Reading Between the Li(n)es of Conflict(ing) Discourses:

A Critical Geopolitics of 11 September 2001 and the ‘War on Terror’

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by

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to critically explore the role of geopolitics in the pre-conflict process of violence legitimation. The thesis argues that before war can occur in world politics violence legitimating ‘conflict discourses’ must be constructed that become hegemonic over violence de-legitimating ‘conflicting discourses’ that seek to prevent war. Consequently, the violence legitimation process is a contested one between opposing ‘conflict(ing) discourses’. The argument is made from a critical geopolitics perspective using a case study of 11 September 2001 and the ‘war on terror’. It is argued that the United States foreign policy elite constructed a hegemonic surprise attack conflict discourse that explained 11 September 2001 in a particular way that legitimated the violent response of the ‘war on terror’. On the other hand, an alternative blowback conflicting discourse proposed an alternative, but subservient, explanation of 11 September 2001 that unsuccessfully attempted to prevent the war on Afghanistan.

The hegemony of the surprise attack conflict discourse was then used in an attempt to establish the ‘war on terror’ as a ‘new’ new world order for the twenty-first century. This attempt, however, was increasingly resisted by many governments and publics around the world throughout 2002. The thesis discusses the New Zealand example of this common transition from support of the war on Afghanistan to opposition to the war on Iraq through a discussion of the local impact of 11 September 2001 and the ‘war on terror’ on domestic politics and foreign policy. The pre-conflict violence legitimation process was especially evident in the build-up towards war on Iraq during 2002 and the early months of 2003. The thesis explores this second example of the contest between opposing conflict(ing) discourses of the ‘war on terror’. The critical geopolitics approach to the violence legitimation process is unique within this emerging sub-discipline and opens the possibility of a contribution to conflict research.
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Chapter One
Research Argument

Proposing a Critical Geopolitics of 11 September 2001 and the ‘War on Terror’

“...I want to understand how neighbours are turned into enemies, how people who once had a lot in common end up having nothing in common but war...how neighbours once ignorant of the very idea that they belong to opposed civilisations begin to think – and hate – in these terms; how they vilify and demonise people they once called friends; how, in short, the seeds of mutual paranoia are sown, grain by grain, on the soil of a common life”.

The Geopolitical Moment of 11 September 2001

My Tuesday 11 September 2001 'where were you?' story is probably not out of the ordinary for those people not directly involved in or indirectly affected by events in New York, Washington, DC, and Pennsylvania in the United States of America. I awoke at home in Christchurch, as usual, to the radio news at 7am (on Wednesday 12 September, New Zealand time) to an unusually passionate newsreader whose excitement penetrated my sleep within seconds. The normal slow awakening on a chilly spring morning was abandoned for the desperate need for pictures; the newsreader's words had got through, but without vision I did not – could not – really comprehend the message. I knew visual images were required, so into the living room it was for one of the more absorbing episodes of breakfast television. Because of the 16 hour time difference between New Zealand and the East Coast of the United States (US) I had missed most of the day's drama: I saw only replays of the attack on the twin towers and their extraordinary collapse and well-after-the-event footage of the smoking hole in one side of the damaged Pentagon. I did see live, however, the collapse of the World Trade Centre Seven building.

Thereafter came three days of almost non-stop television watching as New Zealand's two main commercial channels, the government-owned Television New Zealand's Channel One and the Canadian CanWest-owned TV3, took virtually continuous feeds from the United States' ABC and CBS networks. As I was then a doctoral candidate one year into research on deconstructive critiques of the geopolitical discourses that legitimate violence in post-Cold War ethnic conflict, the events in the United States were not merely of personal interest, but of high academic relevance; although one cannot, of course, really separate the two. I use this division, however, to open this discussion of my reaction to 11 September 2001. I begin with my personal responses before proceeding, via the reasonably quick progression I experienced, to my academic reactions: a common transition amongst geographers' commentaries and reactions (e.g., Flint 2001a, Agnew 2001, and Nijman 2001). My academic responses came to dominate and thus prompted, within the context of the doctoral research already underway, this critical geopolitics of the competing geopolitical discourses – what I call conflict discourses and conflicting discourses – constructed to explain the events of 11 September 2001 in particular ways and/or to legitimate or de-legitimate the 'war on terror' that began in Afghanistan on 7 October 2001.

On a personal level, I suspect that my reaction was no more or less than anyone else's in a similar 'unaffected' position. The grotesque sight of people leaping from 80-plus floors in a futile attempt to escape the inferno inside the World Trade Centre (WTC) is etched in my
memory. I grappled with the macabre irony of Pentagon personnel who, given the size, power, and global reach of the United States military, probably thought themselves beyond such attack but died in its very nerve-centre. I could barely imagine the sense of fear, helplessness, and desperation that the crew and passengers onboard the four aircraft, and in particular those on United Airlines Flight 93 as they apparently prevented the plane from reaching the hijackers’ intended target which resulted in its crash into a field in rural Pennsylvania, must have felt in their last moments of life. This drama was made real by stories of last minute phone calls from crew and passengers to loved ones on terra firma. I therefore had much sympathy for those killed or wounded, their families, friends, and colleagues, and others affected by these events.

Beyond this sympathy, however, I did feel emotionally detached from these events. I am not a citizen of the United States, at the time I had never been there (apart from four mercifully brief stopovers in the transit lounge at Los Angeles airport!), I did not know anybody killed or wounded, and I have never directly experienced or been indirectly affected by such violence. In the following days this emotional detachment meant I was unable to participate in or identify with the US government, media, and popular frenzy that, even in these most justified of circumstances, seemed to quickly descend into emotional hysteria and patriotic fervour. I simply could not match the grief, shock, and outrage of leaders, media, and publics in the US and beyond. My emotional detachment was highlighted to me on 14 September by German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder’s fascinating expression of extra-territoriality when he exclaimed, clearly echoing US President John Kennedy’s 26 June 1963 “Ich bin ein Berliner” (“I am a Berliner”) declaration, that “Today, we are all American”. I also thought this declaration was naively dangerous: if, as George Bush and Osama bin Laden were then suggesting, a ‘clash of civilisations’ was coming, then identifying oneself as ‘American’ did not strike me as a particularly wise thing to do, especially when one has another option and clearly did not need to do so. Political support is one thing; making oneself a ‘target-by-association’ is quite another. Even in the wake of 11 September 2001, therefore, I was unable to fulfil Schroeder’s implicit but impossible suggestion that I was meant to feel exactly as an American, or even mirror US-feelings as a ‘non-American’ American.

Indeed, even when I visited the WTC and Pentagon sites seven months later I did not feel any more – or less – ‘emotional’ or ‘upset’ at the loss of life there, despite the much greater numbers involved, than when I visited other places of violence, death and ‘terrorism’; for example, the Northern Ireland bomb sites of Enniskillen and Omagh, the scene of ‘bloody Sunday’ in (London)Derry, and the infamous Falls and Shankill Roads in Belfast. I approached both 11
September 2001 sites wondering how I would react to being at the scene of these historic events where so many people had been killed. While I was respectful of the scale of the events, I felt that the site of one death deserved the same respect and contemplation as the site of a thousand. Feeling sympathy, but not empathy, with the United States and the victims, therefore, my emotional detachment enabled my transition from personal to academic reaction and I was able to watch events, through 12–14 September, from an increasingly intellectual perspective.

It was obvious that on a number of dimensions 11 September 2001 was a significant and implicitly global geopolitical event. As Neil Smith (2001:631) explains: “The targets themselves were international icons: the World Trade Centre, symbol of global financial power, and the Pentagon, home as much as symbol of global military power”. One could add here the third target that the fourth plane never reached: the White House, ‘home as much as symbol’ of ‘global political power’. The geographical location, projection, and consequences of this economic, military, and political power around the globe are a central geopolitical concern. Moreover, the attacks on these embodiments of power indicate an extreme discontent with that power and its exercise, and are thus suggestive of a counter-geopolitics.

The Arab identity of the perpetrators provides insights into the location of, and hence reasons for, that anger. For decades the Middle East has been scripted as a problematic geopolitical region because of its complex intra-Arab relations, the protracted Arab and especially Palestinian–Israeli conflict, and the region’s oil and gas deposits which complicate its relations with the outside world, particularly the United States and other oil dependent economies. Accepting that Osama bin Laden’s Afghanistan-based al-Qaeda network conducted the 11 September 2001 attacks (on CBS television, for example, this suspicion was raised just 17 minutes after the first plane struck the WTC), the search for an understanding of the(ir) reasons narrows to US–Afghanistan relations and Washington’s preceding interactions with the then ruling Taliban regime. This location of responsibility points to a complex geopolitical context to the attacks.

11 September 2001 was also a global geopolitical event because citizens from 83 states were killed mostly, again, in the World Trade Centre. Consequently, almost one-half of United Nations’ members had a direct connection to the attacks, despite the conventional representation of the attacks as an ‘American tragedy’. In contrast, the families, friends, and colleagues of the victims are a truly ‘global community’; a community made larger if WTC evacuees, Pentagon survivors, and the dozens of ‘near miss’ anecdotes of people who should have been on those planes or in those buildings but whose plans changed at the last fortuitous moment are added.
The method of the attacks signalled further erosion, already accelerating since the Cold War, by non-state actors of the nation-state’s traditional monopoly on the means of violence. The unprecedented use of civilian airliners as manned missiles was a significant escalation in the terror capacity of political violence. Conflict in world politics is a longstanding area of geopolitical interest, and contemporary changes in its character have recently been encapsulated in Mary Kaldor’s (1999) concept of ‘new wars’: the shift from conventional inter-state conflict to intra-state violence and war between a state and a non-state actor.

Finally, 11 September 2001 was a global geopolitical event because within minutes of the first plane hitting the WTC the attack was being broadcast around the world live on television. The coordination of the attack ensured that the vision of the second plane crashing into the WTC would reach millions of television viewers rather than just thousands of local eye-witnesses. Most of the world learnt of the attacks not from the evening news or the morning papers but while the attacks were still taking place; a not quite unprecedented event in the history of television but one that took Piers Robinson’s (2002) concept of ‘the CNN effect’ – sensational political television that changes public opinion and can influence foreign policy – to new heights. Thus, and also reflecting McKenzie Wark’s (1994) notion of media vectors, the information networks of the very society the perpetrators were attacking were used to exponentially multiply the impact of their actions. Therefore, 11 September 2001 was again a global geopolitical event because of its media-savviness; undoubtedly spectacular, but also a spectacle.

What was most striking about 11 September 2001 as a global event, however, was that it triggered a profound geopolitical moment: as did the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand that sparked World War One; as did Germany’s invasion of Poland that triggered World War Two; as did the November 1989 fall of the Berlin Wall that brought down Eastern European and Soviet communism and signalled the decline of the Cold War. At this instant much of the world held its breath at the audacity of the attacks and feared what would happen next. According to numerous newspaper headlines the following day, 11 September 2001 was a “Day That Changed the World” (The Sun) and was “Doomsday America” (The Independent). Some even suggested that this geopolitical event was the “Apocalypse” (Daily Mail) or asked “Is This the End of the World?” (Daily Star). While such rhetoric surely exaggerated the event, it certainly seemed to amount to an “Act of War” (USA Today and the New York Post) and that for the first time in modern history “War Comes to America” (The Times) and the “US Attacked” (New York Times). This notion of a rare geopolitical event was reinforced because, if this was indeed the start of a ‘new war’, it already appeared to be unlike any other ‘war’ in history. Indeed, for geopoliticians
and others it seemed obvious that 11 September 2001 was an event with complex causes rooted in the global geopolitical context at the start of the new millennium. In the immediate aftermath of the attack, however, what was far less obvious was the precise nature of the event's geopolitical consequences.

These wider but unknown impacts quickly became far more important than either its geopolitical causes or the event itself. These consequences would most immediately be determined by the reaction of the United States government in the hours and days after the attacks, so 11 September 2001 presented the Bush administration with a geopolitical choice. Two alternatives appeared at distant ends of a possibility spectrum. At one end, the US could respond with a vigorous diplomatic and investigative pursuit of the surviving perpetrators, co-conspirators, and accomplices in a legal achievement of justice for the victims, their families, and the nation itself. This choice was unlikely given the deaths of the known perpetrators, the difficulties of finding, capturing, and prosecuting (alive) Osama bin Laden and the leadership of his al-Qaeda network, and the problems of pursuing non-state actors through state-based international law. This choice did, however, offer the opportunity to break the escalating cycle of violence between anti-US 'terrorism' and US 'counter-terrorism', avoid a violent response that would reduce both sides to the same tactics, and actually strengthen the principles and practices of international law, multilateral cooperation, and global peace and justice.

At the other end, the United States could react militarily, striking against someone, somewhere, whom it held responsible in an understandably angry but impulsive and even reckless retaliation. From the moment the first plane hit the twin towers this was the more likely, even probable, response. Indeed, a violent retaliation was perhaps the inevitable US response, for as Gearoid O'Tuathail (2003) has since argued the US reaction, both political and public, was largely driven by the notion of "affect", which emphasises the role of previous experience in guiding reaction, virtually by default, to such crises. Or, in O'Tuathail's (2003:858) own words, affect "simplifies and speeds the process of calculative reasoning so that every decision is relatively instantaneous, rather than a rational choice marathon". In this instance, however, such a 'choice' would merely satisfy the immediate demand for revenge but have little regard for the long-term consequences, complicate any simultaneous diplomatic and legal pursuit of justice, and further entrench previous US political, economic, and military policies that potentially provide insights into the causes of 11 September 2001 in the first place. In other words, the geopolitical event of 11 September 2001 presented the US with a crucial geopolitical choice, to be made in the following geopolitical moment, between pursuing peace or escalating violence.
The decision would depend on how the events of 11 September 2001 were described by the Bush administration and explained to the media and citizens of the United States and to the wider world. The description and explanation of 11 September 2001 would have to be constructed, because the event existed, momentarily at least, only as a surreal, even unreal event: recall the numerous comments that the scenes in New York (especially), Washington, and Pennsylvania were 'like a movie'. Indeed, comparisons with the silver screen became one of the scripts through which the events were mediated on the day, and Slavoj Zizek (2002:16) later commented, in the context of the longstanding genre of Hollywood disaster movies, that “the unthinkable which happened was the object of fantasy, so that, in a way, America got what it fantasised about”. Moreover, incredulous comments that the attacks were 'not really happening' echoed Jean Baudrillard’s (1995) famous declaration that “the Gulf War did not take place”. To be sure, for an instant 11 September 2001 existed outside any obvious plausible explanation.

Even as these unbelievable events were still unfolding, however, US President George Bush began to describe, explain and make sense of the otherwise indescribable, unexplainable, and to many initially senseless attacks. Just 44 minutes after the first plane struck the World Trade Centre, Bush (2001a) appeared on television from a Sarasota, Florida school and labelled the morning’s unfinished events as “an apparent terrorist attack” and “a national tragedy”. Later that day, after the twin towers had fallen and the Pentagon still smouldered, speaking at Barksdale Air Force Base in Louisiana, Bush (2001b) declared that “freedom itself was attacked this morning by a faceless coward” and asked “the American people...to join me in saying a prayer for the victims and their families”. In his televised evening address from the White House in Washington, Bush (2001c) described the victims of this “mass murder” as “secretaries, business men and women, military and federal workers, moms and dads, friends and neighbours” whose “lives were suddenly ended by evil, despicable acts of terror”. Bush went on to explain that “America was targeted for attack because we’re the brightest beacon for freedom and opportunity in the world”. And so began the process of explaining the otherwise unexplainable.

This rhetoric was repeated so often by other Bush administration officials, United States military and intelligence service representatives, leaders of other (especially western) governments, US and global media commentators, collective publics, and individual citizens around the world that it quickly became the accepted, dominant explanation of 11 September 2001. This explanation provides the core of what I call here, and substantiate in Chapter Four, the ‘surprise attack’ discourse, because it explained 11 September 2001 as a proverbial ‘bolt-from-the-blue’ or, as Robert McChesney (2002:92) writes, like “a massive attack from outer space”, with no possible
earthly justification. Furthermore, according to this narrative 11 September 2001 was an act of abhorrent cruelty perpetrated by evil terrorists with a barbaric disregard for human life against an unsuspecting, benevolent and innocent United States nation, government, and people. Finally, the perpetrators attacked the US merely because they are jealous of the freedom, democracy, and way of life of the ‘American people’ and resent US global leadership even though that is for the universal good of humanity.

This dominant surprise attack explanation, however, was contested by numerous critical alternatives that I group together here, and again substantiate in Chapter Four, under the concept of ‘blowback’, which is best encapsulated in Chalmers Johnson’s (2000) book, Blowback: The Costs and Consequences of American Empire. The concept proposes that there is a post-World War Two history of ‘anti-American’ protest, and sometimes violent action, against what are perceived by local communities in many parts of the world to be imperialist US foreign policies. ‘Blowback’ thus refers to the unintended, detrimental consequences of US policies abroad and, in its most extreme form, is manifest in violent acts against US targets. The concept, therefore, seems to nicely theorise alternative explanations of 11 September 2001 that drew attention to the geopolitical context of the attacks and could hence provide a better explanation, or at least a fuller understanding, of the reasons behind the attacks. For example, Irish journalist and regional specialist Robert Fisk (2001a) emphasised the problematic history of western and US intervention in the Middle East, as suggested by the identities of the perpetrators, as the geopolitical context to 11 September 2001 in The Independent the following day:

“So it has come to this. The entire modern history of the Middle East, the collapse of the Ottoman empire, the Balfour declaration, Lawrence of Arabia’s lies, the Arab revolt, the foundation of the state of Israel, four Arab – Israeli wars and the 34 years of Israel’s brutal occupation of Arab land all erased within hours as those who claim to represent a crushed, humiliated population struck back with the wickedness and awesome cruelty of a doomed people...This is not the war of democracy versus terror that the world will be asked to believe in the coming days. It is also about American missiles smashing into Palestinian homes and US helicopters firing missiles into a Lebanese ambulance in 1996 and American shells into a village called Qana and about a Lebanese militia paid and uniformed by America’s Israeli ally hacking and raping and murdering their way through refugee camps”.
Similarly, on the same day an anonymous internet punter posted a mock Presidential speech entitled “What Bush Should Have Said” in his televised address the previous evening. Rather than invoking a benevolent, civilised United States as the innocent victim of a ‘surprise attack’ from a barbaric outside world, this fake speech presented a quite different story:

“My fellow Americans. I would like to deeply and sincerely apologise to you all, and particularly to those injured and to the loved ones of those lost. You see, largely away from the public eye, my administration and its predecessors have intervened without cease in the affairs of other peoples. But we have not intervened to advance freedom. We have not intervened to advance democracy. We have not even intervened to protect the interests of the relatively small population of this country... Instead, we have intervened to advance the business interests of our campaign contributors and networks of friends and advisers, to put down the unrest of the many thousands of people who are left impoverished and disenfranchised by our economic policies, and to ensure the military and political dominance of our country over other nations.”

Such alternative explanations raise the possibility that 11 September 2001 was an extreme example of blowback and therefore contests the surprise attack representation of the perpetrators as having no provocation or justification for their actions, of them as evil personified, and their actions as an abhorrent terrorist attack. Such counter-narratives, however, were overcome by the implicit and explicit power of the surprise attack explanation emanating, as it did, from such powerful sites as the White House, the Pentagon, and the State Department. Moreover, the circulation of this story by a largely unquestioning media transmitted this power undiluted to citizens of the US and around the world. Indeed, this dominant narrative was so powerful that it not only explained 11 September 2001 as a surprise attack but, in so doing, also legitimated the violence-in-response of the ‘war on terror’, as the obvious and only reaction to Osama bin Laden, al-Qaeda, and the Taliban, that soon began in Afghanistan on 7 October 2001.

The surprise attack explanation-as-legitimation, which I substantiate in Chapter Five, is illustrated in the same three 11 September 2001 speeches by President Bush quoted above. In the first, Bush (2001a) asserts that the US will “hunt down and find those folks who committed this act” and that “terrorism against our nation will not stand”. In the second, Bush (2001b) declares that “freedom will be defended” and that the US will “punish those responsible for these
cowardly acts”. In the third, Bush (2001c) ends the day concluding that “a great people has been moved to defend a great nation” and that the US “will make no distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbour them”. Hence, in addition to the almost inevitable default reaction predicted by O'Tuathail's notion of “affect”, this dominant surprise attack explanation of 11 September 2001 also began legitimating, on the same day of the attacks, a violent response that ensured the Bush administration’s choice in this geopolitical moment.

Importantly, however, the blowback narratives also contested this dominant surprise attack explanation-as-legitimation by presenting arguments against a violent military retaliation by the United States. Such blowback de-legitimations of the 'war on terror' were epitomised, given the significant moral authority with which they spoke, by Phyllis and Orlando Rodriguez, whose son Greg was missing, presumed killed, at the World Trade Centre. In a letter to the New York Times on 15 September 2001, the Rodriguez' (Rodriguez and Rodriguez 2001a) wrote:

“We cannot pay attention to the daily flow of news about this disaster. But we read enough of the news to sense that our government is heading in the direction of violent revenge, with the prospect of sons, daughters, parents, friends in distant lands dying, suffering, and nursing further grievances against us. It is not the way to go. It will not avenge our son's death. Not in our son's name...Our son died a victim of inhuman ideology. Our actions should not serve the same purpose. Let us grieve. Let us reflect and pray. Let us think about a rational response that brings real peace and justice to our world. But let us not as a nation add to the inhumanity of our times”.

The same day, in an open letter to the White House, the Rodriguez' (Rodriguez and Rodriguez 2001b) made the same plea to President Bush: “Your response does not make us feel better about our son's death. It makes us feel worse. It makes us feel that our government is using our son's memory as a justification to cause further suffering for other sons and parents in other lands”. The Rodriguez' dissent, representative of the blowback de-legitimations of the 'war on terror' that I again substantiate in Chapter Five, from the great majority advocating a military retaliation was effectively overcome by the surprise attack explanation of 11 September 2001 and legitimation of the ‘war on terror’ by President Bush’s speech to the special joint session of Congress on 20 September 2001. Indeed, this speech made clear the choice made by the Bush administration in response to 11 September 2001. The speech therefore represented the end of
this ten-day geopolitical moment because from then on a violent US reaction, although military action did not begin for more than another fortnight, was indeed inevitable.

In the speech, Bush (2001) claimed that the United States was a “country awakened to danger and called to defend freedom. Our grief has turned to anger and anger to resolution. Whether we bring our enemies to justice or justice to our enemies, justice will be done”. After making a series of demands on Afghanistan’s ruling Taliban regime who were believed to house the accused Osama bin Laden and the al-Qaeda leadership, Bush declared that “these demands are not open to negotiation or discussion. The Taliban must act and act immediately. They will hand over the terrorists or they will share in their fate”. That fate was made explicit when Bush warned that “our war on terror begins with al-Qaeda, but it does not end there. It will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped, and defeated…We will direct…every necessary weapon of war to the destruction and defeat of the global terror network”. Finally, Bush (in)famously challenged that “Every nation in every region now has a decision to make: either you are with us or you are with the terrorists”.

This ten-day geopolitical moment demonstrates three important things. First, violence must be legitimated, even when so apparently naturally justified after extreme events such as 11 September 2001, before conflict can occur. Second, this pre-conflict legitimation of violence, and again even in such evidently vindicated circumstances, is often contested by de-legitimations of violence. Third, the surprise attack and blowback narratives illustrate that geopolitics plays a key role in this pre-conflict contest to either legitimate or de-legitimate the use of violence. And all three aspects of this ten-day geopolitical moment from 11 to 20 September 2001 are precisely what this research and thesis is about: the role of geopolitics in the contest over the explanation of the violence in the United States on Tuesday 11 September 2001 and the legitimation or de-legitimation of the consequent ‘war on terror’ that began in Afghanistan on Sunday 7 October 2001. The next section now proposes the research argument presented in this thesis of a critical geopolitics of the conflict(ing) discourses of 11 September 2001 and the ‘war on terror’.

Proposing a Critical Geopolitics of ‘Conflict(ing) Discourses’

The core research argument of this thesis is that conflict relies, in the first instance, on geopolitical narratives (like the surprise attack explanation of 11 September 2001 and legitimation of the ‘war on terror’) that legitimate violence and their hegemony over alternative
geopolitical narratives (like the dissident blowback explanation and de-legitimation) that de-legitimate violence. The prior legitimation of violence is necessary to justify conflict and to normalise the necessary activities of war: human beings killing and maiming one another and destroying each other’s society, infrastructure, and environment. As these actions are not considered to be normal human activities, at least not on the scale required for inter-state conflict or intra-state civil war, then the pre-conflict process of violence legitimation is crucial to understanding how conflict becomes possible.

This research, therefore, explores the role of geopolitics in the construction of violence legitimating and violence de-legitimating narratives, which are both conceptualised here as geopolitical discourses. A discourse is an “ensemble of social practices through which the world is made meaningful and intelligible to oneself and to others” (Gregory 1994:136) that “enable one to write, speak, listen, and act meaningfully” (O'Tuathail and Agnew 1992:193). A geopolitical discourse, therefore, is a discourse that enables state governments to read, interpret, and convey the geography of world politics that consequently acts as a guide to the(ir) conduct of foreign policy. Or, as O'Tuathail (1998a:3) explains, a geopolitical discourse is “a culturally and politically varied way of describing, representing and writing about geography and international politics”. In this thesis, geopolitical discourses that legitimate violence are conceptualised as ‘conflict discourses’ and geopolitical discourses that de-legitimate violence are conceptualised as ‘conflicting discourses’. The pre-conflict contest over the (de)legitimation of violence between the two is represented by the concept of ‘conflict(ing) discourses’. These three concepts will be explained in more detail shortly, but first it is necessary to understand how ‘traditional geopolitics’ helps to legitimate violence and how ‘critical geopolitics’ may be able to understand that process.

In the traditional sense of the term geopolitics refers to the supposedly objective and stable relationship between the geographic characteristics (such as territory, location, resources, population, climate, topography, etc) of the assumed primary actor in world politics, the state, and its consequent political, economic, and military (im)possibilities. This relationship determines the capacity of states to act in and thus influence world politics. Traditional geopolitics is therefore primarily associated with the state and provides a powerful guide to statecraft for state foreign policy elites – the collection of government, military, diplomatic and intelligence institutions responsible for formulating and conducting a state’s external relations – to justify their own actions by constructing geopolitical discourses that enable them to write and speak about the world, how they make sense of that world around them, its people, places, and
dramas, to understand their state’s place within that world, and its interaction with other states. For state foreign policy elites the power of traditional geopolitics results from its objective and specialised geopolitical knowledge and, perhaps more importantly, the(ir) control of that knowledge. This objectivity and control enables state foreign policy elites to present their foreign policies as the natural, obvious, and only option for acting in the international arena, providing them with both internal legitimacy to act on behalf of citizens on the global stage and external credibility with other states as a sovereign international actor. Indeed, Atkinson and Dodds (2000:10) claim that traditional geopolitics was “created by ‘security intellectuals’ (that is, foreign policy experts) who produced theories and strategies to guide and justify the statecraft (that is, foreign policy in practice)” of their state. Moreover, the objectivity of traditional geopolitics enables state foreign policy elites to interpret, understand, and even predict the behaviour of other states in world politics.

This general use of traditional geopolitics by state foreign policy elite’s to justify their foreign policies includes the specific use of geopolitical discourses to legitimate violence as a prerequisite to the(ir) resort to conflict. As O’Tuathail (1998b:53) notes, geopolitical discourses have often been “used politically to justify organised violence and murder by the state”. State foreign policy elites are therefore the most important discursive agents in constructing conflict discourses in times of crisis and impending war, when they will adapt existing geopolitical discourses in order to justify violence and render conflict a credible foreign policy option. The targets of legitimation include other state foreign policy elites (ally, friend, neutral, and foe) to maintain external credibility as an international actor and a state foreign policy elite’s own citizens (and in this globalised world the citizens of other states too, on the crucible of ‘world opinion’) in order to justify violence in the name of the(ir) state.

Many historical examples illustrate this relationship between traditional geopolitics and the legitimisation of violence (Natter 2000). Indeed, it is no curious quirk that the 105 years since the term ‘geopolitics’ was first coined coincides with the most violent and deadliest century in world history. Geopolitical arrangements between the tripartite powers of Britain, France, and Russia on one hand and the central powers of Germany and the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires on the other were vital in justifying World War One. A generation later Karl Haushofer’s ‘Geopolitik’ provided debatable intellectual justification for the militarised expansionist policies of Nazi Germany before and during World War Two. Similarly, Halford Mackinder’s ‘heartland theory’ guided British and Allied policy before the war and, after the ‘heartland – rimland’ update by the Dutch immigrant to the United States Nicholas Spykman, provided the foundations
of western containment strategies during the half-century long Cold War with the Soviet Union. During that time the Truman doctrine gave birth to the ‘domino theory’ that guided US interventions against perceived communist expansion in Vietnam, Angola, Nicaragua and many other ‘third world’ states. Such so-called communist ‘insurgencies’ can be equally read as struggles for national liberation through self-determination: counter-geopolitical discourses that also often justified violence. More recently, in the post-Cold War era, ‘ethnic cleansing’ in Yugoslavia and Rwanda, western ‘humanitarian intervention’ in Somalia and Kosovo, renewed US containment of ‘rogue states’ such as Libya and North Korea, and post-11 September 2001 ‘anti-terrorist’ actions in Afghanistan and now ‘regime change’ in Iraq have all had their own legitimating geopolitical, or conflict, discourses. Thus, the role of traditional geopolitics in legitimating violence has a long history and remains a contemporary issue through the ongoing ‘war on terror’.

In recent years, however, traditional geopolitics has been revisited and problematised by ‘critical geopolitics’, an intellectual extension that has revitalised the previously stagnant field of geopolitics. Instead of an objective and apolitical guide to statecraft, critical geopolitics emphasises the traditional geopolitics of state foreign policy elites as geopolitical discourses which, by definition, are therefore not objective or apolitical. Rather, geopolitical discourses are social and political constructions that are partial because they exclude other sources of geopolitical knowledge and are situated because they represent only one geopolitical perspective, that of the state; or, more precisely, the state foreign policy elite. Consequently, critical geopolitics challenges traditional geopolitics by highlighting alternative sources of geopolitical knowledge and other non-state / foreign policy elite geopolitical perspectives. In so doing critical geopolitics champions the dissident geopolitics of indigenous populations, ethnic, religious, or linguistic minorities, peace groups, feminists, subversive political groups, anti-state or anti-globalisation organisations, etc, that are usually silenced by the power of conventional geopolitical discourses of state foreign policy elites. Indeed, critical geopolitics perceives traditional geopolitical discourses as a form of power that serve the interests of a state foreign policy elite and traditional geopolitics as thus employed, not as an objective and apolitical guide to statecraft, but as a highly politicised and often spurious justification for a predetermined or desired course of action; including the legitimisation of violence. Critical geopolitics thus undermines the justification of particular foreign policies and questions the legitimacy of state foreign policy elites to act on behalf of excluded citizens and sub-state groups, at least in certain ways and/or on particular issues, in world politics.
Critical geopolitics therefore enables the geopolitical discourses of state foreign policy elites to be contested. Accordingly, this thesis argues that, given the role traditional geopolitics has played, and continues to play, in legitimating violence, then a critical geopolitics critique of such conflict discourses will enable an understanding of the violence legitimation process. This possibility is evident in the dissident geopolitics of, for example, the new social movements of the 1960s that condemned the Vietnam war, the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament that challenged the (il)logic of Cold War nuclear strategies, and the many oppositions around the world to the first Gulf War, the air war on Serbia over Kosovo, and now (and especially) the 'war on terror' on Afghanistan and Iraq. These excluded and dissident perspectives resonate with the critical geopolitics approach as well as the concept of conflicting discourses.

Moreover, as an academic discipline geography, in general, is much less associated with the exercise of power by major states than it used to be, and is certainly far less prominent with the contemporary global dominance of the United States than other disciplines such as international relations, political science, and economics. Geography and geographical knowledge, however, remains crucial to the construction and conduct of the 'war on terror', as articles like Beck's (2003) on the use of GIS as counter-terrorism assistance to the US military in Afghanistan suggest. Hence, geography and geographers are well-placed to offer critical understandings of 11 September 2001 and contest the 'war on terror' (Flint 2001b). In particular, critical geopolitics seems ideally suited to explore the process of violence legitimation.

Despite this apparent theoretical possibility, critical geopolitics is not yet making significant contributions to the field of 'conflict research', the sub-discipline of International Relations concerned with the various techniques of preventing, managing, and resolving violence and war (see Reuber 2000). This sub-discipline, also known as 'conflict studies' or 'peace studies', began with early scholars like Johan Galtung (1975), John Burton (1979), Chris Mitchell (1981), Dean Pruitt (1981), Louis Kriesberg (1982), and Saadia Touval and William Zartman (1985). Conflict research soon spawned a number of dedicated international academic journals, including the *Journal of Peace Research*, the *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, and *Cooperation and Conflict*. Moreover, academic institutions like the International Peace Research Institute (PRIO) in Oslo, Norway, the Initiative on Conflict Resolution (INCORE) at the University of Ulster in (London)Derry, Northern Ireland, and the Conflict Research Consortium at the University of Colorado have established a conflict research industry. In recent years contributions by Burgess and Burgess (1997), Stewart (1998) and Jeong (2000) have codified 'conflict resolution' while critiques of conflict research have emerged in, for example, Tidwell (1998).
Although many studies under the critical geopolitics umbrella investigate violence and war and their underlying geopolitical discourses — for example, the geopolitics of the Soviet Union as ‘Other’ (Dalby 1988), ‘terrorism’ in the Middle East (Sidaway 1994), the US invasion of Grenada (Weber 1994), the Falkland’s war (Dodds 1996 and 1998), and the war in Bosnia (O’Tuathail 1996 and 1999) — it is not, so far, a common practice to do so with the specific purpose of contributing directly to this sub-discipline of conflict research. This omission is somewhat surprising given the radical character of critical geopolitics and the call by Hepple (1986:32) at the beginning of ‘critical geopolities’: “A flourishing intellectual debate on geopolitics is an important guarantee not only against dangerously misleading geopolitical doctrines and policies, but can also help in the construction of more sensible and coherent strategies”. Similarly, in a review of critical geopolitics at the end of its first full decade, Dodds (2001:475) advocated that “At times of appalling violence, it may actually be ethically desirable (as well as politically necessary) to be explicit about alternative strategies regarding the prevention of ethnic cleansing and murderous violence”. Therefore, as Dodds (2001:476) continues, “critical geopolitics needs to continue its initial forays into military culture”.

It is, therefore, the explicit intention of this thesis to conduct a critical geopolitics that, at the very least, begins a conversation on the possibilities (or otherwise) of a contribution to conflict research. The research thus aims to extend contemporary critical geopolitics by making, or at least proposing, this original contribution. Simultaneously, this research aims to also extend conflict research, by bringing a critical geopolitics perspective to its field of study. In doing so the research seeks to expand the broader interdisciplinary dialogue between political geography and international relations. These four original contributions will be achieved by highlighting the conflict discourses of the United States foreign policy elite justifying the ‘war on terror’ and their contest with the de-legitimations, or conflicting discourses, that sought to prevent this conflict. Critical geopolitics therefore provides a useful approach to understanding the contest between conflict and conflicting discourses. Before doing so, however, this section now details these proposed concepts, substantiated throughout this thesis, of ‘conflict discourses’ and ‘conflicting discourses’ to frame and enable this research into a critical geopolitics of the ‘conflict(ing) discourses’ of 11 September 2001 and the ‘war on terror’.

The concept of conflict discourse refers to a geopolitical discourse employed by state foreign policy elites to legitimate the(ir) use of violence. A conflict discourse not only justifies the violence committed by oneself but also explains the violence perpetrated against oneself. Thus, a conflict discourse is paradoxical because it simultaneously legitimates the violence of the ‘Self’
while de-legitimating the violence of the ‘Other’. A conflict discourse is constructed prior to the actual use of violence and must become *hegemonic* over conflicting discourses before conflict can begin. The commencement of hostilities thus signifies the hegemony of a conflict discourse and the end of the violence legitimation process. The surprise attack narrative is therefore a conflict discourse because it (a) explained the illegitimate violence of the ‘Other’ against the ‘Self’ on 11 September 2001; (b) legitimated the ‘war on terror’ during the following ten-day geopolitical moment; and (c) became hegemonic over the blowback conflicting discourse and thus legitimated the ‘war on terror’ that started in Afghanistan on 7 October 2001. A second conflict discourse, examined in Chapter Seven, was constructed by the US foreign policy elite to legitimate the war on Iraq which began on 21 March 2003.

In contrast, the concept of *conflicting discourse* refers to those geopolitical discourses employed by various dissenting individuals, organisations, and governments to *de-legitimate* the use of violence in world politics. A conflicting discourse not only de-legitimates the violence intended or committed *by* a state foreign policy elite, but also proposes *alternative* explanations of the violence perpetrated against oneself. Thus, a conflicting discourse is also paradoxical – and for precisely the opposite reason that conflict discourses are, which is why they are so named, because they *conflict against* their opposing conflict discourse – because they *simultaneously* de-legitimize the violence of the ‘Self’ while (if not going so far as legitimating, then at least) attempting to understand the violence of the ‘Other’. A conflicting discourse is also constructed prior to the actual use of violence and seeks to prevent the hegemony of a conflict discourse. When hostilities commence, however, a conflicting discourse is perceived to have become *subservient* to the hegemonic conflict discourse. Thus, the blowback narrative is a conflicting discourse because it (a) offers an alternative explanation of an ‘Other’s’ violence against the ‘Self’ on 11 September 2001; (b) attempted to de-legitimate the violence-in-response during the following ten-day geopolitical moment (and beyond); and (c) became subservient to the surprise attack conflict discourse by the time the ‘war on terror’ started in Afghanistan on 7 October 2001. Equally, a second conflicting discourse, also examined in Chapter Seven, failed to de-legitimate the war on Iraq.

In combination, the concept of conflict(ing) discourse refers to the *contest* between a conflict discourse to legitimate and a conflicting discourse to de-legitimate violence. The conflict(ing) discourse concept recognises that conflict discourses and conflicting discourses are not mutually exclusive and fixed but *rather* are mutually interdependent and evolving. Hence, conflict discourses and conflicting discourses are in an ongoing interactive process in which they
constantly reconfigure themselves in response to reconfigurations of the other. These renegotiations occur when the legitimation of violence attempts to become hegemonic and the de-legitimation of violence is threatened with subservience, or vice-versa. The legitimation of violence and its consequent use then influences the future construction of both conflict discourses and conflicting discourses and thus shapes forthcoming contests between conflict(ing) discourses. Thus, the contest to legitimate or de-legitimate violence during the ten-day geopolitical moment following 11 September 2001 is perceived to be an example of conflict(ing) discourses, because (a) both a conflict discourse and a conflicting discourse circulated in the form of the surprise attack and blowback discourses; (b) the surprise attack conflict discourse and blowback conflicting discourse contested and reconfigured each other; and (c) both discourses were shaped by previous geopolitical discourses and acts of violence and will therefore shape future contests between conflict(ing) discourses, especially in relation to the ‘war on terror’, as occurred between the conflict(ing) discourses over the war on Iraq in 2002/03.

In summary, therefore, the core research argument of this thesis is that conflict in world politics is the result of state foreign policy elite’s traditional geopolitical discourses that legitimate violence and justifies war as a credible foreign policy option, or conflict discourses, becoming hegemonic over critical geopolitical discourses that de-legitimate violence and rejects war as a credible foreign policy option, or conflicting discourses. Consequently, the central research objective is to explore the geopolitics of conflict and conflicting discourses, how conflict discourses achieve hegemony over conflicting discourses, and the contest between the two as conflict(ing) discourses. This chapter now concludes with the specific research questions of this critical geopolitics of the conflict(ing) discourses of 11 September 2001 and the ‘war on terror’.

**Research Questions**

This critical geopolitics of the conflict(ing) discourses of 11 September 2001 and the ‘war on terror’ is driven by the following three research questions:

(1) What conflict discourse(s) did the United States foreign policy elite construct to explain 11 September 2001 and/or to legitimate the ‘war on terror’?

(2) What conflicting discourse(s) offered alternative explanations of 11 September 2001 and/or attempted to de-legitimate the ‘war on terror’?
(3) How did these conflict discourse(s) and conflicting discourse(s) interact as conflict(ing) discourses and how is hegemony achieved and subservience imposed?

These research questions are specifically answered in the four substantive chapters, Chapters Four, Five, Six, and Seven, that constitute the body of this thesis. Chapter Eight considers the implications of this research and concludes the thesis. Before then, however, Chapters Two and Three serve a number of important purposes.

Chapter Two is entitled *Locating a Critical Geopolitics of 11 September 2001 and the ‘War on Terror’* and locates this research within three important contexts. First, I locate this thesis within my own personal geopolitics as the ‘positionality’ from which I conducted the research. Second, I locate this thesis within the broader context of the traditional geopolitics literature and the history of the sub-discipline which provides its intellectual heritage. Third, I locate this thesis within the more specific and contemporary context of the emerging critical geopolitics literature and identify the significance of this research to this intellectual development. The discussion therefore conflates the personal and the (geo)political to locate this critical geopolitics of 11 September 2001 and the ‘war on terror’ in its research context.

Chapter Three is entitled *Constructing a Critical Geopolitics of 11 September 2001 and the ‘War on Terror’* and explains how this particular research was actually conducted. The discussion begins by detailing the specific research method employed to explore conflict(ing) discourses and thus how it frames the four following substantive chapters. Inversely, I then explain this thesis as a piece of anti-research by outlining what it does not attempt to do or be. I then conclude by providing the thesis structure for the remainder of the thesis, including the four substantive chapters and the concluding chapter. The discussion therefore provides the link between the intellectual context of this research, how the three above research questions will be answered, and the wider significance of this critical geopolitics of 11 September 2001 and the ‘war on terror’ addressed at the end of this thesis.

Finally, I wish to express the *raison d’etre* of this research as a personal desire to understand how governments and militaries, as the necessary prerequisite to conflict, legitimate violence to their own citizens and soldiers. I want to know how human beings are convinced that it is right to kill other human beings. For this, to me, is the basic act upon which all war rests: without this mass but individualised conviction that violence is justified war would be impossible. My ambition to resolve this question is no more eloquently captured than in Michael Ignatieff’s
(1998:35-36; emphasis added) description of his own similar thoughts during his time as a journalist in the battlefields of the wars in the former Yugoslavia:

“I’ve been sitting with them (a small unit of Croat soldiers) most of the night while they doze, play cards, clean their weapons. I want to understand how neighbours are turned into enemies, how people who once had a lot in common end up having nothing in common but war. Wherever I’ve seen this process happen – in Afghanistan, Rwanda, Northern Ireland – I’ve found it puzzling. I’ve never accepted the idea that nationalist war is an eruption of tribal hatreds and ancient enmities. Theorists like Samuel Huntington would lead me to believe that there is a fault line running through the back gardens of Mirkovci, with the Croats in the bunker representing the civilisation of the catholic Roman West and the Serbs nearby representing Byzantium, Orthodoxy, and the Cyrillic East. Certainly that is how the more self-inflated ideologues on either side see the conflict. But at worm’s eye level, here in Mirkovci, I don’t see civilisational fault lines, geological templates that have split apart. These metaphors take for granted what needs to be explained: how neighbours once ignorant of the very idea that they belong to opposed civilisations begin to think – and hate – in these terms; how they vilify and demonise people they once called friends; how, in short, the seeds of mutual paranoia are sown, grain by grain, on the soil of a common life”.

Similarly, for me the key to understanding conflict is to explore how violence is legitimated.
Chapter Two
Research Context

Locating a Critical Geopolitics of
11 September 2001 and the ‘War on Terror’

“The hammer and the sickle, the news is at a trickle
The commissars are fickle, but the stockpile grows
Bombers keep on coming, engines softly humming
The stars and stripes are running for their own big show
Another little flare-up, storm brewed in a tea-cup
Imagine any mix-up and the lot would go”

Midnight Oil in Read About It (1982)
Introduction

The purpose of this second chapter is to locate this critical geopolitics of the conflict(ing) discourses of 11 September 2001 and the ‘war on terror’ within its personal and academic research contexts. Establishing the personal context of this research reflects the post-modern argument that all academic knowledge is situated; that is, produced from a particular position that is dependent on the ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, and other characteristics of the researcher. All academic knowledge is therefore also partial, in the sense that it is both incomplete and subjective. This argument contests the conventional thesis that academic knowledge is universal and objective, which depends on the denial of any relationship between the researcher and the researched; that the ‘real world’ is ‘out there’ waiting to be ‘discovered’, ‘investigated’ and ‘re-presented’ with no modification by the identity of the researcher(s), the research method(s) employed, or the type of research output(s) generated. Inspired by the early feminist critiques (Harraway 1991 and Harding 1991) of this supposed neutrality and the consequent universality of knowledge, however, post-modernism argues that the positionality of a researcher is crucial in shaping the conduct and conclusions of academic endeavour (Madge 1993). While the impact of the researcher’s relationship with the researched may be problematic and not precisely known (McDowell 1992) the important point is to acknowledge its existence and locate one’s own position before presenting their acquired academic knowledge. To not do so would be complicit in being an ‘all-knowing, all-seeing’ researcher; instead, the researcher’s positionality must be “made visible and open to debate” (Gilbert 1994:90).

The importance of a positionality discussion in all academic work is clear, but when the research focuses on an extreme event such as 11 September 2001 the (geopolitical) positionality of the researcher becomes even more crucial. In keeping with this post-modern concern with positionality (Rose 1997), therefore, the first section of this chapter explores my own personal geopolitics. Moreover, a positionality discussion is also crucial, as will be shown later in the chapter, in the distinction between a ‘traditional’ geopolitics and a ‘critical’ geopolitics approach, so it is also included here to declare the viewpoint from which this particular critical geopolitics is conducted. I explore my personal geopolitics through a narrative of my interest in violence and conflict, my formative political experiences, my informal geopolitics, and my formalised geopolitics through my University career.

