The discourse of terrorism has entered popular vernacular and is now a part of political and popular conversation. This dialogue, however, employs the use of stereotypes, generalisations and ill-defined terms that remain largely unquestioned. As a result, many misnomers exist regarding terrorism, and terrorists. This paper examines some of the generalisations related to Al Qaeda and the War on Terror and how they came into being, positing that rather than aiding in our understanding, poorly-defined information leads to the reinforcement of domination by Western powers, a heightened level of unjustified suspicion and increased marginalisation of already marginalised communities.

Introduction

‘Maintaining moral as well as information dominance will rank as important as physical protection.’

(Ministry of Defence 2000)

Al Qaeda has dominated the news headlines in one way or another for fourteen years, since it first came to light with government and media after the 1998 US Embassy bombings of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania and Nairobi, Kenya. Since that time, and especially after Al Qaeda’s most infamous terrorist attack of September 11th, 2001, there has been much speculation over the nature of the group. It has been tied to Salafism, a specific branch of Islam that postulates a return to the way of life led by the prophet Muhammad and his contemporaries (Sageman 2004).

In addition to the atrocities of terrorist attacks and the military retaliation against them, the ‘war on terror’ has in many ways also been a war carried out through the media, with both ‘sides’ equally capable of manipulating the ‘enemy’ and their stereotypes (Tuman 2003). The purpose of this paper is to examine some of these stereotypes – particularly related to Al Qaeda and the War on Terror – and how they continue to influence thinking about Muslim communities in the UK and US. These stereotypes have been absorbed into general discourse, as Richard Jackson states: ‘terrorism has come to possess clearly observable ideographic qualities, “terrorism” now functions as a primary term for the central narratives of the culture, employed in political debate and daily conversation, but largely unquestioned in its meaning and usage’ (2007:394). According to the US
State Department database, between 2001 and 2004 international terrorist activity was at its lowest point since the 1980s. However in 2002 and 2003, there were more terrorism-related news stories than at any point before 2001 (Lewis 2012).

Absorbed into the dialogue on terror – and indeed into the rhetoric of everyday life – these stereotypes have a huge impact in the daily lives of the people who must live with them. Fitch (2005) believes that the current discourse on terrorism and the stereotypes it propagates criminalises already marginalised communities and is used to justify increased surveillance for security purposes. He also believes that because of increased criminalisation and stigmatisation, these marginalised communities are likely to remove themselves even further from wider society as a self-protective measure against this discourse.

In this work, firstly the relationship between media and government will be explored with reference to Nordstrom’s notion of the ‘factx’ (sic) of war (2007), the role of propaganda in the War on Terror, and the classic conception of the culture industry as postulated by sociologist and philosopher Adorno (1991). The paper will then look at the connection between religion and terrorism, locating Al Qaeda within the complicated network of Salafism. Lastly, perhaps the most enduring images from the War on Terror – those released from Abu Ghraib – will be examined using work by Razack (2004, 2005) exploring the Orientalist roots of the pictures and connecting them to stereotypes of Muslim people.

Like a War, But Not a War

‘Compounding the difficulty of physical documentation in conflict areas is the question of ‘politicised facts’. In the context of violence and terror, whose voice(s) do we listen to and how do we get to them? The question is further compounded by the fact that each voice, in the face of war’s lethality, has a vested interest in making sure its version is the paramount one by discrediting, subverting or silencing antagonistic ones.’

(Nordstrom 1997:45)

Nordstrom’s ethnography of war in Mozambique highlights the way in which information emanating from battle zones often does not reach foreign shores in the same form as that in which it leaves. Information is filtered through many people as it travels from the site of conflict to the (often) Western public – ‘media specialists’, states Nordstrom, ‘rely heavily on information sanctioned by commanders and political officials because of political necessity and the difficulty of getting to the frontlines’ (1997:46). In this way, ‘the “factx” of war are born far from the realities of the actual violence’ (1997:46).

