



**Centre for Contemporary  
Middle East Studies  
University of  
Southern Denmark**

**Working Paper No. 4**  
August 2005

**Lars Erslev Andersen**

The Rhetoric of bioterrorism  
in media and fiction: implications for  
U.S. counter-terrorism

**The Rhetoric of bioterrorism  
in media and fiction: implications for  
U.S. counter-terrorism**

Paper to be presented at

**NEW MEDIA IN THE MIDDLE EAST**

**International Conference organized by  
Centre for Contemporary Middle East Studies, University of Southern Denmark in  
cooperation with Images of the Middle East  
October 31<sup>st</sup> and November 1<sup>st</sup> 2005**

**University of Southern Denmark,  
Campusvej 55,  
5230 Odense M**

**©Lars Erslev Andersen  
Department for Middle East Studies and Department for History  
University of Southern Denmark  
E-mail: lea@language.sdu.dk**

**D R A F T**

*What if terrorists exploded a homemade nuclear bomb at the Empire State Building in New York City? A one-kiloton nuclear device – tiny by superpower standards – would ignite a fireball 300 feet in diameter that would demolish the Empire State Building and the 20,000 people who work there, leaving in their place a crater 120 feet wide. The intense heat would vaporize much of the building, and everyone in it. A shock wave would spread out from the blast site, exposing everything in its path to pressure as high as thousands of pounds per square inch. Components of the Empire State Building that had not vaporized would create a storm of concrete, glass, and steel missiles, which would be propelled thousands of feet by strong horizontal winds.*

This is how the American terrorism-researcher at Harvard University Jessica Stern begins her book: *The Ultimate Terrorist* from 1999. Over the next couple of pages she continues her speculations on the colossal consequences, in short as well as long term, if even a small nuclear device was brought to detonation. Later on in the text biological weapons are considered, for example *anthrax*. As she writes in the introduction: "Biological weapons have the potential to be as deadly as nuclear bombs. For example, 100 kilogram[s] of anthrax, less than the amount Iraq has produced, could kill up to 3 million people if dispersed under optimal conditions" (Stern 1999, p.3f). It is curious that anthrax is always given as illustration when researchers point out examples of biological weapons one could imagine terrorists would use. Who cannot remember the images of the prior American Secretary of Defence William Cohen with a pound of sugar raised in one arm explaining to journalists from *ABC News* that if this sugar had been anthrax, and had it been spread over Washington DC, half the population would die. Moreover, anthrax surfaces as the first example in Anthony Lake's book: *6 Nightmares* from 2000. Lake was president Bill Clinton's first National Security Adviser, and the first of six nightmares that could strike the USA was biological terrorism in the form of anthrax: "What are your chances of surviving such a tiny dose of inhaled, weapons-grade anthrax? Maybe 50 %. That's why the Congressional Office of Technology Assessment concluded in a 1993 study that a single airplane delivering only 100 kilograms of anthrax – a mere .2562 cubic yards – over Washington, D.C., after dusk on a calm night could kill many hundreds of thousands people" (Lake 2000, p. 13f). The horror does not stop here: "Even worse could be product of "black biology", such as a genetically engineered, antibiotic-resistant strain of anthrax, as reportedly developed by Russian scientists at the Soviet bioweapons conglomerate Biopreparat" (Lake

2000, p. 14). With no morbidity intended one could say that it has, since 1997, been fashionable for research to focus upon the so-called new terrorism and this resulted in a conspicuous amount of attention being placed on anthrax. In 1999, in the US, 104 cases were registered which were thought to be related, to chemical or biological terrorism. After closer investigation, however, all cases were shown to be hoaxes. Of these, 81 instances involved people, in one circumstance or another, threatening to use anthrax. This indicates that, as corollary to the interest of politicians and researchers, anthrax has become a favoured subject among criminals and the unhinged who want to make an impression on their surroundings. Thus, also the media, which quoted the legislators, the experts and the madmen contributed to the common interest in the lethal substance.