This narrative leads into the academic context of this research. Broadly, this research is part of the geopolitical tradition within the political geography sub-discipline. I therefore locate this
research by exploring the origins of geopolitics, its comeback from its supposed association with Nazi Germany and consequent abandonment in western academia, and finally its contemporary conceptualisation in a revisionist literature that has problematised ‘traditional geopolitics’ over the last two decades. This revision has prompted a ‘critical geopolitics’ which has revitalised the field of geopolitics within political geography and provides the more specific academic context of this research. This literature is used to explain the theories of critical geopolitics, how it now perceives traditional geopolitics as geopolitical discourses, and finally to detail the contemporary conceptualisation of critical geopolitics.

**Personal Geopolitics**

For as long as I can remember, violence and conflict in world politics has been of particular interest to me. The main reason for this curiosity was learning of my paternal grandfather’s and great uncle’s participation in World War One and my parents’ lived experience and knowledge of World War Two. This interest developed during my childhood and was further shaped by my leftist family environment. I discuss three specific formative political experiences of my childhood and teenage years that developed my ‘informal geopolitics’. First, the controversial 1981 South African rugby tour of New Zealand raised my awareness of the politics of other places and the geography of world politics. Second, the nuclear-free New Zealand movement and ensuing ANZUS crisis of the mid-1980s raised my sympathy for the small and marginalised in their struggles with the large and dominant. Third, my attraction to the music, messages, and actions of Australian rock group Midnight Oil developed a distinctly South Pacific perspective from which I view the world. This ‘informal geopolitics’ prompted me to study politics, geography, and especially political geography at university which offered a ‘formalised geopolitics’ approach to my specific interest of violence and conflict. This interest and approach was codified in my 1996 Master of Arts thesis and continues in this Doctor of Philosophy thesis.

**Brothers in arms**

Like many New Zealanders I have a family history of participation in foreign wars during the twentieth century. My paternal grandfather, Benjamin Bayliss Mayell (1888 – 1971), and his brother, my great uncle, Charles Joseph Mayell (1892 – 1916) both fought in France during
World War One. Ben was a Private in the 15th North Auckland Regiment (Figure 2.1) and was wounded at Bapaume, on the Somme, on 24 August 1918 at the age of 30. I have no first-hand war-stories of his to recite because Ben died 16 months before I was born. I do, however, remember his old tin helmet becoming a prop in many childhood war games. I also remember my father, Alan Mayell (1927 – 1996), saying that Ben rarely talked about his war experiences, so even Dad knew very little of his father’s activities. About all he did know was the story of his father’s injury: Ben was apparently shot by a German sniper while rescuing a wounded soldier stranded in ‘no man’s land’ between the front-lines. It seems that Ben had a lucky escape as the bullet grazed the side of his face, permanently affecting the vision in one eye, before wounding his shoulder. From memory my father only learnt this story second-hand from his mother Annie (1888 – 1955), not directly from Ben, so such a ‘heroic’ tale, involving a ‘miracle bullet’ and a dangerous rescue mission for a fallen comrade, could have been embellished or distorted over time. I am sure, however, that my father would not have knowingly done that.

Charles was a Private with the New Zealand Rifle Brigade. Until 1992, all that Dad knew was that his uncle was killed in action at Flers on 15 September 1916 at the age of 24. In September 1992 my father Alan, mother Betty (1936 –), and brother David (1965 –) travelled to France to visit some of the war sites there, including the town of Bapaume and the New Zealand Caterpillar Valley War Cemetery near Longueval. Here, they found two significant pieces of information. First, that 15 September 1916 was the date of the New Zealand Division’s assault on the town of Flers, during the bloody Battle of the Somme (Figure 2.2). Second, and rather amazingly, my parents and brother found Charles’ name in a list of soldiers on a memorial wall “whose graves are known only to God” (Figures 2.3 and 2.4). These two snippets are enough for me, in knowing something of the general carnage of World War One, to conclude that Charles probably suffered a horrible combat death.

This story of my grandfather’s and great uncle’s participation in the First World War is, for many reasons, a poignant one to me. First, I realise that I am alive because it was Charles and not Ben that was killed. Had it been the other way around, or Ben’s ‘miracle bullet’ had not been so miraculous and he had been killed as well, family history would have taken a different course. Second, I am pleased that my parents were able to get to both Bapaume and Caterpillar Valley, and especially so for Dad as the son of a man who was both physically and psychologically scarred by the war and as the nephew of a man he never met. Third, Charles’ name on a memorial wall in a war cemetery on the other side of the world epitomises New Zealand’s
Figure 2.1: Private Benjamin Bayliss Mayell (back left), presumably with other members of the 15th North Auckland Regiment prior to embarkation to Europe, 1917. Source: Family Collection.

Figure 2.2: The memorial stone at the Caterpillar Valley war cemetery. Photo: Betty Mayell.
Figure 2.3: The memorial to soldiers with unknown graves. Photo: Betty Mayell.

Figure 2.4: The name of ‘Mayell, CJ’ in the list at Caterpillar Valley. Photo: Betty Mayell.
commitment to foreign wars around the world (Mayell 2004). Fourth, my reproduction of this story reflects the growing awareness amongst my (and younger) generation(s) of New Zealand’s sacrifices in previous wars, as illustrated by the increasing attendances in recent years at ANZAC Day (25 April) commemorations in New Zealand and also at Gallipoli, Turkey.

Most importantly, Ben’s bodily and mental wounds and Charles’ probable horrible death (stories totally ordinary to thousands of New Zealanders and millions around the world) gave me an early insight into the brutality and futility of war that I could not fully comprehend. From a young age I wondered how war was even possible. I never believed that individual, personalised acts of violence like those committed against (and the unknown instances perpetrated by) Ben and Charles were ‘natural’ or ‘inherent’ in human beings. Yet without these individual acts of violence war would be impossible, because ordinary people would not be prepared to kill and die. Thus, it occurred to me that war must depend on the legitimation of violence: on presumably normal, peaceful, human beings like Ben and Charles (as well as ordinary citizens whose support must also be a prerequisite for war) being convinced by higher authorities, namely governments and militaries, that killing and maiming other presumably normal, peaceful, human beings attempting to do the same to them was a legitimate, acceptable, and necessary activity. I believe, therefore, that the war stories of Ben and Charles stimulated my interest in the legitimation and use of violence in world politics.

**Parents in arms**

Of far more direct influence, however, was the lived experience of my parents during World War Two. I remember, for example, my mother telling me one of her childhood ‘war stories’ that is superficially amusing but disturbingly serious: she has told how, as a young girl growing-up in Auckland during the war, her older sister Marjorie and her would play ‘families’ by pushing prams, laden with baby dolls and household necessities like cooking pots and food tins, around the house pretending – or anticipating? – ‘fleeing’ from the invading Japanese. At one point during the war her father built a family bomb trench in the backyard. Mum’s first-hand accounts led me to wonder what it was like to live through the most destructive war in history; or, for that matter, through any war. Moreover, for me such stories illustrated how war sounded frightening enough in the relative safety of Auckland, New Zealand, let alone to directly experience, even as a civilian, such violence.
My emerging (and somewhat morbid!) fascination, however, more specifically reflected my father’s ‘amateur historian’ interest in World War Two. Dad was a teenager during the war and only narrowly missed military service as the war ended just a few months after his 18th birthday; although as a tuberculosis sufferer he would probably have been deemed unfit to serve had he actually been called-up. Dad’s non-service did not, however, diminish his interest in World War Two: I well remember him passing on his knowledge, often while watching (and sometimes correcting for historical inaccuracies) television documentaries, or substantiating wartime events from memory. He was in the fortunate generation of being old enough to remember the war but young enough not to have served in it.

Dad’s status as an ‘amateur historian’ (he was never formally educated beyond secondary school) was epitomised by his ten bound volumes of a weekly World War Two news magazine, *The War Illustrated*. I recall many childhood hours spent reading these yellow, frayed-edged volumes. At a very young age I learnt about the main events of Blitzkrieg, Dunkirk, the Phoney War, the Battle of Britain, Operation Barbarossa, Pearl Harbour, the Pacific War, Crete, El Alamein, the Italian Campaign, Operation Overlord and D-Day, the Battle of the Bulge, Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and Victory in Europe and Victory over Japan Days; the political figures of Winston Churchill, Adolf Hitler, Franklin Roosevelt, and Joseph Stalin; the military commanders of Bernard Montgomery, Erwin Rommel, and Douglas MacArthur; and finally the fighting machines of the Spitfire and Lancaster, the Panzer, Stuka, and Messerschmit, and the Sherman, Mustang and B-29.

Later episodes of violence also contributed to my growing interest, including the United Nations’ ‘police action’ in the Korean War of 1950 – 53, the United States’ escalating involvement and eventual defeat in Vietnam from 1964 – 1975, and of Vietnam’s subsequent invasion of Cambodia in 1979. By the 1980s I was old enough to be aware of contemporary conflicts going on around the world: the Mujaheddin war against the Soviets in Afghanistan between 1979 and 1989, the eight year Iran – Iraq war starting in 1980, the Falkland/Malvinas Islands war of April – June 1982, and the US invasions of Grenada in October 1983 and Panama in December 1989.

As this interest developed, my family environment also shaped my approach to understanding world politics in general and the occurrence of violence in particular. My parents were both from working-class backgrounds, shared a strong Christian faith, and had a well-developed sense of family and community. These characteristics underpinned their overt recognition that there were people around the world, and indeed in our own community, that were less fortunate than
ourselves (and by no means were we ‘rich’ or even ‘well-off’) and this led to a practical commitment to social justice and equality. My father was instrumental in establishing the Christchurch Household Budget Advisory Service in the mid-1960s, which became a nationwide network, providing budget advice to those on limited incomes and/or in financial difficulty; it is still in operation today. For many years Dad also organised the annual New Zealand Foundation for the Blind street appeal in our neighbourhood, and he finished his working life at Christian World Service, a Christchurch-based organisation channelling donations to overseas aid programmes. Similarly, my mother was forever baking and cooking to help our church, the Anglican Parish of St Timothy’s, Burnside, assist those with limited ability to provide for themselves. This environment enabled me to realise that my community and the wider world was not a uniform, homogenous, equal place, but full of difference, division, and inequalities that underlay violence and conflict. This original sense of politics and geography was developed by three specific formative political experiences that coalesced into what I now recognise as an ‘informal geopolitics’: a non-academic conceptualisation of my personal geopolitics.

**Informal geopolitics**

The first of these three experiences was the controversial 1981 South African rugby tour that divided the New Zealand public and led to violent street clashes between anti-*Apartheid* protestors and riot police. As a typical eight-year-old Kiwi kid interested in all sports (I actually played soccer) and who knew nothing of *Apartheid* South Africa I did not understand what the argument was about. I simply saw the South African visit as a sporting tour, a test series between the All Blacks and the Springboks; often hailed as the world’s greatest rugby rivalry, but devoid of any wider political significance. On the other hand, Dad’s politics and Christian faith meant he was staunchly anti-tour, even though he was a passionate rugby fan himself who managed my brother’s teams. Indeed, even before the tour Dad had been involved in church activities and networks that were part of New Zealand’s anti-*Apartheid* movement. His foreknowledge led him to oppose such sporting connections with South Africa. Later, his beliefs and activities culminated in him meeting the head of South Africa’s Anglican Church and vocal anti-*Apartheid* campaigner, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, at a mid-1980s service in Christchurch Cathedral.

It was precisely this difference of opinion between father and son, however, that turned the 1981 Springbok tour into my first formative (geo)political experience. Dad took the opportunity to pass-on his knowledge of the *Apartheid* system and its consequences for black South Africans.
Thereafter, television news items from South Africa of black rioters and white policemen and army personnel made much more sense. I learnt about Banthustans, racial segregation, and identity passes. I learnt of the African National Congress. I learnt who Nelson Mandela was and of his arrest and imprisonment. As a consequence of this increased knowledge and understanding I was against the return tour to South Africa by the New Zealand Cavaliers in 1986. In five years, therefore, I had gone from being interested in another place only as the origin of an opposing sports team to being interested in it as a place with a much different politics than what I was used to: while Aotearoa / New Zealand had its own Maori – Pakeha race relations issues, they were certainly not as extreme, and therefore much less visible, than those in South Africa. Indeed, my use of the term ‘Aotearoa’ – the original indigenous name meaning ‘land of the long white cloud’ – is a sign of the Maori renaissance during my lifetime.

My second formative political experience was the most important in developing my informal geopolitics. In 1984 the recently elected Labour government, which was of course welcomed by my family, began implementing its popular nuclear-free policy. The policy would ban nuclear power generation and the production, storage, or transit of any nuclear material, including nuclear weapons, on or through New Zealand territory or waters. The policy was antithetical to the US-led western alliance’s Cold War nuclear strategies and sparked an immediate diplomatic crisis between the three partners of the 1951 Australia – New Zealand – United States (ANZUS) Treaty, which tied New Zealand into the western alliance. The US, in particular, put considerable pressure on the New Zealand government to abandon or modify its policy, but Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs David Lange (whose father, a prominent doctor in South Auckland during the interwar years, had delivered my newborn mother and who was later in the same class as her younger brother, my uncle Trevor, at Otahuhu College) remained steadfast and eventually the New Zealand Nuclear-Free Act passed into law in 1987.

My memory of nuclear-free New Zealand and the ANZUS crisis is vivid and the experience strongly influenced my informal geopolitics. Despite my young age and limited political knowledge I supported the nuclear-free policy, although I did not participate in the many street demonstrations during the 1980s (I was a little young!). The banning of nuclear weapons seemed an appropriate measure to avoid the horrors portrayed in popular post-nuclear war films like Threads and The Day After that I had seen on television. I therefore felt a great sense of pride as the Labour government implemented the nuclear-free policy. I admired Lange for resisting the international pressure to dilute or drop the proposed legislation. His steadfastness in implementing the wishes of the electorate was an early, impression forming lesson in democracy.
Lange consequently became something of a teenage political hero to me. This David (almost literally!) versus Goliath contest also encouraged me to appreciate dissident perspectives on world politics, often marginalised by dominant perspectives. Experiencing nuclear-free New Zealand as an impressionable teenager opened the path to thinking critically about violence and conflict. Thus by the mid-1990s, when my informal geopolitics was being formalised by my university studies, I was participating in street demonstrations in support of nuclear-free New Zealand: once, ironically, with my US Master’s supervisor against France’s brief resumption of nuclear testing at Mururoa Atoll.

My third formative political experience was my teenage attraction to Australian rock band Midnight Oil (Figure 2.5). To me Midnight Oil were (they disbanded in 2002) much more than just a Sydney-based music group formed in the mid-1970s. For my generation Midnight Oil have written and performed songs that have drawn attention to Australian, South Pacific and global social, political, and environmental issues. Many of these issues were rarely on the public agenda, especially the plight of Aborigines and the problems of race relations in Australia. Midnight Oil also wrote about issues as diverse as environmental pollution and resource depletion, the nuclear arms race and disarmament, asbestos mining, foreign investment and globalisation, United States’ militarism and, significantly for my interest in violence, on conflict and war in such songs as Forgotten Years, US Forces, and Minutes to Midnight. Midnight Oil also backed their music with various public protest actions. In 1985, for example, following their strongly anti-nuclear album Red Sails in the Sunset, Midnight Oil led a televised protest concert on Goat Island in Sydney Harbour. A year later the band undertook an extensive tour of the Australian outback, colloquially known as ‘the dead heart’, to raise awareness of the suffering of Aboriginal people in terms of health, social welfare access, cultural dislocation, and land dispossession. In May 1990 the band staged a lunchtime concert opposite the head offices of the Exxon oil corporation on New York’s Sixth Avenue to protest the social and environmental effects of the oil spill from the Exxon Valdez tanker in Alaska’s Prince William Sound. The concert was staged on the back of a truck under a banner that read “Midnight Oil makes you dance, Exxon oil makes us sick”.

Moreover, the band’s front-man, Peter Garrett, has been involved in numerous political and environmental campaigns. In 1984 he narrowly missed election to the Australian Senate for the Nuclear Disarmament Party. From 1989 to 1993 he served his first term as President of the Australian Conservation Foundation, a position to which he returned in 1998 after a stint on the International Board of Greenpeace, and still currently holds. In recent years he has also been
involved in issues of genetic engineering, coastal development, and uranium mining at Jabiluka in the Kakadu National Park. In 1997 his public contributions were recognised by the Australian National Trust when he was named as one of 100 ‘living treasures’ of Australia. In 2004 Garrett joined the Australian Labour Party and stood in the October 2004 election. Like David Lange, therefore, Peter Garrett became, and still is, something of a musical – political hero to me.

Midnight Oil’s music, lyrics, and actions appealed to my informal geopolitics because they consistently wrote, sang, and acted from a unique ‘down under’ or South Pacific perspective on issues I was also interested in. In this way Midnight Oil’s geopolitics encouraged me to think about the politics of my own place and how this shaped my own perspective on international relations and, in combination with my specific interest of violence in world politics, towards conflict and war. Midnight Oil still influence me today: songs like the anti-globalisation Tone Poem and the rich geographical metaphor that is World That I See from their 2002 Capricornia album still inspire a passionate response from me. I cannot overstate the influence of Midnight Oil and Peter Garrett on my informal geopolitics. By the end of my teenage years, therefore, my informal geopolitics had coalesced around the recognition of the politics of place, the existence of dissenting perspectives, and the importance of place on political perspective; as encapsulated in Midnight Oil’s opening chapter lyric critiquing the Cold War.
Formalised geopolitics

My informal geopolitics guided my initial academic career when I began at the University of Canterbury in 1991. This was a propitious moment to begin formalising my informal geopolitics. As I enrolled the Cold War was in its final death throes and a Desert Storm raged in the first Gulf War. By the end of my first year the Soviet Union had disintegrated and Yugoslavia was on the slippery slope to implosion and ethnic cleansing. My Bachelor of Arts consequently focussed on geography and political science courses dealing with international relations and violence.

By my second year, however, I was beginning to wonder where the geography was in all my politics courses. While I believed geography was fundamental to politics (the physical and human characteristics of place appeared crucial in influencing the politics of that place) my politics courses seemed intent on ignoring geographical context to present sweeping generalisations as theory. I was therefore always dumbfounded (and slightly annoyed!) when both staff and students in politics would ask what I, a geographer, was doing in ‘their’ courses: to me the two disciplines were obviously and inextricably linked. Fortunately, that link became evident in a second year geography course that included a section on ‘political geography’. To find these two concepts together was a great relief: at last, someone else obviously thought there was a connection between geography and politics! The possibility of developing my informal interests into a specific academic career took a decided upturn, and when I was awarded my first ever ‘A’ for an essay my embryonic academic career in political geography was born.

Consequently, I chose geography over politics for my Honours degree in 1995. My first year of post-graduate study did, however, include one politics paper; on international conflict and mediation. This enrolment proved to be an important choice. By this time the ethnic conflict in Yugoslavia, the genocide in Rwanda, and the shambles in Somalia had demonstrated that since the Cold War violence in world politics had undergone a profound transformation, as later codified by Mary Kaldor (1999) in her ‘new wars’ concept. There was an apparent increase in the frequency and intensity of intra-state ethno-nationalist conflicts with crucial implications beyond state borders. Moreover, there appeared to be a corresponding decrease in the number of conventional inter-state wars. These changes represented a significant challenge to the geopolitical assumption of the nation-state inherent in political science’s simple categorisation of ‘international conflict’ between nation-states and ‘civil war’ within nation-states. There was a distinct blurring of the spatial boundaries between the two concepts that undermined the discipline’s quantitative approaches dependent on this spatial categorisation of violence.
The extent to which this spatial categorisation was still entrenched in political science was demonstrated when the faculty member leading my international conflict and mediation course stated that the violence in Yugoslavia between Josep Tito’s Partisans and the German Army during World War Two did not count as an ‘international conflict’ because the Partisans were not the official Yugoslav state army. I thought this to be a rather incredulous claim. This was a violent confrontation between a major conquering power and a local resistance movement in a world war, so to discount it merely because one of the parties was not a ‘state’ seemed inappropriate. To so arbitrarily dismiss this violence was to deny the importance of those events, its combatants, and its victims. And it was simply impossible to ignore the historical legacy of this violence on the contemporary ethnic conflicts in the then disintegrating Yugoslavia.

This single comment provided the catalyst for my 1996 Master of Arts thesis, *Conflict as Contradiction: A Critical Geopolitics of International Conflict*. This research critiqued the ‘nation-state’ as the spatial unit of analysis in political science’s quantitative analyses of ‘international conflict’. By demonstrating the spatial divergence of the concepts of ‘nation’ and ‘state’, and therefore the empirical rareness of a true ‘nation-state’, I argued that the conventional conflation of ‘nation’ and ‘state’ was, in a time of violent sub-state ethno-nationalist conflicts, trans-border refugee flows, and instant global media coverage, no longer an appropriate geopolitical assumption upon which to determine what was and what was not ‘international conflict’. The ‘international’ signified this problematisation of political science’s geopolitical assumption of the nation-state in its spatial categorisation of violence. A number of the objectives of *Conflict as Contradiction* are common to this doctoral research: to contribute to the cross-discipline dialogue between the two usually but unnecessarily separate academic endeavours of geography and politics; to maintain, and in some ways renew, political geography’s longstanding interest in violence and conflict in international relations; to propose alternative ways of thinking about the geopolitics of violence in world politics; and to raise the possibility of a critical geopolitics contribution to conflict research.

This current thesis, however, is different in that I return to my childhood musings on how violence in world politics is legitimated to ordinary people, like my grandfather Ben and great uncle Charles, in order to make killing and maiming possible. The intention, which is clearly a result of who I am as researcher, is to explore this pre-conflict process of legitimation, not so as to glorify violence but simply to understand this pre-requisite to war. This positionality discussion has therefore been crucial in establishing the personal context of this research by examining the development of my political / geographic interest in violence and conflict.
Moreover, it has also provided a background to my relationship with the researched: the precise nature of that relationship, and its impact on what follows, is the subject of a reflexive discussion in Chapter Eight. In the meantime, I now move from establishing the research context of my own personal geopolitics to establishing the academic context of this research.

**Traditional Geopolitics**

This second section establishes the broad academic context of this research. At its widest, this research sits within the sub-discipline of geography known as political geography. This sub-discipline emerged in Europe during the mid to late nineteenth century, and was first codified in German Friedrich Ratzel’s *Politische Geographie* in 1890. Since then political geography has had a long and chequered history within the wider discipline, sometimes being at the forefront of geographic enquiry (e.g., the electoral geography fad of the 1960s quantitative revolution) and at other times being regarded as an embarrassment. In 1927, for example, Carl Sauer described political geography as “the wayward child of the geographic family” and in 1969 Bryan Berry claimed it was a “moribund backwater”. More specifically, this research sits within geopolitics, the branch of political geography specifically concerned with the geography of world politics. Geopolitics has not been immune from, and in fact has largely been responsible for, the changing fortunes of political geography. Indeed, the origins of geopolitics stretch back to Ratzel and, in the early years of the twentieth century, it was effectively synonymous with the wider sub-discipline. Geopolitics fell from grace during and after World War Two, however, so by the time Berry ridiculed political geography in general “geopolitics was surely the most stagnant reach of this lifeless sub-discipline” (Atkinson and Dodds 2000:4). But a generation later geopolitics began a revival that provides the specific academic context of this research. Before then this section provides a brief overview of ‘traditional geopolitics’.

**The origins of geopolitics**

Geopolitics originated in Europe during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The term was first coined by Swedish political scientist Rudolph Kjellen in his 1899 article on the formation of Sweden’s boundaries. Over the next half-century geopolitics became “a mode of reasoning about international affairs that would, in context of World War Two, come to be
organised and categorised as constituting a ‘geopolitical tradition’” (O’Tuathail 1996:22). O’Tuathail then notes that “the notion of a ‘geopolitical tradition’ should always be approached with caution”, mainly because “it is impossible to talk of discrete, exclusive geopolitical traditions...geopolitical ideas and practices were exchanged across the territorial boundaries of states” (Atkinson and Dodds 2000:9). However, again following O’Tuathail (1996:22-23), the concept of a geopolitical tradition is useful because it incorporates three common aspects of early geopolitics. First, geopolitics was a distinctive and privileged, hence powerful, approach to understanding world politics. Second, geopolitics applied the arguments of social Darwinism – more accurately and appropriately known, according to O’Tuathail (1996), as Lamarckian biology – to world politics. Third, geopolitics served the interests of state governments and was thus particularly associated with expansionist colonial and imperial powers. This conceptualisation of a European geopolitical tradition retrospectively refers to the century long conventional history of geopolitics.

This dominant narrative, which has been problematised by the contemporary critical geopolitics literature that is introduced in the next section, begins with the rise of geopolitics amongst a number of white, male, ruling-class intellectuals seeking to influence the foreign policies of their respective European states from the fin-de-siecle and beyond. The origins of geopolitics, as noted, are commonly traced to the work of German Friedrich Ratzel, even though he is better known as the founder of modern political geography in general and despite the fact he never used the term (Taylor 1994). In 1896, however, Ratzel proposed his organic theory of the state in his article The Territorial Growth of States. Ratzel argued that as a living organism the modern state would, indeed must, expand its lebensraum, or ‘living space’, for it to develop to its full potential. This spatial expansion would take place at the expense of other, weaker, decaying states who would be dominated, even consumed, by the territorial growth of the fittest states, making conflict inevitable.

Five years later Briton Sir Halford Mackinder delivered his presidential address to the Royal Geographical Society that was later published as The Geographical Pivot of History (1904) article. This paper is now regarded as a foundational text of geopolitics, even though he also did not use the term ‘geopolitics’ (O’Tuathail 1996). Mackinder argued that because major historical events had occurred in the geographical ‘pivot area’ of the Eurasian landmass and because of the continued ascendancy of land-power over sea-power, whichever state occupied this ‘heartland’, as he later called it, “could exert a dominating influence over world politics” (Smith 1994:228). Mackinder (1919:150) summarised this natural advantage in his famous dictum:
"Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland;
Who rules the Heartland commands the World Island;
Who rules the World Island commands the World".

Mackinder went on to argue that the sea-power of the British Empire meant it had to lead the non-heartland states in balancing the Russian (and later Soviet) land-power dominance suggested by his pivot area geopolitics.

After World War One, however, American geopolitician Isaiah Bowman, who later became well-known as "Roosevelt’s Geographer" (Smith 2003), argued in his 1921 (p.iii) book *The New World: Problems in Political Geography* that the United States had emerged from the war as the leading, balancing sea-power state:

"Since the beginning of the World War the US has increased its foreign investments fourfold, doubled its foreign commerce, and become the creditor of 16 European nations...Our economic and political problems embrace a region whose extent is beyond the Arctic Circle in Alaska, southward to Samoa, and east and west from China and the Philippines to Liberia and Tangier...If our territorial holdings are not so widely distributed as those of Great Britain, our total economic power and commercial relations are no less extensive".

At about the same time Karl Haushofer (e.g., 1925), an ex-German army officer and professor of political geography, began a peculiar *geopolitik* variant of geopolitics that eventually provided some intellectual justification for German military expansionism under Hitler’s National Socialists. By advocating Germany’s ‘natural right’ to seize more *lebensraum* the story of *geopolitik* is the most controversial chapter of this dominant but simplified narrative of the history of geopolitics. In the west, wartime propaganda exploited Haushofer’s supposed personal friendship with Hitler (Hepple 1986), his alleged directorship of a ‘Geopolitics Institute’ at Munich University (O’Tuathail 1996), and later his near-indictment at the Nuremberg war-crime trials and consequent suicide in March 1946 as evidence of *geopolitik*’s guilt-by-association with Nazi foreign policy and the horrors of World War Two. Consequently, after the war geopolitics in general, and not just *geopolitik*, was supposedly rejected in the United States, Britain, and other, but not all, western states.
This post-war decline of geopolitics, however, did not occur before American Nicholas Spykman updated Mackinder’s ‘heartland theory’. In his 1944 book *The Geography of the Peace*, published posthumously the year after his death, Spykman argued for a United States’ policy of “encirclement” to counter the Soviet Union’s natural advantage for world dominance through its occupation of the ‘heartland’. Spykman’s argument was a clear precursor to the containment policy employed by the US and its western allies against the Soviet Union and the eastern bloc during the Cold War (Hepple 1986). Geopolitics’ supposed guilt-by-association with Haushofer’s *geopolitik* and Nazi Germany, however, meant that it was indeed virtually abandoned in the US and many other western states in the post-war period. By 1954 Richard Hartshorne had thus described geopolitics as nothing less than “an intellectual poison”.

Instead, the academic disciplines of international relations and strategic or security studies emerged as the new, acceptable, approaches to world politics (Hepple 1986). These new disciplines tended to avoid the relationship between geography and politics; tarred as such propositions were with the *geopolitik* brush. Moreover, the coming of the nuclear age also rendered geopolitics less meaningful: the ability to deliver nuclear weapons by inter-continental missiles supposedly signalled the ‘end of geography’ as an influence on world politics. Now, the focus was merely the diplomatic management (or otherwise) of the Cold War nuclear arms race and confrontation between the two superpowers and their respective alliances. Thus, while some political geography continued to concentrate on world politics – Dodds and Atkinson (2000) commend here the almost lone work of Saul Cohen – the era of ‘classical geopolitics’ (O‘Tuathail 1996) appeared over by the 1960s.

**The comeback of geopolitics**

This conventional history of geopolitics continues, however, with the start of a rehabilitation of the term, and the practice, from the 1970s. In particular, United States’ Secretary of State Henry Kissinger used ‘geopolitics’, albeit in an unclear and shifting manner, to justify the Nixon administration’s policy of *détente* with China while continuing its Cold War rivalry with the Soviet Union and its “long-standing crusade against perceived leftist (‘pro-Soviet’) governments in the Third World” (O‘Tuathail 1998b:53). Kissinger’s recovery of the term was possible because it came long enough after World War Two for the historical embarrassment of *geopolitik* to have been forgotten, or simply not known, amongst a new generation of statesmen, foreign policy makers, and academics. As a consequence, the term geopolitics was popularised
amongst public audiences to a level it had never before enjoyed (Dodds and Atkinson 2000). The end result of Kissinger’s renewal of geopolitics, aided by other “security intellectuals” (O’Tuathail and Agnew 1992) like National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski, was an unprecedented level of acceptability, popularity, and credibility for this previously avoided term.

By the 1980s this “revival of geopolitics” (Hepple 1986) was providing the catalyst for a (re)new(ed) interest in geopolitics within political geography, especially regarding critiques of the Cold War (O’Sullivan 1982, 1986; Dalby 1988; Nathanson 1988). This attention spawned a revisionist literature that problematises this dominant narrative of the European geopolitical tradition and suggesting three inter-twined strands behind what Dalby (1990a) calls “the persistence of geopolitics”. First, these re-investigations have revealed that geopolitics persisted in certain European states, and beyond, where the post-war decline of geopolitics simply did not occur. As Dodds and Atkinson (2000:xv) claim, this revisionist literature:

“seeks to disrupt the neat and progressive histories of academic geopolitics implicit within stories of emergence, decline and revival. The narrative outlined above is a simple caricature. To be blunt, the development of geopolitical conversations in Europe...do not support such a contention. The geopolitical experiences of Spain, Portugal, and France, for example, provide powerful counter-evidence to the patterns of growth and decline in the Anglo-American world”.

Thus, Dodds and Atkinson (2000) insist, it is more accurate to think of plural European (let alone Latin and South American, African, Asian, and even South Pacific) geopolitical traditions.

Second, geopolitics actually persisted in the core Anglo-American states where this conventional history of decline supposedly occurred when, as noted, new academic disciplines appropriated the study of world politics. Hepple (1986:23), for example, notes that despite the post-war decline of geopolitics in the United States, Britain, and elsewhere, “geopolitical interpretation and analysis continued, but sailed under such other colours as strategic studies or even political geography”. Atkinson and Dodds (2000:4) also note that “the notion that the post-war taboo of geopolitics in the Anglophone world was absolute is wide of the mark”. As evidence, the supposedly geopolitics-free post-war emergence of the Cold War illustrates this persistence of geopolitics. Spykman’s update of Mackinder’s heartland theory as a forerunner to the US containment policy of the Soviet Union has already been noted. Later, Cold War western
doctrines of domino theory, disease metaphors, and the chessboard of the third world were all inherently geopolitical ideas that underlay the Cold War.

Third, this revisionist literature notes that geopolitics persisted as an academic endeavour because of a new, critical interest in precisely these geographical representations of the Cold War. Indeed, Hepple (1986:25) explains that “the revival of geopolitics lies in the...increasingly apparent cracks and holes in the logic of existing US global strategy”. Similarly, Dodds and Atkinson (2000:xv) note that because of “the interrogation of these Cold War representations of the world” this demonstrates that “geopolitics has continued to lurk insistently within the discipline” (Atkinson and Dodds 2000:1). This revisionist, persistence-of-geopolitics literature is used now, rather than an impossible regurgitation of the dominant themes of the long, complex, and controversial histories of European (and other) geopolitical traditions that would take several theses, to substantiate the contemporary conceptualisation of ‘traditional geopolitics’.

**The contemporary conceptualisation of traditional geopolitics**

As the term itself suggests, geopolitics has traditionally referred to the relationship between geography and politics in relation to the foreign policies of individual states and thus the structure and events of world politics in general. But beyond this basic conceptualisation geopolitics has been, and remains, difficult to define (O’Tuathail 1994b). Just as David Livingstone (1992:358) claimed of geography in general, geopolitics has meant, and still means, “different things to different people at different times and in different places”. “In conventional academic understanding”, however, “geopolitics concerns the geography of international politics, particularly the relationship between the physical environment (location, resources, territory, etc) and the conduct of foreign policy” (O’Tuathail and Agnew 1992:191). Agnew and Corbridge (1995:3) go a step further and claim that:

“In its most common usage geopolitics refers to a fixed and objective geography constraining and directing the activities of states. For example, fixed geographical features of the world, such as the disposition of states in relation to the distribution of the continents and oceans, or fixed processes of territorial economic expansion relative to military strength, are seen as determining or strongly conditioning the possibilities and limits of particular states”.
Three components of this conceptualisation encapsulate traditional geopolitics. First, traditional geopolitics assumes a "fixed and objective" geography that determines the relationship between the physical environment and the foreign policies of individual states. By a "fixed" geography traditional geopolitics contends that geography is stable and unchanging – except when transformed by great historical technological developments such as the railway, telegraph, or flight – and therefore it has a permanent and universal influence on foreign policy and world politics. Spykman (1942:41) famously summarised this notion when he claimed that: "Geography is the most fundamental factor in the foreign policy of states because it is the most permanent. Ministers come and go, even dictators die, but mountain ranges stand unperturbed". By an "objective" geography traditional geopolitics contends that the laws of the relationship between geography and politics are 'natural' and unaffected by the political, economic, social, or cultural context within which traditional geopolitics is undertaken. Traditional geopolitics, therefore, is the impartial scientific analysis of geography's influence on foreign policy and thus world politics. This claim to objectivity provides the power-source of traditional geopolitics, the heart of its credibility. As Hepple (1986:29) proposes, geopolitics "carries connotations of hard-headed, no-nonsense realism, with the writer (and reader) facing up to 'geopolitical realities'".

Second, traditional geopolitics assumes that this "fixed and objective" relationship between geography and politics "constrains, directs, determines, or strongly conditions" the foreign policies of states. Because the influence of geography on politics is permanent, universal, and natural, the political significance of the sea on a coastal state is the same the world over and through time, as is the effect of being a landlocked state, as is the impact of a continental climate. Consequently, by analysing the unique combination of a state's location, resources, climate and territory, for example, traditional geopolitics is able to explain the influence of a state's geography on its foreign policy. This geographic explanation for the behaviour of states reflects the social Darwinist approaches prevalent at the time geopolitics emerged: traditional geopolitics was very much the application of biological principles and evolutionary theories to the political realm, as Ratzel's organic theory of the state epitomises. Traditional geopolitics, therefore, is a quasi-environmental determinist means of explaining the behaviour of states, through their foreign policies, in world politics: 'quasi' because it does not contend that 'the environment' (that is, a fixed and objective geography) fully determines all politics, but that it does, at the least, strongly influence the foreign policies of all states and thus world politics. This quasi-environmental determinism was noted by Mackinder (1904:422) when he claimed that "Man and not nature initiates; but nature in large measure controls". Traditional geopolitics, therefore, explains the inherent, natural, and unavoidable geographical reasons behind the behaviour of
particular states, to understand the economic, military, and political capacity of states to influence world politics, and to map the location and distribution of global power and thus the (im)possibilities of individual states.

Third, traditional geopolitics assumes that its “fixed and objective” geography and quasi-environmental determinist explanation of the behaviour of states renders it the most powerful guide to statecraft. Indeed, traditional geopolitics has always been in service to state foreign policy elites because it offers “the seductive promise of a privileged perspective upon current affairs and a unique insight into the political world” (Atkinson and Dodds 2000:1). Traditional geopolitics is therefore employed by state foreign policy elites to describe, explain, analyse and engage in world politics through their foreign policies. O’Tuathail and Agnew (1992:192) nicely summarise this contemporary conceptualisation of traditional geopolitics:

“By its own understandings and terms geopolitics is taken to be a domain of hard truths, material realities, and irrepressible natural facts. Geopoliticians have traded on the supposed objective materialism of geopolitical analysis...(which is held to be) impartial between one or another political system or philosophy. (Geopolitics) addresses the base of international politics, the permanent geopolitical realities around which the play of events in international politics unfolds. These geopolitical realities are held to be durable, physical determinants of foreign policy. Geography, in such a scheme, is held to be a non-discursive phenomenon: it is separate from the social, political, and ideological dimensions of international politics”.

Or, as Spykman (1942:41) once famously stated, “Geography does not argue, it just is”.

Critical Geopolitics

The recent revisionist literature of ‘traditional geopolitics’ has also enabled the emergence of a body of scholarship known as ‘critical geopolitics’, codified in a number of key initial journal articles, (eg, Dalby 1990a and 1991; O’Tuathail and Agnew 1992; O’Tuathail 1992a, 1992b, 1994a; Dodds and Sidaway 1994; Sidaway 1994), significant single authored and edited books (Dalby 1990b; O’Tuathail 1996; Agnew 1998; Dodds 1998; and O’Tuathail and Dalby 1998;
Herod et al. 1998), two special issues of the journals *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* (1994) and *Political Geography* (1996), in entries in textbooks such as *Introducing Human Geographies* (Sharp 1999) and *The Dictionary of Human Geography* (Taylor 2000), and even a *Political Geography* (2000) review symposium of Gearoid O’Tuathail’s 1996 book *Critical Geopolitics: The Politics of Writing Global Space*. The re-reading, re-thinking, and re-writing of the conventional history of geopolitics reflects the simultaneous concern with critical histories of the wider geography discipline (Livingstone 1992) and is inspired by developments beyond the discipline in the broader social sciences – especially, as will be seen shortly, post-modernism – which have influenced both human and political geography. Other ‘new’ forms of geopolitics have contributed to the emergence of critical geopolitics, such as environmental geopolitics or ‘eco-politics’ (Dalby 1992). Thus, “critical geopolitics complemented new (radical) forms of political geography which questioned traditional understandings of the ‘political’ and the ‘geographical’” (Dodds 2001:471).

In addition to these theoretical prompts critical geopolitics was also motivated by a concern with particular events. The importance of early critiques of Cold War geopolitics, to which critical geopolitics traces its origins, has already been noted, but the end of the Cold War, the 1991 Gulf War, the reunification of Germany, the disintegration of Yugoslavia, the break-up of the Soviet Union, and the genocide in Rwanda all impacted significantly on the geography of world politics. Hence critical geopolitics combines the “renewed interest in (traditional) geopolitical ideas…(with) the interrogation of contemporary political change with critical evaluations of geopolitical reasoning and representations” (Atkinson and Dodds 2000:9). Critical geopolitics, therefore, employs recent theoretical and empirical insights to reassess both the conventional history of the geopolitical tradition and to problematise the current meaning of geopolitics.

Dodds and Atkinson (2000:xv) credit critical geopolitics for leading a “thorough revival of geopolitics in the mainstream academic arenas of the Euro-American world and beyond”. Moreover, Dodds (2001:471) notes that, in response to critical geopolitics, “political geography is moving a considerable distance from traditional research agendas based on boundaries, state power, and environmental conditions” and towards new areas of interest including, according to Reuber’s (2000) recent review article, ecological politics, resource and territorial conflicts, the politics of identity, globalisation and international relations, the symbolic representation of political power, and regional conflicts and new social movements. By recognising that “there is a politics to all geographical knowledge” and, inversely, that “there is a geography to all political practice”, critical geopolitics is also significant because it seeks “to problematise the least
problematised part of twentieth century geographical knowledge” (Taylor 2000:125-6). This broad objective is implicit in the phrase ‘critical geopolitics’ itself: the ‘critical’ signifies its questioning approach while the ‘geopolitics’ signifies this hitherto un-problematised subject. O’Tuathail (1994b:525) nicely captures this simultaneous promise and problem:

“‘Critical geopolitics’ is a paradoxical promissory declaration...On the one hand, it promises the possibility of a new and radically different re-conceptualisation of the traditional concepts, concerns, and modes of thought that have defined the study of geopolitics for almost a century. ‘Critical geopolitics’ promises both a new degree of politicisation to understandings of geography and a new degree of geographicalisation to the study of global politics...On the other hand, the term is an awkward oxymoron, an attempt to force together a word usually associated with the questioning of power with another whose very mode of being has been power and the calculated use of it for reactionary ends. The ‘critical’ asserts a connection to the new critical social movements that challenge state-centric thinking, yet ‘geopolitics’ is most often associated with precisely such thinking, with policy prescription for the state”.

Thus, beyond its general intention “to launch alternative accounts or explanations of phenomena defined as ‘geopolitical!’” (Dodds and Sidaway 1994:515) critical geopolitics also defies simple definitions. This elusiveness is mainly because of the wide variety of research agendas and theoretical approaches employed under its name (Dalby and O’Tuathail 1996). Even a recent edited collection critiquing various Geopolitical Traditions declared that “there is no attempt to define or delimit the topic” (Atkinson and Dodds 2000:1). Moreover, there have been critiques of critical geopolitics, with critics like Luttwak (1990) arguing that geopolitics has been superseded by ‘geo-economics’ and Smith (2000) questioning the very possibility of a ‘critical geopolitics’. Nevertheless, the contemporary literature is used here to substantiate the current conceptualisation of critical geopolitics but, hopefully, without paradoxically containing or disciplining the approach which, by definition, seeks to be flexible, open, and adaptive, in contrast to ‘traditional geopolitics’. This final section therefore reviews critical geopolitics in order to establish the contemporary academic context of this research.
Theories of critical geopolitics

The starting point of critical geopolitics is the theoretical refurbishment of the humanities, social sciences, and, in particular, (human) geography by post-modernism and especially the notion of discourse. Post-modernism is “a recent movement in philosophy, the arts and social sciences”, dominated by the writings of French philosopher Michel Foucault from the 1960s to the 1980s, “characterised by scepticism towards the grand claims and grand theory of the modern era” (Ley 1994b:466). Post-modernism is the collective term for various theoretical, methodological, and epistemological approaches that challenge the modernist assumptions of objectivity and its consequent claims of a single, natural and inherent ‘knowledge’ and ‘truth’ and emphasises the multiplicity, subjectivity, and constructed character of ‘knowledge’ and ‘truth’. Post-modernism mounts this critique by employing Foucault’s notion of discourse. As noted briefly in Chapter One, a discourse can be conceptualised as an “ensemble of social practices through which the world is made meaningful and intelligible to oneself and to others” (Gregory 1994:136) that “enable one to write, speak, listen, and act meaningfully” (O’Tuathail and Agnew 1992:193). Similarly, discourses are also “frameworks that embrace particular combinations of narratives, concepts, ideologies and signifying practices, each relevant to a particular realm of social action” (Barnes and Duncan 1992). Four characteristics of discourses enable critical geopolitics’ post-modern critique of traditional geopolitics.

First, discourses are situated in the social and political context in which they are produced, contested, and (re)negotiated. Thus discourses are inherently geographical because they are time and place specific. The exact temporal and spatial context of discourses also means they are inherently political because they are both shaped by and (re)shape that context; discourses are social and political constructions that do “not reflect but actually construct ‘reality’” (Kiely 1999:31). Second, discourses are partial precisely because they are situated: by being embedded and constructed within a specific social and political context discourses can never be objective or complete versions of knowledge and truth. By definition discourses are both inclusionary, as they admit only certain knowledge and truth, and exclusionary, as they omit other knowledges and truths. Third, discourses are consequently normalising because they exclude other knowledges and truths: by privileging one perspective discourses naturalise their particular version of knowledge and truth. Discourses therefore not only normalise but “often implicitly universalise a particular view of the world and position subjects within it” (Gregory 1994:136). In doing so discourses offer ‘common sense’ knowledge and truth that ‘sounds right’. Fourth, discourses are a form of power – “the ability to achieve certain ends...which may be either direct
(the power to do something) or indirect (the power over something)” (Johnston 1994:469) – precisely because they exclude other knowledges and truths in order to normalise their own knowledge and truth: discourses seek to establish and maintain dominance over alternative, dissident, and subversive forms of knowledge and truth. Discourses are therefore mutually interdependent in an ongoing, circulatory, interactive contest for hegemony – “the capacity of a dominant group to exercise control, not through visible rule or the deployment of force, but rather through the willing acquiescence of citizens to accept subordinate status by their affirmation of cultural, social and political practices and institutions which are fundamentally unequal” (Ley 1994a:243) – and thus “are always open to contestation and negotiation” (Gregory 1994:136). The hegemonic geopolitical discourses of state foreign policy elites, however, are therefore a form of “geo-power” (O’Tuathail 1996).

Foucault’s concept of discourse has been central to the emergence of post-modernism over the past quarter-century. The consequence of discourse is the post-modern belief that all knowledge, including geographical, is discursive. This proposition has had a profound impact on human geography and has proved the catalyst for new critical work. O’Tuathail and Agnew (1992:192) nicely summarise post-modernism’s ‘geography-as-discourse’ argument: “Geography is a social and historical discourse which is always intimately bound up with questions of politics and ideology. Geography is never a natural, non-discursive phenomenon which is separate from ideology and outside politics. Rather, geography as a discourse is a form of power/knowledge itself’. So, geography does argue, after all.