Mozambique is a geographically remote area, and distance may play a part in why the ‘facts’ often differ from the ‘factx’. However, as with conflict in distant places, the ‘factx’ of Terror are also often refracted through people and institutions for political purposes. The role of controlled information in the War on Terror is highlighted by Miller and Sabir (2012), and they describe the extensive government machinery for producing propaganda in both the United Kingdom and the United States, citing the US Office of Global Communications – responsible for fabricating the connection between Saddam Hussein, weapons of mass destruction and Al Qaeda – as a particularly relevant example. Through an analysis

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of official figures for terrorist activity in the UK between 2006 and 2008, Miller and Sabir state that although 99.5% of this activity was related to Northern Ireland and only 0.5% to Islamist terrorism, information released through government channels put an overwhelming emphasis on the minority Islamist activities. They also posit that this was true of reporting in the media. Miller and Sabir follow one story from its initial pronouncement by the government through to its eventual denouement, stating,

‘We can conclude… that official briefings are not always reliable, whether by mistake or design. Certainly they suggest that official sources’ account of the threat from ‘Islamist’ terrorism is likely to exaggerate the threat. The extent to which this is deliberate and inevitable or the result of errors or mistakes is hard to tell. The pattern of misinformation and deception involved is hardly incompatible with a strategic communication approach to terrorism.’

(Miller and Sabir 2012:90)

This pattern ties in with a recent study by Adam Hodges (2011) who believes that ‘sound bites’ of information provided by government (for instance President Bush’s speeches after September 11, 2001) form a discursive narrative which ‘regulate how the issue of 9/11 and terrorism can be meaningfully discussed in American society’ (2011:153). These sound bites are then removed from their original context and re-interpreted in different locations and embodied with new meaning, again citing Bush’s speech as an example where most people will not listen to the whole address but encounter parts of it through their local news station (2011). Although Hodges is referring specifically to media distribution in the United States, it is feasible to extend this theory to other Western countries. Hodges traces the use of metaphor in War on Terror narrative, believing that ‘metaphor aids the mapping of particulars onto a generic script by connecting the particulars (e.g. 9/11 and terrorism) to the genre (e.g. the war genre) through the comparison of different domains of experience’ (2011:20). He continues by stating that the use of metaphor makes the ‘text’ easier to understand. In relation to the War on Terror he postulates that,

‘The particulars of 9/11 and America’s response to terrorism are mapped onto the familiar human plight of a nation at war. The generic script of a nation at war provides a ready-made cultural framework to aid in both telling and interpreting the Narrative… generic precedents provide the basic foundation upon which the particulars are laid and thereby interpreted.’

(Hodges 2011:20)

Essentially this means that familiar tropes are used to tell stories of unfamiliar circumstances. However Hodges draws on Bruner (1991) when he infers that by invoking images of the past order to construct meaning in the present, the storyteller presents ‘a version of reality whose acceptability is governed by convention and ‘narrative necessity’ rather than by empirical verification and logical requiredness’ (Bruner 1991:4-5 cited in Hodges (2001:39)). As Richard Jackson states: ‘language is never neutral; words don’t just describe the world,
they actually help to make it. As such, language can never be employed in a purely objective sense’ (2005:1).

Jackson continues his critique of terrorist discourse by exploring the language surrounding the War on Terror (2007). He finds that this discourse is constructed using ill-defined, general terms, which are nonetheless highly culturally loaded and open to broad interpretation. Jackson gives the example of the word ‘radicalisation’, expanded on by Sedgewick (2010), who points out that this term is understood in several different ways and in at least three disparate frameworks (security, integration and foreign policy), with each framework having within it multiple levels of meaning, for instance analytical, official and public (2010:479). Jackson (2007) also states that these terms are often organised into oppositions, for example ‘extreme’ as opposed to ‘moderate’, and that ‘importantly, they also render unreasonable more nuanced narratives about the often-contradictory identities and characteristics of the narratives’ central actors’ (2007:401).

Tuman (2003) demonstrates the importance of media in the construction of terrorist discourse. He believes that,

‘Without the assistance of media, terrorist rhetoric would influence only those in the immediate vicinity of terrorist violence and destruction. Conversely, with the assistance of media, terrorism reaches a much broader, sometimes global audience – and in an era in which most people… get their political information from television, mass-mediated depictions of terrorism can have a profound effect upon the way we think about and engage in discourse about terrorism.’

(Tuman 2003:115)

Adding to this, Jackson (2005) reminds us that the media is the main method of communication for government, institutions and politicians. The role of the mass mediated image in society is central to the concept of the ‘culture industry’ as postulated by Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer (1944). For Adorno and Horkheimer, the culture industry centres on the production of standardised art in order to render the general population into a state of passivity. Adorno elaborates on this:

‘The culture industry misuses its concern for the masses in order to duplicate, reinforce and strengthen their mentality, which it presumes is given and unchangeable. How this mentality might be changed is excluded throughout. The masses are not the measure but the ideology of the culture industry, even though the culture industry itself could scarcely exist without adapting to the masses.’