One wonders why anthrax became the preferred example for, even though it was fashionable to discuss among certain people, there was only one case in the whole of world history where it was known to be used by a terror organization: the Japanese cult Aum Shinrikyo's failed attempt to spread bacteria from an apartment in Tokyo in the summer of 1993. The quotes from Stern and Lake indicate two possible reasons: Iraq and Russia. When Stern casually uses Iraq as a basis for comparison it is hardly a coincidence: since the Gulf War in 1991 where *The Coalition of the Willing* forced Iraq to cease its productions of weapons of mass destruction and destroy its stocks, Saddam Hussein's regime has had, as a state which produced, among other things, anthrax, the doubtful honour of being Rouge state *par excellence*. At the end of the 1990ies the unnerving atmosphere increased exponentially after the former chief of chemical and biological weapons-research for the Soviet Union and Russia, Ken Alibek, told *ABC's Prime Time Live* in February of 1998 that the former super power had produced "hundreds of tons of anthrax bacteria and scores of tons of smallpox and plague viruses". Thus, anthrax was out there somewhere in a world where the end of the cold war and globalisation had resulted in porous boundaries. Either way, the know-how was available with the many scientists who had been tinkering with the stuff in Iraq and the Soviet Union. One could think they would use the mobility which globalisation and porous boundaries allows by seeking new pastures, for example with the global terror-networks. When anthrax appears again and again in research maybe it is because this was the substance which the American military experimented with until president Richard Nixon stopped the program in 1969 – the numbers Stern mentions indicates that she is referring to the old experiments from then.

The purpose of this exposition is mainly to indicate that a new discourse has developed during the late 1990ies, which has had an increasingly important position within the American politics of security. The ingredients for this have been, as suggested, weapons of mass destruction, illegal weapon-programs, rogue states and a new form of terrorism that is under suspicion of wanting to use biological weapons (anthrax). If one reviews the literature published at the end of the 1990ies, especially from the policy-oriented milieus around the think-tanks, that very much address themselves to the decision-makers in Washington, D.C. – this could explain why this city is the preferred scene for the horror stories about biological weapons – it is clear that the threats of this world stem from invisible, non-territorial, suddenly appearing enemies, who with simple means in an asymmetrical conflict wreak catastrophic damage. Catastrophic terrorism was exactly the name the erstwhile Secretary of Defence William J. Perry gave the new threat in a book from 1999: *Preventive Defence. A New Strategy for America*, which he published with his colleague Mr. Ashton B. Carter. Others named the phenomena post-modern terrorism, super terrorism or simply new terrorism.

The world knew only of a limited amount of cases in which terrorism was performed with weapons of mass destruction - actually there was only one known death as a result of biological terrorism until the anthrax-affair in the autumn of 2001 in the US added five new cases to the list (Tucker 1999) - in spite of this it was increasingly the main subject when Americans discussed security politics. This had nothing to do with concrete experiences or empirical knowledge, but theoretical threat-narratives based on worst-case assumptions: apocalyptic scenarios produced in the cinema, novels, role-playing and on desks in many Washington think-tanks.

### **The Threat-assessment is made**

After the Cold War there was no longer any state which could match the USA militarily. In the beginning of the first decade after the fall of the Soviet Union an idea was thus developed that the US should always be able to fight two regional wars at any one time. In the first Gulf War there were half a million American soldiers in the Persian Gulf, wherefore it was plausible to assume that victory would be certain in any regional war if 750000 soldiers were available. According to this, the standing army should therefore count at least 1.5 million soldiers which

was 500000 less than in the Cold War (Klare 1995, p. 28ff). Already in connection with these discussions that involved Colin Powell who was then Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff for Defence and Richard Cheney who was Secretary of Defence, the legislators in Congress were critical of the arguments. They pointed out that the Pentagon had not established a connection between the threat on one side and the concept of defence to match those threats on the other. **“Where are the threats?”** as Senator Sam Nunn asked (Nunn 1990, p. 5f).