Significantly for critical geopolitics, O’Tuathail uses this rejection of Spykman’s supposed non-argumentative geography to consider the implications of geography-as-discourse for traditional geopolitics. O’Tuathail (1996:51) begins by reviewing Spykman’s “Geography does not argue, it just is” statement: “Geography is a permanent, self-evident realm of necessity that is present to itself; it is a durable, immanent force in international relations. Geography is independent of our beliefs and attitudes about it…Geography is literally beneath…the world of the social, political, and ideological, the world of rhetoric and argumentation”. O’Tuathail (1996:52-3), however, goes on to critique Spykman’s position, charging that:

“In scripting ‘geography’ in the above manner, Spykman is already situating himself within discourse. In holding to the view that geography ‘just is’, Spykman is already participating in the realm of rhetoric and argumentation…the very identification and social representation of an
‘is’...is already an argument. Spykman’s ‘argue’ and ‘is’ are not the opposites implied in his declaration. To claim an ‘is’ is already to argue”.

If geography does indeed argue then, as O’Tuathail (1996:53) concludes, “the foundations of geopolitics are not rock solid and natural but fully social and inescapably political”. The implications of this geography-as-discourse argument, or what Dodds (2001:470) calls “the politics of geographical knowledge”, for traditional geopolitics is consequently enormous: it directly contests the assumption of a fixed and objective geography that is meant to underlie traditional geopolitics. O’Tuathail’s critique of Spykman, which could easily be directed against any of the traditional geopoliticians discussed above, also demonstrates this contradiction. In proposing the fixed and objective character of geopolitical analysis, traditional geopolitics actually produces specific, and therefore discursive, ‘knowledge’ and ‘truth’ that guides state foreign policy elites. O’Tuathail and Agnew (1992:192) eloquently capture this paradox:

“The great irony of geopolitical writing, however, is that it was always a highly ideological and deeply politicised form of analysis. Geopolitical theory from Ratzel to Mackinder, Haushofer to Bowman, Spykman to Kissinger was never an objective and disinterested activity but an organic part of the political philosophy and ambitions of these very public intellectuals. While the forms of geopolitical writing have varied among these and other authors, the practice of producing geopolitical theory has a common theme: the production of knowledge to aid the practice of statecraft and further the power of the state”.

Thus, critical geopolitics rejects the assertion that traditional geopolitics is an objective, apolitical and non-discursive approach to world politics and now recognises that it is no more than a series of geopolitical discourses. Consequently, critical geopolitics is interested in how traditional geopolitical discourses are constructed.

The construction of geopolitical discourses

Although the techniques by which state foreign policy elites construct geopolitical discourses are multiple, complex, and impossible to exhaustively identify here, for this is the task of critical geopolitics in general, the most important techniques are summarised from the existing literature.
As first noted in Chapter One, the power of traditional geopolitics flows from its supposed objectivity, which is the result of its assumed neutral perspective. Critical geopolitics refers to this objective perspective as the geopolitical ‘imagination’: the vantage point from which state foreign policy elites view the assumed geopolitical realities of world politics. This all-seeing eye of traditional geopolitics is situated above, and is thus separate from and uninfluenced by, the global stage and the dramas of international affairs which unfold upon it. Or, as O’Tuathail (1996:24) explains, the geopolitical imagination results from “the suspended eye witnessing, not interpreting” and is hence neutral and apolitical. This objectivity serves state foreign policy elites because it enables them to read and interpret the chaos of world politics in a supposedly neutral manner and thus justify their specific foreign policies. As O’Tuathail (1996:34) goes on to explain, “the drama of international politics is not only on display but also under surveillance by imperial eyes that seek to impose a normative system of control and intelligibility upon its indeterminacy…(but) the geopolitical envisioning of the global scene is inseparable from the desire to use the displayed scene for one’s own purposes”.

Critical geopolitics, therefore, rejects the objectivity claim of geopolitical imaginations, including those of critical geopoliticians themselves. This reflexive recognition of the subjectivity of geopolitics is precisely why a positionality discussion was crucial at the start of this chapter, in order to at least acknowledge (even if it is not problematised until Chapter Eight) the geopolitical location of my own eye/I. Critical geopolitics therefore challenges this false objectivity of the geopolitical imagination as the first technique in the construction of geopolitical discourses; or, as Atkinson and Dodds (2000:11) challenge, critical geopolitics interrogates “the visualisation of the world by geopolitical ‘experts’, to ensure geopolitical claims to truth and privileged insight are exposed as partial and subjective”.

The second technique builds on this ‘objective’ geopolitical imagination of state foreign policy elites and refers to how they spatialise world politics. The term ‘spatialise’ regards the mapping of world politics “in such a way as to represent it as a ‘world’ characterised by particular types of places, peoples, and dramas” (O’Tuathail and Agnew 1992:192). This mapping can be either rhetorical, as in spoken or written spatial metaphors and/or similes (the cartographic language of discourse), or real, as in the production of actual hard-copy maps, or both. This geopolitical mapping reveals not only how state foreign policy elites spatialise but also moralise global space. This moralised cartography also helps to legitimate particular foreign policies because “the world is spatialised into regions with imagined attributes and characteristics – leading to a mosaic of places of ‘danger’, ‘threat’, and ‘safety’ that underpins foreign policy” (Atkinson and
Dodds 2000:10). Such a spatialisation of world politics assigns an essentialist identity to places and people: often a ‘good’ ‘us’ ‘here’ versus a ‘bad’ ‘them’ ‘there’ that once again justifies particular foreign policies, and especially violent ones.

As all maps, rhetorical and real, are politicised representations of space, however, critical geopolitics argues that the spatialisation (and moralisation) of world politics is a discursive technique that can be challenged. Again, critical geopolitics contests this spatialisation and moralisation as anything but neutral and objective, and rather as the result of a particular geopolitical imagination from a specific perspective. Indeed, O’Tuathail and Agnew (1992:192) argue that the subjective mapping of world politics is the central tenet of critical geopolitics, claiming that: “Geopolitics, we wish to suggest, should be critical re-conceptualised as a discursive practice by which intellectuals of statecraft ‘spatialise’ international politics”.

The third technique recognised by critical geopolitics in the construction of traditional geopolitical discourses follows the theoretical insights of Ferdinand de Saussure’s post-structuralism, which contends that “meaning is produced within rather than reflected through language” (Pratt 1994:468), and is arguably the most important: language. The centrality of language is because the meaning of objects, subjects, and events are not inherent (singular) and natural (uncontested), but are constructed through the choice of nouns, verbs, and adjectives, reference to other known concepts, and other linguistic techniques such as metaphors, similes, and rhetoric. There is nothing inherent and natural, for example, about a fist-sized, round, red fruit that determines it should be called an apple; it is the noun used to describe it that gives it meaning and distinguishes it from other fruits. The choice of language, however, is dependent on social, cultural and political contexts: language is therefore not ideologically neutral but there exists a “politics of language” (Sharp 1999:184).

It is this politics of language that critical geopolitics seeks to expose in order to demonstrate that it is the language which state foreign policy elites choose to describe, interpret, explain and represent world politics is crucial in constructing (their) geopolitical discourses. As O’Tuathail and Agnew (1992:190) explain, “the way that we describe the world, the words we use, shape how we see the world and how we decide to act”. Geopolitical discourses are therefore linguistic constructions that resonate with established vocabularies and understandings (that is, imaginations, spatialisations, and moralisations) of world politics that consequently aid in the legitimisation of new foreign policies. This politics of language is contested by critical geopolitics, which challenges the discursive language in hegemonic writing, speeches, and other texts of state
foreign policy elites and traditional geopolitics. “At the core of critical geopolitics”, Atkinson and Dodds (2000:11) conclude, “is the belief that these (linguistic) geopolitical representations of global politics deserve serious attention, for it is such ‘scripting’ of the world that helps constitute and legitimate foreign policies”.

In general, therefore, critical geopolitics explores these politics behind the imagination, spatialisation, and language of state foreign policy elites in constructing their traditional geopolitical discourses and seeks to expose “the politics of geopolitical knowledge” (O’Tuathail 1998a:11). In an attempt to grammatically represent this problematisation of the conventional assumptions of traditional geopolitics and the assumed apolitical relationship between geography and politics, O’Tuathail (1996) places a hyphen in ‘geo-politics’, to separate the two concepts and their hitherto unproblematised conflation (see Natter 2000 for a discussion). Moreover, this notion of a ‘geo-politics’ also encapsulates the irony of traditional geopolitics, which critical geopolitics recognises only works by simplifying geography and politics at the global scale and ignoring the complexity of local scale geography and politics. This irony is nicely captured by O’Tuathail (1996:53), who claims that traditional geopolitics “depends on a suppression of geography and politics” and that it “works to de-geographicalise and de-politicise the study of international politics”. Finally, he paradoxically notes that “here is a tradition that is eminently political and recognises itself as such, yet rests on a de-politicisation of geographical and political processes”. Indeed, if this irony of geopolitics is taken to its extreme, traditional geopolitical discourses are both ‘anti-geographical’ and ‘anti-political’.

The contemporary conceptualisation of critical geopolitics

These theoretical underpinnings and the concept of geopolitical discourse result in a contemporary conceptualisation of critical geopolitics that is summarised here to conclude this chapter. Most importantly, traditional geopolitics “is not an objective, scientific form of knowledge” but “is about the operation of discourse and power/knowledge. Too often in the past, geopolitics has been treated not as discourse but as detached and objective description of how the world ‘really is’” (O’Tuathail 1998a:11). The main purpose of critical geopolitics, therefore, is to challenge the objective and apolitical truth claims of traditional geopolitics, as most commonly employed by state foreign policy elites. One of the main means by which critical geopolitics does this follows the theoretical insights of post-colonialism and emphasises alternative “geopolitical knowledges” (Atkinson and Dodds 2000:10) and perspectives that are commonly
excluded by the dominance of the white, male, conservative, ruling class geopolitics that characterises the European and especially Anglo-American geopolitical tradition. Indeed, following Foucault's proposition that "wherever there is power, there is also resistance" (O'Tuathail 1998a:11) critical geopolitics focuses on non-white, indigenous, feminist, and non-ruling class geopolitical knowledges and perspectives. Because of this general intention to champion the underdog, critical geopolitics is an umbrella term covering an array of theoretical and empirical interventions that illustrate "the essentially contested nature of geopolitical knowledge" (O'Tuathail 1998a:11). This demonstration is undertaken within either or any combination of the three fields of geopolitics now recognised by critical geopolitics: practical geopolitics, formal geopolitics, and popular geopolitics (Figure 2.6).

![Diagram of O'Tuathail and Dalby's (1998) current conceptualisation of critical geopolitics](image)

**Figure 2.6: O'Tuathail and Dalby's (1998) current conceptualisation of critical geopolitics**

*Practical geopolitics* refers to the geopolitics practiced by state foreign policy elites in formulating and conducting their foreign policy. The notion of practical geopolitics is dependant on practical geopolitical reasoning: the geopolitical arguments put forward by state foreign policy elites to explain world politics and justify their actions. A theory of "how practical geopolitical reasoning works empirically" is in its early stages within critical geopolitics, but an important attempt is O'Tuathail's (2002:624) paper entitled 'Theorising practical geopolitical reasoning: The case of the United States' response to the war in Bosnia'. In this article, O'Tuathail proposes two concepts to help understand the connection between practical geopolitical reasoning (that is, how state foreign policy elites think and write about world politics) and actual statecraft (that is, how state foreign policy elites behave and act in world
politics). The first is the concept of "geopolitical storylines" that political leaders and foreign policy professionals construct to describe and make sense of international events and crises. In O'Tuathail's (2002:619) words, "a storyline provides a relatively coherent sense-making narrative for a foreign policy challenge", like the surprise attack narrative of 11 September 2001 outlined in Chapter One. Storylines are constructed according to the five following aspects of a "geopolitical drama" (O'Tuathail 2002:619):

1. Where? The location specification of the problem at local, regional, and global scales;
2. What? The situation description of the problem;
3. Who? The actor typifications of those involved in the problem;
4. Why? The blame strategies of the cause of the problem; and
5. So what? The strategic calculations of what to do about the problem.

Responses to these five dimensions will draw on pre-existing geopolitical discourses, what O'Tuathail (2002:608) calls "cultural storehouses of 'common sense'", which will contextualise the new storyline. Here, O'Tuathail's (2003:858) later notion of "affect" introduced in Chapter One, which "simplifies and speeds the process of calculative reasoning so that every decision is relatively instantaneous, rather than a rational choice marathon", could be added to this theorisation of practical geopolitical reasoning. A violent retaliation to 11 September 2001, for example, was essentially an inevitable United States response because of the role of previous experience in guiding reaction, virtually by default, to such crises. Such "cultural storehouses" provide the basis of "geopolitical storylines" that "are sense-making organisational devices tying the (five) different elements of a policy challenge together into a reasonably coherent and convincing narrative" (O'Tuathail 2002:617).

The second concept in O'Tuathail's theorisation extends such storylines into "geopolitical scripts", which provide the guide to statecraft that foreign policy elites use to justify their actions in world politics. "A geopolitical script", therefore, "refers to the directions and manner in which foreign policy leaders perform geopolitics in public, to the political strategies of coping that leaders develop in order to navigate through certain foreign policy challenges and crises", like the surprise attack legitimisation of the 'war on terror' outlined in Chapter One. (O'Tuathail 2002:619). The concept consequently views, quite literally, political leaders and diplomatic personnel as 'actors' 'performing' 'geopolitics' according to a 'script' determined by a particular 'storyline'. As will be shown in Chapter Three, this conceptualisation has important implications for this research, because its method is based on an analysis of, quite literally, the "geopolitical
scripts” (speeches, interviews, and press conference transcripts) of members (the cast) of the United States foreign policy elite. Moreover, as O’Tuathail (2002:620) notes, a geopolitical script must be constantly and credibly reinforced: “Having a script about how to respond to a foreign policy challenge is never sufficient. Geopolitical scripts have to be performed convincingly to maintain and secure legitimacy”. A geopolitical script, therefore, “deals with the pragmatics of foreign policy performance. It is a tacit set of rules for how foreign policy actors are to perform in certain speech situations, and how they are to articulate responses to policy challenges and problems” (O’Tuathail 2002:619-620). O’Tuathail (2002:619) also notes the difference between a “geopolitical storyline” as a “set of arguments” about an international event or crisis and a “geopolitical script” as “a way of performing” in response to that event or crisis. These twin concepts are crucial in Chapters Four and Five, where the surprise attack and blowback explanations of 11 September 2001 are conceptualised as “geopolitical storylines” and the corresponding surprise attack legitimation and blowback de-legitimation of the ‘war on terror’ are conceptualised as “geopolitical scripts”.

Practical geopolitical reasoning also underlies the notion of formal geopolitics: the intellectual study of geopolitics undertaken within government think-tanks, public policy research centres, and academia. These sites of geopolitical knowledge production have conventionally been in the service of state foreign policy elites, as the discussion of the geopolitical tradition in Chapter One demonstrated. It is therefore ironic that critical geopolitics, which seeks to challenge this history and sever those ties is largely an academic enterprise; that is, a contemporary example of ‘formal geopolitics’. Perhaps in an attempt to obscure this irony it is noteworthy that, generally, critical geopolitics distances itself from the ‘formal geopolities’ of, especially, neo-conservative or neo-liberal think-tanks and policy research institutes that continue the geopolitical tradition of acting as a guide to statecraft for foreign policy elites. I openly admit, however, that this research and thesis are part of contemporary formal geopolitics; although I am unsure what the implications of this admission are.

Finally, popular geopolitics recognises that, in contrast to the conventional belief that geopolitics was “confined only to a small group of ‘wise men’ who speak in the language of classical geopolitics” (Atkinson and Dodds 2000:10), geopolitics also operates in wider society. Traditional geopolitical discourses may be primarily produced by the geopolitical reasoning of practical and formal geopolitics but, as Atkinson and Dodds (2000:10) continue, ‘geopolitical cultures’ “also find expression in the everyday realms of television and films, novels and newspapers, the formal education system and the routine politics of banal nationalism...
'popular' geopolitical knowledges are important precisely because they contribute to the production and circulation of 'common sense' geopolitical reasoning which impacts upon public opinion”. This capacity of popular geopolitics to influence public opinion renders it a tool for state foreign policy elites, as it offers them a means to popularise their geopolitical discourses and thus maintain their legitimacy to act on behalf of citizens in world politics, justify particular foreign policies, and control internal dissent. Critical geopolitics, however, increasingly recognises sites of popular geopolitics, especially subversive films or documentaries and dissident comics or cartoons, as important contestations of dominant geopolitical discourses.

This introduction to critical geopolitics demonstrates the profound effect that post-modernism in general and Foucault’s concept of discourse in particular, as well as post-structuralism and post-colonialism, have all had in transforming traditional geopolitics from an ‘objective science’ into a ‘subjective discourse’. In a sense, critical geopolitics is effectively traditional geopolitics plus discourse. This “re-conceptualisation of geopolitics in terms of discourses” (O’Tuathail and Agnew 1992:191) is again nicely summarised by O’Tuathail (1998a:3) in his definitive contemporary conceptualisation of critical geopolitics:

“Concisely defined, critical geopolitics seeks to reveal the hidden politics of geopolitical knowledge. Rather than defining geopolitics as an unproblematic description of the world political map, it treats geopolitics as a discourse, as a culturally and politically varied way of describing, representing and writing about geography and international politics. Critical geopolitics does not assume that ‘geopolitical discourse’ is the language of truth; rather, it understands it as a discourse seeking to establish and assert its own truths. Critical geopolitics, in other words, politicises the creation of geopolitical knowledge by intellectuals, institutions and practicing statesmen. It treats the production of geopolitical discourse as part of politics itself and not as a neutral and detached description of a transparent, objective reality”.

Thus critical geopolitics is “a question not an answer, an approach not a theory” (O’Tuathail 1994b:526), and as such does not specify, demand, or exclude any particular method employed in any research undertaken that, as this thesis does, calls itself ‘critical geopolitics’. It is therefore necessary to now explicitly state the research method used in this critical geopolitics of 11 September 2001 and the ‘war on terror’.
Conclusion

This chapter has located this thesis within its personal and academic research contexts. The personal geopolitics presented in the first section recognised the importance in contemporary critical geography of declaring my own positionality as the sole researcher responsible for this thesis and exploring the relationship between the researcher and the researched. While the implications of that relationship are deferred until Chapter Eight, the necessity of this positionality discussion was reinforced by the theory of critical geopolitics, which rejects the claims to objectivity of traditional geopolitics and instead emphasises, like the post-modern critique in general, the situated-ness and partiality of all academic knowledge; my own included.

Notwithstanding this positionality, the thesis was further located through the establishment of its broad academic context in the longstanding but problematic sub-discipline of political geography and as a continuation of traditional geopolitics. More specifically, the discussion of critical geopolitics narrowed the research context of this thesis and located it as part of the recent and dramatic changes in (traditional) geopolitics and (formal) geopolitical research. It is within this specific research context of critical geopolitics that this thesis is undertaken according to the research method that is explained in Chapter Three.
“Critical geopolitics has shown (perhaps understandably) a reluctance to engage with military affairs and strategy...(but) if critical geopolitics is going to be in a position to articulate alternatives to militarism then one must have some understanding of these particular organisations and cultures”.

(Dodds 2001:471-2).
Introduction

The purpose of this third chapter is to explain the research strategies used to construct this critical geopolitics of the conflict(ing) discourses of 11 September 2001 and the ‘war on terror’ and to link these strategies to the remainder of this thesis. As noted in Chapter Two, because critical geopolitics includes disparate and multiple approaches it is essential to explicitly state the strategies employed in this particular version. Following on from the theoretical outline of critical geopolitics in the last section of the previous chapter, therefore, this chapter now shows how critical geopolitics, or rather this critical geopolitics, works in practice. The strategies employed in this research answers the call by Dodds in the opening chapter quote; that if critical geopolitics is to make a meaningful contribution to conflict research by understanding how violence is legitimated then it must engage with those war-making organisations, in this case most importantly the United States foreign policy elite. The particular research strategy, therefore, aims to extend existing critical geopolitics by overcoming its previous unwillingness (not surprising given the long and close association between traditional geopolitics and war) to investigate issues of violence and conflict.

The discussion is divided into three sections. First, the specific techniques employed in this thesis, as well as the theoretical reasons for their use, are explained. This explanation identifies the strategies used to investigate both conflict and conflicting discourses in both the Afghanistan and Iraq phases of the ‘war on terror’. Second, after identifying what this research method enables, I also explain the strategies of this thesis as a piece of anti-research so as to identify what it does not attempt to do in order to delineate what this thesis is and what it is not. In this regard, a number of methodological omissions and political caveats are noted. The third section details the thesis structure that follows by introducing the four substantive chapters and the one implications and conclusion chapter. This last section, therefore, links the opening research argument, context and strategies chapters to this actual critical geopolitics of the conflict(ing) discourses of 11 September 2001 and the ‘war on terror’.

Research Method

The research method of this thesis focuses on the United States foreign policy elite’s construction of the(ir) conflict discourses of 11 September 2001 and the ‘war on terror’. The
discussion begins by explaining why the US President and a small group of other members of the foreign policy elite are the focus of attention. Their personal and collective descriptions and explanations of 11 September 2001 and the ‘war on terror’ provide the primary data used in this thesis. This data was subjected to a discourse analysis, a method which draws on theoretical insights from post-structuralism, and especially Derrida’s notion of deconstruction, in order to demonstrate these conflict discourses as indeed discursive. This analysis explains the interrelated discursive strategies employed to construct the conflict discourses of 11 September 2001 and the ‘war on terror’, which provide the basis for the four substantive chapters that follow.

Of secondary importance to the research method is the material brought together here as the competing conflicting discourses of 11 September 2001 and the ‘war on terror’. The discussion begins by using the theoretical insights of post-colonialism, a feature of critical geopolitics, to include the excluded alternative explanations of 11 September 2001 and de-legitimations of the ‘war on terror’. These dissident sources of geopolitical knowledge and perspective provide the critical comment that forms the basis of these conflicting discourses. This material is used to challenge the conflict discourses of the US foreign policy elite, in order to demonstrate their discursive character, and in so doing they constitute discursive critiques.

**Conflict discourses**

As argued in Chapter One, 11 September 2001 existed, for a brief moment, outside any explanatory discourse. The meaning of this extraordinary event, however, was quickly constructed by the United States foreign policy elite through the discursive language used to describe and explain the events. President George Bush, as the head of the US foreign policy elite and the leader of the country just attacked, was the most important actor in this process. Whoever holds the US Presidency, as O’Tuathail and Agnew (1992:195) explain, is crucial in shaping world politics: “We must acknowledge the key role the Presidency plays in the assemblage of meaning about international politics within the United States (and internationally since the US became a world power). In ethnographic terms, the US President is the chief *bricoleur* of American political life, a combination of storyteller and tribal shaman”. Moreover, because Bush’s discursive language was repeated – and expanded – by other members of the US foreign policy elite, these actors are also crucial in understanding the construction of their conflict discourses of 11 September 2001 and the ‘war on terror’. As “influential actors” O’Tuathail and Agnew (1992:191) also explain the importance of all US foreign policy elite
members, beyond the President, in shaping world politics, and point to the main source of research material used in this thesis: "Political speeches and the like afford us a means of recovering the self-understandings of influential actors in world politics. They help us understand the social construction of worlds and the role of geographical knowledge in that social construction". The spoken words of President Bush and the US foreign policy elite, therefore, are the most important in understanding the construction of conflict discourses.

At this point, however, it is necessary to explain further what is meant by the phrase 'United States foreign policy elite'. The concept of a 'foreign policy elite' was explained in Chapter One (p.12) as "the collection of government, military, diplomatic and intelligence institutions responsible for formulating and conducting a state's external relations". Although useful, this conceptualisation is problematic because it implies unity amongst the various organisations, not to mention their leaders and interests, grouped together by the term. This impression is unfortunate because in any so-called 'state foreign policy elite', let alone one as big, complex, and powerful as that in the United States, there will always be a divergence of opinion on the means and ends of foreign policy. Foreign policy, therefore, must be seen as the output of a complicated interaction process between these component organisations and interests, not the result of a unanimous position of a homogenous, singular elite. This precaution is especially necessary when considering the United States foreign policy elite because, as noted, of the size, intricacies, and power of its "collection of government, military, diplomatic, and intelligence institutions responsible for formulating and conducting" US foreign policy.

The concept of an 'elite', however, serves the purposes of this thesis because it is consistent with the methodological focus on the very small number of officials (just twelve) as the 'figureheads' or 'spokespersons' for the broader and deeper collection of organisations, politicians, civilians, and soldiers that make up the US foreign policy 'elite' in its entirety. Moreover, in the one-month period examined here, the reaction to 11 September 2001 across this collective was, for all intents and purposes, 'unanimous'; it was not until much later, after the end of this research period, that differences in perspective and purpose between various elements, for example between the Departments of State and Defence, became apparent. This utility of the 'elite' concept in this context reflects O'Tuathail's (2002:618) proposition of "discursive coalitions" between different foreign policy organisations and/or individuals that “are characterised by a shared structure of seeing, representing and reasoning” and thus perceive world politics according to "shared storylines".
As will become clear throughout this thesis, this unity was certainly in operation in the aftermath of 11 September 2001 and the beginning of the ‘war on terror’. A recent article by Lobe (2005) presents a much different contemporary story, however, highlighting the “internal disagreements” between the “neo-conservatives” and the “realists” over the current and future direction of the ‘war on terror’ at the start of the Bush administration’s second term. This heterogeneity reinforces the caution necessary regarding the use of the term ‘US foreign policy elite’ in this thesis, but it is deployed here because it does encapsulate the power of the high-ranking members of the Bush administration to construct the conflict discourses of specific interest to this research.

**Primary data**

Consequently, the speeches, interviews, and press conference transcripts of the twelve members of the United States foreign policy elite (Figure 3.1) constitute the primary data used in this research. This primary data was collected for the one month period from 11 September 2001 to a few days after (in order to include speeches, interviews, and press conferences given because of) the start of the ‘war on terror’ on Afghanistan on 7 October 2001. This period was selected because it was during this time that the conflict discourses both explaining 11 September 2001 and legitimating the ‘war on terror’ were constructed and interacted with (and achieved hegemony over) conflicting discourses. Although these twelve members were included in the discourse analysis, this does not mean that all are quoted in this thesis, as some only had minor roles. Two pertinent examples here are Federal Bureau of Investigation Director Robert Mueller and New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani who, as clearly not normally members of the US foreign policy elite, are included here because of the criminal nature and global character of the attacks.

This primary data was accessed from the websites of the White House at [www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov), the US Department of State at [www.state.gov](http://www.state.gov), and the US Department of Defence at [www.defenselink.mil](http://www.defenselink.mil). I also used the internet resources of the Washington Post at [www.washingtonpost.com](http://www.washingtonpost.com), the New York Times at [www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com), and Cable News Network at [www.cnn.com](http://www.cnn.com) to obtain media interviews and press conference transcripts. The primary data is separately referenced according to the member (as author) and by date, location (that is, White House, Pentagon, or television or radio programme), and format (that is, speech, interview, or press conference) and not by the internet URL, as this is not really the ‘source’ of the material. I also only reference that primary data which is quoted. When I do quote primary data material, any italicised phrases or sentences indicate the addition of my emphasis, and this applies for the whole thesis, so is noted here rather than at each instance throughout the remaining chapters.
Figure 3.1: The United States foreign policy elite, 11 September – 7 October 2001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>President</td>
<td>George Bush</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice-President</td>
<td>Dick Cheney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretary of State</td>
<td>Colin Powell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Security Adviser</td>
<td>Condoleezza Rice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretary of Defence</td>
<td>Donald Rumsfeld</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Secretary of Defence</td>
<td>Paul Wolfowitz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attorney General</td>
<td>John Ashcroft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White House Press Secretary</td>
<td>Ari Fleischer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Bureau of Investigation Director</td>
<td>Robert Mueller</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Outgoing)</td>
<td>Hugh Shelton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Incoming)</td>
<td>Richard Myers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York Mayor</td>
<td>Rudy Giuliani</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Discourse analysis**

This primary data, which totalled more than 600 A4 pages, was then subjected to a post-structural discourse analysis, another theoretical development that has underpinned critical geopolitics. As discussed in Chapter Two, post-structuralism is "concerned to demonstrate the repressions and power relations that underlie scientific claims to truth rather than reproduce them" (Pratt 1994:468) by exposing the discursive character of language. In critical geopolitics, the most common post-structural technique is Jacques Derrida’s notion of deconstruction, which seeks to "show how supposedly closed and totalising discourses are always vulnerable to disruption, displacement and interruption" (Gregory 1994:136) and thus aims to destabilise hegemonic discourses. In practice, deconstruction achieves this by a variety of techniques, including the analysis of texts for internal contradictions of incoherent arguments; demonstrating rhetoric, metaphors, and similes to be illogical or ironic; and showing certain geopolitical knowledges or perspectives to have been excluded (Sharp 1999). These deconstructive techniques of discourse analysis have always been a part of critical geopolitics, as Dodds and Sidaway (1994:526) explain: "The authors of the earliest studies positing a critical geopolitics argued that, by examining the various narratives, concepts, and signifying practices that reside within geopolitical discourses, it would be possible to understand something of the power of those discourses to shape international politics". In attempting to do just this, the discourse analysis in this research was conducted as follows.
Figure 3.2: The discourse analysis and refinement process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First Coding (Nine Themes)</th>
<th>Second Coding (Five Themes)</th>
<th>Third Coding (Three Themes)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Legitimations of the 'War on Terror' on Afghanistan</td>
<td>2. Legitimations of the 'War on Terror'</td>
<td>2. Legitimations of the 'War on Terror'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The 'War on Terror' as the First War of the New Century</td>
<td>3. 'First War' and 'New War'</td>
<td>3. The 'First' and 'New' 'War on Terror'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The 'War on Terror' as a 'New War' Unlike Others in History</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Memorialisation of 11 September 2001 Victims</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Heroism of Emergency Personnel and Survivors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Invocations of God / Christian References</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Invocations of Allah / Islamic References</td>
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<td>Chapter Four:</td>
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<td>Chapter Five:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Chapter Six:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The speeches, interviews, and press conference transcripts for each member of the US foreign policy elite were collated chronologically, from 11 September to 11 October 2001, in electronic files. These files were then printed and bound. These hard-copies were then read for recurrent themes of interest. An initial series of nine themes (Figure 3.2: First Coding) was identified with a colour-coded highlighting scheme. Additional comments were handwritten alongside points of interest and connections between the arguments of different officials were identified and marked. The primary data was then cut-and-pasted into new theme-specific electronic files. In this process, material that overlapped between two or more themes was placed into the corresponding multiple files. At this point it was realised, however, that nine themes were not only cumbersome but also unnecessary as there was considerable overlap between them. The nine initial themes were consequently refined into five themes (Figure 3.2: Second Coding). Material deemed to fall outside these five themes was kept in its original file for possible future reference. The five new thematic files were then printed and read again for key points and significant quotes. In doing so it was realised that two themes (‘memorialisation, heroism, and American national exceptionalism’ and ‘Christian and Islamic religious issues’) were secondary to the three other themes (Figure 3.2: Third Coding) as they merely served to reinforce them.

These three themes provide the basis of the first three substantive chapters. The ‘explanations of 11 September 2001’ theme relates to the first half of research question one, and so are presented in Chapter Four as, following O’Tuathail (2002), a “geopolitical storyline”. The ‘legitimations of the ‘war on terror” theme relates to the second half of research question one, and so are presented in Chapter Five as, again following O’Tuathail (2002), a “geopolitical script”. This division was also helpful because the discourse analysis revealed that, as noted in Chapter One, the US foreign policy elite explained 11 September 2001 in a particular way that, once it became dominant, laid the foundation for additional legitimations of the first phase of the ‘war on terror’ on Afghanistan. The ‘first’ and ‘new’ ‘war on terror” theme provides the basis of Chapter Six because the US foreign policy elite then attempted to establish the ‘war on terror’ as a ‘new’ new world order.

This attempt was codified in the construction of another conflict discourse to legitimate the second phase of the ‘war on terror’ on Iraq, so a fourth substantive chapter, Chapter Seven, was added. Instead of repeating the initial comprehensive data gathering and discourse analysis, however, this second example of a conflict discourse was analysed by focussing on key events between 11 September 2001 and the start of the war on Iraq on 21 March 2003. As with the first analysis regarding the war on Afghanistan, this analysis shows that, in keeping with O’Tuathail’s
(2002:619) theorisation of practical geopolitical reasoning, conflict discourses have two parts: the first “geopolitical storyline” indeed providing “a relatively coherent sense-making narrative for a foreign policy challenge” and the second “geopolitical script” also providing “the directions and manner in which foreign policy leaders perform geopolitics...in order to navigate through certain foreign policy challenges and crises”.

**Discursive strategies**

Within these general themes are the numerous and interrelated arguments of geopolitical reasoning consistently used by different members of the United States foreign policy elite to construct the(ir) conflict discourses of 11 September 2001 and the ‘war on terror’. These arguments are referred to as *discursive strategies*, the key points in explaining 11 September 2001, legitimating the ‘war on terror’, attempting a ‘new’ new world order, or constructing the second Iraq conflict discourse. A discursive strategy could include just one or a number of *discursive tactics*, the constitutive techniques used to make the overall point of the discursive strategy. The conceptualisation and operation of discursive strategies and discursive tactics will become evident in the following substantive chapters.

**Conflicting discourses**

As also argued in Chapter One, the explanation of 11 September 2001 and legitimation of the ‘war on terror’ offered by the United States foreign policy elite were contested by various critical perspectives. For the purposes of this thesis I group these dissident viewpoints together as conflicting discourses as a means of bringing these alternatives into the discussion. Again, this technique is in keeping with the common practice of critical geopolitics which, as O’Tuathail (1998a:11) explains, demands that “it is imperative that we consider not only the discourses forged by the powerful, the hegemonic and the privileged but also the counter-hegemonic discourses of those who are marginalised, ignored and silenced by dominant discourses”. The various points of the conflicting discourses challenging the explanations of 11 September 2001, the legitimations of the ‘war on terror’, the attempt at a ‘new’ new world order, and the construction of the Iraq conflict discourse are therefore included, respectively, in Chapters Four, Five, Six, and Seven. This inclusion emphasises one of the points of deconstruction that, as O’Tuathail suggests, is the cornerstone of critical geopolitics: the inclusion of geopolitical knowledges and perspectives otherwise excluded by such hegemonic discourses as the conflict discourses of 11 September 2001 and the ‘war on terror’.
Including the excluded

The desire to include the excluded comes from another theoretical development that has prompted critical geopolitics, namely post-colonialism: an intellectual movement that “challenges the impact of imperialism on non-western cultures” and opposes “the ethnocentrism of the dominant (white, Anglo-Saxon) culture” (Jackson 1994:465-6). Critical geopolitics recognises that traditional geopolitics was mostly the domain of white, male, conservative, ruling-class intellectuals, as a critical re-reading of even the brief history of geopolitics given in Chapter Two (and there are many more examples not included there) illustrates. Consequently, traditional geopolitical discourses were built on the exclusion of alternative geopolitical knowledges, privileging this perspective and reinforcing the supposed objectivity of traditional geopolitics.

Instead, critical geopolitics includes previously excluded geopolitical knowledges as a means of rejecting the objectivity, and thus legitimacy, of traditional geopolitics. For example, critical geopolitics deconstructs the Euro-centrism, even racism, of traditional geopolitics by emphasising non-white, indigenous or first-nation geopolitical knowledges and perspectives (e.g., Gibson 1998). Likewise, critical geopolitics exposes the masculinity of traditional geopolitics by offering feminist critiques of traditional geopolitical discourses (e.g., Hyndman 2000 and 2004). Finally, critical geopolitics emphasises non-ruling class geopolitical knowledges to illustrate how traditional geopolitics has often served the prevailing economic logic of state elites (MacFarlane and Hay 2003). This re-focussing gives voice to the silenced, as an end in itself, and also highlights what has been excluded by hegemonic geopolitical discourses. The admission of these dissident and otherwise excluded geopolitical knowledges and perspectives undermine the hegemony of state foreign policy elites’ geopolitical discourses.

Critical comment

The conflicting discourses of 11 September 2001 and the ‘war on terror’, therefore, are represented by a plethora of ‘critical comment’ material, from various dissenting perspectives, that I also gathered during the research period. This material was primarily obtained during the same one month period from 11 September 2001 used above, but because slower to produce books, magazine articles, and editorials were also included, a considerable amount of this material dates from after the start of the war on Afghanistan on 7 October 2001. This critical comment came from critics with a dissenting opinion on the explanation of 11 September 2001 and legitimisation of the ‘war on terror’, for example British-based Australian journalist John Pilger, long-time US critic and professor of linguistics Noam Chomsky, and veteran Irish
journalist and Middle East specialist Robert Fisk. In addition, 'non-white' perspectives of academic Rahul Mahajan, author Arundhati Roy, and activist Vandana Shiva, all from India, were also consulted, along with feminist critiques from Barbara Kingsolver and Arianna Huffington. Finally, other academic material that helped to contextualise the events of 11 September 2001 and challenge the 'war on terror' was also consulted.

The critical comment material was collected from three non-mainstream media websites. This material was written by a number of critical authors, too numerous to mention individually here, but who are of course appropriately cited when quoted throughout this thesis. The three websites used for the gathering of this critical comment were the AlterNet news media site at www.alternet.org, the Centre for Research on Globalisation’s (Montreal, Canada) site at www.globalresearch.com, and the Peace Action Network New Zealand (PANNZ) website at www.converge.co.nz. These websites were used as they were free, easily accessible 'clearing houses' that gathered critical news media comment from around the world. Moreover, the Peace Action Network New Zealand website illustrated how this international critical comment material was circulating in New Zealand and was accessible to New Zealanders; an important contextual point for the Chapter Seven case study.

Discursive critiques
The critical comment was used as the most important deconstruction technique in the above discourse analysis: to demonstrate what was excluded by the hegemonic conflict discourses of the United States foreign policy elite, to contest the(ir) discursive strategies used to construct those discourses, and ultimately to offer an alternative explanation of 11 September 2001 and de-legitimation of the 'war on terror'. It is important to note, of course, that while this critical comment is itself representative of a discourse it was not subject to a discourse analysis in the same way the primary data of the conflict discourse was. Rather, the purpose here was to use this material as a method of deconstruction that offered discursive critiques of the conflict discourses and their discursive strategies and tactics. Consequently, the discursive critiques offering alternative explanations of 11 September 2001, de-legitimating the 'war on terror', resisting the 'new' new world order, and opposing the war on Iraq are presented, respectively, in Chapters Four, Five, Six, and Seven to include the otherwise excluded dissident arguments of the conflicting discourses.

In summary, the research method used in constructing this critical geopolitics of the conflict(ing) discourses of 11 September 2001 and the 'war on terror' answers the research questions in the
following ways. First, the discourse analysis of the primary data will identify the discursive strategies by which the US foreign policy elite constructed its hegemonic conflict discourses. Second, the use of the critical comment material to critique these conflict discourses will identify the subservient conflicting discourses of 11 September 2001 and the ‘war on terror’. Third, in combination this dual-edged approach will illustrate how conflict(ing) discourses interact and how conflict discourses achieve hegemony over conflicting discourses. The end result of this research method will be a considerable insight into and understanding of the role of conflict(ing) discourses in the pre-conflict process of violence legitimation.

Anti-Research

This section identifies a number of issues that are excluded from this thesis and the reasons for these omissions. These exclusions, which constitute an ‘anti-research’, are divided into two groups. The first group relates to the method of this research. The reason for omitting these issues is to further delineate the research, by explicitly defining what it is not, in relation to the preceding research method. There are six omitted methodological issues: this research is not a content analysis, media analysis, popular geopolitics, a second discourse analysis, an inverse discourse analysis, or an ‘Other’ discourse analysis. The second group relates to the politics of this research. The reason for omitting certain written techniques that might otherwise be expected in a thesis on 11 September 2001 and the ‘war on terror’ is to avoid reinforcing certain hegemonic discourses that this research attempts to disrupt. There are eight omitted political issues to avoid this paradox: this research is not a justification of 11 September 2001, does not refer to ‘9/11’ or ‘September 11’, or ‘the terrorist attacks of…’, or ‘America’ or ‘Americans’, does not include a superlative epitaph, photographs or video footage, or a timeline or sequence of events, and does not use the problematic term ‘terrorist’ or objectify the War on Terror. I offer these anti-research methodological omissions and political caveats in order to avoid any ambiguity or misinterpretation over what this thesis attempts to do and what it does not.

Methodological omissions

This research is not a content analysis. Although a huge amount of text was analysed, and thus there was a temptation to count the number of key words or phrases, such a quantitative
approach was rejected. This method was omitted because the legitimation of violence present in the primary data did not lend itself to such a clinical and de-contextualised analysis. The nuances of the geopolitical reasoning(s), the details of the discursive strategies, and their interrelationship was such that themes and storylines were far more important than the precise number of times the United States foreign policy elite used a particular word or phrase. Often, the same theme would be expressed by a different official in different words, rendering a content analysis meaningless and inappropriate. The same can also be said for the various authors and sources gathered here under the critical comment umbrella. As a consequence, the discursive strategies are not presented in quantitative tables or graphs, but in written form and summarised in qualitative thematic tables.

Similarly, this research is not a media analysis. Although media websites were the source of a large proportion of the primary data (especially for interviews and press conference transcripts) and critical comment, the temptation to turn this thesis into a media analysis was also rejected. This temptation was stronger than the attraction to conduct a content analysis because, clearly, the media played a crucial role in framing and disseminating the conflict discourses and, but to a much lesser extent, in voicing the conflicting discourses of critical commentators. Thus, while the role of the media in the construction and circulation of conflict(ing) discourses is important it was resisted here because the original competing explanations of 11 September 2001 and the (de)legitimations of the ‘war on terror’ were considered paramount. This future research possibility, however, was highlighted through this research. For example, the discourse analysis did reveal that Secretary of State Colin Powell, during the one month under study, was really only asked the ‘why’ question about 11 September 2001 by the foreign (ie, non-US) media and not by the domestic US media. Such discrepancies say much, of course, about what the latter thought what was and what was not acceptable to raise in the United States in September – October 2001. I do not, however, attempt to offer any more particular insights into the complex (and controversial) role of ‘the media’ (a difficult community to define anyway) in reporting 11 September 2001 and the ‘war on terror’. A media analysis is a worthy research project in its own right that is best conducted by those better qualified than me to explore the role of the media (e.g., Zelizer and Allan 2002) and is consequently beyond the scope of this thesis.

This research is also not a popular geopolitics. Although the research method involved the use of various internet media sites to collect both primary data and critical comment, the temptation to study the circulation and refraction of conflict(ing) discourses through such sites (and other locales of popular geopolitics like cartoons, films, and television) was also rejected. Again, this
was primarily because such an exploration would be a research project in itself and would similarly be better conducted by people better equipped than me to undertake what amounts to a different type of media analysis. Moreover, this research is also not a popular geopolitics because, although the possibility occurred to me during my visit to 'Ground Zero' in New York and the Pentagon in Washington, studying how 11 September 2001 and its victims were being memorialised in the local landscape, which indirectly acted to further legitimate a violent response, was again beyond the scope of this study. The placing of photos, flags, and banners around the church adjacent to the WTC site, the construction of a public viewing platform and memorial board listing the victims’ names, and posters and banners depicting the ‘heroes’ of the New York Police Department, Port Authority, Fire Department and other emergency services did, however, alert me to the rhetorical ‘memorialisation’ and ‘hero-isation’ later identified in the primary data. This ‘popular geopolitics’ helped to personify an innocent US assaulted by a threatening, evil ‘other’ and thus also assisted in legitimating a violent response. An examination of these landscape memorials, however, is again peripheral to this study and perhaps better studied by cultural geographers (e.g., Haskins and Derose 2003).

This research does not include a second discourse analysis of the critical comment material. Although this material represents a ‘discourse’ in itself it is not subjected here to a discourse analysis in the same way as the primary data. Such an exercise would ludicrously double the scope of this thesis, and would serve little purpose, for the critical comment is used here, as noted, only to demonstrate the existence of conflicting discourses, critique the conflict discourses, and illustrate the interactions between conflict(ing) discourses. It is important to acknowledge, however, that the writings of the critical commentators – especially the likes of John Pilger, Noam Chomsky, and Robert Fisk – are themselves discursive and not beyond a critical analysis. Such an undertaking, however, is again beyond the scope of this thesis.

Similarly, this research does not include an inverse discourse analysis of a hegemonic conflicting discourse. While the hegemony of a conflicting discourse over a conflict discourse (which would constitute a defeat of the legitimation of violence and consequently violence would be prevented) is a theoretical possibility within the concept of conflict(ing) discourses, it falls outside the purposes of this thesis, which seeks to explore the pre-conflict process of legitimation in a case study where violence does eventuate, as in 11 September 2001 and two phases of the ‘war on terror’ on Afghanistan and Iraq. There is no doubt, however, that examining unsuccessful legitimations of violence would be as beneficial as the study, like this one, of the successful legitimation of violence. Again, such an undertaking is beyond the scope of this thesis.
Lastly, this research does not include an ‘Other’ discourse analysis of the legitimations of violence presented by Osama bin Laden, al-Qaeda, or the Taliban. These legitimations clearly constitute a conflict discourse but, again in order to keep the current thesis manageable, the use of their rhetoric is limited to an example of critical comment, for it simultaneously (as conflict discourses do) seeks to de-legitimate the violence of their ‘Other’, in this case the United States foreign policy elite. Thus, the conflict discourses of the 11 September 2001 perpetrators, Osama bin Laden, al-Qaeda, the Taliban, or any other ‘Other’ are conceptualised here only as a conflicting discourse. The task of deconstructing the conflict discourses of these ‘Others’ is better left to more qualified scholars, because I am not an expert on these topics, I lack the requisite language and cultural skills, and I am not in the best location to conduct such research.