(Adorno 1991:86)

Therefore, by being an industry and being responsive to the needs and wants of consumers, mass media loses any objectivity in its desire to remain popular, producing culture as a commodity. Through this process, popular stereotypes are reproduced so that other cultures are easily understood and digested regardless of the facts, and through the repetition of these stereotypes a power relationship is reinforced in which the viewer has control over ‘the Other’ (Hall 1997). However,
this power relationship is designed purely to keep consumers content; in essence, to keep them consuming. Adorno describes their position as being intrinsically false, because they are not an end-user but simply part of the machine:

‘Although the culture industry undeniably speculates on the conscious and unconscious state of the millions towards which it is directed, the masses are not primary, but secondary, they are an object of calculation; an appendage of the machinery. The customer is not king, as the culture industry would have us believe, not its subject but its object.’

(Adorno 1991:85)

Cottle (2006) extends this critique to the production of the news, citing ‘the ever-increasing dominance of media giants such as News Corporation… Based on their evident powers of production and distribution around the globe, it is perhaps understandable that the original critique… continues to chime’ (2006:14). Cottle also cites Herman and Chomsky’s ‘manufacturing consent paradigm’ as being relevant to the dissection of contemporary news.

Describing this paradigm, Herman and Chomsky (1988) highlight the importance of propaganda in the role of mass media to ‘amuse, entertain and inform’ (1988:1). They believe that because there is an inequality of wealth and power between those that produce and those that consume mass media, ‘money and power are able to filter out the news fit to print, marginalise dissent, and allow the government and dominant private interests to get their messages across to the public’ (1988:2).

With these mechanisms in mind, then, we are able to see that government and media are intertwined, with each relying on the other. As Miller and Sabir (2012) suggest, governments will often ‘overinflate’ stories in order to either suggest a threat greater than reality, or to make efforts to control this threat seem more effective. Mass media is equally discriminating when it comes to deciding which stories to disseminate, choosing those which will keep the attention of the audience and fulfill the messages that sponsors require in order to maintain their stakehold. If the public discourse of terrorism is defined through the media as the primary way that people obtain their understanding of it, then we must assume that the conversation is at least partly demarcated by the forces that exert influence over that media. In the case of terrorism, the narrative is based on a war story, a construction making violence in this situation easier to understand, regardless of whether the War on Terror really is a ‘war’ or not. The trope of the war story is useful in this regard because it allows for a clear definition of ‘the enemy’.

Terrorism and Religion

The relationship between religion and terrorism is still prevalent in media reports and government policy. A study commissioned by the Greater London Authority that reviewed the UK press printed between May 8th-14th, 2006, found that 91% of newspaper articles mentioning Islam were negative in connotation, with the principle association, in the UK, being with terrorism (Allen 2007). In addition, after the devastating attacks in Oslo of 2011, many newspapers,
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including The Sun in the United Kingdom and the Wall Street Journal in the United States, were quick to attribute those events to jihadists before it was discovered the attacks had been committed by Anders Breivik. In terms of government policy, according to an Associated Press article by Matt Apuzzo and Adam Goldman dated August 23rd, 2011, in the United States New York Police Department (NYPD) officers specifically target mosques, as well as bookshops and cafes frequented by Muslim groups, in order to gather intelligence regarding possible terrorist attacks. In a follow up article dated August 21st, 2012, the authors report that in the six years that this operation targeting Muslim community centres has been running, it has ‘never generated a lead or triggered a terrorism investigation’.

A Guardian article dated May 11th, 2012 reported that a training course for the US military that had been running since 2004 was suspended after receiving just a single complaint. In this course, officers were routinely told that in order to win the War on Terror, the US ‘might ultimately have to obliterate the Islamic holy cities of Mecca and Medina without regard for civilian deaths, following Second World War precedents of the nuclear attack on Hiroshima’. Hutnyk (2011) lists some of the many ways in which Islamic racism related to terrorism manifests itself, stating that incidents such as the shooting of Charles de Menezes on Stockwell tube station, London – in which no police officers were held responsible – and the long trial of Samina Malik, accused of writing poetry on a piece of paper whilst working at an airport

‘All contribute to a climate of generalised suspicion, such that fellow passengers on the tube are wary, the airport check-in queue is an anxious one, citizens are confronted on the streets, taxi-drivers are beaten, Mosques are attacked, right through to a disproportionate attention to “community cohesion,” and the farce of government insistence on British values. This escalation can only be described as a polymorphously perverse new mode of racism manifest in bizarre diverse and ubiquitous forms.’