Several years would go before he got his answer. As a matter of fact a new threat assessment was first developed by the end of the '90ies. Its design was finished, however, before the NATO 50-year jubilee in April of 1999 in Washington. This was held simultaneously with the defence-alliance fighting its first war in Kosovo. Already then it was becoming a pressing question for many what the point of NATO was, now that the Soviet Union had fallen and the Warszawa-pact had dissolved? In principle NATO had outlived itself. However, the US had a new threat assessment ready. Clinton's Secretary of State Madeleine Albright toured the governments of European NATO countries to convince them that this should define the new role for the alliance.

In this assessment terrorism or rather *the new terrorism* played a considerable role since it, along with weapons of mass destruction and the so-called rogue states, were ingredients in the new threat after the Cold War. Terrorism, Rogue states and weapons of mass destruction constitute what was called the asymmetrical threat, where for example Iraq supplied al-Qaida with weapons of mass destruction such as ricin.

It was exactly this cocktail the American Secretary of State Colin Powell indicated when he, in February 2003, wanted to convince the United Nations Security Council that Iraq was a threat that demanded a response from the world community, possibly even in the shape of a war. Also, this combination of elements was used to explain why a so-called “pre-emptive strike”-strategy, that is removing the threat before it could do any damage, was materialising in the defence concept already during the Clinton administration. These considerations are the origin of the metaphor of “a smoking gun”, where Great Britain's Prime minister Tony Blair and president George W. Bush, prior to the second Iraq War, pointed out that the damage would be done if we ever saw a smoking gun: 9-11 should have been prevented before the planes hit the

buildings in Washington and New York. This could happen through better intelligence fieldwork or by bombing training camps used by terrorists before they can complete their objectives. This was the lesson learned by the al-Qaida attack in 2001.

### **After 9-11**

It was the idea of a “pre-emptive strike” which the Americans suggested should be an integral part of the NATO strategic concept and which the European countries, with France as a very vocal element, prevented. The US standpoint was of course that if it should be possible for a terror network to detonate a nuclear device in an American city or spread smallpox the catastrophic consequences were a necessary result. 9-11 showed that there were terrorists for whom mass destruction and death was a goal. Also, the anthrax attack in October of 2001 clearly showed that even a small attack with biological weapons on civilians could result in chaos. New terrorism, which had been a vague concept for the European countries in the 1990ies, and where serious researchers had dismissed the idea as an illusion among hysterical American politicians, had thus become a reality.

According to American theories the actions of new terrorism are characterised by including: 1) WMD, 2) it aims at inflicting maximal damage with as many casualties as possible, 3) its ideological and political goals are not well defined, and 4) it is network-based with a global orientation. As with many concepts, weapons of mass destruction are not clearly defined. These could be: chemical, biological or nuclear weapons. It is, however, not given that the use of, for example, biological weapons results in a large number of dead or massive destruction. Also, the term does not always include a fourth kind of weapon known as radiological weapons. Here one uses radioactive materials that are extremely dangerous. In a *dirty bomb* these can be detonated and thereby spread. *Dirty bombs* have become the object of greater scrutiny after examination of al-Qaida cave-networks in Afghanistan revealed blueprints of such a device.

That new terrorism seeks massive destruction is closely linked with its vague goals. One could see classical terrorism as a sought of information strategy which uses violence to advance demands while it simultaneously functions as a position for further negotiation. One could mention the Palestinians, where the goal is to get the surrounding society to accept the creation of a Palestinian state. Here it is the message that is important, not the body count. The best

example is Black September's operation at the Munich-Olympics where the Israeli delegation was kidnapped. This happened while the world press core was collected in Munich. So, because of all the cameras, the Palestinian problem, which was otherwise quite unknown, became headline material. Two years later the chairman of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation, PLO, held his famous speech at the UN general assembly.