**Political Caveats**

The first political caveat is that this research is not in any way a justification of the events of 11 September 2001. I make this explicit declaration because in the aftermath many attempts to discuss the possible reasons behind the attacks were condemned as condoning the perpetrators and their actions. As will be discussed in Chapter Four, this charge of ‘moral equivalency’ with the ‘terrorists’ was made against journalists who raised the ‘why’ question, citizens who advocated a non-violent response, and academics who explored possible geopolitical contexts to the attacks. This research therefore explores the geopolitical context of 11 September 2001 in order to achieve a fuller understanding of the attacks but in a way that, while raising some controversial material as far as the dominant storyline of 11 September 2001 is concerned, falls well short of justifying or condoning the attacks. Indeed, this thesis accepts that the 19 perpetrators identified by the United States government conducted the attacks and that the wider al-Qaeda network headed by Osama bin Laden orchestrated the attacks; and categorically condemns those actions.

This thesis does not use ‘9/11’, ‘Nine-Eleven’, or even ‘September 11’ because I believe this terminology has been appropriated by the hegemonic conflict discourses of the United States foreign policy elite; the very discourses this thesis seeks to destabilise. Moreover, from a Kiwi perspective this nomenclature is also problematic because it is normal practice in New Zealand to put the date before the month, so ‘9/11’ is in fact ‘11/9’ and ‘September 11’ is ‘11 September’. Indeed, this hegemonic labelling can be further destabilised because in New Zealand the events actually occurred on Wednesday *12 September*. I also include the year in
each use of ‘11 September’, because excluding the year implies that no other violence has occurred on previous or subsequent ‘11 Septembers’. The coincidence of ‘11 September’ as also the date of the US-backed coup in Chile in 1973 has received attention in critiques of US appropriations of this date (Loach 2002). Even this specificity of ‘11 September 2001’ is problematic: I am sure other acts of violence, even terrorism, occurred in other parts of the world on this date (Nair 2002). Finally, I also include the year when referring to 11 September 2001 simply because three more ‘11 Septembers’ had passed by the time this thesis was completed. For these reasons, therefore, ‘11 September 2001’ will always appear in full, except when citing source material.

The third caveat, however, is that ‘11 September 2001’ is not preceded by ‘the attacks of...’ and especially not ‘the terrorist attacks of...’, because to me such a prefix would be discursively loaded and thus needs to be avoided. I do recognise, however, that something should precede ‘11 September 2001’, for this is merely a date on the Christian calendar and is insufficient in referring to the events at the centre of this research. Hence, I could use the prefix ‘the events of’ 11 September 2001, but even this prefix is problematic as clearly other ‘events’ occurred on this day throughout the world; including, as noted, other incidents of ‘terrorism’. Using the more specific ‘events in New York, Washington, DC, and Pennsylvania on 11 September 2001’ is clearly not practical. Indeed, after drafting most of this thesis using the compromise of ‘the events of’ 11 September 2001 was also regarded as too clumsy, so it too was deleted, except where absolutely necessary. I acknowledge, however, that using just ‘11 September 2001’ assumes that readers are thinking of what I am referring to and that it does not mean something else to them; although in this thesis this is probably not an unreasonable expectation.

I definitely do not refer, however, to the War on Terror or even the war on terror, because in capitals or lower case without inverted commas denotes, to me, an objective, accepted truth that has also been appropriated by the conflict discourses of the United States foreign policy elite. Instead, I always place the ‘war on terror’ nomenclature in inverted commas, to consistently recognise that this is a discursive and therefore contested construction and not an objective geopolitical reality and to avoid reinforcing it as such. The use of inverted commas is, in a sense, a grammatical consistency with O'Tuathail’s (1996) ‘geo-politics’; an attempt to highlight the politics behind the geopolitics of the ‘war on terror’. The only exception to this rule, again, is when citing source material or, in the case of my own subheadings, capitalising ‘War’ and ‘Terror’ for formatting consistency.
Similarly, I do not include a superlative epitaph, to any greater degree than already expressed in Chapter One, to the victims of 11 September 2001. Even if such an epitaph did reflect a genuine level of grief on my part, I believe to include it here would risk reinforcing the already common privileging of the lives lost in New York, Washington, and Pennsylvania over those victims of violence in other acts of ‘terrorism’, and especially violence committed by the United States. Moreover, in the days after 11 September 2001 I felt that such epitaphs spread around the world so quickly and were replayed by the global media so often that they began to sound insincere, obligatory grievances too familiar to be genuine. Thus, I feel that to include here my own prolonged and intense epitaph would not only risk sounding insincere, a series of empty clichés forming a meaningless eulogy, but would also serve, again, to reinforce the conflict discourse of the US foreign policy elite.

Indeed, I also do not include photographs or video footage of 11 September 2001. For me, these images have also been appropriated by the conflict discourse of the US foreign policy elite and serve to privilege the lives of those killed in New York, Washington, and Pennsylvania over other victims of terrorism in other parts of the world on that day and on any other day, before or since. In addition, the visual spectacle and spectacular of the events is also by now an all too familiar story; reproducing photos and/or video here would serve no beneficial purpose and merely contradict the purpose of this thesis to disrupt conflict discourses of 11 September 2001 and the ‘war on terror’.

For precisely the same reasons the seventh caveat excludes any detailed timeline of 11 September 2001. This omission also rejects the unnecessary reproduction of the factual narrative that has opened academic articles that do not then examine 11 September 2001 in any more detail (e.g., Goodrich 2002). Again, the basic sequence of events is now so well known by the probable readership of this thesis that to recite it here would serve little purpose and risk much.

The penultimate caveat excludes the use of the nouns ‘America’ or ‘American’ to refer to the government, military, or citizens of the United States. As Eduardo Galeano (1998) argues in *The Open Veins of Latin America*, the appropriation of the terms ‘America’ and ‘American’ by the United States of America is a sign of its hegemony over the other states, cultures, and peoples of the American continent (or continents, if North and South America are counted as separate geographic entities). In a small resistance against this appropriation, and because there is no other collective noun for US citizens, when I refer to the population of the United States of America I place the ‘American people’ in inverted commas, as I did in Chapter One (p.3) on my
reaction to 11 September 2001 as a ‘non-American’ ‘American’. Writing the ‘American people’ in this way also refers to the frequent appeals by members of the US foreign policy elite, as explained in Chapters Four and Five, to the US population for political support and to defuse criticism. Again, the only exception to this rule is when quoting source material.

Finally, because the cliché of ‘one person’s terrorist is another person’s freedom fighter’ applies, in spades, to this thesis I avoid the term ‘terrorist’ by using the less-loaded ‘perpetrators’ when referring to the 19 hijackers of 11 September 2001. In more general contexts I always place ‘terrorist’ or ‘terrorism’ in inverted commas to resist this otherwise loaded term. The only exception, again, is when citing source material or when the (con)text of my argument demands otherwise. In combination, these six methodological omissions and nine political caveats constitute this anti-research of what this thesis does not attempt to do. This chapter now concludes with the thesis structure which enables what the research does do to be presented.

**Thesis Structure**

The structure of the remainder of the thesis begins with the four substantive chapters (Chapters Four, Five, Six, and Seven) and ends with the concluding chapter (Chapter Eight). As noted in the research method section, the thesis structure was determined by the broad groupings of discursive strategies within the primary data identified during the coding process; the critical comment material was then coalesced around these groupings. The first issue of contention between the conflict and conflicting discourses was the explanation of 11 September 2001, so this is the theme of Chapter Four. Consequently, the second issue of contention was the (de)legitimation of the ‘war on terror’, so this is the theme of Chapter Five. Next, the third contentious issue was the attempt by the United States foreign policy elite to establish the ‘war on terror’ as a ‘new’ new world order, so this is the theme of Chapter Six. Finally, the fourth issue of disagreement came over the (non)justification of the war on Iraq, so this is the theme of Chapter Seven. Chapter Eight considers the wider implications of this research and concludes the thesis by considering the future of conflict(ing) discourses.

The four substantive chapters make a sequential thesis argument. Chapter Four begins by demonstrating that the US foreign policy elite explained 11 September 2001 in a particular way that obscured the geopolitical context of the attacks. Chapter Five then demonstrates that this obscuration served the purpose of legitimating the ‘war on terror’, which became hegemonic
with the start of the war on Afghanistan on 7 October 2001. Chapter Six then argues that the US foreign policy elite then used this hegemony in an attempt to establish the 'war on terror' as a 'new' new world order to replace the Cold War, but that this contradictory and incoherent attempt was increasingly resisted by many states, organisations, publics, and individuals around the world and was consequently unsuccessful. This attempt and its failure is examined through a local New Zealand case study and the watershed global controversy over the second phase of the 'war on terror' on Iraq.

Each of the four substantive chapters has an internal structure that enables it to respond to the research questions formulated at the end of Chapter One. After a small section offering a conceptual framework (except for Chapter Five, as the conceptual framework of Chapter Four applies here as well), each chapter then details the discursive strategies used by the United States foreign policy elite in constructing their conflict discourses. The discussion will then present the discursive critiques presented by various critical commentators within the conflicting discourses. Each substantive chapter finishes with a third section that demonstrates how the conflict discourses interacted and, crucially, how the conflict discourses achieved (or did not achieve, in the cases of Chapters Six and Seven) hegemony over the conflicting discourses. These four substantive chapters are now overviewed here to provide a map for the coming terrain and to expand the thesis argument presented briefly above.

Chapter Four is entitled Explaining 11 September 2001: Surprise Attack or Blowback? and explores the competing explanations of 11 September 2001, as the first part of the conflict(ing) discourses, present in the primary data and critical comment. The core argument of this discussion, following O'Tuathail’s (2002) theorisation of practical geopolitical reasoning, is that the United States' foreign policy elite invoked the powerful geopolitical discourse of the US national exceptionalism myth as a "cultural storehouse of common sense" to construct its hegemonic "geopolitical storyline" of 11 September 2001 as a surprise attack. In contrast, the critical comment proposed an alternative explanation that placed the attacks in a much broader geopolitical context that constructed a subservient "geopolitical storyline" of 11 September 2001 as blowback. The discursive strategies of the former and the discursive critiques of the latter demonstrate the interaction between these 'explanatory storylines' as the first parts of the surprise attack conflict discourse and blowback conflicting discourse. The discussion concludes by explaining how the surprise attack storyline achieved hegemony over the blowback storyline.
Chapter Five is entitled (De)Legitimating the ‘War on Terror’: Surprise Attack Versus Blowback and explores the competing legitimations and de-legitimations of the ‘war on terror’, as the second parts of the surprise attack conflict discourse and blowback conflicting discourse, present in the primary data and critical comment. The core argument of this discussion is that, again following O’Tuathail’s (2002) theorisation of practical geopolitical reasoning, the US foreign policy elite extended its hegemonic explanation of 11 September 2001 to construct a “geopolitical script” to legitimate the ‘war on terror’, and in particular the war on Afghanistan, in response. The blowback conflicting discourse, however, also extends its explanation of 11 September 2001 to similarly construct a “geopolitical script” to de-legitimate the ‘war on terror’, and especially the war on Afghanistan, in response. Again, the discursive strategies of the former and the discursive critiques of the latter demonstrate the interaction between these opposing ‘(de)legitimation scripts’ as the second parts of the two conflict(ing) discourses. The discussion concludes by explaining that the start of the war on Afghanistan on 7 October 2001 signalled the hegemony of the surprise attack conflict discourse over the blowback conflicting discourse.

Chapter Six is entitled Attempting a ‘New’ New World Order: The Geopolitical (Dis)Continuities of the ‘War on Terror’ and explores how the United States foreign policy elite then extended the hegemony of the ‘war on terror’ in an attempt to establish the ‘war on terror’ as a ‘new’ (given the failure of the first Bush administration’s previous attempt in the early 1990s) new world order to replace the Cold War. This attempt invoked discursive strategies that simultaneously drew similarities between Dalby’s concept of the ‘second Cold War’ and the ‘war on terror’ and, using Kaldor’s (1999) concept of ‘new wars’, differences between the Cold War and the ‘war on terror’; hence the notion of ‘geopolitical (dis)continuities’. The use of the Cold War and the ‘new wars’ concepts, however, was full of ironies and paradoxes that undermined the strength of the argument and consequently resulted in widespread resistance that has since prevented the ‘war on terror’ becoming a ‘new’ new world order.

Chapter Seven is entitled Resisting the ‘New’ New World Order: New Zealand, 11 September 2001, and the ‘War on Terror’ and explores one local example of this global resistance to the ‘new’ new world order through a New Zealand case study. The first section establishes New Zealand’s unique pre-existing geopolitical context, including its previous nuclear-free resistance to the ‘second Cold War’ during the 1980s, within which the impacts of 11 September 2001 and the ‘war on terror’ on its domestic politics and foreign policy must be understood. Like many other states, New Zealand experienced a transition from being a supporter of (and participator in) the war on Afghanistan to being an opponent of the war on Iraq. This local – global nexus leads
into the second example of the conflict(ing) discourses (de)legitimating the war on Iraq, which became so controversial that not only did it assist in the failure of the ‘war on terror’ to become a ‘new’ new world order but forces a more nuanced understanding of the hegemony of conflict discourses and the subservience of conflicting discourses as proposed in Chapter One; the point which concludes this discussion.

Chapter Eight is entitled *Conclusions: Reading Between the Li(n)es of Conflict(ing) Discourses* and explores the empirical, methodological, and theoretical implications of this research. The empirical implications summarise the four substantive chapters and how they responded to the three research questions. The methodological implications begin with the reflexive discussion deferred from Chapter Two before exploring the advantages and limitations of the research method employed. The theoretical implications focus on the original contributions of this research to practical geopolitics, critical geopolitics, and conflict research. The concepts of conflict discourses, conflicting discourses and conflict(ing) discourses are then summarised with post-research updates. The strengths and weaknesses of conflict(ing) discourses are examined, before the chapter (and this thesis) concludes with suggestions for future research and, in particular, proposing that understanding the pre-conflict violence legitimation process may be the starting point of a critical geopolitics contribution not just to conflict research but perhaps, by illuminating means of countering that process, to conflict management and prevention.
Chapter Four

Explaining 11 September 2001:
Surprise Attack or Blowback?

“On September the 11\textsuperscript{th}, enemies of freedom committed an act of war against our country. Americans have known wars, but for the past 136 years they have been wars on foreign soil, except for one Sunday in 1941. Americans have known the casualties of war, but not at the centre of a great city on a peaceful morning. Americans have known surprise attacks, but never before on thousands of civilians. All of this was brought upon us in a single day, and night fell on a different world, a world where freedom itself is under attack”.

George Bush, Thursday 20 September (2001)

“(In the 2000 edition of Blowback) I argued that many aspects of what the American government had done abroad virtually invited retaliatory attacks from nations and peoples who had been victimised. I did not predict the events of September 11, 2001…but I did clearly state that acts of this sort were coming and should be anticipated”.

Chalmers Johnson in Blowback (2002:vii)
Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the two conflict(ing) discourses that initially competed to explain the events of 11 September 2001. The first discourse, which follows the opening quote by President George Bush, is the surprise attack conflict discourse advocated by the United States foreign policy elite. The surprise attack discourse is conceptualised as a conflict discourse because it de-legitimated the violence of the ‘Other’ and won the contest to become the hegemonic explanation of 11 September 2001. The second discourse, which follows the opening quote by academic Chalmers Johnson, is the blowback conflicting discourse typical of the critical comment material. The blowback discourse is conceptualised as a conflicting discourse because it sought a more critical understanding of the violence of the ‘Other’ and lost the contest, such as it was in the US, and became the subservient explanation of 11 September 2001. The surprise attack and blowback discourses are not the only two possible perspectives. Jacques Derrida, for example, has recently proposed the analogy of the terrorism of 11 September 2001 as an “autoimmune disease” that is part of and attacks the system that creates and sustains it (Borradori 2003). For the purposes of demonstrating the concept of conflict(ing) discourses and the contest between them, however, surprise attack and blowback are the most appropriate approaches. The discussion is divided into three sections.

First, the United States national exceptionalism myth and Johnson’s concept of blowback are introduced in detail because they underlie, respectively, the two discourses examined in this and the next chapter. Second, the specific discursive strategies used by the US foreign policy elite in constructing the surprise attack explanation of 11 September 2001 are examined. The blowback discursive critiques of these strategies, which together present an alternative explanation of 11 September 2001, are also presented. Following O’Tuathail’s (2002) paper on theorising practical geopolitical reasoning, these competing explanations can be conceptualised as opposing geopolitical storylines of 11 September 2001. Finally, the last section explains how the surprise attack explanation, or storyline, of 11 September 2001 achieved hegemony over the blowback explanation, or storyline. This explanatory hegemony provided the central narrative for the surprise attack legitimation script of the ‘war on terror’ that, as the second part of this conflict discourse, is subsequently explored (along with the blowback de-legitimation script as the second part of the blowback conflicting discourse) in Chapter Five.
Two Conflict(ing) Discourses

Both parts of the surprise attack conflict discourse draw extensively on the United States national exceptionalism myth, which constructs and perpetuates the notion that the US is an ‘exceptional’ state, nation, and society unlike any other on earth. The myth has its origins in the discovery of the ‘New World’, was first codified in the writings of French aristocrat Alexis de Tocqueville in the mid-nineteenth century, and has found recent critical geopolitical consideration in O'Tuathail and Agnew (1992) and O'Tuathail (1998a). The myth is conceptualised here as a geopolitical discourse because it underlies US perceptions of itself and the outside world, which in turn influence its relations with other states and thus its role in world politics. The geopolitical influence of exceptionalism is evident, as will be demonstrated in the following section of this chapter, in the discursive strategies used by the United States foreign policy elite to explain 11 September 2001 and, as will be argued in the next chapter, to legitimate the ‘war on terror’. The national exceptionalism myth, therefore, is crucial to the construction of both storyline and script parts of the surprise attack conflict discourse.

Chalmers Johnson (2000 and 2002) best articulates the blowback conflicting discourse in *Blowback: The Costs and Consequences of American Empire*. By emphasising the unintended consequences of US foreign policy that rebound on itself, blowback presents a somewhat different view of the United States and its perceptions of and relations with the rest of the world. The blowback concept is therefore conceptualised as an alternative geopolitical discourse to the US national exceptionalism myth, as evident in many of the discursive critiques deployed by various critical commentators presenting a dissident explanation of 11 September 2001 and so is used here to group these numerous perspectives together. By enabling 11 September 2001 to be understood as something other than a surprise attack the blowback concept illustrates how this hegemonic explanation was contested. Similarly, and again as will be argued in the next chapter, the concept of blowback is also central to the de-legitimation of the ‘war on terror’. Johnson’s concept of blowback, therefore, is crucial to the construction of both parts of the blowback conflicting discourse. In combination, the US national exceptionalism myth and the concept of blowback represent, respectively, the conceptual cores of these two conflict(ing) discourses.
The United States national exceptionalism myth

A number of explanatory points need to be made dealing with the four parts of the above subtitle, before commencing, this necessarily brief discussion of an otherwise complex topic. In keeping with the political caveat presented in Chapter Three, I refer here to the United States, rather than the American, national exceptionalism myth, in order to emphasise its state-specific and not continental character. Because the origins of the myth pre-date the formal establishment of the United States, when it was America the continent that was constructed as exceptional, however, the use of the terms 'America/n/s' here is unavoidable. The historical development of this myth is placed in its contemporary context by a focus on the US (not American) national exceptionalism myth. Second, this discussion is not concerned with, but certainly acknowledges, the problematic question of the validity (or otherwise) of a United States nation (or detailing 'American' / US history). This debate reflects the growing awareness of the difference between states and nations, hitherto assumed to be synonymous because of the idealised existence of nation-states, which has spawned a multidisciplinary literature on the meaning of nation and nationalism (e.g., Connor 1978; Anderson 1990; Bhabha 1990). Generally, the US is considered to be such a ‘melting pot’ of different indigenous and immigrant ethnicities, cultures, and religions that it is not regarded as a single unified ‘nation’ (Gerstle 2001). What is important here, however, is that the myth of United States exceptionalism is the paramount attempt at a nationalist unifying discourse; hence ‘national’ appears in the subtitle and the concept in text.

Third, the meaning of the word ‘exceptionalism’ is the focus of the following discussion, so the final preamble point concerns the meaning of the word ‘myth’. The word ‘myth’ is used here in both senses: national exceptionalism as a powerful narrative of the US nation and ‘American’ nationalism and because, as a common feature of nationalist discourses, that narrative is a mixture of both fact and fiction. Moreover, ‘myth’ also implies the ongoing invocation of national exceptionalism to maintain its continued credibility and relevance to contemporary life. Indeed, this current character rendered the myth central to the United States foreign policy elite’s surprise attack explanation of 11 September 2001. The following discussion, therefore, presents the broad contours of the US national exceptionalism myth as the conceptual core of its surprise attack conflict discourse.

The idea of United States ‘exceptionalism’ began with the discovery of the American continent, by Christopher Columbus in 1492, when it was immediately pronounced as the ‘New World’. This term implied that not only was ‘America’ geographically separate from the ‘Old World’ of
Eurasia, but that it was also (potentially) socially superior to the oppressive, class-structured, and poverty-ridden European societies (Noble 2002). Indeed, from its discovery ‘America’ was perceived as a divine land, a space ordained by God as a vast, rich, and pristine continent that could provide enough land and largesse to all those who ventured to it. Thus, the colonisation of the ‘New World’, as a place where new settlers could escape the misery of Europe, own their own land, live in freedom from oppression, and pursue what became known as the ‘American dream’, soon began. Colonisation started on the east coast and spread westward as more and more new space was opened-up by the territorial expansion of ‘American civilisation’ through the geographic spread of ‘American values’ (Wrobel 1993). In so doing, the challenges of the unexplored environment and the resistance of the indigenous American Indians were both overcome. The concept of ‘exceptionalism’, therefore, has existed since the discovery and colonisation of ‘America’ and developed throughout the declaration (and wars) of independence and thereafter became associated with the United States of America as a separate state.

The myth was codified by de Tocqueville in his two volume account (1835 and 1840), entitled *Democracy in America*, of his 1831 travels throughout the United States. As a recent discussion (Lipset 1996:18) emphasises, de Tocqueville’s labelling of the US as ‘exceptional’ inferred that it is “qualitatively different from all other countries”, and as such he is “the initiator of the writings on American exceptionalism”. De Tocqueville’s original meaning of ‘exceptionalism’, Lipset (1996:17) notes, implies a comparison with other countries: indeed, de Tocqueville travelled to the US in order to establish why “the American revolution had produced a stable democratic republic” while “efforts at establishing democracy in his native country, starting with the French Revolution, had failed”. *Democracy in America*, however, included no direct comparison between America and France, although in his notes to the book de Tocqueville admits that he “never wrote a word about America without thinking about France” (Lipset 1996:18). The implicit comparison in the idea of the United States as ‘exceptional’ is important because critics of the notion, according to Lipset (1996), often but mistakenly assume that by ‘exceptional’ what is meant is that the United States government, society, culture, and people are believed, by the ‘American people’, to be ‘better’ than all others.

While such a privileging may not have been intended by de Tocqueville, in its contemporary meaning the myth does elevates things American over things non-American. The assertion that the US is *quantitatively better* than others, rather than simply “qualitatively different”, has been made possible because of the universalising of US ‘values’ and ‘civilisation’: the contention that US values stand as an exemplar to the rest of the world, a pinnacle to which all other states,
nations, and societies should aspire. This ranking is, despite Lipset’s defence, implicit in the very notion of US exceptionalism and is explicit through this universalising of American values (O'Tuathail 1998a). Indeed, Lipset (1996:18) undermines his own defence when he admits that exceptionalism “is a double-edged concept” for the US is “the worst as well as the best”. Evidence of the myth’s current meaning as a self-fulfilling prophecy that elevates US values and civilisation above all others, will become clear in the following discussion and, in particular, through the exploration of the surprise attack conflict discourse in this and the next chapter.

Within this universalised myth the current literature (e.g., Gerstle 2001) commonly refers to an ‘American creed’ built on six fundamental principles: liberty, egalitarianism, laissez faire, individualism, populism, and religion. The principle of liberty distinguishes the United States from the ‘Old World’ of Europe and, enshrined as it was in the Declaration of Independence, provided the foundation stones of the United States: liberty from government restrictions on individual freedoms and the entrenchment of democracy. The US thus becomes the mythological home of freedom and democracy. The ‘American creed’ is consequently egalitarian, because this liberty provides all citizens with equal opportunity to pursue their own interests and fulfil their own version of the ‘American dream’; even though cultural and legal prejudices against minorities (native Americans, African-Americans, Hispanics, and East European immigrants) have characterised American history and indicate the second meaning of myth as a mixture of fact and fiction (Gerstle 2001). The pursuit of individual ambitions is most importantly undertaken in the economic realm, which is characterised by a laissez faire national economy based on free market capitalism and thus unrestricted freedoms to private interests and entrepreneurship. More generally, the ‘American creed’ also guarantees individualism, through the legal protection of the rights of citizenship: the freedom of speech, the freedom of assembly, and the right to bear arms, amongst others (Lipset 1996). Conversely, while the United States is an individualistic society populism is also important because the ‘American people’ are joined together by the common adherence to and exaltation of this creed, hence the national exceptionalism myth also articulates the interests and attitudes of the US ‘nation’ and ‘nationalism’. Finally, the strength of Christianity indicates the importance of religion in the ‘American creed’, where even a secular belief in the divine ordination of the United States and the ‘American people’ is commonplace, and even more overt in religious congregations and communities. In combination, these six principles of the ‘American creed’ is what originally determined, in contrast to the birthright citizenship of the ‘Old World’ of Europe and elsewhere, membership in the United States ‘nation’. This definition persists today, as the contemporary meaning of being an ‘American’, whether a US citizen or a new immigrant, is adherence to this
creed and the belief in national exceptionalism (Lipset 1996). Like all nationalist discourses, therefore, the ‘American creed’ is simultaneously inclusive and exclusive: it not only determines who is included but also who is excluded.

This division is reflected in the entire myth itself, which spatialises American/s self-perceptions of itself/themselves vis-à-vis non-America/ns: it is therefore a geopolitical discourse that contrasts the inside with the outside, the Self with the Other. This distinction is often made in religious terms, between the divine American continent ordained by God as home to a pure democratic civilisation juxtaposed against a chaotic, corrupt, and uncivilised outside world, which at times even descends into barbarism and evil. This assertion of good and evil reflects the strong Christian tradition within US society. Moreover, external ‘evil’ is usually personified in order to resonate with Christian beliefs in the Devil so that it can be more readily understood: hence Adolf Hitler, Joseph Stalin, Slobodan Milosevic, and now Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden, have all served useful discursive purposes by embodying the chaos and evil of the outside world and providing a powerful demonic image of ‘America’s’ threatening ‘Other’. Such representations are also more readily understood than ‘real’ answers as to why such chaos and evil exists, especially in a society limited in its information from and knowledge about the outside world (Smith 2001; McChesney 2002).

This spatialisation is crucial to United States foreign policy because it offers a clear understanding of world politics which, in turn, influences US understandings about the outside world and how it should, or must, interact with that world. Throughout ‘American’ history this spatialisation of the world and world politics has influenced the domestic debate about US foreign policy. In particular, the distinction between a good, righteous ‘Self’ and an evil, despicable ‘Other’ has been manifest in the debate over whether the United States should pursue an isolationist or an internationalist foreign policy. Advocates of isolationalism argue that the United States should avoid entanglement in the messy, corrupt, and unfathomable politics of other, lesser, states. This line of argument was laid down in the Monroe Doctrine of 1830, which committed US foreign policy to a focus on the American continent and subsequently kept the US out of World War One until 1917, led Washington to reject the post-war League of Nations, and prevented involvement in World War Two until after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour. Staying out of such imbroglios, so the isolationist argument went, would not only preserve US exceptionalism but also show the world that the ‘American creed’ was a universal set of principles for the good of all humanity, a universal truth and utopia to aspire to; but not one the US could help (or force) other states, who have to achieve this for themselves. By remaining
isolated, in other words, the purity and exemplary character of the US would continue to shine as a beacon for others around the world.

In contrast, advocates of internationalism argued that the United States had a responsibility to become involved in world politics and to show the way, by goodwill or force, to other states. Although the US was 'above and beyond' the normal chaos of world politics, it was not, so the internationalists argued, immune from the consequences of events beyond its shores. Isolation was not, therefore, a viable option and instead the US should use its foreign policy in a self (but believed to be divinely) appointed 'civilising mission' to bring the core principles of democracy, freedom, and capitalism to the rest of the world. Such arguments won through at specific crises, for example at the end of 1917 and after Pearl Harbour, and have dominated the domestic debate about US foreign policy ever since. Indeed, for more than half a century the main feature of this debate has not been between isolationism and internationalism, but within internationalism over the extent to which the US should become involved in various issues and events in world politics. Since the end of World War Two the US involvement has been predicated on the spatialisation of world politics inherent in the national exceptionalism myth and the idea of a civilising mission to defend, provide and spread freedom, democracy, and capitalism around the world. Exceptions came when direct United States intervention was deemed to not be in the US self-interest or were too fraught with peril; for example in Cuba, Afghanistan, and Rwanda.

The first example of this new internationalism came immediately following World War Two when, in contrast to the immediate American withdrawal from world politics after its decisive intervention in World War One, the US remained an active, and dominant, player. This status was a consequence of its emergence as a global economic, military, and political power vis-à-vis a devastated Europe. The emergence of the Cold War is not of direct concern here; rather, the important point is the continued American spatialisation of world politics: a good, righteous, democratic, capitalist free-world, led and epitomised by 'America', against an evil, despicable, communist, oppressed world, led and epitomised by the Soviet Union (Fousek 2000). The ensuing half-century long Cold War between East and West can thus be read as a US struggle to spread the 'American creed', now expressed in the universal concepts of democracy and capitalism, into those spaces dominated by communism and socialism and the interstices of this binary spatialisation. The 'victory' in World War Two and the 'fighting' of the Cold War epitomised the US national exceptionalism myth and transformed its meaning of 'America' as 'qualitatively different' from others to stressing 'America' as 'qualitatively better' than others and thus a model for others to emulate (Fousek 2000).
This universalism was clearly evident at the end of the Cold War, when US representations held that Washington, and in particular Presidents Ronald Reagan and George Bush senior, had ‘won’ the Cold War, which proved the inherent and undeniable exceptionalism of ‘America’. At the end of the Cold War Francis Fukuyama (1989 and 1993) proclaimed the US ‘victory’ signalled the ‘End of History’ because the millennia-long human pursuit of the best forms of political and economic organisation was now complete. The world, Fukuyama consequently argued, was now divided into two new groups of states: those ‘post-historical’ states that were already democratic and capitalist and those states still struggling in the ‘historical’ to achieve this utopia. This conceptualisation of the end of the Cold War and prediction of the post-Cold War world provided the basis for the first US attempt to establish a ‘new world order’ beginning with the first Gulf War in 1991. This ‘new world order’, as President George Bush (1991) proclaimed, would be in the American image: “a new era – freer from the threat of terror, stronger in the pursuit of justice, and more secure in the quest for peace, an era in which the nations of the world, East and West, North and South, can prosper and live in harmony”. Moreover, Fukuyama’s (1989) “triumph of liberalism” corollary would spread democracy and capitalism around the world in an accelerated process, now that the global Cold War confrontation was over, that increasingly became known as ‘globalisation’ during the 1990s. Such triumphalist accounts as Fukuyama’s, and their incorporation into post-Cold War Bush administration foreign policy, clearly undermine Lipset’s (1996) earlier defence that critics often misunderstand the US national exceptionalism myth as being about a ‘qualitative difference’ and not that the US is ‘qualitatively better’ than others.

This attempt at a ‘new world order’ unraveled because of international crises in the former Yugoslavia, Somalia, and Rwanda, but again this is not of concern here. The point, however, is that the national exceptionalism myth continued to underlie US foreign policy through the privileging of US democracy and capitalism as a universal good for all humanity; as the early settlers had done when colonising the east coast, the interior, and then the west coast of the American continent. This persistence of the myth in US foreign policy was evident, for example, in the 1999 NATO war against Serbia over Kosovo, and was, as shall become clear in the remainder of this chapter, the guiding pre-existing geopolitical discourse that enabled the US foreign policy elite to explain the events of 11 September 2001 as a surprise attack. Indeed, as O’Tuathail and Agnew (1992:195-6; emphasis added) explain, the power of this elite, embodied in the President, to explain the otherwise unexplainable is, in part, a result of the ability (and necessity) to invoke the national exceptionalism myth:
“One of the great powers of the Presidency, invested by the sanctity, history and rituals associated with the institution – the fact that the media take their primary discursive cues from the White House – is the power to describe, represent, interpret and appropriate. It is a formidable power, but not an absolute power, for the art of description and appropriation must have resonances with the Congress, the established media, and the American public. The generation of such resonances often requires the repetition and re-cycling of certain themes and images even though the socio-historical context of their use may have changed dramatically. One has the attempted production of continuity by the incorporation of ‘strategic terms’, ‘key metaphors’ and ‘key symbols’ into geopolitical reasoning. Behind all of these is the assumption of a power of appropriateness in the use of certain relatively fixed terms and phrases”.

In conducting these emphasised tasks, through the various discursive strategies explained in the next section, the United States foreign policy elite drew heavily on the US national exceptionalism myth. This continuity enabled a credible explanation of 11 September 2001 for the ‘American people’ by framing the attacks in familiar (and therefore powerful) terms of a good, civilised, internal ‘Self’ assaulted by an evil, uncivilised, external ‘Other’; of narrating the unknown in terms of the known. Similarly, and as noted above and will be detailed in Chapter Five, this national exceptionalism myth was also used by the US foreign policy elite to write its legitimisation script of the ‘war on terror’. Before then, however, the second half of this first section considers Johnson’s concept of ‘blowback’, the corresponding conceptual core of the alternative explanation, or storyline, of 11 September 2001.

**Johnson’s concept of ‘blowback’**

The various discursive critiques of the surprise attack explanation of 11 September 2001 are brought together here by the concept of blowback. Reporter James Risen (quoted in Eland 1998:3) explains the origins of the term:

“When the Central Intelligence Agency helped overthrow Mossadegh as Iran’s prime minister in 1953...the CIA was already figuring that its first effort to topple a foreign government would not be its last. The CIA, then
just six years old and deeply committed to winning the Cold War, viewed its covert action in Iran as a blueprint for coup plots elsewhere around the world, and so commissioned a secret history to detail for future generations of CIA operatives how it had been done. The history, which remains classified, was recently obtained by the *New York Times*… Amid the sometimes curious argot of the spy world – ‘safebases’ and ‘assets’ and the like – the CIA warns of the possibility of ‘blowback’… shorthand for the unintended consequences of covert operations”.

In 2000 Chalmers Johnson, who is not the only user of the term but certainly the most explicit, elaborated the concept in his book *Blowback*. Here, and in the 2002 reprint, Johnson (2002:xii) repeats this original meaning of blowback as the “unintended and unexpected negative consequences of covert special operations” conducted by the United States around the world during and after the Cold War. Blowback has expanded along two dimensions over the intervening half-century and “is not restricted just to CIA provocations” (Johnson 2002:xvi). Blowback now also refers to the unanticipated, detrimental side-effects of overt US foreign policies that make it “the world’s most prominent target for blowback, being the world’s lone imperial power” (Johnson 2002:12). Second, blowback is not limited to the US but is a phenomena also experienced by other states. Johnson (2002:11-12), for example, argues that “Israel’s greatest single political problem is the daily threat of blowback from the Palestinian people and their Islamic allies because of Israeli policies of displacing Palestinians from their lands and repressing those that remain under their jurisdiction”. Johnson (2002:xvi) summarises the blowback concept as “simply another way of saying that a nation reaps what it sows”.

The “unintended and unexpected negative consequences” of blowback are manifest in resistance to the exercise of United States’ power. This defiance includes passive protest but the concept tends to emphasise its more dramatic manifestations in acts of violent retaliation. Blowback is thus conducted by individuals, organisations, and states aggrieved by US foreign policies. Blowback is not, however, a linear process but rather a messier mosaic, entangled in numerous feedback loops. In simple terms, blowback is, as Johnson (2002:17) explains, the rebounding of US policies back from those places and peoples disaffected by them: “As a concept, blowback is obviously most easily grasped in its straightforward manifestations. The unintended consequences of American policies and acts in country X are a bomb at an American embassy in country Y or a dead American in country Z”. Moreover, not all expressions of US power or
interventions produce blowback, but explaining why is not the purpose of this discussion; instead it is to detail the concept and raise the possibility of blowback.

Implicit in this definition is the spatial variability of blowback, which can occur in places other than that affected by the original United States policy. Similarly, blowback is also temporally unconstrained as the first incident may occur, in varying frequencies and intensities, long after the problematic US policy. Once started, however, blowback may continue for many years. This spatial and temporal disjuncture gives blowback the appearance, especially from a US perspective, of random, isolated, and unprovoked acts of 'anti-American' violence unrelated to previous actions. In the US, therefore, Johnson (2002:8) claims that "what the daily press report as the malign acts of 'terrorists' or 'drug lords' or 'rogue states' or 'illegal arms merchants' often turn out to be blowback from earlier American operations". As an example, Johnson cites the December 1988 bombing of Pan Am flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland, which was portrayed as an unprovoked 'terrorist' attack. Johnson, however, argues that this incident was blowback provoked by the 1986 US air-strike, launched as punishment for suspected Libyan sponsorship of terrorist groups in the Middle East, on Tripoli. This explanation was later substantiated by Libya's admission of responsibility.

Such alternative explanations have little popular resonance because of the secrecy of the United States operations that provoke these acts of blowback. Indeed, Johnson (2002:xi) argues that blowback occurs from covert operations "that have been kept secret from the American people and, in most cases, from their elected representatives". Therefore, blowback is often a reaction "to ill-conceived, short-term, invariably illegal US clandestine operations aimed at overthrowing foreign governments or helping launch state terrorist operations against target populations. The American people may not know what has been done in their name, but those on the receiving end surely do" (Johnson 2002:xi). Highlighting this last point, Johnson (2000:17) explains that even 'overt' foreign policies are often hidden from US civilians, meaning that "although people usually know what they have sown, our national experience of blowback is seldom imagined in such terms because so much of what the managers of the American empire have sown has been kept secret". Again, this secrecy reinforces the appearance that incidents of blowback are inexplicable 'anti-American' 'terrorist' attacks on the United States. As Johnson (2000:17) claims, "any number of Americans have been killed in that fashion, from Catholic nuns in El Salvador to tourists in Uganda, who just happened to wander into hidden imperial scenarios about which they knew nothing".
This point raises the complexity of the victims of United States foreign policy and blowback. Initially, these victims include those killed, wounded, or otherwise affected by the original US policy or intervention; for example the Cambodian victims of secret US bombings during the latter stages of the Vietnam war. Next, the victims of blowback include the unintended and unexpected victims of the initial action; Johnson (2000) points here to the one-and-a-half to two million deaths between 1975 and 1979 resulting from the rise of Pol Pot’s Khmer Rouge in the aftermath of the bombing of Cambodia. Victims of repressive regimes and dictators installed and/or supported by the US are also included; such as Chilean victims of the Pinochet regime from 1973 to 1990. These regimes and dictators produce more blowback, and therefore more victims, by eventually inspiring revolutions from the people who they have oppressed: like the victims of the 1979 Sandinista revolution in Nicaragua, and not to mention those killed during the following Contra war. Blowback then completes its circle when US military personnel, diplomats, and civilians are killed in attacks (until 11 September 2001 in places other than the United States) against the US itself for any of these stages; as the Lockerbie example illustrates.

Blowback can continue, however, because such incidents of ‘terrorism’ often provoke retaliatory attacks by the United States. To illustrate, Johnson (2002) cites an example of specific interest to this thesis. Beginning with the continued stationing of US military forces in Saudi Arabia after the first Gulf War, a foreign (Christian) presence many Muslims within the home of Islam’s holiest shrines view “as a humiliation to their country and an affront to their religion” (Johnson 2002:xv), he explains the twin bombing of the US embassies in Nairobi, Kenya and Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania on 7 August 1998 as blowback. These attacks killed 12 US citizens, more than 200 locals, and injured over 4,000 people and were suspected to be the work of the al-Qaeda network based in Sudan and Afghanistan. The US responded by launching air-strikes against the al-Shifa pharmaceutical factory, suspected of developing chemical weapons, in Khartoum and on an al-Qaeda training camp in Afghanistan. The Khartoum factory was later proved clean of chemical weapons and actually produced vital drugs for Sudan’s impoverished population; an unknown number of whom perished, because the US blocked a United Nations investigation (Chomsky 2001). This tit-for-tat exchange continued with an al-Qaeda attack on the USS Cole warship in the port of Aden, Yemen in October 2000 which killed 17 US navy personnel. In other words, blowback refers to an ongoing and often escalating spiral of violence and counter-violence with victims on both sides.

The problem of blowback is also manifest in the foreign policy challenges presented by individuals, organisations, or states that were previously United States allies but have turned
against their former patron. This switching is especially common amongst former Cold War clients who, having served their geopolitical purpose for Washington, now resist US hegemony after the defeat of communism. Here, there is no more salient example than Osama bin Laden; a US client while helping to lead the Islamic mujaheddin against the occupying Soviet Red Army in Afghanistan during the 1980s, but Washington’s persona non grata for the last decade and Devil incarnate since 11 September 2001. Blowback, therefore, is in some ways personified in former clients like bin Laden, Manuel Noriega and Saddam Hussein. Now, blowback is embodied in adversaries such as Sheikh Muqtada al-Sadr and Abu Massad al-Zarqawi in Iraq.

This contemporary conceptualisation of blowback is therefore much broader than its CIA origins in the Iran coup report of half-a-century ago. At the beginning of the millennium Johnson (2000:229) uses this substantiated concept of blowback to predict the character of international relations in the coming 100 years: “World politics in the twenty-first century will in all likelihood be driven primarily by blowback from the second half of the twentieth century – that is, from the unintended consequences of the Cold War and the crucial American decision to maintain a Cold War posture in a post-Cold War world”. Johnson (2000:33) also narrows this general prediction to a prophecy of 11 September 2001:

“Terrorism by definition strikes at the innocent in order to draw attention to the sins of the invulnerable. The innocent of the twenty-first century are going to harvest unexpected blowback disasters from the imperialist escapades of recent decades. Although most Americans may be largely ignorant of what was, and still is, being done in their names, all are likely to pay a steep price – individually and collectively – for their nation’s continued efforts to dominate the global scene”.

Johnson (2000:223) also anticipated that the US homeland was not safe: “given its wealth and power, the United States will be a prime recipient in the foreseeable future of all the more expectable forms of blowback, particularly terrorist attacks against Americans in and out of the armed forces anywhere on earth, including within the United States”.

Two years later, when these predictions had materialised, Blowback was reprinted with a special post-11 September 2001 preface. In this short commentary, Johnson (2002:vii-viii) notes that the original edition “was largely ignored in the United States. Few of the mainstream book review sections took any notice of it, and a former member of the first President Bush’s national security
staff, Philip Zelikow, wrote in the Council on Foreign Relations house organ that *Blowback* ‘reads like a comic book’). This “domestic lack of interest” contrasted with the international response as the book was translated into German, Italian, and Japanese and attracted European media attention. According to Johnson (2002:viii), however, the domestic response to *Blowback* “changed dramatically after September 11, 2001. The book was reprinted seven times in less than two months and became something of an underground bestseller among Americans suddenly sensitised too, or at least desperate to know about, some of the realities of the world they lived in”. This interest seemed to justify Johnson’s (2002:vii) pre-11 September 2001 intention of the first edition, which was “to warn my fellow Americans about the nature and conduct of US foreign policy over the previous half-century, focusing on the decade after the demise of the Soviet Union”. Johnson’s warning was “that many aspects of what the American government had done abroad virtually invited retaliatory attack from nations and peoples who had been victimised”. Finally, Johnson concluded: “I did not predict the events of September 11, 2001…but I did clearly state that acts of this sort were coming and should be anticipated”.

From this conceptualisation of blowback 11 September 2001 can be viewed as an example thereof. First, accepting that al-Qaeda was responsible for the attack, and remembering the history of violence between it and the United States, 11 September 2001 can be explained in terms of this escalating spiral of violence and counter-violence; indeed, it is within this context that many blowback critiques of the surprise attack explanation are offered. Second, given that examples of blowback are often understood as isolated, unprovoked, ‘anti-American’ ‘terrorist’ attacks, the gravity of 11 September 2001 demands it be examined in terms of possible US policies, especially with regard to the Middle East, that may explain the context of the attack. Third, blowback may help locate the perpetrators, the al-Qaeda network, and bin Laden in the wider geopolitical context of the *mujaheddin* war against the Soviet Union and therefore as former clients that have turned against their former patron. Finally, although blowback is not solely directed at the US, it is the most likely target because of the exercise of global US power.

From this perspective 11 September 2001 can therefore be explained as an *extreme* example of blowback. Media commentator Geov Parrish (2001), for example, immediately wrote: “It’s hard to say why this happened, but there has been so much bloodshed around the world that the US has been associated with...that it’s impossible to avoid the conclusion that the same feelings we have this week – of fear, vulnerability, rage – are the feelings that motivated this cowardly attack in the first place”. Similarly, Neil Smith (2002:11) wrote shortly afterwards, in noting the 1998 US air-strikes against Sudan and Afghanistan, that: “If that bombing is to be justified in the name
of revenge for the monstrous bombing of the Kenyan and Tanzanian embassies, then the question needs to be asked: To what monstrosities were the World Trade Centre attackers responding?". Such blowback explanations are at odds with the surprise attack storyline based on national exceptionalism. Hence, the question for the next section is to explain how the United States foreign policy elite constructed the surprise attack explanation of 11 September 2001 and how this storyline was contested by the alternative blowback explanation. As the answer is dependent on discourse, the discursive strategies and the discursive critiques of these two conflict(ing) discourses are now examined.