(Hutnyk 2011:57-58)

The connection between ‘international terrorism’ and the ‘global Salafi jihad’ is one made by President Bush in his speech on the evening of September 11th, 2001. Within terrorist studies literature, Marc Sageman, in Understanding Terror Networks (2004), elaborates on this connection, stating that the movement ‘advocates a strategy of violent jihad, resulting in an explosion of terror to wipe out what it regards as local political heresy. The global version of this movement advocates the defeat of the Western powers that prevent the establishment of a true Islamic state’ (2004:1). He goes on to say that Al Qaeda is at the forefront of this movement, and that Al Qaeda is led by Salafi ideology. John R. Schindler adds to this by saying that ‘the main politico-theological movement behind the upsurge of radicalism in the modern Muslim world is Salafism’ (2009:247). The connection between Al Qaeda and Salafism is made by several other authors, including Abdel Bari Atwan (2006) and Lawrence Wright (2006). Whilst this connection is not necessarily false, it should be remembered that Salafi jihadism, of which groups such as Al Qaeda are a part (Kepel 2002), is not representative of Salafism as a whole. When Salafism becomes synonymous with Al Qaeda, and
violence in general, this has implications for all Salafis who are branded as potential terrorists and discriminated against.

Roel Meijer points out that Salafism is divided into three basic movements: quietist, political and jihadi (2010). According to Quintan Wiktorowicz (2006), these ‘divisions have emerged as a result of the inherently subjective nature of applying religion to new issues and problems… Although Salafists share the same approach to religious jurisprudence, they often hold different interpretations about contemporary politics and conditions’ (2006: 208). Linking the three ‘branches’ of Salafism is the idea that paradise can only be reached by returning to a way of life similar, if not identical, to the life lead by the prophet Muhammad and his contemporaries (Meijer 2010). The difference between them, according to Wiktorowicz, is the method of implementing this and interpreting the changes that have occurred in the world since that time (2006:208). Schindler allows for only two divisions in his description of Salafism, ‘those advocating a dua (calling) and the jihadists, who advocate a violent approach’ (2009:248). Whilst on first glance Schindler’s description seems to be a straightforward division between peaceful and violent jihad, he does make allowances for the fact that the categories are somewhat porous, something that Meijer (2010) criticises Wiktorowicz (2006) for not making clear.

Gerges (2005) reminds us that jihad is usually considered a ‘local’ happening: jihad against an enemy in close proximity, for example the Russian forces during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, 1979-1988. What Gerges labels ‘transnational jihad’ is a modern phenomenon unique to Al Qaeda, a strategic decision conceived by Osama bin Laden, Abu Hafs and Abu Ubaidah al-Banshiri (the three founders of the group). After the attacks of September 11th, 2001, bin Laden drew criticism from other jihadi groups that he had underestimated the power of the United States and that he was misguided in considering that attacking the US directly would lead to US forces leaving Muslim countries. This judgement was allegedly based on previous perceived successes: for example, the US Marines’ withdrawal from Lebanon in the early 1980s after their Beirut headquarters was destroyed (Gerges 2005).

These criticisms show that far from being representative of Salafism as a whole, Al Qaeda was not even representative of the smaller jihadi branch to which it belonged. In fact bin Laden had become something of a ‘black sheep’ amongst jihadi groups:

‘The core of the jihadis’ critique is a direct assault on what the religious nationalists view as the shortsightedness and colossal miscalculations of bin Laden and Zawahiri. Although these veteran militants are highly critical of America and its foreign policies, they say that killing American civilians has proved to be disastrous for the Islamist and jihadi movements… They also say that pro-Western Muslim rulers now feel emboldened to crack down harder against all Islamists and former jihadis, not just Al Qaeda operators.’