Classical terrorism has since then been defined as theatre by the American terrorism expert Brian Jenkins, since its goal was to get a large audience with few deaths. In extension of this there are examples of groups like Bader-Mainhof apologising if its operations had cost the lives of innocent civilians. These classical examples of terrorism were usually accompanied by a press release to some news agency where the terror organisation took responsibility, argued its case and made a demand. In relation to this it is conspicuous that the terror operations performed by groups like al-Qaida, in the '90ies and the first years of the new millennium, were not followed by press releases explaining who was responsible and what demands were made. By studying their MO, there is rather a pattern of warnings being issued first, maybe days or weeks ahead of the operation, as was the case with the Bali-bombing in the autumn of 2002. Here al-Qaida's second-in-command announced violent attacks on a tape sent to *al-jazeera*. No basis for negotiation or demands was made.

One does not get the impression that a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict would fulfil al-Qaida's mission whereby it would dissolve itself. The goals involved seem to be more general and intertwined with religion of an almost apocalyptic kind. Thus, al-Qaida's criteria for success must be seen as very obscure indeed. What is not left unclear, however, is that al-Qaida, like Aum Shinrikyo, perceive their battle as being a holy one. Their victims are conceived as belonging to the infidels, and because of this lose their humanity – their life only has worth as sacrifices in the cause of the holy mission. This eschatological perspective and the contempt for the life of the infidel means, according to theory, that such groups seek to inflict the greatest possible damage and chaos. The more one knows about groups such as al-Qaida it becomes clear that they are not groups in any traditional sense, rather they are a network of individuals organised around nodes without any fixed geographical position. Experience has shown that such networks can be organised from many places and that the only demand on locality is that they can function relatively unbothered by authorities. Financing, organisation,

communication, acquiring weapons and other such things are left to the network itself, but it does need hideouts and the relative protection of states that are viewed as sovereign by the UN, whereby they cannot be attacked by, for example, the US. This organisational structure makes it possible for the network to spread out on a global level.

In many ways growth conditions for new terrorism have been optimal after the Cold War, and especially increased globalisation, which has created what some call the global village, has been important. Nation-states have been under pressure, not least in the former Soviet Union, which means it has been increasingly difficult to prevent the illegal spreading of people and hardware across borders, also, a range of conflicts have arisen with ethnic, cultural and religious components. Thus, there is a much greater risk for the spreading of weapons, including weapons of mass destruction. One can mention that the Americans, already in the beginning of the 1990ies, were worried about the proliferation of nuclear weapons in connection with the scrapping of warheads. In 1992 Boris Jeltsin disclosed facts about a vast production of biological and chemical weapons in the Soviet Union. It was feared these could fall into the hands of terror-networks or rogue states or that the scientists working with the substances would seek employment in for example Iraq, Iran or al-Qaida.

In this way the Americans could found their claim, that the threat from terrorism with weapons of mass destruction was very real: firstly, there was a big risk for the spread of weapons of mass destruction due to globalisation and secondly, there are terror-networks that actually wish to inflict a catastrophic attack. Thirdly, the Gulf War of 1991 showed with horrible clarity that a rogue state, that is Iraq, actually had an extensive production of chemical and biological weapons, and last but not least, had done its best to develop nuclear weapons. When Aum Shinrikyos' attack with sarin in the Tokyo Metro was investigated in the spring of 1995 large stocks of components for the production of chemical and biological weapons were found. Also, it was found that the cult had acquired Russian battle-helicopters that could disperse the substance from air, and that Russian weapons experts had actually been employed (Tucker 2000, p. 213ff). This case thus strengthened the argument for those who saw catastrophic terrorism as the main threat of the post-Cold War era.

From 1996, when the USA revised its terror-legislation, especially to counter the threat from biological terrorism, the fight against new terrorism attained top priority and was conceived as a primary threat, which the armed forces should be organised to combat. It was also this threat the US wished NATO to recognize and deal with in 1999. This, however, only resulted in the establishment of an information center for weapons of mass destruction in the headquarters at Brussels. The idea that NATO should be ready to function '*beyond territory*', was abandoned but only to be revitalised in 2002.