**Surprise Attack or Blowback?**

This section examines the specific discursive strategies the United States foreign policy elite used to construct its surprise attack explanation of 11 September 2001 and the discursive critiques of those strategies presented by the various critical commentators that constituted the alternative blowback explanation. Following O'Tuathail's (2002) dimensions of geopolitical storylines, the discursive strategies are divided into three aspects addressing the what, who, and why of 11 September 2001 (Figure 4.1), and the discursive critiques are presented simultaneously. The what discussion considers the targets of the attack and who it was directed against. The who discussion considers the character of the 19 perpetrators. The why discussion considers the reasons for the attacks. Although some ‘conspiracy theories’ contest the how and when of 11 September 2001, these ‘facts’ are beyond the purpose of this thesis because they are not dependent on discourse for explanation; these facts ‘speak-for-themselves’ and are not contested (or, as noted in Chapter Three, even repeated) here. As this discussion will argue, however, there is considerable divergence between the surprise attack and blowback explanations over the what, who, and why of 11 September 2001.

The three subheadings in this section are all borrowed from elsewhere. The first subheading uses one example of the different uses of the expletive ‘fuck’ included on a satirical list I remember reading as a teenager. The list, similar to the one at [www.lotsofjokes.com/%2FcatI43.htm](http://www.lotsofjokes.com/%2FcatI43.htm) (accessed 3 April 2005), included an illustrative quote attributed to a famous historical character. The example used here, of the expletive as an expression of astonishment and disbelief, was the quote attributed to the ‘mayor of Hiroshima’. I do not use *What the fuck was that?!*, however, to suggest that 11 September 2001 is comparable to Hiroshima (or Nagasaki). Rather, the obscene subheading is used because as an exclamation it encapsulates the shock and incredulity
of the events in New York and Washington and as a question it enables the opposing surprise attack and blowback explanations of the what of 11 September 2001 to be explored.

The second and third subheadings come from the bifurcation of the subtitle of an early 2002 public speaking tour undertaken by Irish journalist and Middle East specialist Robert Fisk in the United States. Fisk's 'September 11: Ask who did it, but for heaven's sake don't ask why' talks recognised the acceptability of discussing the 'who' but the unacceptability of discussing the 'why' in the US following the attacks. Although there is broad agreement between the two explanations on the who of 11 September 2001, the subject of why is much more controversial. Fisk's speaking tour sought to discuss with US citizens the otherwise unpalatable topic of what he believed to be the probable US foreign policy context to the attacks. Again, these two subheadings enable the opposing surprise attack and blowback explanations of the who and the why of 11 September 2001 to be explored.

'What the fuck was that?!

The first task in constructing the surprise attack storyline of 11 September 2001 was to explain what the event actually was. That it was an 'attack' was obvious once the second plane hit the World Trade Centre and an accidental first crash had been ruled out. Explaining precisely what, and who, was being attacked was more complicated, however, and involved two discursive strategies. The first discursive strategy, which included three tactics, explained 11 September 2001 as an 'act of war'. The second discursive strategy, which also included three tactics, explained 11 September as a 'surprise attack'. This strategy, following President George Bush's (2001I) phrase in the opening chapter quote, is used to name this geopolitical storyline. Indeed, this phrase names the whole conflict discourse because, as will be argued at the end of this chapter, this surprise attack explanation was the first step in legitimating the 'war on terror'. Both these discursive strategies are simultaneously contested here by discursive critiques that present the alternative blowback explanation of the what of 11 September 2001.
Figure 4.1a: The surprise attack discursive strategies of the ‘what’ of 11 September 2001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DISCURSIVE STRATEGY</th>
<th>Explanation of Discursive Tactic</th>
<th>Example of Discursive Tactic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. ACT OF WAR</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. The USA attacked</td>
<td>The USA itself was the target of the attacks</td>
<td>&quot;A well-coordinated, extensive assault against the United States&quot; Colin Powell, speech, 11 September (2001b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. The American people attacked</td>
<td>The 'American people' and their way of life was attacked</td>
<td>&quot;The terrorist activity that we experienced this week… is something that just strikes directly at our way of life&quot; Donald Rumsfeld, interview, 16 September (2001b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. The targets of the attacks equals war</td>
<td>The targets and scale of attacks equal an act of war</td>
<td>&quot;The forces of terrorism attacked the citizens of our country with a ferocity that was nothing short of a declaration of war against the people of America&quot; John Ashcroft, press conference, 18 September (2001b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. SURPRISE ATTACK</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Unforeseen</td>
<td>No forewarning of the attack to the US</td>
<td>&quot;The September 11 attacks caught us by surprise&quot; Paul Wolfowitz, testimony*, 3-4 October (2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Unprovoked</td>
<td>No provocation by the US to warrant attack</td>
<td>&quot;On September 11, 2001, New York City, the most diverse city in the world, was viciously attacked in an unprovoked act of war&quot; Rudy Giuliani, speech, 1 October (2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Unjustifiable</td>
<td>No legitimate justification for the US to be attacked</td>
<td>&quot;They died because, in the words of justification offered by their attackers, they were Americans...And they died for another reason, the simple fact that they worked in this building&quot; Donald Rumsfeld, press conference, 11 October (2001j)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* To the House of Representatives Armed Services Committee
‘Act of war’

The surprise attack explanation began with identifying what had been attacked. The assaults on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon (and intended on the White House) were presented as an attack on the United States of America itself. The attacks were much more than simply assaults on those buildings, the organisations within them, or the cities of New York and Washington. This tactic was evident from the very outset, when Bush (2001a) explained in his first speech from Sarasota that the still unfolding events were “a national tragedy” and “an apparent terrorist attack on our country”. 11 September 2001, therefore, was an attack against the entire United States of America.

The surprise attack explanation continued with the identification of who had been attacked. In addition to being an assault on the United States of America, 11 September 2001 was also an attack on the ‘American people’ and their way of life. The attacks were much more than merely assaults on the people who worked in the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon (and, again, intended in the White House). This tactic was also immediately apparent, when Bush (2001c) explained in his evening address to the nation that “today, our fellow citizens, our way of life, our very freedom came under attack in a series of deliberate and deadly terrorist attacks”. 11 September 2001, therefore, was an attack against the ‘American people’ and their way of life.

After identifying what and who had been attacked the United States foreign policy elite declared that these targets meant that the assaults, and especially their scale, amounted to an ‘act of war’. Again, this explanation was first used by Bush (2001d), but not until the following morning, when he claimed in a press conference that “an act of war has been declared on the United States of America”. Later that day White House Press Secretary Ari Fleischer (2001a) was questioned by the media about the ‘act of war’ description. His answer defends the use of the phrase as natural and uncontroversial in the circumstances:

QUESTION: “In terms of the President’s statement this morning that this was an act of war, was it the realisation that both the White House and Air Force One were targeted that elevated his language to talk about an act of war? Was it a threat against the head of this country that elevated it to that level?”

FLEISCHER: “I think that the actions against the soil of the United States are what led the President to say that this was an act of war against the United States”.
Subsequently, the ‘act of war’ description became a catch-phrase over the following month, condensing 11 September 2001 as an attack on the United States of America, the ‘American people’ and their way of life. This representation assisted the US foreign policy elite because suffering an ‘act of war’ invoked a patriotic public response that was correctly anticipated to result in mass support of the government.

‘Surprise attack’

The second discursive strategy concerning the what of the attacks names this explanation as a three-dimensional surprise attack. The first tactic presented 11 September 2001 as an unforeseen attack. The extent to which United States intelligence agencies had prior warning has been a major controversy (in part because their possible failings undermine the notion of an exceptional US government), but the important point is that in the one month under scrutiny 11 September 2001 was explained as an unforeseen attack about which there was no specific forewarning. Fleischer (2001a) was the first to assert the unforeseen character of the attacks. During a press conference the following morning he unequivocally stated that “clearly something yesterday took place in New York that was not foreseen, that we had no specific information about”. Four days later Vice President Dick Cheney (2001a) explained simply on NBC TV’s Meet the Press that “we were surprised by what happened here”. 11 September 2001, therefore, was an unforeseen ‘surprise attack’ on the United States.

The second tactic presented 11 September 2001 as an unprovoked attack. The United States foreign policy elite both implicitly and explicitly argued that the US had done nothing to provoke the attacks. The key implicit explanation was that both the victims and the US itself were ‘innocent’, thus any provocation by citizens or state was denied. Secretary of State Colin Powell (2001d) began, on his flight back to Washington from Lima, Peru, that afternoon, when he referred to “this cowardly attack against innocent people”. Similarly, this tactic was also implicit, as discussed later when considering the why of 11 September 2001, in the explanation that the United States was attacked merely because, in keeping with the national exceptionalism myth, it is the home of ‘freedom and democracy’. This point of non-provocation was also made explicitly. For example, in his speech on the national day of mourning on 14 September Bush (2001f) explained the unwarranted character of the attack by stating that “war has been waged against us by stealth and deceit and murder”. 11 September 2001, therefore, was also an unprovoked ‘surprise attack’ on the United States.
The third tactic presented 11 September 2001 as an unjustifiable attack. The question of justification demands consideration of the attackers' motivations, which is covered in detail in the following who and why sections. It is sufficient to note here, however, that because there had been no provocation by the (exceptional) United States (which could simply not have done anything) to encourage the attacks any possible justification was also denied. Just as the ‘act of war’ strategy emphasised the scale of the attack, so too does this tactic use its magnitude to explain 11 September 2001 as unjustifiable. Powell’s (2001d) explanation on National Public Radio the day after epitomised this tactic: “this act is so horrible, so horrendous in its nature and dimensions, that there can be no justification”. 11 September 2001, therefore, was finally an unjustifiable ‘surprise attack’ on the United States.

The surprise attack storyline served the purposes of the United States foreign policy elite. As an unforeseen attack it is exonerated of any failure to protect the ‘American people’ (and, indeed, citizens from around the world) by taking preventive or mitigating action. As an unprovoked attack it denies any role in encouraging such animosity against the United States. As an unjustifiable attack it circumvents any discussion of the perpetrators’ possible reasons for the attack. The surprise attack storyline, therefore, was constructed with several politically motivated discursive strategies that explained 11 September 2001 as an unforeseen, unprovoked, and unjustified ‘act of war’ against the United States, the ‘American people’, and their way of life.

Numerous blowback discursive critiques, however, contest this explanation of 11 September 2001. To begin with, the idea that it was the United States itself that was attacked is rejected and narrowed to the notion that it was actually US foreign policy that was targeted. In an eloquent editorial written shortly afterwards, Smith (2001:631) calls the surprise attack explanation “ideological work” because while 11 September 2001 was a profoundly local and global event it had to be manufactured as a national event: “There was little that was automatically national in the scale of these two local attacks. To be sure the targets were on US soil but it was the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon that were targeted, not the Statue of Liberty, Disneyworld, or Hollywood, which are arguably much more resonant symbols of American national identity”.

Reading the targets of the attack in these terms leads to a different conclusion of what was attacked. Smith (2001:631), for example, suggests that “September 11 was an attack on global economic and military power, which, in recent years, resides disproportionately in the United States”. If so, such a reading raises the prospect of 11 September 2001 as blowback against the exercise of US power around the world. In expressing this narrower understanding of what was attacked Johnson (2002:viii) states that “the suicidal assassins of September 11, 2001, did not
'attack America', as political leaders and news media in the United States have tried to maintain; they attacked American foreign policy’. According to this blowback explanation, therefore, 11 September 2001 was not an ‘act of war’ against the United States but, more specifically, an attack on the US foreign policy elite itself.

This divergence between the surprise attack and blowback explanations regarding the what of 11 September 2001 only widens from here. If it was not an attack on the United States, but US foreign policy, then it was also not an attack on the ‘American people’ or their way of life. Although it was clearly US (and other) citizens, and not military or foreign policy elite personnel, that were killed and injured, it is worth recalling that “terrorism, by definition, strikes at the innocent in order to draw attention to the sins of the invulnerable” (Johnson 2002:x-xi). As something more specific than an attack on the United States, the ‘American people’, and their way of life, the blowback explanation of 11 September 2001 undermines the basis of and need for an aggressive patriotic response to this contested ‘act of war’. As Smith (2001:635) notes, however, “the need to nationalise September 11 arose from the need to justify war”: a clear pointer to the link between the surprise attack explanation and the legitimation of the ‘war on terror’ that is the concluding point of this chapter and provides the stepping-stone to the next.

Moreover, some blowback critiques argue that even the scale of the attacks did not warrant explanation as an ‘act of war’, but rather proposed that the magnitude of 11 September 2001 could equally have been read as a measure of the animosity held towards US foreign policy. Such an interpretation could have provided a catalyst for a critical re-assessment of those policies, as Abu-Nimer (2000) proposes: “the appropriate and effective reaction to the recent attack on US superpower symbols is...to act as a genuine leader of the world, to take responsibility for past foreign policy mistakes, and to address the root causes of a deep-rooted conflict”. An honest introspection would thus lead away from a violent response and potentially towards a less problematic involvement in the Middle East.

Other blowback critiques also contest the hegemonic explanation of 11 September 2001 as an unforeseen, unprovoked, and unjustified surprise attack. Since then, considerable evidence has been presented that United States intelligence agencies did have information warning of an attack. It is not the purpose of this thesis, however, to explore the issue of what was known, when it was known, and what was (or was not) done with that information. These considerations were the focus of the subsequent National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States (also known as the 9/11 Commission), which had ten Commissioners, 80 full-time staff,
existed for almost two years, had a $15 million budget, interviewed more than 1,000 people in ten countries, and produced a 1,000 page report. Rather, the intention here is to illustrate that the ‘no forewarning’ discursive strategy is contestable. Perhaps the most comprehensive presentation of the evidence of just such a forewarning is included in Ahmed’s (2002:81) book *The War on Freedom: How and Why America was Attacked, September 11 2001*, in which he concludes that “there is compelling evidence that the US intelligence community had extensive forewarning of the 11th September attacks on New York and Washington”. The events of 11 September 2001, therefore, were perhaps not so ‘unforeseen’ as the US foreign policy elite initially argued.

Equally, if the blowback proposition that the attacks were directed against United States foreign policy is accepted, then the ‘no provocation’ strategy is also problematic. As an extreme example of blowback it is clear that US foreign policy was a provocation for the perpetrators, an irritation extremely difficult to confront in the United States, as well as elsewhere. Acknowledging even the smallest degree of provocation not only rejects US foreign policy but also risks condoning ‘terrorism’. The blowback critiques, however, were very careful to avoid this by universally condemning the attacks, but at the same time sought to understand 11 September 2001 within its geopolitical context. Flint’s (2001a) Introduction to the special issue of the *Arab World Geographer* was typical: “All the contributors to this collection voice their disgust at such actions. Yet...we have a social responsibility to ask critical questions...questions that address the issue of what motivated these acts of violence”. The response indicates that the events of 11 September 2001 were also perhaps not so ‘unprovoked’ as the US foreign policy elite argued.

While seeking to explore the geopolitical context of the attacks, the blowback critiques were also careful not to present themselves as condoning the perpetrators’ actions by ‘justifying’ the attacks. As Smith (2002:9), who lives near the World Trade Centre site, lamented after a peripatetic tour of the scarred Manhattan landscape: “I struggled to comprehend how this could have happened. How are we to explain this? What could anyone have been thinking to cause such mayhem, horror, and loss-of-life?”. Blowback explanations of the ‘justification’ for 11 September 2001 were therefore just as incredulous as those presented by the US foreign policy elite, but differed in that they sought to understand the broader resentment that, evidently for the perpetrators, provided the ‘justification’ for the attacks. This contentious issue is explored in more detail in the following who and why parts of this section.
The second task in constructing the surprise attack storyline of 11 September 2001 was to explain who perpetrated the attacks. While the critical comment generally agrees with the primary data on the identity of the perpetrators and their organisational affiliation (only the more extreme ‘conspiracy theories’ differ) there is less agreement on their character, and it is this aspect of the who of 11 September 2001 that is of specific interest here. The United States foreign policy elite’s explanation of the who involved a sole discursive strategy which represented the perpetrators, according to Bush’s favourite description, as “evil doers”. This phrase followed the simple logic that because the attacks were ‘evil’ the perpetrators and their surviving accomplices were, by default, “evil doers”. Moreover, because the 19 perpetrators were dead and there needed to be someone else to blame, this characterisation was extended to al-Qaeda in general and Osama bin Laden in particular. This constant description, however, was far more than mere ‘name-calling’, for these “evil doers” embody the very essence of evil (as personified by bin Laden), are consequently beyond rational comprehension, and are denied any legitimate motivation for their actions.

‘Evil-doers’

Bush (2001c) began this construction of “evil doers” in his White House speech that evening, when he informed the nation that “today, our nation saw evil, the very worst of human nature”. In the following days and weeks the human-nature qualifier was dropped and presented the perpetrators’ evil as being ‘not-of-this-world’, that their wickedness had no earthly explanation. For example, on the one month anniversary Bush, appearing at a press conference after touring the damaged Pentagon with Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld, gave a sense of this otherworldliness when he explained that: “We cannot fully understand the designs and power of evil. It is enough to know that evil, like goodness, exists. And in the terrorists, evil has found a willing servant”. This demonic ‘not-of-this-world’ evil is personified by bin Laden. Bush’s (2001o) description during a press conference on 26 September was typical: “I consider bin Laden an evil man...This is a man who hates. This is a man who has declared war on innocent people. This is a man who doesn’t mind destroying women and children...This is an evil man”.

The “evil doers”, led by bin Laden, are consequently beyond comprehension and are thus excluded from the rational world. In response to an al-Qaeda videotape broadcast on al-Jazeera television three days after the war on Afghanistan commenced, for example, Powell (2001ac)
Figure 4.1b: The surprise attack discursive strategies of the ‘who’ and ‘why’ of 11 September 2001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DISCOURSE STRATEGY</th>
<th>Explanation of Discursive Strategy / Tactic</th>
<th>Example of Discursive Strategy / Tactic</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WHO?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. EVIL DOERS</td>
<td>Evil personified, irrational, and with no legitimate motivation</td>
<td>&quot;It's hard for us to comprehend the mentality of people that will destroy innocent folks&quot; George Bush, speech, 8 October (2001v)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHY?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1. WHY DO THEY HATE US?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Irrational jealousy</td>
<td>The terrorists' hatred of the US is just irrational jealousy</td>
<td>&quot;It must have something to do with his background, his own upbringing. Osama bin Laden has, for whatever reason, developed this intense hatred of everything that relates to the United States&quot; Dick Cheney, interview, 16 September (2001a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. No connection</td>
<td>The attacks are not connected to US foreign policy in Middle East</td>
<td>&quot;We are in the Persian Gulf area, we are in Arab lands, at the invitation of Arab nations, and our presence there is dictated by the fact that Iraq invaded one of its neighbours. So we are not there as invaders, the way the Taliban has allowed al-Qaeda to invade Afghanistan&quot; Colin Powell, interview, 10 October (2001ac)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY</td>
<td>The terrorists attacked US because they hate freedom and democracy</td>
<td>&quot;They have attacked America because we are freedom's home and defender&quot; George Bush, speech, 14 September (2001f)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
told viewers of CBS TV's *The Early Show* that "for anybody to take credit for the murder of 6,000 innocent citizens from 80 countries, that is outrageous. It is despicable. It is evil...They are murderers. They believe in no faith other than power and their own irrational actions". The "evil doers" were therefore motivated only by irrational reasons that do not provide any legitimate motivation for the attacks. Although there were many dismissals, it was a fortnight later that Bush (2001n) gave the most categorical denial of any legitimacy for the perpetrators' actions when he explained that: "These were evil doers. They have no justification for their actions. There is no religious justification. There is no political justification. The only motivation is evil". Constructing the perpetrators, al-Qaeda, and especially bin Laden as evil, irrational terrorists circumvented any potential discussion of even the possible existence of a legitimate motivation for the attack(ers) of 11 September 2001. In so doing, as shall be discussed more fully in the following why part of this section, this denial also prevented discussion of the specific reasons for the attacks. Preventing these discussions helped the US foreign policy elite establish and entrench its storyline of the attacks in New York and Washington.

Despite this dual-circumvention and the general agreement between the two storylines on the who of 11 September 2001, a number of blowback discursive critiques recognised, and challenged, this shutting down of discussion about these supposed "evil doers". The following day, for example, Robert Fisk (2001a) wrote, while still condemning the perpetrators through his description of the attacks, that "there will be, inevitably and quite immorally, an attempt to obscure the historical wrongs and the injustices that lie behind yesterday's firestorms. We will be told about 'mindless terrorism', the 'mindless' bit being essential if we are not to realise how hated America has become in the land of the birth of three great religions...All these must be obscured lest they provide the smallest fractional reason for yesterday's mass savagery". Such criticisms were clearly aimed, in keeping with Johnson's concept of blowback and a central conceptual strand of conflicting discourses, at a more critical understanding of the who of 11 September 2001. Indeed, there was also a contradiction within the primary data, for the "evil doers" were also described as committed, organised, and clever. Bush (2001o) himself admitted this paradox in a 26 September press conference when he explained that: "These terrorists had burrowed in our country for over two years. They were well organised. They were well planned. They struck in a way that was unimaginable". The US foreign policy elite's "evil doers" explanation of the who of 11 September 2001, therefore, was a politically motivated discursive strategy that contributed to the surprise attack storyline.
‘...But for heaven’s sake don’t ask why’

The third task in constructing the surprise attack storyline of 11 September 2001 was to explain why the attack occurred. This aspect is the most controversial of the what, who, and why examined here, and is dealt with last because it leads into the next section on how the surprise attack explanation became hegemonic over the blowback explanation. The reasons behind 11 September 2001 vary widely between the two storylines. This controversy was alluded to earlier in the unprovoked and unjustifiable tactics of the surprise attack discursive strategy, and the “evil doers” strategy, but is considered in detail now. Here, the surprise attack explanation involved two discursive strategies. First, the straightforward ‘why?’ question was transformed into the ‘why do they hate us?’ question, which precluded any exploration of the broader geopolitical context of the attack and ensured that 11 September 2001 could only be understood as an act of hatred; thus excluding alternative blowback explanations that highlighted the perpetrators’ (geo)political grievances. Second, 11 September 2001 was explained as an attack on the US simply because it is the home of ‘freedom and democracy’. The credibility of this explanation was a result of the void left by asking the ‘why do they hate us?’ question instead of just the ‘why’ question and because it resonates with the national exceptionalism myth.

‘Why do they hate us?’

In a press conference eight days after the attack Bush suggested that he would directly tackle the ‘why?’ question of 11 September 2001. In announcing that he would address a joint session of Congress the following evening Bush (20011) recognised the need to confront this question: “I look forward to the opportunity to explain to the American people who it is, who would do this to our great country; and why, why would people choose America? A lot of our citizens have got a lot of questions about what has taken place on September the 11th and subsequent to that, and I owe it to the country to give an explanation”. Bush’s (20011) answers on 20 September were disappointing as he transformed the simple ‘why?’ question into the discursive ‘why do they hate us?’ question first uttered by an incredulous woman to a waiting television crew as she emerged from the World Trade Centre rubble (Sardar and Davies 2002): “Americans are asking ‘why do they hate us’? They hate what they see right here in this chamber: a democratically elected government. Their leaders are self-appointed. They hate our freedoms: our freedom of religion, our freedom of speech, our freedom to vote and assemble and disagree with each other”.

This explanation, however, seems insufficient, for the above quote is a statement, not an explanation of actually why ‘they’ hate ‘us’ (or ‘US’). Instead, Bush’s response to his own
prompt simply frames the why of 11 September 2001 within US exceptionalism and reduces the perpetrators’, al-Qaeda’s, and bin Laden’s hatred of the United States to irrational jealousy. This tactic was in evidence as early as two days after the attack when Powell responded to a question on NBC TV’s *The News Hour* that illustrates this connection between US exceptionalism and the ‘why do they hate us?’ question. The framing of the question within the national myth ensured that the answer also invoked US exceptionalism, as Powell (2001k) explained how this irrational jealousy results in terrorism:

QUESTION: “Finally, Mr Secretary, let me ask you this. The President mentioned today as well that the people who committed these awful acts on Tuesday hate us and hate what we stand for. Where does that come from? We think of ourselves as the good people of the world, we Americans. Why do these people hate us so that they would fly an airplane into targets and kill themselves in order to kill Americans?”

POWELL: “The reasons are very, very complex. In some instances, they don’t like our value system. They don’t like the system that treats every individual as a creature of God with the full rights of every other individual. They don’t like our political system, our form of democracy... They resent, in many instances, our successes of society. But rather than debating us on our values, rather than listening as we listen to them, they choose another form of debate with us: debate on the battlefield. And they choose terrorism, a weapon that is available to them because they can’t defeat us on a conventional battlefield”.

The second tactic built on this alleged irrational jealousy by denying any connection between the perpetrators’ hatred of the United States and US foreign policy in the Middle East. The following passage, from the ABC *News* broadcast on 20 September, was one of the few times (if not the only instance in the primary data) that the possibility of this connection was raised on US television (a point discussed further in the next section). Powell’s (2001s) response, however, ensured no connection was possible by resorting to bin Laden’s irrational jealousy:

QUESTION: “Do you believe that United States policy in the Middle East and further to the east, in Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India has anything to do with the violence?”
POWELL: "This is a man who has a hatred of western values and ideals, and he manifests that hatred against the United States of America. So if there was no Middle East peace problem right now and we had solved all of that, there would still be an Osama bin Laden and an al-Qaeda attacking US interests and our friends' interests".

This last sentence is obviously unknowable: unless bin Laden and al-Qaeda are driven only by irrational jealousy and not by any legitimate (geo)political concerns that, if they were resolved to their satisfaction, would cease to provide their motivation for terrorism against the United States. Asking 'why do they hate us?' and not simply 'why?' deflects attention away from the reasons for the attacks towards an understanding of 11 September 2001 as a simplistic act of 'hatred' and benefits the US foreign policy elite by further invoking a patriotic public response.

'Freedom and democracy'
The second discursive strategy explained the why of 11 September 2001 as an attack on the United States simply because, again in accordance with national exceptionalism, it is the home of freedom and democracy. The strategy began just hours afterwards when Bush (2001b) declared from Barksdale Air Force Base that "freedom itself was attacked this morning". That evening Bush (2001c) expanded this explanation by claiming that "America was targeted for attack because we're the brightest beacon for freedom and opportunity in the world". The next morning Bush (2001d) used the irrational jealousy tactic to further explain these attacks on freedom and democracy by stating that: "These people can't stand freedom. They hate our values. They hate what America stands for". 11 September 2001, therefore, was an attack motivated by an irrational jealousy of US 'freedom and democracy'. Moreover, just as the 'why do they hate us?' question was narrowed to bin Laden, so too was his hatred for the US focussed on his animosity towards its freedom and democracy. In an interview on NBC TV’s Meet the Press, for example, Cheney (2001a) summarised this simple explanation as to why bin Laden was driven to attack the US:

CHENEY: “You have to ask yourself why somebody would do what he does, why is someone so motivated. Obviously, he is filled with hate for the United States and for everything we stand for”.

QUESTION: “Why?”

CHENEY: “Freedom and democracy”.
This explanation of motive, like the explanation of what and who, served the US foreign policy elite by circumventing any discussion of the broader geopolitical context of 11 September 2001, lest it contradict this surprise attack storyline. Moreover, it also placed the 'why' of the attacks within the framework of national exceptionalism and thus provided the 'American people' a reference framework for comprehending the reasons for the assaults.

As with its position on to the what and who of 11 September 2001, however, the blowback response to why sought to offer a more substantial explanation of the possible reasons for the attacks. The blowback critiques began by pointing out that this discussion would have been possible had the ‘why do they hate us?’ question remained the more honest, and more important, ‘why?’ question. Instead, the ‘why do they hate us?’ question was “a question whose wording guarantees (to the extent it is not rhetorical) an untruthful answer” (Smith 2001:634) because it demanded 11 September 2001 be explained only in terms of ‘their’ hatred of ‘us’; within, in other words, the national exceptionalism myth and the ‘evilness’ of the ‘terrorists’. Moreover, that the question was even asked in the first place also illustrated the ignorance of most US citizens of the impact of US power on many people and places around the world. This illustrates the common critique (Smith 2001; McChesney 2002) that the US is insulated to the global impacts of its power. Indeed, one could argue that ‘they’ ‘hate’ ‘us’ (or ‘US’) precisely because of the naivety implicit in the question itself. Or, as Mahajan (2002:15) argues, “one columnist summed it up perfectly: ‘Why do the hate us? They hate us because we don’t know why they hate us’”. Asking ‘why do they hate us?’ instead of just ‘why?’ was thus a discursive strategy that again served to prevent discussion of the geopolitical context of the attacks.

The blowback critiques also argue that irrational jealousy is an insufficient motivation to explain why the perpetrators would conduct such an attack and be prepared to die in doing so. Simple hatred of US freedom and democracy, especially given that the perpetrators had lived in the US and experienced those values, seems an unlikely reason when there is no explanation of why these aspects are so hated. Indeed, Mahajan (2002:14) explains that “whatever considerations were in the mind of Osama bin Laden or members of his network, his broadcast statements contain no mention of any resentment to American democracy (sic) or freedom”. Instead, as Mahajan (2002:14) continues in a style typical of the blowback critiques, an al-Qaeda recruiting video commonly used by US and global media included numerous “propaganda points” that “have to do with US domination of the (Middle East) region, not with the internal organisation of American society. The blowback critiques therefore focussed on explaining the motivations of
the perpetrators, and thus the reasons for the attacks, in terms of US foreign policy in the Middle East, not the irrational jealousy of US national exceptionalism.

In particular, Johnson (2002:xi) lambasts the United States foreign policy elite for the political purpose the denial of any connection between 11 September 2001 and US foreign policy in the Middle East serves:

"On the day of the disaster, President George W Bush told the American people that the country had been attacked because it was ‘a beacon of freedom’ and because the attackers were motiveless ‘evil-doers’. In his address to the US Congress...he said, ‘This is civilisation’s fight’. The President’s attempt to define difficult-to-grasp events as a conflict over abstract values...was not only disingenuous, but also a way of evading responsibility for the 'blowback' that America’s imperial projects have generated. For if it is acknowledged that blowback played a part in the September 11 calamity, then some people holding high-elected, appointive, or administrative office in the US are at least partly implicated in the deaths of several thousands of their fellow citizens".

Despite such vehement criticisms, the surprise attack storyline became the hegemonic explanation of 11 September 2001. Precisely how this dominance was attained over the blowback explanation, and why these opposing storylines constitute a conflict and a conflicting discourse, is examined in the next section.

**Achieving Surprise Attack Hegemony**

This section explains how the surprise attack explanation achieved hegemony over the blowback explanation of 11 September 2001 and in doing so why they represent, respectively, the first parts of a conflict discourse and a conflicting discourse. The surprise attack storyline had an inherent advantage over the blowback storyline simply because it was advocated by the powerful United States foreign policy elite and was transmitted, virtually unquestioned, around the world by US and global media. This advantage meant that, to a certain extent, this storyline was always going to become dominant. Moreover, the credibility of the surprise attack explanation for the ‘American people’ was enhanced because it was framed in terms of the US national
exceptionalism myth. As has been argued, however, these advantages for hegemony do not mean that the surprise attack explanation was uncontested, so the focus here is on how the blowback explanation of 11 September 2001, which builds on the discursive critiques presented throughout the last section, was rendered subservient.

Achieving surprise attack hegemony was a three-step process. First, the surprise attack storyline de-contextualised 11 September 2001 by removing it from any political, social, historical, or economic (that is, all geopolitical) context. Second, blowback critiques that attempted to contextualise the de-contextualised by drawing attention to United States foreign policy in the Middle East, previous US involvement in Afghanistan and with the Taliban, and its previous relations with Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda were marginalised. Advocates of the surprise attack explanation dismissed any such attempt as being the moral equivalent of the terrorists for condoning terrorism and ‘anti-Americanism’ for blaming the US itself for the attacks. Third, preventing discussion of the possible geopolitical context of 11 September 2001 raises the question of what benefits from this omission. The conclusion of this chapter is that the hegemony of the surprise attack explanation over the blowback explanation of 11 September 2001 benefited the legitimation of the violent US response known as the ‘war on terror’. Hence, by the end of this section these surprise attack and blowback storylines are conceptualised as providing the basis for the second part of their respective conflict and conflicting discourses: the consequent (de)legitimation scripts of the ‘war on terror’ that are discussed in Chapter Five.

**De-contextualising 11 September 2001**

De-contextualising 11 September 2001 began by not asking the ‘why?’ question. As argued above, even when this question was asked, it was transformed into the discursively loaded ‘why do they hate us?’ question, and in addition the posing of the ‘why?’ question (let alone the answering of it) was conspicuously absent from the primary data. Possible answers were thus beyond discussion in the United States. Instead, the US foreign policy elite, the US media, and the ‘American people’ seemed preoccupied, as Zelizer and Allan (2002:11-12) explain, with the other dimensions of 11 September 2001: “One such question which appeared to be particularly awkward, and hence was rarely asked, was ‘why?’”. Members of the public making their way through the September 11 coverage could learn much from what reporters told them about the ‘who’, ‘what’, ‘where’, ‘when’ and ‘how’ of the attacks. The matter of ‘why’, however, remained elusive”. Indeed, this collective avoidance of the ‘why?’ question by the US
government, media, and public contributed to the ease with which the ‘freedom and democracy’ reason became the hegemonic explanation of the why of 11 September 2001.

Moreover, the obscuration of potentially more credible reasons for the attack from the US public was highlighted by the presence of the ‘why?’ question in the foreign media, as demonstrated by the discourse analysis. The following transcripts of interviews with Powell, the official most frequently exposed to foreign media, provide two examples of the why question being more forcefully asked from the outside world. In contrast to domestic explanations, Powell (2001p) candidly admitted, on the Arab satellite TV network al-Jazeera six days after the attacks, that terrorism is the outcome of much more complex geopolitical scenarios than represented by the ‘freedom and democracy’ explanation:

QUESTION: “Many people in the Arab world repeat the question (that) the US has not asked itself...why the US is...hated in the Arab and Muslim world...because of what they call blind support of destruction, of killing Palestinians and others. Do you have an answer?”

POWELL: “I think that’s not a correct characterisation of the United States. We deplore violence. We also know that very often violence and terrorist acts come out of political frustration, a sense of hopelessness, a sense of helplessness. I am not unmindful of those kinds of motivations. But I am also of the view that the best way to deal with this sense of hopelessness is not through violence and terrorism...And so I can assure you that America is trying to play a unifying role, trying to play a helpful role in bringing the violence down, ending the killing on both sides and getting to a peace table, where we can discuss the kinds of issues that cause a sense of hopelessness. Terrorism is fuelled by these sorts of grievances over time, from the past. And I am not insensitive, nor is America. We are prepared to do whatever we can to get through these barriers to understanding”.

It seems difficult to reconcile this why of 11 September 2001 with that recited to domestic audiences, not to mention the fact this statement came just 20 days before the US launched air-strikes on Afghanistan. Indeed, the closest that the possibility of a blowback context came to being considered in the US media came in a National Public Radio interview with Powell the
day after the attacks. When it was suggested that the attacks might be linked to Israeli and US policy towards the Palestinians, however, Powell (2001d) was vociferous in his denial:

QUESTION: “When you spoke with (Saudi Arabian diplomats and the Chairman of the Arab League) today, did they raise the linkage of this terrorist attack to Israeli actions in the Middle East or to US policy on the Israel – Palestinian dispute?”

POWELL: “They did not. And the simple reason is that...even though we have a difficult situation between the Israelis and the Palestinians, no way could that justify this kind of attack against innocent people which costs thousands of lives. And none of them suggested that, nor would I have expected them to”.

This suggestion was terminated again in the foreign media on 21 September when Powell (2001v), this time confronted by a sceptical interviewer from the BBC, made a partial admission of the connection between 11 September 2001 and US foreign policy but then resorted to national exceptionalism to explain the attacks:

QUESTION: “Are you really suggesting that American foreign policy...has nothing to do with the selection of American targets?”

POWELL: “I am sure that it has something to do. We also have to remember that the greatest target that they have been going after are American values. The fact that we stand for a form of democracy and representative government and a value system that they find threatening to theirs and one that they have to destroy”.

As this passage suggests, any attempt to resist this de-contextualisation of 11 September 2001, and especially to raise the possibility of an alternative blowback explanation was normally shut down by the surprise attack explanation of national exceptionalism. At this time of heightened US patriotism, overwhelming grief, and nervous anxieties such propositions were problematic at best, dangerous at worst, and virtually universally condemned. Advocates of the surprise attack storyline lambasted alternatives as condoning terrorism, ridiculed their proponents as being the moral equivalent of the terrorists, and dismissed them as ‘anti-American’. Indeed, to not express some or all of the surprise attack explanation, in Bush’s (20011) emotionally charged, dichotomous world of being “with us” or “with the terrorists”, was to run the risk of falling, by
default, into the latter category. The effect was to silence dissent(ers) from the rapidly becoming hegemonic surprise attack storyline, and in effect thus render any blowback explanation subservient. There was no better example of this silencing of dissent than the following experience of journalist Robert Fisk (2001b):

"Every effort will be made in the coming days to switch off the ‘why’ question and concentrate on the who, what, and how. CNN and most of the world’s media have already obeyed this essential new war rule. I’ve already seen what happens when this rule is broken. When The Independent published my article on the connection between Middle Eastern injustice and the New York holocaust, the BBC’s 24-hour news channel produced an American commentator who remarked that ‘Robert Fisk has won the prize for bad taste’. When I raised the same point on an Irish radio talk show, the other guest, a Harvard lawyer, denounced me as a bigot, a liar, a ‘dangerous man’, and – of course – potentially anti-Semitic. The Irish pulled the plug on him."

This incident represents the impossibility of admitting the non-hegemonic blowback explanation, because doing so would not only contradict the surprise attack explanation but would also challenge national exceptionalism, by effectively saying that US foreign policy in the Middle East provides the context to the attacks, and thus the US is not as ‘exceptional’ as it believes.

Instead, for example, in response to a rare attempt at a linkage by CBS TV anchor Dan Rather on the morning of 11 September 2001, former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright defended United States foreign policy by declaring that “I say for only those who do not believe in democracy and human rights can a statement like that be made...I am proud of American policies”. This denial of any need for an honest introspection of US foreign policy helped present 11 September 2001 as having occurred in a geopolitical vacuum. This de-contextualisation was eased because, as discussed earlier, blowback can occur at spatial and temporal disjunctures from US foreign policies that may actually help to contextualise such attacks; hence the appearance of a disconnected incident of random ‘anti-American’ ‘terrorism’. Decontextualising 11 September 2001 was therefore crucial in the surprise attack explanation achieving hegemony over the blowback explanation.
The popular success of this de-contextualisation was aided by particular characteristics of US society, as McChesney (2002:91) explains: “The September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon, for most Americans, were similar in effect to having a massive attack from outer space. Almost entirely ignorant of global politics, devoid of any understanding of Islam, and educated primarily by Hollywood movies featuring Arnold Schwarzenegger, Bruce Willis, and Sylvester Stallone, Americans were ideally prepared for a paranoid and hysterical response”. That response was a political and popular desire to retaliate and was the result of this de-contextualised 11 September 2001. It is obvious, however, that there had to be a geopolitical context within which to fully understand the attack. 11 September 2001 could not be a random, senseless, isolated, surprise attack or bolt-from-the-blue or attack-from-outer-space. As Smith (2002:11) explains, seeking a context to the attacks is to understand “that no act of terrorism comes out of the blue, without explanation, context, or background”. Such an explanation is too easy, too simplistic, and simply too unbelievable given the amount of contrary blowback critiques already noted. There must be, therefore, a much more complex geopolitical context to this extreme attack.

**Contextualising the de-contextualised**

Providing a more complex geopolitical context to 11 September 2001 is precisely what the blowback explanation attempts to do; to, in other words, contextualise the de-contextualised. Contrary to the accusations of moral equivalency and condoning terrorism, this contextualisation does not seek to excuse the attackers and/or condone their acts, but to understand the event as substantially as possible. For example, Marston and Rouhani (2001) explain in their description of the personal impacts of 11 September 2001 that: “As academics and teachers, we have struggled with how to talk about the disaster – to our students, and to our families, friends, and local communities – in ways that both respect the delicacy of individual feelings but also appropriately situate the tragedy in the larger historical, political and economic context within which it absolutely must be comprehended”. Following Smith (2001:632), who emphasises that “amidst the discursive hysteria after September 11, the silences are as important as the frenzy”, the following discussion suggests the possible geopolitical context to 11 September 2001 as proposed by some leading advocates of the ‘blowback’ explanation.

As alluded to throughout this chapter, the general geopolitical context within which the blowback critiques normally place 11 September 2001, because of the identities of the attackers,
is United States foreign policy in the Middle East. As noted in Chapter One, the Middle East has long been scripted as a problematic geopolitical region because of its complex intra-Arab relations, the acrimonious Arab and especially Palestinian – Israeli conflict, and the complicating factor of the region’s oil wealth with, especially, oil dependent western economies. Within these general characteristics, for decades US foreign policy towards the region has been, and remains, problematic. Washington’s support for secular, unpopular regimes in Arab countries has isolated it, and increasingly so, from popular Islamic opinion. This distancing has been exacerbated by its unwavering support of Israel and its inconsistent involvement, despite its apparent power to advance a resolution, in the Middle East peace process. The US policy on Iraq, and in particular its devastating sanctions regime, has further created a sea of Arab animosity. By 2001, US foreign policy in the Middle East was a source of great antipathy.

This general geopolitical context was perhaps best and most immediately invoked to contextualise 11 September 2001 by journalist Robert Fisk. In The Independent the following day Fisk (2001a) lamented the historical context of the attacks: “So it has come to this. The entire modern history of the Middle East, the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the Balfour declaration, Lawrence of Arabia’s lies, the Arab revolt, the foundation of the state of Israel, four Arab – Israeli wars and the 34 years of Israel’s brutal occupation of Arab land, all erased within hours as those who claim to represent a crushed, humiliated population struck back with the wickedness and awesome cruelty of a doomed people”. Later in the same article Fisk (2001a) points out the role of the West in provoking the attacks through its long-term problematic involvement in the region: “the malign influence of history and our share in its burden must surely stand in the dark with the suicide bombers. Our broken promises, perhaps even our destruction of the Ottoman Empire, led inevitably to this tragedy”.

Australian born but UK-based journalist John Pilger (2001) summarised this inevitability of a Middle Eastern retaliation against western, and particularly United States, intervention in the region over such a long period of time. Writing two days after the attacks, and being cautious not to fall into the same trap of jumping to the conclusion that ‘Arab terrorists’ were responsible for the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995 when it turned out to be the work of domestic ‘terrorists’ Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nicholls, Pilger (2001) commented that: “If the horrors of Tuesday did come from the Middle East, who can really be surprised?”. This ‘unsurprising’ source of the attack(er)s contrasts sharply with the surprise attack storyline. It is only within this much broader geopolitical context, according to the blowback storyline, that 11 September 2001 can be properly explained and fully understood.
More specifically, because al-Qaeda and Osama bin Laden are based in Afghanistan, then United States involvement there, both historical and contemporary, is of paramount importance. For present purposes this narrower geopolitical context begins in 1979 when, according to Johnson (2002:xii-xiii) "the consequences of the overthrow of the Iranian government in 1953 fell due" with the Iranian revolution but, more importantly, when "the United States was also deliberately provoking the former Soviet Union into invading Afghanistan". Although the consequent Soviet invasion, on 24 December, is commonly believed to have been a unilateral move by Moscow to prop up a teetering communist puppet regime, Johnson and other writers (eg, Rashid 2001) now acknowledge Washington’s role in laying what has become known as ‘the Afghan trap’. This nomenclature follows the revelations of former CIA director Robert Gates (1996) and then National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski (1998) who assert that the United States "actually began to aid the mujaheddin guerrillas in Afghanistan not after the Soviet invasions", as is conventionally understood, “but six months before it” (Johnson 2002:xiii). When questioned by the French weekly magazine Nouvel Observateur in 1998 about this entrapment, Brzezinski replied: “That secret operation was an excellent idea. It had the effect of drawing the Russians into the Afghan trap... The day that the Soviets officially crossed the border, I wrote to President Carter, saying: ‘We now have the opportunity of giving to the USSR its Vietnam War’”.

The United States turned Afghanistan into ‘Vietnam’ by funding, training, and later arming numerous Afghan opposition groups, collectively known as the mujaheddin, who fought the occupying Red Army for the next decade. These opposition groups reflected Afghanistan’s diverse collection of ethnic groups, but all fought to defend Islam against the godless communists. Indeed, Muslim recruits to the mujaheddin came from all over the Arab and Islamic world to fight the Soviet occupation, the so-called “Arab Afghans” (Nojumi 2002), including the Saudi Arabian born Osama bin Laden. In the global context of the Cold War, however, the ‘means’ of militant Islam was inconsequential to the United States: what mattered was the ‘end’ of inflicting a ‘Vietnam’ on the Soviet Union. Washington, therefore, waged its Cold War by proxy in Afghanistan, channelling money, advisors, and arms to the mujaheddin via neighbouring Pakistan. The cost was 1.5 million Afghan lives (Rashid 2001) and six million refugees (Ahmed 2002); but ‘the Afghan trap’ had worked, with the Red Army withdrawing defeated in 1989 and, partly as a result of its Afghan ‘Vietnam’, the Soviet Union disintegrated in the following two years.