(Gerges 2005:191-192)

Gunning and Jackson (2011) take this argument a step further and question the link that is made between religion and terrorism. They state that the division between ‘religious’ and ‘secular’ life is deeply problematic and that it is difficult,
therefore, to claim that certain types of violence are more religious than others. That is not to say that religion is not in some way involved, but the authors believe that there has been an underlying insinuation that religion is in some way responsible for violence:

‘Many studies on ‘religious terrorism’ openly state, or at least strongly imply, that the religious element is a central cause of violence. In other words, it is not a ‘soft’ concept that simply describes the way in which religious justifications are used to legitimise tactics or motivate followers. Rather, there is an implicit assumption that religious ideas have the power to cause the violence. In this sense, religion is viewed, under certain conditions, as a ‘root cause’ of contemporary terrorism.’

(Gunning and Jackson 2011:373)

The authors go on to state that because groups such as Al Qaeda (and also Hamas and Hezbollah) operate or are associated with the Middle East, they are often labelled as religious groups because of the historical conceptualisation of the area as being particularly religious, especially in comparison with the secular view of the West (2011:377). They state that in fact these groups often have secular aspects, arguing that although the creation of an Islamic state is inspired by religion, ‘it has emerged within a very particular – and a particularly political and modern – interpretation of religion which has been moulded by a number of arguably “secular” dynamics’ (2011:376-7).

This view is supported by the work of Pape (2005), who conducted a study into Al Qaeda’s suicide terrorist attacks. He found that although religious motives may play a small part in joining the group; in fact, suicide terrorists associated with Al Qaeda were ten times more likely to originate in Muslim countries with a US military presence than otherwise, and also twenty times more likely to originate in Muslim countries with a US military presence and an Islamic fundamentalist population (Pape 2005:103-4).

‘For Al Qaeda, religion matters, but mainly in the context of national resistance to foreign occupation. The fact that the United States and its allies are predominantly non-Islamic societies makes it easier for Al Qaeda’s leaders to exploit their own religion to justify the use of martyrdom operations as the main weapon for national liberation.’

(Pape 2005:104)

We can see that there is a tendency to over-simplify the relationship between Al Qaeda and Salafism, and also with religion and terrorism in general. Whereas contemporary media would have us believe that Al Qaeda is a Salafi group, and indeed that their Salafi philosophy is wholly responsible for their violence, by examining this in more detail it is evident that there are flaws in this logic. The connection between Salafism and Al Qaeda is too broad, whilst the connection between religion and terror is, at least in part, one borne out of Middle Eastern stereotypes and Orientalism. By reducing terrorist violence to being motivated solely by religion, the political aspects of Al Qaeda’s actions and their rooting in contemporary international affairs become forgotten. Of equal importance is that by labelling Islam as a violent religion, we risk identifying all Muslims not only
as inherently ‘more religious’ than others, but also as being fundamentally dangerous. In essence, by doing this we forgo any kind of diversity within Muslim populations in favour of broad cultural typecasts.

Abu Ghraib

In April 2004, dozens of images were released depicting scenes of torture at Abu Ghraib prison, Afghanistan. Whilst some saw these images as revealing a hidden side of the War on Terror, for many, they also served to reinforce negative Muslim stereotypes, blurring further the distinction between terrorism, religion and Muslim identity. Carrabine (2011) describes the images as:

‘Scenes of US soldiers inflicting atrocities upon helpless captives and inanely grinning as they pose behind piles of twisted, naked bodies. Other notorious images include the hooded man on the box, a female soldier leading a naked prisoner on a leash, dogs poised to attack yet more naked detainees, while others are forced to wear women’s underwear and masturbate for the camera or are coerced into simulated sexual positions.’

(Carrabine 2011:6)

Carrabine also states that the circulated images were only a small selection of the thousands viewed by US Congress, and that the unreleased images depicted far worse scenes.

Aguayo points out that after the images were released, within the US media ‘there was a massive failure to recognize the outright colonial violence of these acts by American soldiers’ (Aguayo 2009:44). She states that when describing or commenting on the pictures, euphemisms such as ‘wrongdoing’ and ‘alleged abuse’ tended to be used, circumventing the direct use of the word ‘torture’. Aguayo believes that,

‘The omission of the word torture and its replacement with less threatening vocabulary normalise the occupation and conquest of other countries in the name of Euro-American security and the salvation of Muslim women, rhetoric with which an American public can identify—especially when the images cast are of Muslim men as dangerous suicide bombers and of women as concealed under their burqas and oppressed by their men.’