### **Worst Case**

Obviously there was no consensus on how new terrorism and its use of WMD should be conceptualised and fought. The main divergence is represented by the existence of two schools of thought. We could name the first the "Vulnerability-school" while we can refer to the other, less elegantly, as the "Threat-assessment-school". In the first line of thought the starting point is the worst-case scenario, for example the consequences of a plague attack or the detonation of a nuclear device in a major city. Of course the conclusions are devastating and show that the USA – or any other country for that sake – would be extremely vulnerable to such an attack. Also, the preparedness for dealing with the consequences is quite insufficient. In extension of this, they argue for developing a more comprehensive preparedness, which attained high priority at the end of the 1990ies. The other school of thought is much more concerned with the threat itself and argues that one should investigate who would have the capacity to see through such a terror attack with weapons of mass destruction. Here it is pointed out that there actually are very few known examples of such terrorism and that it is a very formidable task to even handle these weapons. The assessment thus becomes that the threat is low and that the proper strategy to follow would be goal oriented data-collection by the intelligence services as the primary defence. A natural corollary to these lines of thought is a critical stance toward the federal spending of huge amounts of money on national preparedness in the case of terrorist attacks.

9-11 did change the situation however. On the one hand this attack was not accomplished with the use of weapons of mass destruction rather, like earlier attacks by al-Qaida, conventional weapons were used. This confirms the idea that terror-networks would choose to go for biggest effect with the simplest means. This, of course, reduces the chance of seeing weapons of mass

destruction in terror-attacks. Alternately, only about a month after 9-11, the world witnessed four letters with anthrax being circulated in the congress mail-system resulting in five people being contaminated and dying. Also, the congress, and a whole series of other Washington buildings, had to be evacuated and decontaminated. In a matter of weeks billions of dollars were spent analysing all sorts of powder all over the world. The nature of the anthrax found in the letter showed that it could only have come from the USA, the former Iraq or Russia, and that it required advanced laboratories. Thus, there must have been a dispersion of the substance from one of these places, which indicated that the threat was real. On the other hand, it was more likely that it was related to rightwing lunatics, from USA's own backyard, rather than global terror-networks.

Additionally, after the American attacks in Afghanistan it was proven that al-Qaida had experimented with the use of chemical weapons. Furthermore, the poison ricin, which is developed from beans, was found in the unravelling of an al-Qaida cell in Rome and during the search of another cell in Manchester plans for the use of weapons of mass destruction was found. The case in Manchester also involved ricin and was connected to an al-Qaida group in northern Iraq, the link, however, could not be verified later on.

Experts point out that the fast development in biological industries very well could result in negative profits, since biological material, which is more easily handled by the terror-networks, can be used for actual attacks. Known biological weapons are actually very difficult to handle because of the high contagion risk in addition to the fact that they are only really effective if the weapon is dispersed over large areas with dusters on a plane. With developments in the bio-industry one could fear that substances are developed which could be used with much greater ease by terror-networks.

In spite of the very few actual cases, other experts non-the-less argue that there have been no certain examples of terror-networks actually having used weapons of mass destruction. Thus, one must assume that conventional weapons will be preferred in the future since, all else being equal, they are easier to handle and at the same time inflict all the damage one could hope for. These experts also point out that the focus on terrorism with weapons of mass destruction is the real source of weakness, since it diverts resources to a threat, which is relatively small, from

one, which is known to be large, that is conventional terrorism. An examination of why the American authorities did not prevent the 9-11 attacks would place consideration on whether or not there was too much focus upon spectacular uses of weapons of mass destruction and not conventional forms of terrorism, which actually levelled the Twin Towers.

### **Apocalyptic passion or cool analysis?**

”Austen told the group that the Cobra virus appears to trigger a kind of Lesch-Nyhan disease in humans, in both men and women. Lesch-Nyhan had become a contagious disease. Cobra probably had the ability to knock out the gene for enzyme HPRT, and that somehow led to self-injury and auto-cannibalism. Natural Lesch-Nyhan disease was a progressive disorder that came on slowly as the child developed, “No one understands the exact kind of brain damage that causes Lesch-Nyhan children to engage in self-injury,” she said to the group. “Cobra apparently causes the same general type of brain damage but very rapidly” (Preston 1997, p. 295). This passage is from Richard Preston’s book *The Cobra Event*, which is about a new type of biological weapon in the shape of a recombined virus. The result of an infection is a horrendous death after hours of auto-cannibalism. Cobra is the name of this fiendish virus, which in the book is as contagious as smallpox – and no antidote exists. It is, in other words an attack weapon to which there is no defence. If this substance were spread in a city – in the book the final scenes are placed in the New York subway – would result in a doomsday like situation as the Black Death of the Middle Ages did.