With its Cold War objectives achieved, the United States abandoned Afghanistan, leaving behind it a plethora of well-armed, well-trained, ethnically-based militias driven by ‘extremist’ Islamic
ideologies. The almost inevitable outcome, in a country with a decade of war experience and without a strong central government, was a violent and protracted civil war. By late 1994, however, one of these groups was asserting its dominance on the battlefield: the Taliban, meaning ‘students of Islam’ (Rashid 2001). The Taliban were dominated by the large Pashtun tribe of southern Afghanistan, centred on the city of Kandahar, and constituted about 40 per cent of Afghanistan’s 20 million people (Rashid 2001). The Pashtun had dominated Afghanistan for three centuries but, during the twentieth century, had ceded control to smaller ethnic groups. The Taliban were therefore a revival of Pashtun ‘nationalism’, a mixture of a reactionary Pashtun tribal code, or “Pashtunwali” (Rashid 2001:4), and an extreme, literal interpretation of the Wahabbi branch of Sunni Islam dominant in (and originating from) Saudi Arabia. This hybrid form of ‘Islamic extremism’ was taught in the madrassas, or “Islamic theology schools” (Rashid 2001:1), of southern Afghanistan amongst the Pashtun community and in Pakistan’s bordering North West Frontier province amidst the Pashtun-dominated Afghan refugee community during and after the mujaheddin war. Indeed, these madrassas not only doubled as military training academies for the mujaheddin, both indigenous and the foreign “Arab Afghans”, but many were established with United States and Saudi Arabian money during the 1980s. Again, this side-effect of its involvement in Afghanistan was apparently inconsequential to the US, who prioritised the collapse of communism in the Soviet Union and across Eastern Europe, the 1991 Gulf War, and then the crises in the former Yugoslavia, Somalia, and Rwanda. Indeed, in his 1998 Nouvel Observateur interview Brzezinski dismissed the civil war in Afghanistan, uncontrolled Islamic militancy, and the rise of the Taliban: “What is more important in world history? The Taliban or the collapse of the Soviet empire? Some agitated Muslims or the liberation of Central Europe and the end of the Cold War?”.

From these madrassas emerged the Taliban, led by Mullah Mohammed Omar, a veteran of the mujaheddin war but an otherwise mysterious figure who was rarely seen in public, let alone photographed (Rashid 2001). Through vicious military conquest of disparate opposition groups, often euphemistically united under the ‘Northern Alliance’ umbrella, and their territories, the Taliban expanded from their southern Afghanistan stronghold and came to dominate other parts of the country. The Taliban’s rise to power was particularly violent and often bordered on ‘ethnic cleansing’ and genocide; or in Ahmed’s (2002:92) phrase, it was “anarchical civil war”. Ironically, however, when the Taliban captured the capital Kabul in September 1996 it bought a level of ‘stability’ and ‘security’ to 90 per cent of Afghanistan that had not been known since before the Soviet invasions (Rashid 2001).
At this time, in the mid-1990s, two important events for the blowback contextualisation of 11 September 2001 took place. First, a “New Great Game” (Rashid 2000) in Central Asia began emerging between the five former Soviet republics (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan), Russia, China, Iran, Pakistan, and the United States for access to and control of the vast oil and gas deposits of the Caspian Sea basin. The term “New Great Game”, explains Ahmed Rashid (2001:6), the Pakistani journalist who coined the phrase, is “a throwback to the nineteenth century Great Game between Russia and Britain over control and domination in Central Asia and Afghanistan”. In the late twentieth century, however, this latest version specifically concerns “the last untapped resources of (oil and gas) energy in the world today” (Rashid 2001:6). As such, the United States was eager to secure access to and control of these valuable supplies for its oil dependent economy and the Union Oil Company of California (UNOCAL) was given government assistance to negotiate an ‘oil deal’ with regional governments; and to do so before other competitors, such as Russia and China, were able to.

The details of this multinational scramble for Caspian oil and gas are not relevant here; rather the important point is that Afghanistan, ironically given that it is landlocked and has no oil or gas deposits of its own, became crucial to the United States strategy in this New Great Game. Afghanistan’s importance, and therefore the Taliban’s, resulted from its strategic location between the oil and gas fields of the Caspian Basin and the Indian Ocean. For UNOCAL and Washington this position provided the only viable option for an overland oil and gas pipeline to transport the resource from its source to international shipping lanes via the Pakistani port of Gwador and from there to its final destination. Three other possible routes exist, but these are unattractive because they would leave the oil and gas under the control of states with difficult relations with the United States: northwards through Russia, eastwards through China, and southwards through Iran (Figure 4.2). Such routes would render the supply of oil and gas dependent on the vicissitudes of those relationships, so Washington initially welcomed the rise of the Taliban, because it gave them a single ‘government’ to negotiate with and because the new regime could provide the necessary security for the construction and operation of an overland pipeline. Consequently, negotiations for an ‘oil deal’ between Washington, UNOCAL, and the Taliban began during the Clinton administration.

Second, the former ‘Arab Afghan’, Osama bin Laden, returned to Afghanistan and took up residence in Kandahar, where he became friends with Taliban leader Mullah Mohammed Omar. During the mujaheddin war bin Laden had used his expertise as an engineer, the resources of his family’s construction business, and his own personal wealth to build roads, training facilities,
and military installations to help fight the Soviet occupation. In 1988 bin Laden established al-Qaeda, literally ‘the Base’, a militant Islamic organisation of mujaheddin, many ‘Arab Afghans’ like himself. The mujaheddin victory over the Soviets in 1989 was welcomed by bin Laden, like many others, as a victory for Islam over the invading infidels and he, also like many others, believed the Red Army’s demise at their hands in Afghanistan precipitated the disintegration of the Soviet Union.

With the resultant faith in the ability of militant Islam to defeat secular opponents, bin Laden travelled back to Saudi Arabia in 1990 to offer the royal family his services in recruiting another mujaheddin army to reverse Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait and defend the Saudi kingdom. His offer, however, was rejected in favour of accepting the United States-led multinational coalition onto Saudi territory, a decision which outraged bin Laden (Bodansky 2001). While he remained in Saudi Arabia during the early 1990s, he became increasingly irritated by the corrupt Saudi regime and especially by their decision to allow a continued US military presence in the home of Islam’s three holiest sites after the 1991 Gulf War. In bin Laden’s view this was an affront to Islam and the direct teaching of Mohammed, who had declared: “Let there be no two religions in Arabia” (Bergen 2001:84). The presence of a foreign Christian power was therefore antagonistic to bin Laden and his increasing number of followers; not to mention amongst many Muslims throughout the wider Arab and Islamic worlds.

In 1992 bin Laden had defined al-Qaeda’s objective as the ending of a United States presence in Saudi Arabia and the Horn of Africa, especially Somalia. The Saudi government reacted to this rhetoric and bin Laden’s construction of military training camps in Sudan and Yemen by revoking his Saudi citizenship and freezing his assets in April 1994 (Brisard and Dasquie 2002). By August 1995 bin Laden ratcheted up the rhetoric in an open letter to King Fahd that called for a guerrilla campaign targeting US forces in Saudi Arabia. Three months later five US soldiers were killed in a car-bombing at a Saudi National Guard building in the capital Riyadh. Thereafter, al-Qaeda was suspected of conducting numerous attacks, the most prominent being the truck-bombing of the Khobar towers in Dhahran that killed 19 US soldiers in June 1996. President Clinton responded by authorising the CIA to crush the al-Qaeda network, which prompts bin Laden, who was now coordinating al-Qaeda from Afghanistan, to declare war on the United States. In February 1998 bin Laden then issues a fatwa, or religious decree (which he has no authority under Islam to issue, because he is not a religious leader), claiming that it was every Muslim’s duty to kill Americans, both military personnel and civilians. In addition to the continued US presence in Saudi Arabia, bin Laden also cited Washington’s support for Israel,
the treatment of Palestinians, and the US enforcement of sanctions against Iraq as the reasons for his jihad, literally 'struggle' but commonly (mis)understood in the West as 'holy war' (Bergen 2001), against the United States (Brisard and Dasquie 2002).

It is six months later, in August 1998, that these two parallel developments of the New Great Game and bin Laden’s jihad against the United States conflate. Bin Laden’s residence in Kandahar and growing friendship with Mullah Omar has turned al-Qaeda and the Taliban into close religious, political, and military allies. This alliance was noted by the United States, so when al-Qaeda simultaneously detonated two truck-bombs outside the US embassies in Nairobi, Kenya, and Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania on 7 August (the eighth anniversary of the first arrival of US military forces in Saudi Arabia to prepare for the Gulf War) Washington responded not only with the air-strikes against the al-Shifa pharmaceutical company in Khartoum, Sudan and an al-Qaeda training camp in Afghanistan but also by terminating oil negotiations with the Taliban (Ahmed 2002). The Taliban was in any case becoming the subject of much condemnation in the US and the West because of its fundamentalist Islam, its vitriolic foreign policy statements, and its poor treatment of United Nations and international aid agencies attempting to assist the desperate Afghan people survive ongoing civil war, drought, and famine. Specifically, it was the Taliban’s conservative treatment of women (who were banned from working, largely restricted to their homes, and forced to wear the all-covering burqa outdoors) and its destruction of the two 1,800 year old statues of Buddha carved into the side of the Bamiyan valley in September 1998 that earned the Taliban international pariah status (Nojumi 2002).

The Clinton administration’s termination of oil negotiations left the United States strategy in the New Great Game in something of a quandary: how now to fend off other challenges and secure the access to and transportation of Caspian Basin oil and gas deposits? The question was left unanswered for the remainder of Clinton’s second term, and it seemed there would be no immediate resolution after al-Qaeda bombed the USS Cole in Aden in October 2000, which killed 17 US Navy personnel. Within a few months, however, the incoming Bush administration re-opened secret negotiations with the Taliban in the hope of rescuing US prospects to control Caspian Basin oil and gas and, specifically, of reaching a pipeline agreement. Again, the details of these negotiations are not relevant here (see Rashid 2001, Brisard and Dasquie 2002, and Ahmed 2002), but the important point is that contact was re-established between Washington and Kabul (or rather Kandahar as the real Taliban centre), but discussions did not go well. Indeed, these sources all report that in July 2001 (just six weeks before 11 September 2001) the US representatives at a secret meeting in Germany, having offered a proxy delegation
representing the Taliban with generous amounts of aid, threatened that “either you accept our offer of a carpet of gold, or we will bury you under a carpet of bombs” (e.g., Ahmed 2002:58) in a last-ditch attempt to secure a deal.

It is this *Forbidden Truth* (Brisard and Dasquie 2002) of US – Taliban oil pipeline negotiations that provides, for the blowback storyline, the specific geopolitical context of 11 September 2001. For this secret history raises the possibility that, given the close association between al-Qaeda and the Taliban, the attacks (even if the planning was well underway by the time of the threat) were a pre-emptive strike against the United States which, as Ahmed (2002) discusses at length, was preparing for a war on Afghanistan well before 11 September 2001. As a pre-emptive strike 11 September 2001 may have only brought forward the inevitable, but it is probable that bin Laden figured the attacks and the US retaliation would help polarise the Islamic and Christian worlds and thus bring more supporters to his cause. As bin Laden still steadfastly believed in the ability of Islamic mujaheddin, especially al-Qaeda and the Taliban, to defeat superpowers in the difficult terrain of Afghanistan, provoking the US into a ground war was a means of challenging the American infidel head-on.

For the United States foreign policy elite, admitting this possible specific geopolitical context is impossible because it would undermine the surprise attack explanation of 11 September 2001. More importantly, it would also de-legitimate the first phase of the ‘war on terror’ as the US is implicated in the attacks through its general Middle East foreign policy, its problematic two decade involvement in Afghanistan, and its attempts to secure an oil pipeline deal with the Taliban. Given this alternative but denied context to 11 September 2001, the question that arises from its exclusion is: ‘what benefits?’ In other words, what political purpose is served by de-contextualising 11 September 2001 as the hegemonic surprise attack explanation does? This question follows Foucault, who argued that any hegemonic discourse represents a form of power and knowledge that, by excluding others, serves the interests of power; thus something always benefits from the hegemony of certain discourses over others.

*The surprise attack and blowback conflict(ing) discourses*

The response is that the hegemony of the surprise attack explanation of 11 September 2001 over the blowback explanation benefits the legitimisation of the violent response known as the ‘war on terror’. By presenting 11 September 2001 as an unforeseen, unprovoked, and unjustifiable ‘act of
war’ against the United States, the ‘American people’ and their way of life, the US foreign policy elite assumed the moral high ground, framed the attacks within the pre-existing geopolitical discourse of national exceptionalism, and laid the foundation for the legitimation of the ‘war on terror’. In other words, from the outset, beginning with Bush’s speech from the school in Sarasota on the morning of the attacks, 11 September 2001 was explained in this particular way so as to justify a military response. The surprise attack storyline is not therefore an innocent, objective, and apolitical explanation of these events but the first step in legitimating the ‘war on terror’, and thus served the political purposes of the US foreign policy elite. This initial step was followed by several other discursive strategies that further legitimated the ‘war on terror’, and these are the subject of Chapter Five.

The hegemonic surprise attack explanation of 11 September 2001 was therefore much more than the dominant storyline of these events. Rather, the surprise attack explanation was the first stage in the construction of the surprise attack conflict discourse that legitimated the ‘war on terror’. This explanation was the first part of this conflict discourse because it not only de-legitimated the violence of the ‘Other’ (by dismissing the attacks as the work of “evil doers” motivated only by “irrational jealousy” and without any legitimate justification for their actions) but also because it legitimated the violence of the ‘Self’ by portraying the United States as the innocent victim of this unforeseen, unprovoked, and unjustified surprise attack. Victor Navasky (2002:xiv) nicely summarises how this surprise attack explanation (storyline) provides the basis of the surprise attack legitimation (script) of the ‘war on terror’: “The picture conveyed...was as follows: ‘A benevolent, democratic, and peace loving nation was brutally attacked by insane evil terrorists who hate the United States for its freedoms and affluent way of life. The United States must immediately increase its military and covert forces, locate the surviving culprits and exterminate them; then prepare for a long-term war to root out the global terrorist cancer and destroy it’”.

Moreover, by achieving hegemony over the blowback explanation of 11 September 2001, the surprise attack storyline rendered this alternative understanding a conflicting discourse. For not only did the blowback explanation seek more critical understandings of the violence of the ‘Other’ by contextualising the attacks, the storyline also sought to de-legitimate the coming violence of the ‘war on terror’. Consequently, the blowback explanation is also a conflicting discourse because it de-legitimates the violence of the ‘Self’, not only by proposing an alternative version of 11 September 2001 but also by adding (as is also the subject of Chapter Five) numerous discursive critiques of the conflict discourses deployed to legitimate the ‘war on
terror'. Accordingly, the surprise attack and blowback conflict(ing) discourses also contested the (de)legitimation of the 'war on terror', which is explored in the next chapter.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has detailed the surprise attack and blowback explanations, or storylines, of 11 September 2001. These explanations rested on the two concepts, respectively, of the United States national exceptionalism myth and Johnson's concept of blowback against US foreign policy as explored in the first section. From there, the contest between the two explanations involved the discursive strategies and discursive critiques concerning the what, who, and why of the attacks. The surprise attack storyline explained 11 September 2001 as an unforeseen, unprovoked, and unjustifiable act of war against the United States, the 'American people', and their way of life perpetrated by "evil doers" driven only by an irrational jealousy of US freedom and democracy. The blowback explanation, however, contested this storyline and explained 11 September 2001 as an attack on US foreign policy perpetrated by the extreme fringe of an understandable body of resentment because of its problematic foreign policy in the Middle East and its dubious prior relations with the Taliban, al-Qaeda, and Osama bin Laden.

The final section of this chapter explained that because the surprise attack explanation of 11 September 2001 successfully de-contextualised the attacks and the blowback explanation failed to contextualise the de-contextualised, the surprise attack storyline achieved hegemony over the blowback storyline. In so doing the surprise attack explanation was the first part of a conflict discourse, because it de-legitimated the violence of the 'Other' and, by explaining 11 September 2001 in a particular way so as to justify war, thus laid the foundation for the legitimation of the 'war on terror'. In contrast, by becoming subservient the blowback explanation was the first part of a conflicting discourse because it sought a more critical understanding of the violence of the 'Other' and, by conflicting against the surprise attack conflict discourse, thus questioned the legitimation of the coming violent response of the 'Self'. The surprise attack and blowback explanations of 11 September 2001, therefore, also represent an example of conflict(ing) discourses over the (de)legitimation of the first phase of the 'war on terror' on Afghanistan. The discursive strategies and the discursive critiques involved in this contest are the subject of Chapter Five.
Chapter Five

(De)Legitimating the 'War on Terror':
Surprise Attack Versus Blowback

“I know that many Americans at this time have fears. We’ve learned that America is not immune from attack. We’ve seen that evil is real...yet America is equal to this challenge. Make no mistake about it. They’ve roused a mighty giant. A compassionate land will rise united to not only protect ourselves, not only make our homeland as secure as possible, but to bring the evil-doers to justice so that our children might live in freedom”.

George Bush, Monday 8 October (2001v)

“After the attacks, there was a tremendous outpouring of sympathy for Americans around the world, in the Islamic world as well. There was a chance to capitalise on that newfound goodwill to, at a stroke, eliminate several major grievances of the Arab world, and enhance domestic security in the United States...Instead, the United States chose to do the most counter-productive thing possible, continuing as the arrogant, interventionist superpower and further victimising some of the most wretched people on earth”.

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate the contest between the second part of the surprise attack and blowback conflict(ing) discourses to (de)legitimate the ‘war on terror’. Despite the right of retaliation assumed by the United States after the events of 11 September 2001, this process of violence legitimation was still necessary in order to justify the first phase of the ‘war on terror’ on Afghanistan. Consequently, the US foreign policy elite used the hegemonic surprise attack explanation (or storyline) of 11 September 2001 presented in Chapter Four as the basis of its conflict discourse to legitimate its ‘war on terror’. President George Bush’s opening quote epitomises this surprise attack legitimation script. Similarly, but for precisely the opposite purposes, numerous critical commentators used their subservient blowback explanation (or alternative ‘storyline’) of 11 September 2001 presented in Chapter Four as the basis of a conflicting discourse in an (unsuccessful) attempt to de-legitimate the ‘war on terror’. Rahul Mahajan’s opening quote epitomises this alternative blowback de-legitimation script. In other words, the contest between the surprise attack and blowback explanations, or storylines, of 11 September 2001 now moves to a similar contest, again following O’Tuathail (2002), between the consequent surprise attack and blowback “geopolitical scripts” to respectively legitimate and de-legitimate the ‘war on terror’.

This contest is reflected in the bifurcated structure of the following discussion. The first section details the surprise attack legitimation script by explaining the discursive strategies, within three distinct but inter-related ‘acts’, that were used to justify the ‘war on terror’. The second section then presents the alternative blowback geopolitical de-legitimation script by outlining the major discursive critiques of these strategies, corresponding to each of the three surprise attack ‘acts’, which sought to prevent the ‘war on terror’. The surprise attack legitimation and blowback de-legitimation scripts are not the only two possible geopolitical scripts regarding the ‘war on terror’. Following Derrida’s analogy noted in Chapter Four, for example, that ‘terrorism’ is an “auto-immune disease”, the ‘war on terror’ can be seen as a system fighting against a disease itself produces and thus can not easily or fully eradicate it (Borradori 2003). Again, however, for the purposes of demonstrating this (de)legitimation contest, and thus the concept of conflict(ing) discourses, surprise attack and blowback are the most appropriate. Exploring this contest demonstrates that, as with the surprise attack or blowback contest over the explanation of 11 September 2001, the ‘war on terror’ is also discursively legitimated by the hegemony of the surprise attack legitimation script over the blowback de-legitimation script. This hegemony was demonstrated by the start of the war in Afghanistan on Sunday 7 October 2001. The chapter
concludes by arguing that the US foreign policy elite then used the hegemony of the surprise attack conflict discourse in its attempt to establish the ‘war on terror’ as a ‘new’ new world order to replace the Cold War, which is the subject of Chapter Six.

The Surprise Attack Legitimation Script

After constructing the surprise attack explanation of 11 September 2001 and achieving hegemony over the alternative blowback explanations, the United States foreign policy elite then had to write this dominant storyline into a script from which the ‘war on terror’ could be acted out. This section argues that this drama followed three broad acts. The first act *naturalised* (that is, it presented as objective and apolitical) the new post-11 September 2001 geopolitical realities of world politics within which the ‘war on terror’ would be conducted. Then, the second act *normalised* (that is, it presented the violent response as necessary, unavoidable, and the only possible reaction to these new natural realities) the ‘war on terror’. The third act included a series of self-legitimating discursive strategies that argued that the presupposed conduct of the war on Afghanistan would justify the violence in itself. It was this *conducting* of the ‘war on terror’ that ultimately achieved the hegemony of the surprise attack legitimation script. On that note, the blowback discursive critiques of these three acts are not presented simultaneously with each surprise attack discursive strategy as in Chapter Four, but are offered provided in the second section of this chapter as the blowback de-legitimation script of the ‘war on terror’.

*Naturalising the ‘war on terror’*

Three discursive strategies were identified as crucial in naturalising the ‘war on terror’ (Figure 5.1). This first act began with *globalising* 11 September 2001 as an attack not just on the United States but on the entire world; necessitating a unified worldwide response. Next, the world that was attacked was the *civilised* world, assaulted by an uncivilised ‘Other’; demanding a coalition of civilised states against ‘international terrorism’. Thus, the world was *dichotomised* into two mutually opposing camps; forcing all states to choose sides in this global struggle between good and evil.
Figure 5.1: The discursive strategies naturalising the ‘war on terror’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DISCURSIVE STRATEGY Discursive Tactic</th>
<th>Explanation of Discursive Strategy / Tactic</th>
<th>Example of Discursive Strategy / Tactic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. GLOBALISING</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Number of states</td>
<td>A global attack because of the number of states with citizens killed</td>
<td>&quot;Eighty nations lost citizens at the World Trade Centre. This isn't just an assault against America. It was an assault against the world, and the world is responding&quot; Colin Powell, interview, 10 October (2001ac)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Random attack</td>
<td>A global attack because it could have happened to any state</td>
<td>&quot;No country is safe from this kind of attack. It crosses every geographic boundary, social boundary, religious boundary, cultural boundary. And we must see it in those terms and respond in a unified way&quot; Colin Powell, interview, 13 September (2001k)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. CIVILISING</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Assault on civilisation</td>
<td>11 September 2001 was an attack on the civilised world</td>
<td>&quot;Terrorism is a scourge not only against the United States, but against civilisation [and therefore] it must be brought to an end&quot; Colin Powell, press conference, 12 September (2001c)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Terrorism as uncivilised</td>
<td>All terrorism is a criminal, barbaric, and uncivilised activity</td>
<td>&quot;We have endured an enormous tragedy but we will overcome. We will defend the rule of law against the lawless&quot; Colin Powell, speech, 21 September (2001j)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. DICHOTOMISING</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. States to decide</td>
<td>Every state must now decide which side of the ‘war on terror’ they stand</td>
<td>&quot;The United States is presenting a clear choice to every nation: Stand with the civilised world, or stand with the terrorists. And for those nations that stand with the terrorists, there will be a heavy price&quot; George Bush, speech, 6 October (2001s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. No neutrality</td>
<td>There is no room for neutrality in the ‘war on terror’</td>
<td>&quot;Look at the destruction, that massive, senseless, cruel loss of human life, and then, I ask you to look into your hearts and recognise that there is no room for neutrality on the issue of terrorism. You're either with civilisation or with the terrorists&quot; Rudy Giuliani, speech, 1 October (2001)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Globalising the ‘war on terror’

The first discursive strategy constructed 11 September 2001 as not just an international event, affecting more than one state, but as a *global* event affecting all states. As victims’ nationalities were confirmed, the ever-increasing number of states affected was used to globalise 11 September 2001 and thus naturalise a unified worldwide response. From the outset Secretary of State Colin Powell (2001j) consistently used this tactic, opening a 13 September press conference by raising the prospect that many other states would have had citizens killed:

> “Let me begin by first expressing our regrets to other nations who have lost precious lives in this tragic occurrence on the 11th. We are focusing, of course, on Americans, but we’ve also seen that *Great Britain* thinks they’ve lost 100 people. I’ve heard (of) *Australians, Japanese, South Koreans, Mexicans, Irish Nationals, Israelis* and many others who worked in this World Trade Centre”.

Four days later Powell (2001p) began to quantify this tactic when he argued that 11 September 2001 was an attack “that went far beyond America, far beyond New York City and far beyond Washington; 37 *countries* lost citizens in the World Trade Centre”. A week after the attacks Powell (2001q) explained that “62 *nations* are now identified as having lost citizens in the tragic terrorist act of last Tuesday”. Nine days after the attacks Powell (2001t) noted a further increase during an interview on a Fox TV *Special Report*: “I’ve just gotten an update report that we were saying 67 *nations* lost people in the World Trade Centre. Now it turns out there were 80 *nations* that lost people in the World Trade Centre”. This update was near the final total of 83, but the point is that this large number of states affected helped to globalise 11 September 2001 as an attack on the world. This apparent contradiction, given the earlier explanation of an ‘act of war’ against the United States, the ‘American people’, and their way of life, is perhaps explained by the universalising of ‘American’ values and civilisation by the US national exceptionalism myth: any attack on the United States is, by default, an attack on all humanity.

The consequent claim that 11 September 2001 was a random attack that could have happened to any other state built on this foundation. This possibility, which is only made plausible by the surprise attack denial that 11 September 2001 had anything to do with US foreign policy and thus the tactic also serves to further de-contextualise the attacks, was first raised by Powell (2001g) the following day in an interview on CNN television: “I have had expressions of full support from European allies and other allies...I sense there is a good deal of leaning forward
based on the calls I’ve had this morning in recognition of the fact that this could have happened to any one of them”. Similarly, during a press conference a week after the attacks National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice (2001x) claimed that other states joining the ‘war on terror’ were doing so because those governments knew that “This could have been us, and we understand that when America was attacked, more than America was attacked”. Thus, in addition to the 82 other states affected by having citizens killed, 11 September 2001 was also globalised by the warning that those states which escaped this attack could easily be targeted in the future. This possibility, which again only makes sense by denying that the US had been specifically targeted, further necessitates a unified worldwide response.

Civilising the ‘war on terror’

This globalised 11 September 2001 was then rhetorically inflated into an assault on the civilised world by an uncivilised ‘Other’. This second discursive strategy began to naturalise a global coalition of ‘civilised states’ against ‘uncivilised terrorists’ by describing this global attack as an assault on civilisation. The ploy, which clearly draws on and reinforces the binary spatialisation implicit in the national exceptionalism myth, was immediately and especially apparent in Powell’s interviews on numerous television networks the following day. For example, Powell (2001i) on NBC TV’s Today Show: “I’ve been in touch with leaders around the world...to make sure everybody understands that we need a worldwide response to this assault on America, because it’s an assault on civilisation, it’s an assault on democracy, it’s an assault on the world and the world must respond as the United States plans to respond”. Similarly, Powell (2001h) on Fox TV’s Morning News: “We are trying to make sure that the world understands that this was an assault not just on America, but on civilisation – upon all of the nations of the world. And it requires a worldwide response”.

Axiomatically, this attack on civilisation also constructed ‘terrorism’ as ‘uncivilised’. Clearly, this labelling was eased by President George Bush’s constant description of the “evil doers” explained in Chapter Four. The point here, however, is that this ‘evil’ is the ‘uncivilised’ opposite of the ‘civilised’ world, epitomised by the United States. At his press conference on 13 September Powell (2001j) first criminalised the activity by claiming that: “terrorism is a crime against all civilisation. Terrorism is a crime against all humanity. It knows no ethnic, religious or other national or geographic boundaries and we must see it in that context”. Vice President Dick Cheney (2001a), interviewed five days after the attacks on NBC TV’s Meet the Press, then used the criminal character of terrorism to draw attention to the distinction between the ‘civilised’ and ‘barbaric’ worlds: “I think the world increasingly will understand that what we
have here are a group of barbarians, that they threaten all of us, that the US is the target at the moment...So it's an attack not just upon the United States, but upon civilised society”.

During a 17 September interview on al-Jazeera TV Powell (2001p) summarised this tactic by categorically stating the United States position: “We believe that terrorism, in whatever form it shows up, is an uncivilised act”. Therefore, in his speech to the OAS five days later Powell (2001w) noted “the simple proposition that if we are a civilised people, we must work together in concert to defeat evil, to defeat terrorism”. As an ‘uncivilised’ activity a global coalition of civilised states to fight a ‘war on terror’ against the barbaric evil of ‘international terrorism’ was necessitated. The ‘war on terror’, therefore, would be a war between a ‘good civilised us’ (or ‘US’) and an ‘evil uncivilised them’. As noted in Chapter Four, for the ‘American people’ such representations presented the unfamiliarity of 11 September 2001 and the ‘war on terror’ in familiar terms.

**Dichotomising the ‘war on terror’**

This division between the civilised and uncivilised dichotomised the world into two opposing camps of good and evil that excluded neutrality. Bush (2001n) elevated (or perhaps reduced) the ‘war on terror’ to a good-versus-evil dichotomy during a 25 September press conference by imploring: “make no mistake about it, this is good versus evil”. Bush (2001r) entrenched this dichotomisation on 4 October when, in a speech at the Department of State just before it began, he simply declared that: “This is a war between good and evil”. Consequently, all states must now decide upon which side of this post-II September 2001 global divide they stand. This new decision was initially signalled, five days after the attacks, by Cheney (2001a) on NBC TV’s Meet the Press when he said of all states: “They’re going to have to decide, whether they’re going to stand with the United States and believe in freedom and democracy and civilisation or are they going to stand with the terrorists and the barbarians, if you will”. This decision would provide the basis of the ‘war on terror’, as Powell (2001y) explained on the next episode of NBC TV’s Meet the Press a week later:

“In terms of response, we have begun a broad campaign against the perpetrators of this attack, and also against terrorism in general. The campaign has already begun...with rallying the international community on our side of this issue, letting nations around the world know that this is a time to choose. You're either for freedom or you're for terrorism”.
Accordingly, the United States would now use the choice states made as “a new benchmark” (Powell 2001x) to determine its relationship with other states. As Powell (2001y), during the same interview on NBC TV’s Meet the Press on 23 September, said of states that were believed to persist in supporting terrorism: “continued conduct of that kind will identify you as someone who has a hostile interest towards the United States and the interests of the civilised world”. Consequently, in the post-11 September 2001 world there was no possibility of neutrality, no room for a ‘third way’ between the civilised world and the uncivilised ‘Other’. This exclusion further dichotomised the ‘war on terror’ and was epitomised by Bush (2001x) as he announced the start of the war on Afghanistan on 7 October, when he explicitly ruled out the possibility of neutrality and warned of the dangers of being on the wrong side of this new dichotomy: “Every nation has a choice to make. In this conflict, there is no neutral ground. If any government sponsors the outlaws and killers of innocence, they have become outlaws and murderers themselves. And they will take that lonely path at their own peril”.

These three discursive strategies of the first act of the surprise attack legitimation script naturalised the ‘war on terror’ by presenting these new post-11 September 2001 geopolitical realities of world politics as objective, apolitical, and axiomatic. Bush’s (2001t) speech to the joint session of Congress on 20 September epitomised this naturalising of the ‘war on terror’ and its consequences. Globalising the ‘war on terror’, as Bush did when he declared that “Perhaps the NATO Charter reflects best the attitude of the world: an attack on one is an attack on all”, necessitated a unified worldwide response. A coalition of civilised states against uncivilised ‘international terrorism’ was necessitated by civilising the ‘war on terror’, as Bush did when he explained that the ‘war on terror’ was more than a US response: “This is not, however, just America’s fight. And what is at stake is not just America’s freedom. This is the world’s fight. This is civilisation’s fight”. Finally, dichotomising the ‘war on terror’, as Bush did when he declared that “Every nation in every region now has a decision to make: either you are with us or with the terrorists”, necessitated all states to choose sides and excluded neutrality in this Manichean struggle between good and evil. Within these new naturalised ‘geopolitical realities’ the ‘war on terror’ was then normalised by additional discursive strategies legitimating the war on Afghanistan.
Normalising the ‘war on terror’

Eight discursive strategies, presented in four pairs, were identified as crucial in normalising the ‘war on terror’ (Figure 5.2). This second act began with separating the war on Afghanistan from religion and representing the United States as anointed with the responsibility of history to defeat ‘international terrorism’. Next, the ‘war on terror’ was both a war of self-defence of the civilised world against an uncivilised ‘Other’ and an inevitable war because negotiation with the “evil doers” and their supporters was impossible. Normalisation continued with claims of the popular approval of the ‘American people’ and justified by the deified President of the United States of America. Finally, the US government, military and people were resolute in their determination to conduct the ‘war on terror’ and were defiant in denying even any ‘victory’ to ‘terrorism’.

Religion and history

The role of religion in the ‘war on terror’ is a complex and controversial one and a full discussion is beyond the scope of this thesis. The point here is to focus on the issues raised by the discourse analysis of the primary data. After Bush’s (2001h) initial description of the ‘war on terror’ as a “crusade” was withdrawn, the United States foreign policy elite then separated the war on Afghanistan from a partisan understanding of the role and importance of religion. The first tactic in this regard was to further reinforce 11 September 2001 as an attack on the world, and thus again normalise a unified military response, by claiming it was an attack on all religions. One of the most vociferous assertions came from Deputy Secretary of Defence Paul Wolfowitz (2001) in his testimony to the Armed Services Committee on 3-4 October: “We will deal decisively with the terrorist network that is responsible for this horror and those who aid and abet their barbaric assaults on all civilized people of all religions everywhere in the world”. The effect was to not only include Islam in the religions attacked on 11 September 2001 but also to emphasise that what mattered now in the ‘war on terror’ was not religion but civilised behaviour, thus separating the perpetrators from Islam and all other religions.

Similarly, the violence of the ‘Other’ was rejected by dismissing the credibility of religion in justifying the attacks of 11 September 2001 and emphasising the simple criminality of those actions. In response to the suggestion, on NBC TV’s Meet the Press on 23 September, for example, that the US had unhelpfully demonised Osama bin Laden, Powell (2001y) discredited his religious motivations and then represented him purely as a criminal murderer:
Figure 5.2a: The discursive strategies normalising the ‘war on terror’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DISCURSIVE STRATEGY</th>
<th>Explanation of Discursive Strategy / Tactic</th>
<th>Example of Discursive Strategy / Tactic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. RELIGION</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. All religions</td>
<td>Because all religions were attacked</td>
<td>&quot;Terrorists attacked and killed innocent people from dozens of countries of all races and religions...Innocent lives are still at risk...and will be until we have dealt with the terrorists&quot; Donald Rumsfeld, press conference, 9 October (2001i)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. False religion</td>
<td>The false use of Islam to justify terrorism</td>
<td>&quot;So while we are looking at the Muslims who through a false application of their faith are de-legitimates the 'Other's' use of violence doing this, let's look at the Muslims who understand the power of the democratic system&quot; Colin Powell, interview, 23 September (2001x)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. HISTORY</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Assured defeat</td>
<td>By attacking the US the terrorists assured their own defeat</td>
<td>&quot;This nation is peaceful, but fierce when stirred to anger. This conflict was begun on the timing and terms of others; it will end in a way and at an hour of our choosing&quot; George Bush, speech, 14 September (2001f)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Fulfil undertaking</td>
<td>The US will fulfil the historical undertaking to defeat terrorism</td>
<td>&quot;We are engaged in a noble cause (that will) bring peace to the world, the likes of which we've never seen (and) to make the world a better place for generations to come&quot; George Bush, speech, 4 October (2001r)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. US destiny</td>
<td>It is the US historical destiny to lead the civilised world</td>
<td>&quot;Now war has been declared on us, we will lead the world to victory&quot; George Bush, press conference, 13 September (2001e)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. US responsibility</td>
<td>It is the US historical responsibility to defeat terrorism</td>
<td>&quot;Today's operation is Enduring Freedom. We defend not only our precious freedoms, but also the freedom of people everywhere to live and raise their children free from fear&quot; George Bush, press conference, 7 October (2001f)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Figure 5.2a: The discursive strategies normalising the 'war on terror'

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<th>DISCURSIVE STRATEGY</th>
<th>Explanation of Discursive Strategy / Tactic</th>
<th>Example of Discursive Strategy / Tactic</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. SELF-DEFENCE</strong></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| a. National security | Terrorism is a threat to US national security | "The enormous destruction and devastation that was caused by last Tuesday's attack have brought us to a turning point in our country's fight against terrorism and the preservation of the safety and security of our society"  
John Ashcroft, press conference, 18 September (2001b) |
| b. Ongoing threat | Terrorism is an ongoing threat to US national security | "The American people face a serious, immediate, and ongoing threat from terrorism. At this moment American service men and women are risking their lives to battle the enemy"  
John Ashcroft, speech, 25 October (2001c) |
| c. Offensive war | The US must take the 'war on terror' to wherever the terrorists are located | "The best defence against terror is a global offensive against terror wherever it might be found"  
George Bush, press conference, 8 October (2001u) |
| **4. INEVITABLE** |                                           |                                         |
| a. No negotiation | There is no possibility of negotiating with the terrorists | "The President's message to the Taliban today is the same message that he gave last night: that there will be no negotiations and no discussions. He expects the Taliban to honour the demands that he made in his speech last night"  
Ari Fleischer, press conference, 21 September (2001c) |
| b. Gunboat diplomacy | The only means of diplomacy that the terrorists understand is military action | "(The Taliban) have rejected every suggestion, request, or demand made by the United States of America and the coalition partners"  
Donald Rumsfeld, press conference, 7 October (2001h) |
| c. Taliban responsibility | The Taliban are responsible for the start of the war on Afghanistan | "The Taliban have made a choice...they are what they are, and they are bringing great harm to the Afghan people"  
Donald Rumsfeld, press conference, 7 October (2001h) |
“We are very sensitive to this question. And it is unfortunate that there are Muslims who feel that way. The reality is that Osama bin Laden has demonised himself. *He is unfaithful to the religion that he says he is an adherent to.* He is a murderer. He has murdered thousands of people...He has committed these acts of murder around the world, *and that’s what he should be seen as, a murderer*.

Ironically, bin Laden’s (and thus al-Qaeda’s and other ‘terrorists’) false interpretation of Islam to justify ‘terrorism’ was then used to legitimate the war on Afghanistan. In a press conference on 8 October, for example, Attorney General John Ashcroft (2001c) reasoned: “Osama bin Laden broadcast a message yesterday celebrating the attacks of September 11. He glorifies the terrorists who kill thousands of innocent men, women and children with no warning and no mercy. *He distorts religion to promote death and to destroy life.* He seeks fear, chaos and terror for the American people, and he swears to steal our sense of security in America. This is the face of evil. After hearing his chilling words, *there can be no doubt that America’s actions of self-defence are justified*. The effect of this accusation of a false invocation of Islam to justify ‘terrorism’ was to undermine one of the ‘Other’s’ main sources of their own legitimation of violence.

As a war of historical significance, the ‘war on terror’ was a warning to those who had declared war on the peace-loving United States that they had made a mistake that assured their own defeat. Other ‘enemies’ in history had made this same error, and now the 11 September 2001 perpetrators and their colleagues would share in their predecessors’ fate. Bush (2001f) made this point emphatically in his first National Public Radio address after the attacks when he warned that the ‘terrorists’ “will discover what others have learned: those who make war against the United States have chosen their own destruction”. The effect was to invoke history as a precedent to justify a violent response.

Paradoxically, the United States foreign policy elite was then self-effacing in arguing that although the US did not start or want this war it would fulfil the historical undertaking to defeat ‘international terrorism’. The tactic was clearly expressed by Bush (2001t) as he announced the start of the war in Afghanistan on 7 October, when he declared: “We did not ask for this mission, but we will fulfil it”. The effect was to present the ‘war on terror’ as an objective and apolitical reality that, barring 11 September 2001, would not have been pursued by the US, thus exonerating them of responsibility for starting the war on Afghanistan.
Far more typical, however, was the claim that it was the historical destiny of the United States to lead the civilised world in this ‘war on terror’. Here, the national exceptionalism myth was invoked to justify the natural right, indeed the historical indispensability, of US global leadership. Bush (2001r) exemplified this tactic in a speech at the State Department on 4 October: “I know there will be some nations that will become frustrated over time... But we won’t weary, this is a nation that has (sic) made a determination to rise-up in a united way...Now is the time. Now is the time for this great nation to lead”. The effect was to normalise US leadership of the ‘civilised world’ against the uncivilised world.

These three tactics were brought together in the assertion that, as the leader of the civilised world, the United States had a historical responsibility to conduct the ‘war on terror’ for the security of others and also for future generations. Initially, this strategy was limited to the ‘historical opportunity’ given the US by 11 September 2001. In a press conference two days later, for example, Bush (20010) noted that the coming ‘war on terror’ was “an opportunity to do generations a favour by coming together and whipping terrorism”. At the national prayer service in Washington the next day, however, Bush (2001f) boosted this historical opportunity when he stated that the US “responsibility to history is already clear: to answer these attacks and rid the world of evil”. The effect was to legitimate the defeat of ‘international terrorism’ as not only of benefit to the United States but a long-term global good.

Self-defence and inevitable

By emphasising terrorism as a threat to national security the ‘war on terror’ was presented as a war of self-defence. Ashcroft (2001a) made this argument immediately: “Today, America has experienced one of the greatest tragedies ever witnessed on our soil. These heinous acts of violence are an assault on the security of our nation. They are an assault on the security and freedom of the American people”. On the same day Bush (2001c) used this national security threat to justify the need for self-defence, declaring that the US government had already “taken all appropriate security precautions to protect the American people” and would “do whatever is necessary to protect America and Americans”. The effect was to begin asserting the United States’ moral and legal right to self-defence.

Moreover, this threat was an ongoing threat, a ‘clear and present danger’ in White House parlance, to national security. The threat did not pass, in other words, with the deaths of the 19 perpetrators on 11 September 2001. Powell (2001p) used this tactic on al-Jazeera television six days after the attacks: “Now, right now, our principal concern is the Osama bin Laden and al-
Qaeda organisation. But there are other organisations in the world that conduct terrorist activities and conduct them against (sic) US citizens and US interests. To the extent that we have to defend ourselves and protect ourselves, we obviously have to go and see what we can do about those terrorist organisations as well'. The effect was to use the dramatic but short-lived incident of 11 September 2001 to normalise the ‘war on terror’ as an ongoing US war of self-defence.

Paradoxically, this self-defensive war was transformed into an offensive war by arguing that a ‘war on terror’ could not be waged only on US territory but had to be taken to wherever the terrorist threat exists in the world. Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld was particularly assertive in making this argument. On ABC TV’s This Week programme on 16 September, for example, Rumsfeld (2001x) used the unpredictability of terrorism to justify an offensive war: “We have to recognise that a terrorist can attack in any time and any place using a variety of different techniques. It may be an airplane one day, it may be a ship or a subway or a car. Therefore, the only thing we can do is...wage a war and it has to be taken to them, where they are”. In a press conference at the Pentagon two days later, a week after the attacks, Rumsfeld (2001b) made this offensive ‘war on terror’ even more explicit: “The best defence against terrorists is an offence. You simply cannot batten down the hatches and try to cope with every conceivable thing any terrorist could imagine to do. I mean, they’ve already done some unimaginable things. The only answer is to take the effort to them, where they are”. The effect was to legitimate US military actions in any part of the world by claiming them as part of this self-defensive ‘war on terror’.

The ‘war on terror’ was also an inevitable war because, recalling that these “evil doers” are beyond normal human behaviour, negotiation with ‘terrorists’ is impossible. This tactic was immediately evident when Powell (2001h) denied the possibility of negotiating with bin Laden, al-Qaeda, or the Taliban on Fox TV’s Morning News the morning after the attacks:

QUESTION: “We have an international terrorist network. There is no way we can negotiate with these people, is there?”
POWELL: “No. They have to be rooted. They have to be destroyed. And we are hard at work on that this morning”.

The effect of not being able to negotiate with the ‘terrorists’ was to circumvent any chance of a diplomatic solution to the crisis. Instead, the only ‘diplomacy’ the ‘terrorists’ understand is ‘gunboat diplomacy’. Hence the United States presented the Taliban regime a list of demands
with which they had to fully and immediately comply in order to avoid military action. Bush (2001) articulated these demands, and the consequences for not meeting them, in his 20 September speech to Congress:

"And tonight the United States of America makes the following demands on the Taliban. Deliver to United States authorities all of the leaders of al-Qaeda who hide in your land. Release all foreign nationals, including American citizens you have unjustly imprisoned. Protect foreign journalists, diplomats and aid workers in your country. Close immediately and permanently every terrorist training camp in Afghanistan. And hand over every terrorist and every person in their support structure to appropriate authorities. Give the United States full access to terrorist training camps, so we can make sure they are no longer operating. These demands are not open to negotiation or discussion. The Taliban must act and act immediately. They will hand over the terrorists or they will share in their fate”.

The Taliban response to these demands, which indicated discussions were possible if the United States provided evidence of bin Laden’s guilt, was raised with White House Press Secretary Ari Fleischer (2001a) at a press conference the following morning, but the ‘no negotiation’ tactic closed-off any diplomatic opening and led to the inevitability of the ‘war on terror’:

QUESTION: “Does this administration believe, based on the Taliban’s response, that military action is inevitable?”
FLEISCHER: “The President has made it abundantly clear that this nation is preparing for war, because war has been declared against the United States. And the United States will respond...because justice demands it”.

QUESTION: “Does the President believe that the window of opportunity has closed, in terms of the Taliban responding to his demand?”
FLEISCHER: “I think he’s put them on notice. And he is preparing to do what must inevitably come next”.

The effect of this inevitability was that only the Taliban could now prevent war, and if the Taliban did not meet these demands then responsibility for the war on Afghanistan would be
theirs, and not rest with the United States. The Taliban’s intransigence would provide the trigger for war. In his weekly radio address on 6 October Bush (2001s) announced the imminent deadline for Taliban compliance with US demands: “Full warning has been given, and time is running out”. The following evening, when Bush (2001t) announced the commencement of military action, he specifically blamed the Taliban for the outbreak of hostilities: “More than two weeks ago, I gave Taliban leaders a series of clear and specific demands: Close terrorist training camps. Hand over leaders of the al-Qaeda network, and return all foreign nationals, including American citizens unjustly detained in your country. None of these demands were met. And now, the Taliban will pay a price”. The effect was to again blame ‘international terrorism’ for ‘starting’ the ‘war on terror’ (first on 11 September 2001 in the United States and now on 7 October 2001 in Afghanistan) and thus place full responsibility on their shoulders and simultaneously exonerate the United States.