(Aguayo 2009:44)

Razack (2005) rejects the notion that the Abu Ghraib atrocities were committed by a small number of ‘bad apples’ and instead posits that they are indicative of the racial fault line of the ‘new world order’, ‘an enactment of a global script in which white nations view themselves as assisting the Third World into modernity’ (2005:345). She points out that although the sexual nature of the torture involved was essentially ‘passed off’ on the grounds of being used to gain information, it was not questioned in the media as to why the perpetrators thought sexually-related violence was an appropriate method of intelligence extraction. She states that this is a fundamentally Orientalist train of thought: ‘unlike us, they
are sexually repressed, homophobic, and misogynist and are likely to crack in sexualised situations, particularly those involving women dominating men or those involving sex between men’ (Razack 2005:347).

Razack (2004) also explores the idea of the imperilled Muslim woman and the dangerous Muslim man, adding to the picture a third figure of the civilised European, citing these characters as the central figures in the War on Terror. She believes that the focus on the treatment of women, and particularly violence against Muslim women by Muslim men,

‘serves not only to mask the violence Muslim communities experience from the outside but provides fuel for the ‘War on Terror’. As happened in the invasion of Afghanistan, the Taliban’s treatment of Afghan women far overshadowed the historical context in which they gained power, a context in which the United States played an active role while securing its own economic interests in oil.’

(Razack 2004:130)

Razack makes the connection between Abu Ghraib and the perpetuation of this stereotype of Muslim people when she states that ‘the fact that the status of Iraqis is so evidently sub-human, so culturally different, and so in need of discipline, crowds our news reels’ (2005:362, emphasis in original). For Razack, the Abu Ghraib pictures depict Muslims as being close to animals, with the perceived dangers of arranged and forced marriages being used as further evidence of this. For Razack then, the Abu Ghraib photographs – particularly the public release of a selected number of these images – acts as reinforcement for the motivation of the entire War on Terror and the Western domination of the Middle East.

Conclusion

The literature shows that the War on Terror has generated many false assumptions about Al Qaeda, Salafism and terrorism in general. It also shows that there is extensive government machinery related to disseminating what can be called propaganda related to these topics. Whilst in some ways this propaganda can be seen as a strategy of war in the fight against terrorism, these false assumptions have implications for Muslim people, who have to deal with the effects of institutionalised racism on a daily basis. As Hodges (2011) states, the result of creating ‘factoids’ of information and snippets of news that are easy to digest is that they miss out the detail. This is evidenced by Jackson (2007) when he states that dialogue about the War on Terror is populated by several key words, which are specific in their label but general in their meaning.

Adorno and Horkheimer discuss the idea of the culture industry as instilling a sense of passivity in those who take part in it, but quite how passive the ‘masses’ were to the War on Terror is a matter for discussion. Believing that viewing the Abu Ghraib images without questioning the politics behind them can be as much a partaking of violence as committing the act itself, Razack implicates us all in the horrors of Abu Ghraib when she asks us to remember that ‘participation in racial terror… can be as much textual as it is in the actual acts of racial violence, and we can achieve some of the same reassurances and pleasure
through reading about, viewing, and legally authorizing such acts’ (Razack 2005:361-362). As Carrabine (2011) states, the images that were released from Abu Ghraib were edited by the US government, that is, images were selected on the basis of what was suitable – and desirable – for the general public. Government gave the audience what it wanted to see. Discussion around these images was then focussed around minimising the damage to the reputation of the US army. This relates to both Adorno’s concept of the culture industry, as well as Herman and Chomsky’s description of the role of media and government in the circulation of propaganda.

As Jackson (2007) states, the ‘broader discourse [concerning the War on Terror] functions to promote a number of discrete political projects and reify a particular kind of political and social order’ (2007:425). The nature of this social order is clarified by Razack (2004) in her discussion of the photographs that came out of Abu Ghraib: it is essentially imperialist in nature, with the dialogue surrounding it constructing the West as a civilising force to the Third World’s savagery. The photographs and ensuing public conversation are both symptoms and reinforcing factors in the rift between ‘them’ and ‘us’. Unless the dominant discourse is replaced by a new, inclusive discourse that allows for a deeper understanding and acceptance of cultural difference, then the minority groups targeted by the Terror discourse will only become more marginalised.
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