At the meeting of a study group in December of 1997 president Bill Clinton asked the leader of the Institute for Genomic Research, Dr. J. Craig Venter, if it was possible to develop a weapon to which there is no defence (Benjamin 2002, p. 252f; Miller 2001, p. 235ff). Venter explained that this was possible by using certain genetically engineered, recombined types of virus, which had already been depicted in a very realistic novel: *The Cobra Event*. Venter’s answer made a deep impression on Clinton. He immediately read Preston’s book and, in addition, made it mandatory reading for the staff in the Pentagon. Already in April of 1998 he held a secret seminar on the bio-terrorist threat, which resulted in the purchase of large quantities of vaccines and other medicine. As his top adviser, Sidney Blumenthal, writes in the book *The Clinton Wars*, Clinton became: ”virtually obsessed with the dangers of bioterrorism”: ”At Clinton’s instigation, federal programs virtually unknown before – to protect the nation’s ”critical

infrastructure and to curb weapons of mass destruction – received US dollars 3.6 billion over the next four years, and traditional counterterrorism funding was increased by 43 %. Clinton insisted on spending whatever Clarke and the other intelligence agencies believed was necessary” Blumenthal 2003, p. 656). According to the *New York Times* journalist Judith Miller, in the book *Germs. Biological Weapons and America’s Secret War* from 2001, Clinton maintained his interest for worst case scenarios, his apocalyptic passion, by reading other books on the subject; ”Tom Clancy’s *Rainbow Six*, a thriller about a counter-terrorist team’s efforts to prevent Armageddon, made a big impression. Another favourite was a Patricia Cornwell novel that focused on a female medical examiner’s battle against a shadowy figure intent on using mutant smallpox for mass murder” (Miller 2001, p. 225).

What should one do if it actually became possible for a terrorist or an organisation to develop a biological weapon such as a Cobra virus and thereafter dispersed it in a major city? Since there is virtually no real experience in this field of research it has been necessary to invent it. This has happened through large and thoroughly prepared war games staged by experts from for example Johns Hopkins University’s respected *Center for Biodefence* in cooperation with the federal health authorities and other relevant institutions. The results from these *games* peg out the framework for the policy on the issues. All this was set into movement years before 9-11. After 9-11 the funding for programs and *games* have increased exponentially. Just like the detonation of a small nuclear device in a city would have catastrophic consequences so would the dispersion of Cobra virus. Therefore something must be done to prevent it. The problem is that the new network-terrorism, post-modern terrorism, is everywhere and nowhere and therefore impossible to unravel completely. As a metaphor for the pitched battle between Good and Evil in the last ages the dark forces have taken hold of our imaginations rather than being located in trivial political reality. As a metaphor it has invaded our everyday life as a fear of evil that suddenly manifests itself as a letter with invisible powder, a bomb in a discothèque at the holiday resort or the transformation of an aircraft to an effective missile. It is this rhetoric of fear and vulnerability that convinces Danes to choose local holiday resorts placed in insect infested orchards instead of the warm beaches in the south. But more disturbingly it also results in entrenchment, as when the British Parliament envelops itself in a concrete shroud of fear that terrorists should drive a van loaded with explosives into the heart of legislation. It is such irrational alloys of fear and security that have sparked the French sociologist Jean Baudrillard’s