**Popular and deified**

The ‘war on terror’ was rendered a popular war by memorialising the victims of 11 September 2001 in such a way as to give moral authority to the war on Afghanistan. Bush (2001g) signalled this memorialisation tactic in his weekly national radio address four days later: “Now we honour those who died and prepare to respond to these attacks on our nation. I will not settle for a token act. Our response must be sweeping, sustained, and effective”. The effect was to assert that the 3,000 deaths on 11 September 2001 normalised a violent response. The US foreign policy elite enhanced this alleged moral authority of the dead by extrapolating from the direct casualties to the collective victim of the ‘American people’. This tactic was immediately evident on CBS TV’s *Morning News* the following day when Powell (2001f), in keeping with national exceptionalism, exalted the ‘American people’ and claimed they thought along the same lines as the US government: “When you saw those scenes coming out of New York and Washington, the American people made a judgement, we are at war. And they want a comprehensive response. They want us to act as if we are at war. And we are going to do that...(because) the American people know what they saw yesterday...an act of war”. Similarly, the effect was to assert the moral authority of the victimised ‘American people’ to again demand a violent response.

This popular support was used to deflect criticisms of the ‘war on terror’. In a press conference on 24 September, for example, Fleischer (2001d) resorted to this tactic to defuse criticism of the ‘secrecy’ surrounding the ‘evidence’ upon which the US counter-terrorism actions were based:
### Discursive Strategy

#### Explanation of Discursive Strategy / Tactic

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<td><strong>5. POPULAR</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>a. Moral authority</td>
<td>The US has a natural moral authority to respond with violence</td>
<td>&quot;Time will pass, but our nation will never forget that morning when thousands of innocent, unsuspecting human beings were murdered...&quot;</td>
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<td>b. Collective victim</td>
<td>The 'American people' are the collective victim of the attacks</td>
<td>&quot;...I doubt there is a man or woman in this room tonight who did not experience a personal loss in the events of September 11...&quot;</td>
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<td>c. The peoples' support</td>
<td>The 'war on terror' has the popular support of the 'American people'</td>
<td>&quot;...And I know there is not a man or woman in this room who does not wait on the day that justice is delivered, as it will be. And it will be delivered methodically, unsparingly, and in full&quot; Dick Cheney, speech, 18 October (2001b)</td>
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<td><strong>6. DEIFIED</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>a. Truth and knowledge</td>
<td>The US President is deified as the source of truth and knowledge</td>
<td>&quot;The President has made very clear that this is considered a direct attack against the United States of America and our own way of life&quot; Donald Rumsfeld, press conference, 20 September (2001d)</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. Deflecting criticism</td>
<td>The deity of the US President deflects criticism of the 'war on terror'</td>
<td>&quot;George W Bush has done more, much more, than to declare war on terror. George W Bush is fighting a war on terror. Under his leadership we have pledged ourselves to victory&quot; John Ashcroft, speech, 25 October (2001c)</td>
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<td><strong>7. RESOLVE</strong></td>
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<td>a. US resolve</td>
<td>The US is resolved to survive the trauma of 11 September 2001</td>
<td>&quot;Our country is strong. A great people has been moved to defend a great nation&quot; George Bush, speech, 11 September (2001c)</td>
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<td>b. Crucial resource</td>
<td>US resolve is a crucial resource in fighting the 'war on terror'</td>
<td>&quot;It's hard for people around the world to understand the resolve of America...But they need to look in the eyes of members of my administration and hear them say that not only is this President resolved, but America is resolved to root out terrorism&quot; George Bush, speech, 3 October (2001q)</td>
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<td><strong>8. DEFIANT</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>a. Maintain and deny</td>
<td>The US will maintain its foreign policy and way of life and deny victory to 'terrorists'</td>
<td>&quot;The people who committed these acts are clearly determined to try to force the United States of America and our values to withdraw from the world, or to respond by curtailing our freedoms. If we do that, the terrorists will have won, and we have no intention of doing so&quot; Donald Rumsfeld, press conference, 18 September (2001x)</td>
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QUESTION: “Ari, it does seem that...the answer is always ‘That’s classified. Trust us’. Does that really serve the democracy well if all this information on which the government is basing its actions is classified?”

FLEISCHER: “I think the American people get it. I think they understand that as the nation moves from a peacetime footing to a wartime footing, the government’s need to hold certain pieces of information closer is an important need. And I think the American people are accepting and understanding of that”.

In other words, because the ‘American people’ are not questioning the government’s handling of this popular ‘war on terror’, there is no need for the media to do so either.

On the assumption that something must be true if the President says so, the President of the United States of America was deified as the ultimate source of truth and knowledge about the ‘war on terror’. The tactic was evident in the persistent ‘As the President has said...’ claims by other members that initially served to ‘objectify’ explanations of 11 September 2001. For example, in a press conference the following day Fleischer (2001a) used this tactic to reinforce the reason for the attacks: “As the President said in his remarks this morning, freedom and democracy are under attack”. In a press conference a week afterwards Rice (2001) also objectified this ‘attack on the world’: “And so when the President says that he is doing this to rally the world, we have a very visible symbol of the fact that it was the world that was attacked”. This deification continued in order to ‘objectify’ legitimations of the ‘war on terror’. For example, in a press conference on 24 September Powell (2001z) explained that the ‘war on terror’ “will be fought with persistence and with perseverance, and it will be fought until, as the President has said, we have prevailed and we have won”. The combined effect was to present the President’s assertions as objective facts that are consequently beyond dispute.

As with the popular tactic regarding the ‘American people’, the deification of the President was also used to deflect criticisms of the ‘war on terror’. As the member most often placed under the media spotlight, Fleischer was particularly adept in using this tactic. A press conference exchange on 9 October concerning the limited circulation of classified intelligence information (discussed more fully in the last part of this section) to just eight members of Congress was typical of Fleischer’s (2001f) invocation of ‘the President’ to withstand the media barrage:
QUESTION: “(Ari, is there concern that Congress’s role, its contribution to the war policy and its oversight, is now going to fall into the hands of those eight people?)”

FLEISCHER: “I think the President is very satisfied with the sharing of information and the decision he’s made”.

QUESTION: “(Has there been) any time when so few members of the elected leadership of this representative government have been informed of the operations of these...”

FLEISCHER: “I very much appreciate your desire to have a large group of people have this information, but I’ve said about all I’m going to say...The President has done this for a reason. The President stands by it, and it’s the right thing to do in the President’s opinion, and that’s why he’s done it. He’s aware of the types of questions you’re going to ask about this. But the President has done it deliberately because this is a time of war...Yes, this is a determined decision by the President”.

In other words, to critique the ‘war on terror’ was to critique the President himself; a questioning at odds with the office holder’s normal status as the embodiment of national exceptionalism. The effect of this deification was deny any criticisms of both the President and the ‘war on terror’.

Resolute and defiant

As a resolute war, the United States was presented as resolute in facing the trauma of 11 September 2001. Although the attacks challenged US unity, strength, and confidence, they had not shattered those qualities. Again invoking national exceptionalism, Bush (2001b) began this tactic in his second speech of the day, from Barksdale Air Force Base, when he claimed that: “The resolve of our great nation is being tested. But make no mistake: We will show the world that we will pass this test”. The effect of this US resolve was to further legitimate a violent response, as Bush (20011) declared in his speech to Congress on 20 September: “Tonight, we are a country awakened to danger and called to defend freedom. Our grief has turned to anger and anger to resolution. Whether we bring our enemies to justice or justice to our enemies, justice will be done”. As Bush suggests, this resolve was a crucial resource for fighting the ‘war on terror’, a tactic that was evident within hours of the attacks. During a press conference the following morning Powell (2001c) made the connection between United States resolve and fighting the ‘war on terror’: “It is a tragedy. But as the President has made clear, it is a tragedy that we are strong enough to overcome. Our spirits will not be broken. The resilience of this
society will not be broken. We will find out who is responsible for this and they will pay for it". The effect was to legitimate the ‘war on terror’ as a war the US, despite the trauma of 11 September 2001 and with typical exceptionalism, could still fight (and win).

As an explicit demonstration of this resolve, the apparent (but not admitted) wishes of the 11 September 2001 perpetrators were defied by pledging to maintain US foreign policy. This defiance would deny the perpetrators any ‘victory’ on the international stage. In a press conference on 18 September, for example, Rumsfeld (2001x) was in a particularly defiant mood: “We have a choice: either to change the way we live, which is unacceptable; or to change the way that they live, and we choose the latter...The terrorists...thought they could frighten Americans into retreat and inaction, and they will find that Americans have no intention of withdrawing from the world in fear”. In a press conference a fortnight after the attacks Bush (2001x) was equally vociferous in his defiance of the ‘terrorists’: “Now is the time for freedom­loving people to come together to fight terrorist activity. We cannot fear terrorists. We can’t let terrorism dictate our course of action. And we will not let a terrorist dictate the course of action in the United States”. The irony was that in launching a ‘war on terror’ the ‘terrorists’ were doing exactly that, but the effect was to further disconnect 11 September 2001 from US foreign policy which, because it did not provoke the attacks, did not warrant reconsideration.

Likewise, any ‘victory’ on the domestic front was denied by defying any change to the American way of life, as immediately evident in a Powell (2001c) press conference the following day:

“We believe that acts of war have been committed against the American people and will respond accordingly. But at the same time, life has to go on. In all of the difficult times we will be facing ahead, we have to still try to return life to a sense of normalcy. We cannot be a people who are afraid to live. We cannot be a people who will move away from a relatively open society. We cannot be a people who walk around terrified. We’re Americans. We don’t walk around terrified. We’re going to be strong in this difficult period. And we’re going to move forward with pride and with determination”.

The effect was to further deny any ‘victory’ to the ‘terrorists’ by refusing to alter the behaviour of the United States or the ‘American people’, thus normalising the ‘war on terror’ in defence of pre-11 September 2001 foreign policy and way of life.
These eight discursive strategies of the second act of the surprise attack legitimation script normalised the 'war on terror' by presenting it as the only credible foreign policy response to the new post-11 September 2001 'geopolitical realities' of world politics. Religion and history were invoked by the to normalise the supposed (ir)religious and historical significance of the 'war on terror'. The war on Afghanistan was constructed as a war of US self-defence and an inevitable war against the implacable foe of 'international terrorism'. The 'war on terror' was also a popular war amongst the 'American people' and was further normalised by the deification of the US President. Lastly, the 'war on terror' was also a war to be fought by the resolute and defiant US government, military and citizens. This normalised 'war on terror' was then presented as fait accompli because, regardless of any developments between now and then, the actual conduct of the war on Afghanistan would self-legitimate this violent response.

**Conducting the ‘war on terror’**

Four discursive strategies were identified as crucial in the third act of self-legitimating the 'war on terror' (Figure 5.3). Conducting this secret war began by limiting public disclosure of evidence concerning 11 September 2001 and then undertaking much of the 'war on terror' in secrecy. Next, this comprehensive war was extrapolated to include those who harboured, and not just perpetrated, 'international terrorism', so the 'war on terror' would also be a multifaceted counter-terrorism effort. Specifically, this just war would be conducted by the righteous US military and would therefore also be a humanitarian war to assist the innocent civilians of Afghanistan. Finally, this mundane war would also be conducted on the home-front of domestic politics and would become part of the banal politics of everyday life for the 'American people'.

**Secret war**

As a secret 'war on terror', the United States foreign policy elite argued that to disclose evidence regarding the guilt of Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda in perpetrating 11 September 2001 would risk revealing not only what the US knew but also how they knew it. Non-disclosure, therefore, protected US intelligence methods and sources. This tactic, which became a consistent theme, was signalled by Powell (2001g) the day after the attacks in an interview on CNN television:
Figure 5.3a: The discursive strategies self-legitimating the ‘war on terror’

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<td><strong>1. SECRET WAR</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>a. Protect intelligence</td>
<td>The US must protect its intelligence gathering methods and sources</td>
<td>&quot;To reveal (how the US gets intelligence information) would be to provide information to the al-Qaeda organisation, to Osama bin Laden, to any other enemies of this country that they would love to have. And I will not do that&quot; Ari Fleischer, press conference, 21 September (2001c)</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. Non-classified evidence</td>
<td>The US will only release non-classified intelligence information</td>
<td>&quot;It’s in our interest to give as much information to the world as we can... so that everybody will see the case as clearly as we do. So the information will be coming out...(but) there’s a lot of information we have to go through&quot;. Colin Powell, interview, 27 September (2001aa)</td>
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<tr>
<td>c. Military secrecy</td>
<td>Military operations secret to not reveal war-plan to enemy</td>
<td>&quot;I'm not going to describe what forces we're moving. I'm not going to discuss the dates and times of when they leave and when they're going to arrive...I'm not going to provide specific details of who's doing what, when, and where&quot;. Donald Rumsfeld, press conference, 20 September (2001d)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Invisible war</td>
<td>Some of the 'war on terror' will be conducted in secret</td>
<td>&quot;So the progress that takes place...most of it will be seen, some of it probably won't be seen, but it will occur in different places, at different times, in different ways&quot; Donald Rumsfeld, press conference, 19 October (2001)</td>
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Figure 5.3a: The discursive strategies self-legitimating the ‘war on terror’

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<th>DISCURSIVE STRATEGY Discursive Tactic</th>
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<td>2. COMPREHENSIVE WAR</td>
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<td>a. All terrorism</td>
<td>The ‘war on terror’ is against all forms of terrorism, wherever it is</td>
<td>&quot;It is also a campaign against all forms of terrorism...(it) is something we all have to attack wherever it occurs throughout the world&quot; Colin Powell, interview, 10 October (2001ab)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Terrorist states</td>
<td>The ‘war on terror’ is against states that harbour or support terrorists</td>
<td>&quot;From this day forward, any nation that continues to harbour or support terrorism will be regarded by the United States as a hostile regime&quot; George Bush, speech, 20 September (2001)</td>
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<tr>
<td>c. Multifaceted</td>
<td>The ‘war on terror’ will be fought simultaneously on various fronts</td>
<td>&quot;We will direct every resource at our command - every means of diplomacy, every tool of intelligence, every instrument of law enforcement, every financial influence, and every necessary weapon of war - to the destruction and to the defeat of the global terror network&quot; George Bush, speech, 20 September (2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Multiple coalitions</td>
<td>The ‘war on terror’ will involve multiple and flexible coalitions</td>
<td>&quot;From time to time I see references in the press to ‘the coalition’ - singular. And let me reiterate that there is no single coalition in this effort. This campaign involves a number of flexible coalitions that will evolve...(and) will involve different nations at different times doing different things&quot; Donald Rumsfeld, press conference, 18 October (2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Arab and Islamic states included</td>
<td>The ‘war on terror’ coalitions will include Arab and Muslim states</td>
<td>“The world stands united in this effort. It is not about a religion or an individual terrorist or a country. Our partners in this effort represent nations and peoples of all cultures, all religions and all races” Donald Rumsfeld, press conference, 7 October (2001)</td>
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</table>
QUESTION: “Mr. Secretary, Senator Orrin Hatch was saying this morning that US intelligence actually intercepted communications between Osama bin Laden supporters discussing the attacks. What can you tell us about these intercepted communications?”

POWELL: “We should not be talking about intelligence methods used by the United States of America. All we do is put them at risk, so we should not be talking about such things, and I will not”.

Indeed, even talking about not talking about this subject was taboo:

QUESTION: “Are you suggesting that Senator Orrin Hatch has been irresponsible in floating this information?”

POWELL: “We should not be talking about how the United States collects information in cases such as this”.

The effect was to circumvent discussion, especially any critical examination, of information concerning the understanding of 11 September 2001; even though this provides the basis for the ‘war on terror’. This questioning was emphatically defused by Fleischer (2001c) during a 21 September press conference when the media persisted in questioning the White House Press Secretary on the US evidence against bin Laden. After reciting the risks of revealing information, Fleischer concluded that: “I just want to say this with the greatest respect possible: You have the right to ask those questions. I have the responsibility not to answer them”.

Consequently, only non-classified evidence, that would not endanger intelligence gathering methods and sources or provide sensitive information to US ‘enemies’, would be disclosed. Such information would be thoroughly checked and filtered before being de-classified and released. This process would take time, meaning this tactic was employed during the one month under scrutiny but very little evidence was actually disclosed within this period. Powell (2001ab) made the protection of this evidence clear in an interview on National Public Radio on 27 September: “We’re assembling lots of information. Some of it is intelligence information; some of it is law enforcement information. And as we assemble it, we will release that which is unclassified and we can share, protecting that which is classified so that we don’t give away sources and methods, or tell the enemy what we know that we don’t want them to know”. The effect was to circumvent, or at least delay, demands for the disclosure of evidence on the guilt of Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda until after the war on Afghanistan had started.
Similarly, the United States foreign policy elite refused to divulge any military aspect of the coming war on Afghanistan. This military secrecy tactic was evident from the outset when, in a press conference the day after the attacks, Fleischer (2001a) also stone-walled the media:

QUESTION: “Given the scale and the level of killing in these attacks yesterday, can the President assure the American people that the response will be commensurate?”
FLEISCHER: “I’m just not going to speculate about the response. You have what the President said about how the United States will prevail. But I’m not going to go beyond that, I’m not going to speculate. And I leave it at that”.
QUESTION: “It does suggest a unified military response, though”.
FLEISCHER: “I think it suggests a unified response. Again, anything dealing with anything military I’m not going to speculate about”.

As with the non-disclosure of intelligence information, to share war information too widely would give warning to the enemy of the US war plan. The un-stated reasoning was to avoid endangering the success of those operations and risking the lives of military personnel. Again, Fleischer (2001f) was left to defend this military secrecy in a press conference on 9 October:

QUESTION: “Ari, should the American people be prepared next to see ground troops in Afghanistan?”
FLEISCHER: “I’m just not going to discuss any operational aspects of the campaign”.
QUESTION: “You’re not ruling out the use of U.S. ground troops?”
FLEISCHER: “I’m not discussing it. Obviously, that type of question, if that were the case, that’s information that those people who are fighting us in Afghanistan would love to know, and I’m not going to provide it”.

As a consequence of this increasingly secret ‘war on terror’, it was admitted that while most of the military action in Afghanistan would be visible, certain aspects of it would be invisible and may only become ‘public’ long after the event. Cheney (2001b) was explicit in making this point eleven days after the war started when he argued in a charity dinner speech at the Waldorf Hotel in New York that: “It is important to realise that the military aspect will not always be so visible. There will be times like this when we can watch a videotape of the guided munitions finding
their targets. Other successes will come from covert operations that are not seen or heard beyond a very small circle”. The effect was to limit the distribution of classified information in order to maintain control over the war-making process. This tactic was evident in the limiting of the number of people (as noted above, for example, to the leaders of Congress rather than all members) who were privy to such information about the ‘war on terror’. The effect was to drape a veil of secrecy over the ‘war on terror’.

Comprehensive war
A comprehensive ‘war on terror’ was established by extrapolating from the specific ‘terrorism’ of 11 September 2001 to ‘international terrorism’ in general, in all its political forms and wherever it is located throughout the world. This point was first made by Powell (2001c) in his press conference the following morning when he forewarned that the ‘war on terror’ would be “against all forms of terrorism, wherever it may occur and however it rears its ugly head”. A month later Powell (2001ad) was still practicing this tactic, claiming in an interview on CBS TV’s The Early Show that: “This is not just a campaign against al-Qaeda and Osama bin Laden; it is a campaign against terrorism...that affects nations and civilisations and cultures all around the world...So all of us have an interest in participating in a campaign that goes against terrorism wherever it is found”. The effect was that military action against ‘terrorism’, however defined, was legitimated anywhere in the world.

Similarly, the ‘war on terror’ was extrapolated to include ‘terrorist states’. Because ‘international terrorism’ needs state support to function, states that harbour and support terrorism are deemed to be as abhorrent as the terrorist groups, and are therefore legitimate targets of the ‘war on terror’. This extrapolation was made from the evening of the attacks, when Bush (2001c) declared from the White House that the United States “will make no distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbour them”. In a press conference seven days later Bush (2001x) detailed what this guilt-by-association meant for the al-Qaeda organisers of 11 September 2001 and the Taliban regime in Afghanistan:

“All I can tell you is that Osama bin Laden is a prime suspect and the people who house him, encourage him, provide food, comfort or money are on notice. Last week I spoke clearly about our nation’s policy and that is, we’re going to find those evil doers, those barbaric people who attacked our country and we’re going to hold them accountable and we’re going to hold the people who house them accountable. The people who
think they can provide them safe havens will be held accountable. The people who feed them will be held accountable. And the Taliban must take my statement seriously”.

The effect was to provide time-and-place specific targets, instead of un-locatable ‘terrorists’ and ‘terrorist’ ‘networks’, for the conventional US military’s ‘war on terror’.

Not only would the ‘war on terror’ be a comprehensive war against all forms of ‘terrorism’ and ‘terrorist states’, but it would also be far-reaching because in order to defeat ‘international terrorism’ the ‘war on terror’ must be a multifaceted war conducted on various fronts: political, financial, military, legal, and intelligence. In his own press conference and at least three television interviews, Powell (2001c, 2001f, 2001g, 2001h) used this tactic extensively in the 48 hours following the attacks. Powell’s (2001c) press conference statement the day after was typical: “Let’s not think that one single counter-attack will rid the world of terrorism of the kind we saw yesterday. This is going to take a multifaceted attack along many dimensions: diplomatic, military, intelligence, law enforcement. All sorts of things will have to be done to bring this scourge under control”. The effect was to prepare ready-made ‘war on terror’ justifications for any and all actions, domestic or international, on any of these ‘fronts’.

As a consequence of this multifaceted war, there would not be one single fixed international coalition against terrorism but multiple coalitions conducting the ‘war on terror’. The nature of these coalitions would depend on the facet of the ‘war on terror’ and would change according to priorities. In a press conference a week after the attacks Rice (2001) began this tactic: “There is clearly one big, overarching coalition…but what different countries will bring to the equation, what different fronts people will fight on (in) this war on terror, I think, will unfold over this period of time”. Two weeks after the attacks, Rumsfeld (2001f) further explained this notion of flexible, changing coalitions: “Let there be no doubt, as well, that there will not be a single coalition, as there was in the Gulf War. The kinds of things we’re going to be engaged in will engage some countries on one aspect of it and still other countries on another aspect of it and we will see evolving coalitions that will change over time, depending on the activity”. The effect was to give international credibility to the US retaliation for 11 September 2001.

Significantly, it was also argued that Arab and Muslim states would also be included in these global, flexible coalitions, because this is a ‘war on terror’ in all its forms and wherever it exists and not a war on just ‘Arab’ or ‘Islamic’ ‘terrorism’. Consequently, Arab and Muslim states
were actively included in the coalition of ‘civilised states’ to demonstrate that this was the divide in the ‘war on terror’ and not Judeo-Christian versus Arab/Islamic states. In his press conference on the day the war on Afghanistan began, Rumsfeld (2001h) explained this inter-religion unity:

“In Kuwait, in Northern Iraq, in Somalia, Bosnia and Kosovo, the United States took action on behalf of Muslim populations against outside invaders and oppressive regimes. The same is true today. We stand with those Afghans who are being repressed by a regime that abuses the very people it purports to lead, and that harbours terrorists who have attacked and killed thousands of innocents around the world of all religions, of all races and of all nationalities. The world stands united in this effort. It is not about a religion or an individual terrorist or a country. Our partners in this effort represent nations and peoples of all cultures, all religions and all races. We share the belief that terrorism is a cancer on the human condition, and we intend to oppose it wherever it is”.

The effect was to legitimate all-inclusive political allegiances and avoid (or, after Bush’s initial faux pas in using the word “crusade”, to counter) the accusation that the ‘war on terror’ was specifically targeting Arabs and Muslims.

**Just war**

In order to soften the violent image of the war on Afghanistan, it was argued that the ‘war on terror’ would be a just war fought for good and moral purposes. Specifically, the war would be conducted by a righteous US military, whose personnel virtually epitomise the national exceptionalism myth. The post-11 September 2001 version of this tactic began by exalting the military victims, as Rumsfeld (2001g) did in a Pentagon press conference 16 days later: “those Department of Defence employees who were injured or killed were not just victims of terror. They were combat casualties, brave men and women who risked their lives to safeguard our freedom. And they paid for our liberty with their lives”. After recalling the victims’ sacrifices at the Pentagon, Bush (2001t) continued this exaltation of US military personnel as he sent them into battle on 7 October: “A Commander-In-Chief sends America’s sons and daughters into battle in a foreign land only after the greatest care and a lot of prayer. We ask a lot of those who wear our uniform. We ask them to leave their loved ones, to travel great distances, to risk injury, even to be prepared to make the ultimate sacrifice of their lives. They are dedicated. They are honourable. They represent the best of our country, and we are grateful”. The effect was to claim
that service personnel, despite their occupation, are not violent and aggressive but kind and compassionate people. In keeping with this personal character of those who are part of it, the US military only uses violence when it is absolutely necessary and does so only in the pursuit of peaceful and honourable objectives.

Moreover, the United States military was also exalted as nothing less than the cornerstone of not only the peace and prosperity of the US, but of the entire world. The US military was not simply the protective shield defending the divine American homeland from the chaotic outside but stood between civilisation and barbarism, freedom and submission, democracy and totalitarianism, good and evil. As such, the US military also underpinned the stability of the US, and therefore global, capitalist economy. This perspective of a right and righteous military was emphatically argued by Wolfowitz (2001) in testimony to the Armed Services Committee just days before the war on Afghanistan began:

“Finally, the loss of life and damage to our economy from the attacks of September 11, 2001 should give us a new perspective on the question of what this country can afford for its defence...this assault is a wake-up call for us all about the importance of investing adequately and providing for our security. To think we can’t afford what we need to deter the adversaries of tomorrow and underpin our prosperity, and by extension, peace and stability around the globe, is simply wrong”.

The effect was to justify even higher levels of defence spending on this glorified US military.

This just war would be manifest in the righteous United States military’s benevolence towards innocent Afghan civilians, Arabs and Muslims because it was only fighting al-Qaeda, the Taliban and other ‘international terrorists’ in this secular ‘war on terror’. Powell (2001i) was careful to make this point the following day during an interview on NBC TV’s Dateline, when he explained that 11 September 2001 “should not be seen as something done by Arabs or Islamics; it is something that was done by terrorists”. Later, Powell (2001c) also used joint press conferences with Muslim counterparts to distinguish ‘terrorists’ from Arabs and Muslims. His statement alongside the Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, was typical: “We are not seeing this as anti-Arab (or) anti-Islam; it’s anti-terrorism...this is not the beginning of some conflict with other Arab nations”. The distinction was substantiated, as the US prepared for war on Afghanistan, by Bush (2001s) in his weekly radio address:
### Figure 5.3b: The discursive strategies self-legitimating the 'war on terror'  

<table>
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<th>DISCURSIVE STRATEGY</th>
<th>Explanation of Discursive Strategy / Tactic</th>
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<td><strong>3. JUST WAR</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>a. Righteous US military</td>
<td>The righteous US military is the basis of American peace and prosperity</td>
<td>&quot;The US Armed Forces underpin our nation's prosperity and way of life. We don't get our ‘peace dividend' by short-changing them. We get it from the peace and security they make possible&quot; Paul Wolfowitz, testimony*, 3-4 October (2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Secular war</td>
<td>The 'war on terror' is a secular war against terrorists and not Muslims</td>
<td>“The United States of America is a friend to the Afghan people, and we are the friends of almost a billion people worldwide who practice the Islamic faith. The United States of America is an enemy of those who aid terrorists and of the barbaric criminals who profane a great religion by committing murder in its name&quot; George Bush, speech, 7 October (2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Mistakes exonerated</td>
<td>The US military is exonerated of any mistakes in the 'war on terror'</td>
<td>&quot;Coalition forces will continue to make every reasonable effort to select targets with the least possible unintended damage. But as in any conflict, there will be unintended damage&quot; Donald Rumsfeld, press conference, 9 October (2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Humanitarian undertaking</td>
<td>The war on Afghanistan is also a humanitarian undertaking by the US military</td>
<td>&quot;All the actions that over time our military and our nation has been called on human rights has always been at the forefront of it...And that message is an eternal American message to all nations around the world&quot; Ari Fleischer, press conference, 25 September (2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4. MUNDANE WAR</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>a. No concessions</td>
<td>The 'American people' will make no concessions to the terrorists</td>
<td>&quot;In the weeks since the September 11 attacks, the American people have been asked to balance a difficult set of realities...We have encouraged Americans to be active, but vigilant; calm, but alert...Overwhelmingly, Americans have responded to the reality of terrorism with both understanding and responsibility&quot; John Ashcroft, press conference, (2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Everyday war</td>
<td>The 'war on terror' will be fought in the banal activities of everyone’s daily lives</td>
<td>&quot;We are asking every child in America to earn of give a dollar that will be used to provide food and medical help for the children of Afghanistan...Wash a car. Do a yard for a neighbour...by acting today we can help the children survive&quot; George Bush, press conference, 11 October (2001)</td>
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*Testimony to the House of Representatives Armed Services Committee
"Our enemy is not the Arab world. Many friendly Arab governments are themselves the targets of extremist terror. Our enemy is not Islam, a good and peace-loving faith that brings direction and comfort to over one billion people, including millions of Americans. And our enemy is not the people of any nation, even when their leaders harbour terrorists. Our enemy is the terrorists themselves and the regimes that shelter and sustain them".

The effect was to paint the secular ‘war on terror’, as did the comprehensive war, as not targeting Arabs and Muslims.

As a consequence of this righteous and secular war the United States military would be exonerated of mistakes made while conducting the ‘war on terror’ which resulted in innocent Afghan civilians (that is, paradoxically, Arabs and Muslims) being killed. Moreover, this ‘collateral damage’ was an acceptable risk because the ultimate goal of the violence was benevolent: that is, peace, security and freedom for the people of Afghanistan. Powell (2001i) inadvertently signalled US acceptance of the possibility of mistakes in an interview on NBC TV’s Dateline the day after the attacks:

POWELL: “Let’s first of all determine who is responsible and then determine the best response. The response may be political, certainly diplomatic, and it may well be military. And you can be sure that we will do it carefully, we will do it prudently, and we will make sure we’ve got the goods on them, or at least a high probability of having the goods on them, before launching military strikes”.

The US military was also exonerated because it is impossible to have ‘perfect intelligence’ in military operations, so mistakes can and will be made. Powell (2001v) used this ploy in an interview with the BBC ten days after the attacks:

“Anybody who thinks you’ll have perfect intelligence is incorrect. At the same time, you can’t just sit back and do nothing because you don’t have perfect intelligence. You get as much intelligence as you can, information, you make an informed professional judgment as to what it is you’re facing and then you go face it. And you take appropriate action.
So the lack of 100 percent perfect intelligence is no reason for not acting”.

The effect was to exonerate the US military from mistakes, because the benevolent ends justifies the violent means.

The ‘war on terror’ was also just war because, as further evidence of the righteousness of the war on Afghanistan, the US military would also bring humanitarian relief to the hungry, poor, and war-ravaged Afghan people. This tactic began by pointing out the pre-existing US contributions to humanitarian programmes in Afghanistan. Fleischer (2001e), for example, explained that the Bush administration had always made the distinction between the Taliban regime and the Afghan people in a press conference on 25 September: “The best example (of this distinction) I can give you is the United States provides approximately $140 million a year in humanitarian assistance to help feed the people of Afghanistan, while at the same time the United States has never recognised the Taliban regime as a legitimate government”. More specifically, the US airdrops of humanitarian relief, including food aid, medical supplies, and other essentials, to Afghan civilians were consistently highlighted. In typical style, Bush (2001t) provided the incontrovertible proof of this humanitarian undertaking at the outbreak of war: “At the same time, the oppressed people of Afghanistan will know the generosity of America and our allies. As we strike military targets, we will also drop food, medicine and supplies to the starving and suffering men and women and children of Afghanistan”. The effect was to again portray the United States as the benefactor, and not the deliberate antagonists, of the Afghan people (and by implication Arabs and Muslims in general) in this just ‘war on terror’.

Mundane war

The last self-legitimating discursive strategy argued that because the ‘war on terror’ also needed to be waged on the home-front it required new policies in many areas of domestic politics, including in the economy, budget, security, and judicial spheres. It is not the purpose of this thesis to detail these, but the point is that the ‘war on terror’ was used to justify domestic policy changes. The effect was to legitimate more mundane (vis-à-vis the exciting, public, global, military ‘war on terror’ on Afghanistan) agendas under the cover of the ‘war on terror’ and these were defended as maintaining the US way of life, because to change that in any way would be to concede ‘victory’ to the terrorists (see ‘defiant’). Indeed, the domestic ‘war on terror’ was an opportunity to reinforce that way of life through maintaining a difficult but necessary balancing act between freedom and security. When asked during a 21 September press conference to
comment on the changes in the lives of US citizens as a result of 11 September 2001, Powell (2001u) stressed the need to maintain the normality of domestic life to ensure that no concessions were made to 'international terrorism':

"It's also important to remember that we are a people who live in an open society and we don't want the society to become closed. We need people to go back out to stores, we need people to go to movies and theatres, we need to restore a sense of normalcy in our life, while at the same time being mindful of the challenges to our security that exist. But the terrorists will really have won if they change our fundamental way of life. And they won't do that, they can't do that. But at the same time, we have to show an added level of security in order to protect ourselves and to protect our citizens".

The effect was to permeate the 'war on terror' into everyday life, where the 'American people' would also fight the 'war on terror' in their banal activities by returning to their routines; to shop, work, travel, school and holiday. A good example of this tactic came on 2 October, when Bush re-opened Reagan airport in central Washington. In his speech Bush (2001p) used the banal activity of air travel as a means of fighting the 'war on terror' when he declared that: "Every person who gets on an airplane, who goes to work, who takes their family to visit relatives, is taking a stand against terrorism...People who travel say terrorism is not going to intimidate us". Two days later, in a speech at the Department of State, Bush (2001r) was again rendering the 'war on terror' banal:

"I see an opportunity at home when I hear the stories of Christian and Jewish women alike helping women of color, Arab-American women, go shop because they're afraid to leave their home. I see a great opportunity when I see moms and dads spend more time with their children here at home. I see, out of this sadness and grief, an opportunity for America to re-examine our culture, to re-examine how we view the need to help people in need whether it be in our own neighbourhood or around the world. I see, out of this evil, will come good, not only here at home, as youngsters all of a sudden understand the definition of sacrifice, the sacrifice of those brave souls on Flight 93, who after the 23rd Psalm said, 'let's roll' to save America".
The effect was to legitimate the ‘war on terror’ at the lowest but most important level possible – the effect on individual lives – and to individualise the balancing act between freedom and security now being played out more broadly in domestic and international politics.

Collectively, these four self-legitimating discursive strategies enabled the United States foreign policy elite to write the third and final act of its legitimation script: that the conduct of the war on Afghanistan would in itself justify the use of violence. This first phase of the ‘war on terror’ was, therefore, by necessity a secret, comprehensive, just, and mundane – but uncontroversial – war. This surprise attack legitimation script proved its hegemony with the start of the war on Afghanistan on 7 October 2001. This hegemony, however, was still contested by numerous blowback critiques that constituted an alternative de-legitimation script of the ‘war on terror’.

The Blowback De-legitimation Script

The numerous blowback critiques of the surprise attack legitimation script built on the subservient blowback explanation of 11 September 2001 and presented an alternative geopolitical script that sought to de-legitimate the ‘war on terror’. This de-legitimation script is presented here in the opposite of the same three ‘acts’ used above; hence the three acts are unnaturalising, ab-normalising, and mis-conducting the ‘war on terror’. It is important to recall here that this critical comment material is not subjected to its own discourse analysis, which is beyond the purposes of this thesis. Similarly, the following discursive critiques are not necessarily a blow-by-blow contestation of each of the above discursive strategies and/or tactics, although these do provide a broad guide to the following discussion. Such a specific approach would clearly be cumbersome, monotonous, and impossible given the range of critiques resulting from the use of sources from within and outside the United States and from after the start of the war on Afghanistan. Moreover, forcing this complexity in to the above typology would produce a normative script solely for the purposes of this research. Rather, this blowback de-legitimation script is presented in order to illustrate the direct contest, along these three acts, between the second parts of these two conflict(ing) discourses over the (de)legitimation of the ‘war on terror’.
Un-naturalising the 'war on terror'

The blowback explanation of 11 September 2001, within the context of the problematic United States foreign policy presented in the last section of Chapter Four, enabled the consequent de-legitimation script to contest the globalising discursive strategy. In contrast to the surprise attack legitimation script, the assault was neither an attack on the world, because of the number of states with citizens killed, nor a random attack that could have been perpetrated against any other state. In the first instance, the deaths of civilians from non-US states, including other Arabs and Muslims, was clearly inconsequential to the perpetrators; in targeting a civilian population the victims were always going to be a function of the demographics of World Trade Centre companies and employees and the vagaries of airline passenger lists. As neither factor could be controlled by al-Qaeda or Osama bin Laden, 11 September 2001 as an attack on the world is only plausible if the surprise attack denial that it was an attack on US foreign policy is accepted; which of course it is not by the blowback de-legitimation script.

As a consequence, 11 September 2001 was also not a random attack: this claim was only credible if another state (or states) had the same or similarly problematic foreign policy in the Middle East and wielded a comparable level of political, economic, and military power in the region. As the United States is alone in this category 11 September 2001 was not a random attack that could have befallen other states. Political geographer John Agnew (2001), for example, lamented this aspect of the surprise attack legitimation script when, in the weeks after the attacks, he became "increasingly upset at the hubris of American commentators: that... America was an innocent bystander in world affairs suddenly thrust into the 'front lines' of global terrorism by nameless actors from afar". Thus the blowback de-legitimation script begins its un-naturalising of the 'war on terror' by rejecting this globalising of 11 September 2001 as a means of legitimating a worldwide military response.

Next, the alternative blowback de-legitimation script argued that if 11 September 2001 was not an attack on the world then it also was not an attack on 'civilisation', because both imply an attack on more than one state; whereas this script maintained it was a specific attack on US foreign policy. This critique again highlights the discursive purpose, to deflect attention away from the targeting of US foreign policy and to de-contextualise 11 September 2001, of this surprise attack strategy. Moreover, invoking 'civilisation' rhetoric was ironic because the violence of the US response was decidedly 'uncivilised', as Mahajan (2002:98) ridiculed: "In one of the most shameful spectacles in modern history, the richest and most powerful nation on
earth pounded one of the poorest, most desolate nations on earth...while proclaiming its virtue to
the world”. This unbecoming response contrasted with the more appropriate response advocated
by the blowback de-legitimation script which, in Johnson’s (2002:xvi) words, argued that: “The
proper reaction to terrorism is patient, thorough police work, good intelligence, and cooperation
with friendly police agencies. The terrorists should be apprehended, brought before a properly
constituted international tribunal, and evidence presented to convict them – as was done in the
case of the terrorists who bombed Pan Am flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland”. Responding
with more violence, the blowback de-legitimation script argued, only played into the hands of al-
Qaeda and bin Laden. A peaceful, judicial, and diplomatic pursuit of justice was thus not only
the more ‘civilised’ response but also the more appropriate ‘strategic’ response that would defuse
the cycle of violence (Jackson 2002).

Given that the United States has perpetrated and supported groups committing such acts around
the world for decades, the construction of ‘terrorism’ as an ‘uncivilised’ ‘Other’ was even more
damning. Such blowback critiques begin with the demand that the use of state military force
itself is a form of ‘terrorism’ and should be recognised as such, but even the conventional
understanding of ‘terrorism’ as non-state violence is associated with the US. For example,
Washington supported ‘terrorist’ tactics perpetrated by the rebel Contras in Nicaragua during the
1980s, to the point where it was condemned by the World Court (Chomsky 2001). The US is
also the home of the ‘School of the Americas’, which has trained many ‘terrorists’ from many
countries that have gone on to commit ‘terrorism’ around the world, and to many of its graduates
today (Pilger 2002). Moreover, representing ‘terrorism’ as only a criminal activity rather than an
‘uncivilised’ one would have prevented the irony that some ‘terrorism’ is ‘successful’ in
achieving political ends (for example, the IRA eventually bombed its way into mainstream
politics in Northern Ireland) and some ‘terrorists’, to a greater or lesser extent, are redeemed
(e.g., Nelson Mandela, Gerry Adams, Yassir Arafat and Muammar al-Gaddafi); ‘terrorists’,
therefore, are not forever and always the ‘uncivilised’ opposite of the ‘civilised’.

Indeed, the resort to this ‘civilisation’ and ‘uncivilised’ rhetoric was unfortunate because it
unhelpfully reduced 11 September 2001 and the ‘war on terror’ to the potentially dangerous
‘clash of civilisations’ theory of post-Cold War world politics proposed by political scientist
Samuel Huntington (1993, 1996). This proposition held that world politics in the twenty-first
century would be characterised by inter-civilisation conflict and, in particular, between the
Western and Islamic ‘civilisations’. Huntington’s simplistic and normative categorisation has
been critiqued from a critical geopolitics perspective (Reuber and Wolkersdorfer 2002) and was
apparent in the civilising rhetoric of the United States foreign policy elite that only helped to polarise the ‘war on terror’ and legitimate violence. The blowback de-legitimation script therefore rejected this ‘clash of civilisations’ rhetoric as reducing the complexities of post-11 September 2001 world politics into a simple dichotomised ethno-religious conflict that only helps extremists, epitomised by Bush and bin Laden, on both sides (Chomsky 2001).

As a consequence, the blowback de-legitimation script also un-naturalised the ‘war on terror’ by arguing that a Manichean struggle between good and evil was not appropriate to understanding 11 September 2001 nor helpful for guiding policy thereafter. Indeed, not only did this dichotomisation prevent a ‘civilised’ response, as discussed above, but forcing all states to decide which side of this global divide they stood was particularly aggressive and grossly simplified the complexities of 11 September 2001 and the ‘war on terror’. The strategy, therefore, was in keeping with the irony of traditional geopolitics: in representing world politics in this way the surprise attack conflict discourse is both ‘anti-geographical’ and ‘anti-political’. This critique is not articulated in order to defend those states supporting ‘terrorism’ or those that may choose the ‘Other’ side of this divide, but to point out that this dichotomisation demonstrates the US inability to understand that non-support, even amongst Arab and Islamic states, of its foreign policy does not equal ‘anti-Americanism’, let alone support for bin Laden and al-Qaeda. Political geographer Jan Nijman (2001) summarises this irony and inability: “The hardest part for the United States to understand, it seems, is that people’s antipathy towards the United States is not the same as sympathy for al-Qaeda. There is more to it than the simple divide between ‘us’ and “them’’. A dichotomised post-11 September 2001 world was not, therefore, a natural ‘geopolitical reality’ as argued by the surprise attack legitimation script.

The blowback de-legitimation script therefore also rejected the assertion that there was no room for neutrality on the ‘war on terror’ as simplistic, but also dangerously simplistic. This apprehension flowed from the recognition that, with neutrality ruled out as a political option, states attempting to steer a ‘third way’ or ‘even-handed’ course through the ‘war on terror’ would be construed as being not “with us (or rather ‘US’)” and therefore they must be “with the terrorists”. In this “new world”, as Mahajan (2002:18) laments, “independent policy and middle ground were a thing of the past...a nation or a group could not condemn both terrorism and the US response to it”. In other words, unless there was full support of the US ‘war on terror’ other states, regardless of their own geopolitical situation and practical reasoning, could be deemed an ‘enemy’ by Washington, with potentially serious consequences in these highly militarised times.
The dichotomising of post-11 September 2001 world politics was thus contested by the blowback de-legitimation script of the ‘war on terror’.

Ab-normalising the ‘war on terror’

The blowback de-legitimation script also contested the normalising of the ‘war on terror’ as the only credible foreign policy reaction to 11 September 2001. As Mahajan (2002:19-20) explains, the United States foreign policy elite “mounted a campaign to claim that its contemplated actions were not just entirely legitimate but the only possible response of right-thinking people”, but various critiques illustrate the discursive character of this legitimation script. For example, the role of religion in normalising the ‘war on terror’ was highly paradoxical: while religion was supposedly irrelevant to their war on all ‘terrorism’, not just Arab or Islamic ‘terrorism’, the impression from the targeting of Afghanistan, the Christianised and civilisational rhetoric, and the use of racial profiling in western law enforcement against non-existent “Arab nationals” (Smith 2001) was that religion was indeed a crucial part of the ‘war on terror’. Certainly the perception in the Arab and Muslim world was that Arabic and Islamic states, groups, and individuals were being specifically targeted by Washington over the ‘terrorism’ of other races and religions. Bush’s (2001h) initial use of the word “crusade” was particularly damaging in this regard, despite subsequent efforts to retract and avoid such rhetoric, including the claim that the ‘war on terror’ was against ‘terrorism’ of all religions and the recognition that bin Laden’s, al-Qaeda’s, and the Taliban’s false religion was a mutant of the real Islam. Instead, the conflation of Islam and ‘terrorism’ persisted to such an extent that even western commentators recognised the ‘war on terror’, as first waged on Afghanistan, as having significant religious overtones. Smith (2001:636), for example, in ridiculing the attempts to downplay the role of religion, notes that Bush “was taken to pay homage in a Washington mosque, insisting that the coming war against Muslims and Arabs was not a war against Muslims and Arabs”. Such critiques were typical of the blowback de-legitimation script.

Similarly, the ‘war on terror’ was also rejected as being motivated by a sense of historical destiny or responsibility. Rather, the blowback de-legitimation script emphasises the less glorious and more tangible motives for the war on Afghanistan resulting from the specific geopolitical context of 11 September 2001. “This analysis”, and especially Ahmed’s (2002) recognition of US plans for a war on Afghanistan pre-11 September 2001, “implies that the US government wanted war, and raises the question of why they wanted it” (Mahajan 2002:31).
first reason, Mahajan claims (2002:32), is “imperial credibility”: that “in order to maintain its status as the one, unilateralist, interventionist superpower, the modern empire, the US government had to attack something”. The second reason, he continues, “is the oil and natural gas of the Caspian basin and the related question of US military bases in the newly opening area of Central Asia”. After dismissing the US desire to destroy bin Laden, al-Qaeda, and the Taliban as being “near the bottom of the hierarchy of goals”, Mahajan (2002:33) concludes that the war on Afghanistan is “about the extension and maintenance of US government power”. “Other motives”, he dismisses, “are strictly secondary”; hence the blowback de-legitimation script regards claims to historical destiny and responsibility to legitimate the ‘war on terror’ as a rhetorical cover, a politically motivated discursive strategy.

