conflict.* International Seminar on Civilizational Dialogue (3rd: 15-17 September 1997: Kuala Lumpur), BP171.5 ISCD. Kertas kerja persidangan / conference papers. Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Library, 1997.

[60] An exemplary case of biased analysis in favor of the official version is the book by David Dunbar and Brad Reagan (eds.), Debunking 9/11 Myths: Why Paranoid Conspiracy Theories Can't Stand up to the Facts. With a Foreword by John McCain. An In-depth Investigation by Popular Mechanics. New York: Hearst Books, 2006.

[61] As for the naïveté of liberal intellectuals in the United States and the rhetoric of the "global war on terror" as it has evolved since the events of September 11 see Edward S. Herman and David Peterson, "There Is No 'War on Terror'," in: *ZNet*, January 18, 2008, www.zcommunications.org/znet/viewArticle/16237. – For a comprehensive critique of the official conspiracy theory see David Ray Griffin, *Debunking 9/11 Debunking: An Answer to Popular Mechanics and Other Defenders of the Official Conspiracy Theory.* Northampton, Mass.: Olive Branch Press, 2007.

[62] Mr. Fujita is a member of the Democratic Party of Japan.

[63] For details, including a full transcript of the respective session in the Japanese Senate, see "Main Japanese Opposition Party Questions 9/11 in Parliament. Broadcast on Japanese public TV." *Global Research*, January 15, 2008, www.globalresearch.ca.

Fujita's intervention before the Committee (broadcast live on Japan's public NHK television channel) is a telling example of the lack of courage in confronting a powerful political establishment.[64] A rather docile and obviously opportunistic intellectual élite in the West, in tandem with client régimes in the Muslim world, has effectively silenced – or at least marginalized – critical opinion.

Against this bleak – geopolitical as well as civilizational – background we can basically identify *two desiderata* of international politics in the framework of the increasing alienation between Islam and the West which accompanies the confrontation over the "global war on terror":

(A) Muslim countries will have to emancipate from the policy of *divide et impera* to which they have fallen victim since colonial times – and even more so in the neo-imperial era since the end of the bipolar world order. They would further have to come up with a *cohesive strategy* to counter the disinformation about Islam that has become pervasive in the Western world. Well-intended, but non-consequential, proclamations and appeals deploring Islamophobia by inter-governmental bodies such as the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) or its specialized agency, the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO), are simply not enough.[65] The means are definitely there, but the will is lacking on the part of governments that, in many instances, effectively behave like

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[64] See, for instance, "Kevin Barrett: Media are ignoring 9/11 whistle-blowers." Letter to the editor, *Capital Times*, Madison Wisconsin, 25 January 2008, www.madison.com.

[65] See, *inter alia*, *"The Rabat Commitment." Conclusions and Recommendations of the Rabat Conference on Dialogue among Cultures and Civilizations through Concrete and Sustained Initiatives*, Rabat, Morocco, 14-16 June 2005.

client régimes – or administrations of protectorates –, not as sovereign actors representing the will of "their" peoples.

(B)   The countries of the West, "assembled," to varying degrees of intensity and loyalty, around the United States as the imperial hegemon, have to realize that they are about to embark upon an unwinnable test of wills: a conflict that cannot be ended in (conventional) military terms and that will, if not contained by means of multilateral diplomacy, completely absorb the "political energies" and exhaust, to a considerable extent, the resources even of advanced industrial societies.[66] At the same time, they have to correct and eventually reverse the process of "civilizational alienation" vis-à-vis Islam for which they are responsible in important respects. There is a need, as then Secretary-General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, has put it, "to unlearn the stereotypes that have become so entrenched in so many minds and so much of the media."[67]

The necessary reassessment of the West's position will have to be based, first of all, on the realization (a) that a "war on terror" is conceptually flawed because one cannot fight against a <u>tactic</u> (or method of resistance), and (b) that such use of force, erroneously labeled as "war," can never be efficient and achieve sustainable results for an additional reason – because it only deals with the symptoms, not the causes of the conflicts the West sees

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[66] According to the diagnosis of Michel Chossudovsky, the Bush administration has "embarked upon a military adventure which threatens the future of humanity." (*America's War for Global Domination.* Centre for Research on Globalisation / Centre de recherche sur la mondialisation, 15 December 2003, at www.informationclearinghouse.info/article5428.htm.)

[67] "Secretary-General, addressing headquarters seminar on confronting Islamophobia, stresses importance of leadership, two-way integration, dialogue." *Press Release*, United Nations, SG/SM/9637, HR/4802, PI/1627, 7 December 2004.

itself engaged in. Such an undertaking indeed resembles the struggle of Sisyphus.

Those who propagate an abstract war against evil – and have made of the evasive terrorist a "metaphysical enemy," representing the absolute "other" – will have to realize (a) that it is not only intrinsically *immoral* and *illegal*, but factually *impossible* to reshape an entire civilization according to the norms of another (competing) world view and value system by means of coercion, including the use of armed force; and (b) that the grievances that have led to the existing tensions between Islam and the West will have to be addressed (whether those are related to the problems in Palestine, Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia, Mindanao, etc.) before a specific security strategy in terms of identifying potential terrorist threats can be developed.[68]

Unless what we have described as collective denial of reality is coming to an end, there will be no hope for a way out of the present impasse which, to a large extent, has made of ongoing military operations, described as part of the "global war on terror," a battle against windmills.[69] Only a *paradigm change* (at the level of defense doctrine) and subsequent *reorientation of strategy* (away from a "metaphysical" friend-enemy pattern towards a new form of partnership between civilizations)[70] will offer the political leaders a chance to

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[68] Those grievances and tensions are, by now, also being acknowledged in Western establishment circles. See, for instance, Peter Warren Singer (senior fellow and director of the Twenty-first Century Defense Initiative at the Brookings Institution): "We have entered a new global paradigm. From the historic heart of the Islamic world in the Middle East to the peripheries in Southeast Asia and in the West, a tension has built that is severe and palpable." ("America, Islam, and the 9-11 War," in: *Current History*, Vol. 105 [December 2006], pp. 415-422; p. 415.)

[69] In a recent analysis, Edward S. Herman has pointedly described the fictitious character of the "war on terror," characterizing it as "a political gambit and myth used to cover a U.S. projection of power that needed rhetorical help with the disappearance of the Soviet Union and the Cold War." Edward S. Herman and David Peterson, op. cit.

[70] The idea of such a paradigm change has been advanced in a joint initiative (2005) of the Prime Ministers of Turkey and Spain for an "Alliance of Civilizations," to operate under the auspices of the United Nations Organization. For details see: *Alliance of Civilizations. Report of the*

prevent the cycle of violence into which the world may otherwise descend for an unforeseeable period of time.

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High-level Group, 13 November 2006. New York: United Nations, 2006.