airy essay on *The Spirit of Terrorism*, which concludes that september 11<sup>th</sup> , more than anything, was the dominant and arrogant superpower's own suicide: " It is almost they who did it, but we who wanted it. If one does not take that into account, the event lost all symbolic dimension to become a pure accident, an act purely arbitrary, the murderous fantasy of a few fanatics, who would need only to be suppressed. But we know very well that this is not so. Thus all those delirious, counter-phobic exorcisms: because evil is there, everywhere as an obscure object of desire. Without this deep complicity, the event would not have had such repercussions, and without doubt, terrorists know that in their symbolic strategy they can count on this unavowable complicity. This goes much further than hatred for the dominant global power from the disinherited and the exploited, those who fell on the wrong side of global order. That malignant desire is in the very heart of those who share (this order's) benefits. An allergy to all definitive order, to all definitive power is happily universal, and the two towers of the World Trade Center embodied perfectly, in their very double-ness (literally twin-ness), this definitive order. No need for a death wish or desire for self-destruction, not even for perverse effects. It is very logically, and inexorably, that the (literally: "rise to power of power") exacerbates a will to destroy it. And power is complicit with its own destruction" Congenially with the American politicians' and terrorism experts' apocalyptic passion for biological catastrophes and global, network-based evil, the high-priest of postmodernism Baudrillard compares terrorism with a virus: "Terrorism, like virus, is everywhere. Immersed globally, terrorism, like the shadow of any system of domination, is ready everywhere to emerge as a double agent" (Baudrillard 2001, p.1f)

The problem with Baudrillard's analysis, which will probably be welcomed by all that adhere to a reflex-like jubilation over any critique of the USA, simply because it is a critique of the USA, is that it remains within the confusion of simulacra. Just like the most persistent supporters of the American terrorism-discourse lose themselves in their own metaphors on the worst-case scenarios instead of asking who would have the capacity to detonate a nuclear device in New York? Rather than making terrorism a pitched battle between the light and dark forces and placing it in a **homespun** metaphysical discourse on the last ages, terrorism can be analysed as a political and historical phenomena rather than a self-fulfilling prophecy on the arrogance of power. This would make it possible to deal with the background for terrorism and its manifestation as an idea. This would not, of course, remove terrorism once and for all, but it

would de-demonise it, which, after all, is the most important thing to do when the rhetoric of fear and vulnerability is to be deconstructed.

*Thanks to Thomas Derek Robinson for diligent work and help with the translation*

## Literature:

Jean Baudrillard (2001): *The spirit of terrorism*, translated from French original (“L’Esprit du Terrorisme”, *Le Monde* November 2) by Rachel Bloul and distributed by Cyber-Society-Live (CSL): [www.jiscmail.ac.uk/lists/cyber-society-live.html](http://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/lists/cyber-society-live.html) November 15, 2001.

Daniel Benjamin & Steven Simon (2002): *The Age of Sacred Terror* (New York: Random House)

Sidney Blumenthal (2003): *The Clinton Wars. An Insider’s Account of the White House Years* (New York: Penguin Books)

Ashton B. Carter & William J. Perry (1999): *Preventive Defense. A new security strategy for America* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press)

Michael Klare (1995): *Rogue States and Nuclear Outlaws. America’s search for a new foreign policy* (New York: Hill and Wang)

Anthony Lake (2000): *6 Nightmares. Real threats in a dangerous world and how America can meet them* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company)

Judith Miller, Stephen Engelberg, William Broad (2001): *Germs. Biological Weapons and America’s Secret War* (New York: Simon & Schuster)

Sam Nunn (1990): *Nunn 1990: A New Military Strategy* (Washington D.C.: The Center for Strategic and International Studies)

Richard Preston (1997): *The Cobra Event* (London: Orion)

Jessica Stern (1999): *The Ultimate Terrorists* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press)

Jonathan B. Tucker & Amy Sands (1999): “An unlikely threat”, *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, July/ August 1, Vol. 55, No. 4

Jonathan B. Tucker (ed.) (2000): *Toxic Terror. Assessing Terrorist Use of Chemical and Biological Weapons* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT): David E. Kaplan: “Aum Shinrikyo (1995)”.