The war on Afghanistan was rejected as a war of self-defence because it did not fit the definition of such action under international law, as it exists in Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter that governs the use of force. Here, the definition of ‘self-defence’, explains Mahajan (2002:21), demands that “there must be an imminent threat of attack, there must be no alternative available in time, and even then it must be targeted specifically at those who pose the threat” before military action can be justified as self-defence. While the legal opinion on this issue is the subject of much controversy (as it was a year later over the legality of the ‘pre-emptive’ war on Iraq, as discussed in Chapter Seven) beyond the scope of this thesis, the blowback de-legitimation script subscribed to the view that the US ‘war on terror’ did not meet this legal definition of self-defence. As Mahajan (2002:21) summarises:

“The attack on Afghanistan met none of those criteria. It happened almost four weeks after the initial attack, easily enough time to make arrangements for the Security Council to deal with the problem...The response was directed against Afghanistan, even though none of the 19 hijackers were Afghan and there is no evidence known of even a single case of an Afghan being involved in terrorist attacks on the United States. Furthermore, Afghanistan, unlike the United States, has no long-range bombers or intercontinental ballistic missiles, nor any other way of striking at the United States”.

This offensive war (in both senses of the word, given that it was not self-defensive and therefore unpleasant) on Afghanistan was therefore also rejected. The discrediting of the claims of a non-religion specific, historical, and self-defensive ‘war on terror’ means that other motivations must,
as already argued, be driving the war on Afghanistan; which is precisely the opposite of self-defence, as it implies the US selection of targets. Moreover, the blowback de-legitimation script argued that an offensive war on Afghanistan would only add to the resentment at US foreign policy that led to 11 September 2001 in the first place. The ‘war on terror’ appeared to be a counter-productive means of increasing ‘national security’. Arab political geographer Mohammed Abu-Nimer (2001) articulated this common warning: “Bombarding Afghanistan not only will certainly fail to prevent further attacks on US targets at home or overseas, but might also contribute to the escalation and sophistication of such international violence. The killing of bin Laden and his followers in a massive attack will give someone else the chance to lead his cause, maybe with a more successful campaign to recruit popular support”. The probability of future blowback, in response to the response (the war on Afghanistan) to the original blowback (11 September 2001), may therefore be increased by the ‘war on terror’ and thus contradict US national security goals.

Over and above the inevitability of the war on Afghanistan, given the catastrophic trigger event of 11 September 2001 to a war the United States was already planning and that the ‘American people’ were now calling for, this first phase of the ‘war on terror’ was also unavoidable because the US foreign policy elite deliberately and arbitrarily shut-down negotiations with the Taliban. There was no request for the extradition of bin Laden and his accomplices from Afghanistan, “just a demand to ‘deliver’ an unspecified number of unnamed individuals” (Mahajan 2002:17). Even when the Taliban responded by asking for the evidence against bin Laden and al-Qaeda, this possibility of a diplomatic solution was circumvented by the refusal to negotiate with the Taliban, lest an agreement be reached and the United States be deprived of the(ir) primary casus belli. This manoeuvre was disingenuous, as it not only rendered the war on Afghanistan inevitable but also placed responsibility for the war on the Taliban, for failing to meet US demands. The strategy, however, was also against the requirements of international law, because “we are left with the conclusion that...the Bush administration deliberately sought war...a violation of the UN Charter, which requires the use of all means short of force before taking military action” (Mahajan 2002:31). This aspect of the blowback de-legitimation script therefore rejects the inevitability of the war on Afghanistan as an abnormality of the ‘war on terror’.

Another abnormality lay in the claim to the moral authority of the United States to retaliate militarily after 11 September 2001. While this right of reply may appear natural or inherent, to exercise that right is not necessarily the correct or just thing to do. For example, it has already been shown how the blowback de-legitimation script argued that a violent response was not
necessarily a ‘civilised’ reaction. In addition, the moral right of retaliation is squandered if the reaction targets any individual, group, or state not directly involved in the original attack; as the US war on Afghanistan undoubtedly did by killing innocent Afghan civilians, and even the Taliban if they were not involved in planning or had foreknowledge of the attacks. A retaliation that targets the wrong people was held to be as abhorrent as the 11 September 2001 attacks themselves, as Johnson (2002:x) suggested: “In most of the world, the spectacle of the world’s richest and most heavily armed country attacking one of the world’s poorest quickly eroded the moral high ground accorded to the United States as the victims of the September 11 attacks”. In other words, the moral authority to retaliate is one thing; actually doing so is quite another.

Moreover, while the ‘American people’ were constructed as the collective victim of the attack (another means to deflect attention away from 11 September 2001 as an attack on United States foreign policy), this does not mean that they all supported a violent response. While Bush’s approval ratings and support for a war on Afghanistan did poll in the high 80, even 90 plus, per cent range, this indicates the popular ‘war on terror’ was not universal; so claims to the ‘American people’ to normalise the war and deflect criticisms of it were also disingenuous. Indeed, as argued in Chapter One some of those ‘American people’ who were more victims than others, such as Phyllis and Orlando Rodriguez, were against a military retaliation. Such sentiments were present in the wider US populace and even more so around the world; ab-normalising voices against the war on Afghanistan but even louder, as will be argued in Chapter Seven, in opposition to the 2003 war on Iraq.

As one of the intentions of this entire thesis is to show the situated and partial character of practical geopolitics, it is axiomatic that the deified war on Afghanistan, and especially the deity of the President of the United States of America as the source of objective geopolitical truth and knowledge, is also rejected. Instead, as the use of his primary data quotes demonstrate, the President exists within pre-existing discourses (especially the national exceptionalism myth) that enable (im)possibilities but also place constraints, and holds a particular geopolitical perspective. This peculiarity is the very meaning of practical geopolitics and geopolitical reasoning, and the essence of critical geopolitics is to understand such ‘authoritative’ readings and writings of world politics as discursive. The deification of the ‘war on terror’ as an objective truth espoused by the deity of the US President does, however, demonstrate how the national exceptionalism myth exalts the practical geopolitics of the United States foreign policy elite; even when it is precisely their power to shape world politics that means it should be under constant public and academic critique. This requirement is why the blowback de-legitimation script, even in its limited role
here of pulling apart the discursive strategies of the surprise attack legitimation script, is an important balance.

Finally, ab-normalising the ‘war on terror’ involved highlighting that while United States resolve and defiance is undoubtedly a good thing in facing the ‘terrorist’ threat, too much of both qualities may be detrimental. By invoking the resolve of the US government, military, and the ‘American people’ to fight and win the ‘war on terror’, there is a risk of entrenching policies that, according to the blowback explanation, led to the attacks of 11 September 2001 in the first place. Equally dangerous is the risk of maintaining public attitudes and stereotypes that will only reinforce some of the above problematic discursive strategies, such as the ‘civilising’, ‘dichotomising’, and ‘inevitability’ of the ‘war on terror’. By refusing to negotiate with ‘terrorists’ or pursue a diplomatic and judicial resolution to ‘terrorism’, for example, ‘Others’ may only continue to be polarised and thus produce more ‘blowback’ in the future. Smith (2002:12) explains this danger in terms that recognise the ‘terrorism’ on both sides that results from such ongoing polarisation: “A myopic response that sees only a ‘war on terrorism’ and not the interwoven threads of global injustice from which these events sprang, will intensify rather than compensate for the murder of innocents. Maintaining inequality, exploitation, and intense oppression, much of it made in America, is the single deepest cause of terrorism – on all sides”.

It was this desire to prevent more ‘terrorism’, whether state ‘terrorism’ in the form of war or non-state ‘terrorism’ in the form of violence against civilians, that the blowback de-legitimation script attempted to achieve by ab-normalising the first phase of the ‘war on terror’ as the only credible response to 11 September 2001. The final but unsuccessful act of this attempt came in its argument against the misconduct of the war on Afghanistan.

**Mis-conducting the ‘war on terror’**

The blowback de-legitimation script critiqued the self-legitimations of the surprise attack legitimation script by emphasising the misconduct of the ‘war on terror’, even though the outbreak of the war on Afghanistan proved the hegemony of this conflict discourse over this conflicting discourse. For example, this ‘secret war’ undermines the United States exceptional democracy and civilisation that is supposedly at threat from without (that is, ‘international terrorism’) and from within. This contradiction is exemplified in the secrecy surrounding the internment and treatment of ‘enemy combatants’ at Camp X-Ray at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, the secret ‘military tribunals’ proposed and established to hear cases against them, and the treatment
those detained at the Abu Ghraib prison in Baghdad, Iraq. While the need for secrecy surrounding military operations is reasonable and generally accepted, the secrecy surrounding these scandals was challenged as they threaten the fundamental ‘checks and balances’ on a democratic government during war time. This issue is an old chestnut that this thesis does not attempt to explore, let alone resolve, because the point here is only that as a ‘secret war’ the conduct of the ‘war on terror’ was problematic. Indeed, as a war not against states but transnational organisations, new questions about the ‘secrecy’ surrounding the intelligence gathering methods and sources of the United States were inevitable because of the increasing importance of these activities.

As discussed above, the ‘war on terror’ was not a ‘comprehensive war’ against all forms of ‘terrorism’ but one that targeted one specific type nominally, but not only, located in Afghanistan. Since 11 September 2001, in other words, nothing or little more than normal has been done, and especially not in a military sense implied by a ‘war on terror’, about ‘terrorism’ or ‘terrorists’ in the United States and the west. Mahajan (2002:17), for example, notes that “Emanuel Constant, one of the thugs involved in organising FRAPH, the Haitian paramilitary group that supported the military coup by killing thousands of civilians and terrorising countless others, walks the streets of New York a free man”, and certainly the ‘Real IRA’ and ETA have continued their ‘terrorist’ activities in Northern Ireland and Spain free from US military action.

“Any blanket US condemnation of terrorism is therefore disingenuous”, Smith (2002:10) explains, because “the US government, like most governments around the world, has historically made a distinction between ‘good’ terrorism and ‘bad’”. This failure to address all forms of ‘terrorism’ contradicts the stated intentions of the ‘war on terror’ and reinforces the perception that it is a selective campaign against the ‘terrorism’ of US ‘enemies’. Indeed, the war on Afghanistan illustrates that this is not a ‘comprehensive war’ against all forms of ‘terrorism’ but a specific version of ‘Islamic’ ‘terrorism’.

For the blowback de-legitimation script the proposition that the ‘war on terror’ (or any war for that matter) is a ‘just war’ is oxymoronic. The decision to go to war on Afghanistan endangers innocent civilians who had nothing to do with 11 September 2001 and makes their already desperate situation, after two decades of war, drought, and famine, much worse. The first phase of the ‘war on terror’, therefore, was decidedly unjust. Abu-Nimer (2001), for example, illustrated the pointless injustice of a US war on Afghanistan: “What the likely results of this retaliation? Probably thousands of Afghani citizens will be killed. Millions...mainly poor...will be displaced...Several Afghani cities and towns will be destroyed again. They have been
destroyed twice, once by the Soviet invasion and once by the ongoing civil war, so the American missiles will simply turn the rubble upside down’. As a consequence, attempts to sell the ‘war on terror’ as a humanitarian undertaking were disingenuous, and this was highlighted by the controversy of the dropping of food aid by air. Numerous critical commentators attacked this humanitarian façade as a cynical public relations campaign, because air-drops are notoriously inefficient at delivering food aid, the type of food supplied was inappropriate to the Afghan people, and the amount of food dropped was grossly inadequate (Mahajan 2002). Worst of all, the food aid parcels were the same colour as anti-personnel mines, increasing the likelihood that Afghans, especially children, would be killed or injured when retrieving a food-aid package only to discover, too late, that it was an unexploded weapon. The blowback de-legitimation script thus rejected this conduct of a ‘humane war’ as a contemptuous means of presenting a benevolent image of the United States to the Arab and Islamic worlds.

Although it is impossible to comment on the personal characteristics of those enlisted, it is very difficult to sustain the claim that the United States military is a righteous organisation that underwrites US and global peace and prosperity. Rather, those on the receiving end of its power know that it is something much different, and the above discussion of the specific targeting of Afghanistan and the inevitability of the ‘war on terror’ makes exonerating the military from combat mistakes, and especially those that result in ‘collateral damage’, is problematic.

Finally, although it is beyond the purposes of this thesis because it mainly concerns the domestic ‘war on terror’, the blowback de-legitimation script also contested the ‘mundane war’ because this has enabled the Bush administration to introduce all sorts of neo-conservative domestic policies with less questioning or opposition than may have occurred pre-11 September 2001. This opportunity enabled otherwise controversial anti-terrorism and law enforcement legislation, especially those that curtail civil liberties like the USA PATRIOT Act, to be passed in the United States, and in other Western countries as well. There is also a clear link here between the legitimation of the ‘war on terror’ as an everyday war to be fought by the ‘American people’ in the banal activities of their normal lives and the need to overcome potential political opposition to such legislation. Even in this ‘mundane war’, therefore, the blowback de-legitimation script contested the mis-conduct of the ‘war on terror’.

In combination, this sample of discursive critiques constitute a blowback de-legitimation script of the ‘war on terror’ that, unsuccessfully, attempted to prevent the hegemony of the surprise attack legitimation script. This failure became obvious when the war on Afghanistan began on 7
October 2001. The hegemony of the surprise attack legitimation script, which also signalled the hegemony of the entire surprise attack conflict discourse over the blowback conflicting discourse, was then used by the United States foreign policy elite in its attempt to establish the ‘war on terror’ as a ‘new’ new world order to replace the Cold War.

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that, and demonstrated how, the United States foreign policy elite used its dominant surprise attack explanation (or storyline) of 11 September 2001 as the foundation for the second part of the conflict discourse that, by writing a legitimation script, justified the ‘war on terror’ that began in Afghanistan on 7 October 2001. This legitimation script included three acts that transformed explanation into legitimation. First, the ‘war on terror’ was naturalised within the supposedly objective post-11 September 2001 geopolitical realities of world politics, by globalising, civilising, and dichotomising the attacks. Second, the ‘war on terror’ was normalised as the only possible response to these new realities, by justifying a violent response through appeals to religion and history, portraying the war as self-defence and inevitable, claiming the war was popular and deified, and asserting that the US was resolute and defiant in conducting the ‘war on terror’. Third, the ‘war on terror’ was self-legitimated because the conduct of the war would justify the violence in itself, by arguing that the war would necessarily be a secret, comprehensive, just and mundane war. These three acts of the surprise attack legitimation script became hegemonic over the blowback de-legitimation script with the start of the war on Afghanistan.

This alternative script also extended the subservient blowback explanation of 11 September 2001 and contested the surprise attack legitimation script in an attempt to de-legitimate the ‘war on terror’. This attempt was presented within the same three acts of the legitimation script, but instead emphasised the un-naturalising, ab-normalising, and mis-conducting of the ‘war on terror’. These critiques, however, were not enough to overcome the momentum for war, and the surprise attack conflict discourse won the contest for hegemony over this blowback conflicting discourse. Finally, this hegemony was also used by the United States foreign policy elite in its attempt to establish the ‘war on terror’ as a ‘new’ new world order that would replace the Cold War and structure world politics for the foreseeable future. This attempt has also been contested by resistances, and it is this contest between these conflict(ing) discourses that is the subject of Chapter Six.
Chapter Six

Attempting a 'New' New World Order: The Geopolitical (Dis)Continuities of the 'War on Terror'

"The American people breathed a sigh of relief when the Cold War ended a decade ago. They looked around and saw we were a superpower with no obvious adversary capable of destroying us. They saw democracy spreading across the globe. They saw a powerful economic expansion creating unprecedented prosperity. And there was a temptation to believe that this favourable circumstance was a permanent condition. On September 11th, America learned that it was not. The September 11th attacks have awakened us to a fundamental reality: the twenty-first Century security environment will be different from the one we faced in the 20th Century – but just as dangerous. To ensure our safety and freedom in the decades ahead, we need to understand the change that has taken place – and the lessons it holds for our future”.

Paul Wolfowitz, Wednesday 3 October (2001)
Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the attempt by the United States foreign policy elite to establish the ‘war on terror’ as a ‘new’ post-11 September 2001 new world order. Since the end of the last world order, the bipolar Cold War between East and West, world politics has been in a period of geopolitical transition. As discussed in Chapter Four, in 1991 the first Bush administration proclaimed, following Fukuyama’s triumphant “End of History” thesis, a ‘new world order’ based on US-leadership of a United Nations-focussed multilateral world system that would replace the international paralysis of the Cold War. This ‘new world order’ was epitomised at the outset by the multinational coalition that evicted Iraq from Kuwait in the Gulf War. Such cooperation, however, unravelled during the subsequent crises in Yugoslavia, Somalia, and Rwanda and this ‘new world order’, such as it ever was, collapsed. A decade later, the attacks of 11 September 2001 provided a second opportunity for the United States foreign policy elite to assert US leadership of a ‘new world order’.

The contours of this ‘new’ new world order are implicit in the hegemonic surprise attack conflict discourse, but are explicit in the opening chapter quote by Deputy Secretary of Defence Paul Wolfowitz. Here, as in the primary data as a whole, the ‘war on terror’ is both related to and distinguished from the preceding world order: although the Cold War ‘danger’ passed a decade earlier, 11 September 2001 shattered the illusion of the post-Cold War “favourable circumstance” and returned United States perceptions of the world to an equally dangerous, but for different reasons, “security environment”. Thus ‘terrorism’, or more specifically the US-led war on it, will now (re)structure world politics for the foreseeable future and replace the Cold War. In contrast, many governments, publics, organisations, and individual citizens around the world resisted this attempt to redefine world politics. These resistances draw on but frequently extend the blowback conflicting discourse, or present new ones, and have collectively prevented the establishment of the ‘war on terror’ as the ‘new’ new world order. This chapter, therefore, is about this attempt and the resistances to it; or, in other words, about two conflict(ing) discourses over the ‘new’ new world order.

The discussion is divided into four sections. The first section provides the conceptual context, by examining Dalby’s (1990b) concept of a ‘second Cold War’ and Kaldor’s (1999) concept of ‘new wars’, because the United States foreign policy elite invoked both the Cold War and ‘new wars’ in its articulation of the ‘war on terror’ as a ‘new’ new world order. The ‘war on terror’ is similar to the Cold War but distinguished from it by the ‘new wars’ concept. The second section
explains the discursive strategies similar to the Cold War as geopolitical continuities between the Cold War and the ‘war on terror’. The third section explains the discursive strategies invoking the ‘new wars’ concept as geopolitical discontinuities between the Cold War and the ‘war on terror’. The fourth section explores the many ironies and paradoxes of this attempt, and concludes by arguing that these internal contradictions opened up spaces for the various resistances to the ‘war on terror’ as a ‘new’ new world order; the local New Zealand example of which is the subject of Chapter Seven.

The ‘Second Cold War’ and ‘New Wars’ Concepts

This section uses two pieces of literature in order to establish the conceptual context of this chapter. The first is Simon Dalby’s (1990b) book *Creating the Second Cold War: The Discourses of Politics*, one of the earliest propositions of a critical geopolitics. In this discussion Dalby follows Halliday’s (1983) original bifurcation, either side of the 1970s decade of détente, to conceptualise a ‘second Cold War’ during the 1980s. Dalby, using a similar method to this thesis, examined the writings of the Committee on the Present Danger (CPD), a powerful Washington-based ‘think tank’ on United States foreign policy, to illustrate how it reinvigorated the Soviet threat; hence his notion of the CPD ‘creating’ this ‘second’ Cold War. Dalby’s conceptualisation is important here because, as noted in the Introduction and will be demonstrated in the next geopolitical continuities section, the US foreign policy elite used discursive strategies continuous from the Cold War in its attempt to establish the ‘war on terror’ as a ‘new’ new world order. Dalby’s study, however, was quickly overtaken by the sudden end of the ‘second Cold War’ itself. In the ensuing post-Cold War chaos a new understanding of the rapidly changing character of violence was urgently needed.

Early responses to this problem were codified by Mary Kaldor’s (1999) concept of ‘new wars’ articulated in her book *New and Old Wars: Organised Violence in a Globalised Era*. In this discussion Kaldor, using her knowledge of the wars in Nagorno-Karabakh (Azerbaijan) and Bosnia-Herzegovina (Yugoslavia), argues that violence was undergoing a fundamental transition which necessitates a distinction between ‘old wars’ and ‘new wars’. Whereas, *inter alia*, ‘old wars’ were fought between state militaries, were aimed at the conquest and control of territory, and mobilised entire populations, ‘new wars’ are increasingly fought by non-state private militias seeking control of natural resources or government change within states and involve only a small section of the population. This transition, Kaldor notes, had already received consideration as
‘informal wars’ or ‘post-modern war’, but argues that the phrase ‘new wars’ places them within the(ir) context of accelerated processes of post-Cold War globalisation. This conceptualisation is important here because, again as noted in the Introduction and will be demonstrated in the third geopolitical discontinuities section, the United States foreign policy elite used discursive strategies resonant with the ‘new wars’ concept to modify the ‘war on terror’ from a ‘third Cold War’ – that is, a geopolitical continuity from the ‘second Cold War’ – into what President Bush called the “first war of the twenty-first century”. The attempt to establish the ‘war on terror’ as the ‘new’ new world order to replace the Cold War, therefore, was a hybrid of geopolitical (dis)continuities from Dalby’s ‘second Cold War’ and Kaldor’s ‘new wars’ concepts.

**Dalby’s ‘second Cold War’**

In the Preface to *Creating the Second Cold War*, Dalby (1990b:ix) summarises his argument. In noting the failed opportunity to lessen the military dimension of the Cold War through the ‘thaw’ between the United States and the Soviet Union during the 1970s, Dalby (1990b:ix) argues that:

> “Superpower détente came to an acrimonious end amid vociferous arguments concerning the danger of the ‘Soviet threat’ to ‘Western security’... The USSR was once again portrayed as an implacable foe, an untrustworthy rival who understood only force, a competitor for world domination that would use any means at its disposal to advance its position in the global geopolitical competition with the USA... US political discourse in the late 1970s once again specified global politics as an arena of military competition; a harsh world of power, in which the provision of military security was the primary raison d'etat”.

Dalby’s (1990b:ix-x) subsequent exploration of this ‘second Cold War’ is “about the arguments of those in the USA who campaigned against détente and arms control agreements and who supported the renewal of Cold War and geopolitical competition as the overarching priority of US foreign policy”. Underlying these arguments was a geopolitical discourse that constructed the Soviet Union as the inverse ‘Other’ of the United States and the west. Dalby reinforces the longstanding process of ‘Othering’ in traditional geopolitics (see Chapters Two and Four), but through the post-modern understanding of this process as being discursive it has been subject to a significant re-examination within critical geopolitics (Dalby 1988, Sharp 1996). In this case,
the Soviet Union is constructed as everything the United States and the west is not: communist not democratic, socialist not capitalist, repressive not free, aggressive not passive, and expansionist not static. Thus the identities of ‘Self’ and ‘Other’ are geopolitical constructions based on a dichotomous understanding of ‘us’ and ‘them’. Security is then conceptualised as the spatial exclusion of the ‘Other’ from the territory of the ‘Self’. Beyond this foundational geopolitical discourse of the Soviet Union as ‘Other’, these ‘second Cold War’ arguments depended on four “fairly discrete but interconnected and often mutually supporting ‘security discourses’” (Dalby 1990b:11).

Dalby argues that the discourse of realism focuses attention on the power dimension of world politics and the consequent military security requirements. In Dalby’s (1990b:11) words, the realist discourse understands the concept of ‘security’: “in the sense of preventing a potential adversary invading one’s territorially understood space, which in turn relates to physical protection and political alliances at, in the US case, the global scale. The emergence of this security regime simultaneously involved the expansion of the arena of state security to the level of alliance security, and the expansion of the understanding of security in terms of technological military control of precisely demarcated areas of territorial space”. Given the Chapter Four discussion on the ‘global civilised coalition’ demanded by 11 September 2001, there is a clear connection with the ‘war on terror’ here, because security means “preventing a potential adversary invading one’s territorially understood space” and therefore requires “physical protection and political alliances at, in the US case, the global scale”. Moreover, the “understanding of security in terms of technological military control of precisely demarcated areas of territorial space” is also a feature of the ‘war on terror’, with increased surveillance, security checks and other counter-terrorism devices for ‘homeland security’ and military actions beyond the United States in those territories housing and exporting ‘international terrorism’. Such a prioritisation of military security downplays other security issues such as global warming and climate change, HIV / AIDS and new ‘super-bugs’ like SARS and the ‘Bird Flu’, and economic vulnerabilities exposed by rapid globalisation.

The discourse of nuclear strategy followed this emphasis on the military aspects of world politics and the consequent security implications. Again, in Dalby’s (1990b:12) words, this nuclear strategy ‘security discourse’:

“specified the superpower contest in terms of nuclear coercion and the policy of deterring an aggressive totalitarian USSR. The complex, and at
times, arcane discussions of this discourse, premised their analysis on the eternal enmity of the two systems. They supplemented these assumptions with a series of worst-case analyses, where it is always assumed that the other side will do their worst. This form of analysis, coupled with the widespread popular fear and awe of nuclear weapons, supported the continued rapid expansion of nuclear weapons and their delivery systems.

Again, in the light of Chapters Four and Five, this nuclear strategy resonates with the ‘war on terror’ in a number of ways: the “eternal enmity” between ‘civilisation’ and ‘terrorism”; it is indeed “always assumed that the other side (that is, ‘international terrorism’) will do their worst”; and “the widespread fear and awe” of weapons of mass destruction (especially of nuclear, biological, or chemical weapons in the hands of ‘terrorists’) continues to legitimate technological and military security responses. This last connection is particularly explored in the following section.

Dalby (1990b:12) then argues that the discourse of sovietology “theorised the USSR as unchanging, driven by internal geopolitical factors as well as the expansionist logic of totalitarianism to expand and hence to threaten US interests around the globe”. The similarity here with the ‘war on terror’ is obvious: ‘terrorists’ are implacable foes with incomprehensible motivations and ‘terrorism’ consequently endangers US global political, economic and military interests throughout the world. Moreover, Sovietology assumed that because the Soviet Union’s “ultimate goal was global domination” this “precluded the possibility of serious or long-term cooperation between the superpowers”. Again, as the ‘inevitable’ discussion in Chapter Five illustrated, the similarity with the ‘war on terror’ is clear: the ‘terrorists’ were also theorised as implacable foes with whom the negotiation of a peaceful settlement was not possible.

Dalby (1990b:14) brings these first three “security discourses” together through geopolitics, because realism, nuclear strategy, and Sovietology all “contain important geopolitical presuppositions which are often overlooked because they are taken-for-granted”. It is here that Dalby outlines the starting point of his critical geopolitics of the ‘second Cold War’:

“Informed by a critical post-modern sensibility which insists on challenging the assumptions of hegemonic discourse, this book takes a position that challenges the hegemonic conception of the state as the
provider of security by a process of spatial exclusion of Otherness… It does so by refusing the conventional equation of the state with the provision of security, arguing from a position that states are not natural entities but politically created practices, and their claims to legitimacy ought to be the subject of critical investigation rather than the point of departure for analysis”.

This thesis, and in particular this chapter, therefore follows Dalby’s questioning of legitimacy, as his “critical investigation” then focuses on the literature of the Committee on the Present Danger (CPD) – reconstituted since 11 September 2001 as a neo-conservative think-tank (Lobe 2005) – and how these four “security discourses” were used to create the ‘second Cold War’. Dalby proposes that their arguments became hegemonic through the combined ‘Othering’ effect of the four discourses of realism, nuclear strategy, Sovietology and geopolitics he identifies. Particularly important was the power of these discourses to render the Cold War a technical problem that can only be solved by ‘experts’ through the provision of more technological and military security; and thus it is beyond public debate. Dissent from the received wisdom of these experts is consequently ridiculed as failing to account for the harsh geopolitical realities of world politics, and thus criticisms or alternative security proposals underestimate, and thereby exacerbate, the threat. Discussions of security based on other ‘non-expert’ knowledge is also excluded because there is only one true comprehensive understanding of the ‘Other’ and thus only one appropriate course of action to ensure security. As argued in the third half of Chapter Four and the second section of Chapter Five, this exclusion of alternative, dissident perspectives and knowledge is not peculiar to the second Cold War, but is also a feature of the ‘war on terror’.

In addition to the many connections between the four “security discourses” of the ‘second Cold War’, therefore, Dalby’s argument provides a rich conceptual context for understanding the ‘war on terror’. Indeed, the United States foreign policy elite used a number of Cold War-like discursive strategies in its attempt to establish the ‘war on terror’ as a post-11 September 2001 ‘new’ new world order; or, in my extension of Dalby, as a ‘third Cold War’. These geopolitical continuities between the Cold War and the ‘war on terror’ are more fully explored in the second section, but it is important to note here that a number of discursive strategies were used to distinguish the ‘war on terror’ from the ‘second Cold War’. These geopolitical discontinuities invoked Kaldor’s concept of ‘new wars’ and this context is now explored.
Kaldor's 'new wars'

In the Introduction to *New and Old Wars* Kaldor (1999:1-2) begins the explanation of her 'new wars' concept:

"My central argument is that, during the 1980s and 1990s, a new type of organised violence has developed, especially in Africa and Eastern Europe, which is one aspect of the current globalised era. I describe this type of violence as 'new war'. I use the term 'new' to distinguish these wars from prevailing perceptions of war drawn from an earlier era...I use the term 'war' to emphasise the political nature of this new type of violence, even though...the new wars involve a blurring of the distinctions between war, organised crime, and large-scale violations of human rights".

This explanation of the terminology, however, is only the starting point for understanding this intricate concept. Kaldor's (1999:2) next step is to acknowledge that her 'new wars' label is "a catch-all term" which includes other recognitions of this change in the character of violence used by various authors, each emphasising a different aspect of these 'new wars'; including 'privatised' or 'informal wars' (Keen 1995), 'degenerate warfare' (Shaw 1999), 'post-modern war' (Gray 1997) and, since Kaldor's 1999 book, 'virtual war' (Ignatieff 2000) and 'virtuous war' (Der Derian 2001). Kaldor (1999:2-3) also includes the importance of the United States military's notion of a 'Revolution in Military Affairs' (Cohen 1996) which emphasises the role of information technology in revolutionising, in as an important a way "as the advent of the tank and the aeroplane, or even as significant as the shift from horsepower to mechanical power" (Kaldor 1999:4), the conduct of war from the late twentieth century. Kaldor argues that what brings these variations together is the recognition that the traditional categorisation of intra- and inter-state violence (of 'internal' or 'civil wars' versus 'international conflict') is no longer relevant because "the distinction between internal and external, between aggression (attacks from abroad) and repression (attacks from inside the country), or even between local and global, are difficult to sustain" (Kaldor 1999:2). Such violence requires a more appropriate (re)conceptualisation, which Kaldor does by linking 'new wars' to recent changes in world order.

Kaldor (1999:3) argues that "the 'new wars' have to be understood in the context of the process known as globalisation", which she defines as "the intensification of global interconnectedness:"
political, economic, military, and cultural”. While acknowledging that ‘globalisation’ “has its roots in modernity or even earlier”, Kaldor believes that the “globalisation of the 1980s and 1990s is a qualitatively new phenomenon which can, at least in part, be explained as a consequence of the revolution in information technologies and dramatic improvements in communication and data-processing”. Although this contemporary globalisation (Mander and Goldsmith 1996; Held and McGrew 2000) began before the end of the Cold War it has come to characterise the post-Cold War world; just as ‘new wars’ have their origins in what the United States military called ‘low-intensity conflicts’ during the Cold War to refer to guerrilla warfare or terrorism, but which have now also come to be closely associated with the post-Cold War era. Kaldor (1999:3-4) explains this link between ‘new wars’ and ‘world order’ in these terms: “It is undoubtedly true that the consequences of the end of the Cold War – the availability of surplus arms, the discrediting of socialist ideologies, the disintegration of totalitarian empires, the withdrawal of superpower support to client regimes – contributed in important ways to the new wars. But equally, the end of the Cold War could be viewed as the way in which the Eastern bloc succumbed to the inevitable encroachment of globalisation – the crumbling of the last bastions of territorial autarchy, the moment when Eastern Europe was ‘opened up’ to the rest of the world”. Kaldor (1999:4) therefore argues that “the impact of globalisation is visible in many of the new wars”, and she outlines five defining dimensions of these globalised post-Cold War ‘new wars’ which are all manifest in the attacks of 11 September 2001 and the consequent ‘war on terror’.

The first dimension is what Kaldor (1999:7) calls “the new wave of identity politics”, by which she (1999:6) means “the claim to power on the basis of a particular identity – be it national, clan, religious, or linguistic”, that was unleashed by the collapse of communism. Explaining that globalisation is “a contradictory process involving both integration and fragmentation, homogenisation and diversification, globalisation and localisation” (1999:3), Kaldor (1999:7) argues that with the discrediting of socialist economics, communist politics, and “the nation-building rhetoric of the first generation of post-colonial leaders” a vacuum of political legitimacy resulted from the end of the Cold War. This vacuum has been filled by the rise of identity politics based on “an idealised nostalgic representation of the past” which utilise “memory and tradition” but “are reinvented in the context of the failure or the corrosion of other sources of political legitimacy”. These “backward-looking political projects” took hold before “forward-looking projects” such as liberal democracy, free-market capitalism, and human rights and the rule of law could be established. Consequently, Kaldor (1999:7) concludes, “this type of identity politics is inherently exclusive and therefore tends to fragmentation”, and in the post-Cold War era this disintegration has both led to and characterised ‘new wars’. The post-Cold War rise of
militant Islam in Central Asia, South Asia, and the Middle East is just one form of "identity politics" catastrophically expressed on 11 September 2001.

The second dimension is the geographic location of these 'new wars', which erupt in those states which have collapsed under the speed and magnitude of globalisation and the implosion of socialism, communism, and post-colonial nationalism; states commonly referred to as 'failed states' (Bilgin and Morton 2002; Mallaby 2002). Kaldor (1999:4) consequently explains that new wars "arise in the context of the erosion of the autonomy of the state and in some extreme cases the disintegration of the state". Here, Kaldor's own specialty of the disintegration of Yugoslavia during the early 1990s is an example of the intersection of state failure and the rise of identity politics. Within this 'failed state' problem, the state’s simultaneous loss of "the monopoly of legitimate organised violence" (Kaldor 1999:4) is of particular importance. Armed sub-state actors mean that exclusionary identity politics are easily able to erupt in violence, either against the remnants of the state or against other competing identity groups. Thus 'new wars' are characterised by the "privatisation of violence" from above (small, professional, standing state armies) and from below (smaller, private, identity-based militia groups). Kaldor (1999:8) therefore explains that "in contrast to the vertically organised hierarchical units that were typical of 'old wars', the units that fight these wars include a disparate range of different types of groups such as paramilitary units, local warlords, criminal gangs, police forces, mercenary groups and also regular armies including breakaway units of regular armies". The decentralised, networked, 'international terrorism' of al-Qaeda and the tribal based forces of the Taliban clearly fit this typology of 'new war' actors.

The third dimension is the 'new war' economies that also arise in the economic vacuums of 'failed states'. The private groups involved in violence, separated from state financing, must pursue alternative sources of income to finance their activities. Such alternatives are often numerous in the 'failed state' economies through the control of natural resources, commodity production, illegal trade in arms, drugs, and other illicit goods, and other 'black market' activities. This economic involvement enables non-state groups to forge national and transnational trading links with other private groups, multinational corporations, and states. These general characteristics of 'new war' economies were evident in Afghanistan prior to 11 September 2001, where the Taliban had come to power over its rivals and funded its regime largely through its control of opium poppy cultivation and hence the country's heroin drug exports. This activity arose after the destruction of commercial agricultural capacity during the Soviet war that was never rebuilt; poppy cultivation provided a realistic cash-crop alternative for
Afghan farmers. While these ‘new war’ economies are not limited to the post-Cold War period and the ‘failed state’ script is predominantly read by advocates of United States or western intervention, both concepts clearly connect to the context of 11 September 2001 and the ‘war on terror’, through the links between al-Qaeda, the Taliban, and the ‘failed state’ of Afghanistan. Moreover, the personal financing of al-Qaeda by multi-millionaire Osama bin Laden and the private donations from around the world also contextualise 11 September 2001 within the framework of ‘new war’ economies.

The fourth dimension concerns the modes of warfare used, by both private militias and state militaries, in the ‘new wars’. For the former, Kaldor (1999:7-8) argues that:

“The strategies of the new warfare draw on the experience of both guerrilla warfare and counterinsurgency...In guerrilla warfare, territory is captured through political control of the population rather than military advance, and battles are avoided as far as possible. The new warfare also tends to avoid battle and to control territory through political control of the population, but whereas guerrilla warfare...aimed to capture ‘hearts and minds’, the new warfare borrows from counterinsurgency techniques of destabilisation aimed at sowing ‘fear and hatred’”.

In response, the latter (and the focus here is on the United States military) have used the Information Technology-driven Revolution in Military Affairs (Cohen 1996) to counter these new ‘asymmetrical threats’ (Newland 2001) and avoid dangerous large-scale deployments of ground troops, like Vietnam, as sidestepped in Bosnia, Somalia, and Rwanda. Instead, electronic intelligence gathering, remote surveillance (by drone, high-altitude aircraft, or satellite), the use of ‘precision bombing’ by ‘smart weapons’, and small, elite, mobile forces have become the new modes of warfare for state militaries. Hence states, and especially the US and its allies, have also waged ‘new wars’; for example the air-strikes on Bosnia in the early 1990s, the various ‘pin-prick’ attacks on Iraq throughout the 1990s and in 1998 on Sudan and Afghanistan, and the NATO air war on Serbia over Kosovo in 1999. The new mode of warfare employed by non-state entities has therefore prompted a change in the mode of warfare by major powers like the United States, the United Kingdom and military alliances such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation. These changes have occurred simultaneously with and partly because of the IT-driven RMA. Although the failure to find bin Laden (and more recently the ‘post-conflict’ security problems in Iraq) reveal the limits of this new mode of warfare, the resonance here with
11 September 2001 and the ‘war on terror’ is clear: the perpetrators used an ultimate ‘new war’ asymmetrical mode of attack and the US responded (initially) with a massive air war against Afghanistan before a (relatively) small deployment of ground troops.

The last dimension connects with another associated literature on ‘global governance’ (Duffield 2000) and focuses on the management and resolution of ‘new wars’. Kaldor (1999:X) calls this objective the “cosmopolitan project” to address the interrelated factors of globalisation, identity politics, ‘failed states’, political and economic illegitimacy, and the new mode of warfare. As Kaldor (1999:9) argues, because there “is no possible long-term solution within the framework of identity politics” and “because these are conflicts with extensive social and economic ramifications” external, “top-down” and imposed resolutions are “likely to fail”. The key to successful conflict management (as measured by a lasting resolution), therefore, “is the restoration of (state) legitimacy (and) the reconstitution of the control of organised violence by public authorities, whether local, national, or global” (Kaldor 1999:10). In order to achieve this, Kaldor then demands that what is needed “is an alliance between local defenders of civility and transnational institutions which would guide a strategy aimed at controlling violence”. Thus, Kaldor (1999:11) argues that this “cosmopolitan project” is also important at the global scale:

“Although the new wars are concentrated in Africa, Eastern Europe, and Asia, they are a global phenomenon not just because of the presence of global networks, nor because they are reported globally. The characteristics of the new wars I have described are to be found in North America and Western Europe as well... This is why the cosmopolitan project has to be a global project even if it is, as it must be, local or regional in application”.

This “cosmopolitan project” is clearly evident, problematic though the US-led post-conflict security and reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan and now Iraq may be, in the ‘war on terror’.

The concept of ‘new wars’ is a complex one because, although it links to the end of the Cold War, it is erroneous to assume that only ‘old wars’ occurred before the demise of that world order and only ‘new wars’ have occurred since 1991. Rather, aspects of ‘new wars’ were apparent in the ‘old wars’ of the Cold War era, and vice-versa since then. Moreover, the concept is further complicated because in any current ‘new war’ various aspects of ‘old wars’ are present (or absent) in varying degrees. The utility of Kaldor’s concept, however, comes from its
codification of the main features of the change in the character of violence due to the end of the Cold War world order and the contemporary processes of accelerated globalisation. The concept of ‘new wars’, therefore, offers a conceptual framework for understanding the numerous discursive strategies used to distinguish the ‘war on terror’ from the Cold War in its attempt to establish it as a ‘new’ new world order. These geopolitical discontinuities are explored in the third section of this chapter. Before then, however, the second section explores the discursive strategies extending the ‘war on terror’ as a ‘third Cold War’ geopolitical continuity from Dalby’s ‘second Cold War’ concept.

The Geopolitical Continuities of the ‘Third Cold War’

This second section explores the discursive strategies employed by the United States foreign policy elite in its attempt to establish the ‘war on terror’ as the ‘new’ new world order that were similar to those employed in the Cold War (Figure 6.1). These geopolitical continuities gave the ‘war on terror’ a sense of familiarity with the immediate past world order and thus provided comfort and stability to the ‘American people’, and beyond. In this period of discontinuity, therefore, this familiarity added credibility to the continuity of a ‘third Cold War’. The first geopolitical continuity extrapolated the ‘terrorist threat’ from 11 September 2001 to ‘international terrorism’; just as the Soviet threat was expanded to the universal danger of global communism during the Cold War. The ‘terrorist threat’ was then spatialised as a ubiquitous global danger; just as communism was represented during the Cold War. The ‘war on terror’ also sounded like the Cold War because in many rhetorical devices the words ‘terrorist’ and/or ‘terrorism’ could be substituted with the words ‘communist’ and/or ‘communism’ without the loss of meaning; and vice versa. Similarly anxieties were raised about the imminence of more attacks to maintain the credibility of the ‘terrorist threat’ and justify a Cold War-like fear of an assault by the ‘Other’. This fear necessitated constant vigilance by the government, military, and public; just as the relentless spread of communism and the fall of dominoes demanded ongoing ‘containment’ and ‘forward defence’. Lastly, because ‘terrorism’ is a difficult adversary, the ‘war on terror’ would be of an indefinite duration until ‘terrorism’ is defeated. These geopolitical continuities between the Cold War and the ‘war on terror’ are now explored in detail.
**Figure 6.1: The geopolitical continuities of the ‘third Cold War’**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONTINUITY Discursive Tactic</th>
<th>Explanation of Continuity / Discursive Tactic</th>
<th>Example of Continuity / Discursive Tactic</th>
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</table>
| 1. EXTRAPOLATION              | Extrapolation of the terrorist threat to all 'international terrorism' | "A comprehensive campaign not to go after just one person, but to go after a network, the al-Qaeda network and...other terrorist organisations that are practicing this kind of evil on the civilised world"  
Colin Powell, interview, 16 September (2001a) |
| 2. SPATIALISATION             | The 'tree root' spatialisation of terrorism as a ubiquitous danger | "But let's not just focus on Osama bin Laden. It would be nice to see him brought to justice. But that won't end it. It's the whole network that has to be ripped up and brought to justice"  
Colin Powell, interview, 23 September (2001b) |
| 3. SUBSTITUTION               | Substituting terrorism for communism maintains meaning | "The outcome of this struggle is certain. A few young men may be deluded into dying for the terrorist (communist) vision of the world, but only the terrorists (communists) themselves want to live in such a world, where law is replaced by brute force and morality is defined by vicious and violent men"  
Dick Cheney, speech, 18 October (2001b) |
| 4. ANXieties                 | Anxieties raised by warnings of more terrorist attacks | "We have no indication that anything similar to what happened yesterday is afoot in the country. But at the same time, this is a time for caution and vigilance. But it is also a time for us... to show the world that America is coming back from this tragedy and (will) not hide in bunkers"  
Colin Powell, press conference, 12 September (2001c) |
| a. Warnings and reassurances | Anxieties raised by the possibility of WMD terrorism | "With proliferation, with the relaxation of (Cold War) tension, that proliferation enables terrorists to get their hands on capabilities that are increasingly powerful...to the point that you're not talking about thousands, you're talking about multiples of thousands of people"  
Donald Rumsfeld, press conference, (2001d) |
| b. Weapons of mass destruction threat |                      |                                          |
| 5. VIGILANCE                  | The ubiquitous terrorist threat demands constant vigilance | "I think we have to be vigilant during this time of heightened tension...this is a time for a little bit of heightened additional security (and) heightened vigilance"  
Colin Powell, interview, 23 September (2001w) |
| 6. DURATION                   | The 'war on terror' will be of indefinite duration | "I'm very pleased that more and more people around the world recognise the nature of this campaign, recognise that we have to get involved, recognise it's not going to be solved in one day or one week, but it'll be a long-term campaign"  
Colin Powell, interview, 17 September (2001p) |
| a. Indefinite duration        | Victory is assured and will spread US values and civilisation | "We cannot deal with terror. It will not end in a treaty...The struggle can only end with their complete and permanent destruction and in victory for the United States and the cause of freedom"  
Dick Cheney, speech, 18 October (2001b) |
Extrapolation

The first geopolitical continuity extrapolated the 'terrorist threat' from the specific perpetrators of 11 September 2001 to 'international terrorism' in general; a strategy which further de-contextualises the attacks. The danger is not just embodied in the 19 al-Qaeda operatives and Osama bin Laden, but exists as a "global terror network" (Bush 2001x) connecting a small number of 'terrorist' states with 'terrorist cells' in dozens of states around the world. As President George Bush (20011) explained in his speech to Congress on 20 September: "Americans are asking, 'Who attacked our country?' The evidence we have gathered all points to a collection of loosely affiliated terrorist organisations known as al-Qaeda...This group and its leader, a person named Osama bin Laden, are linked to many other organisations in different countries...There are thousands of these terrorists in more than 60 countries".

While this extrapolation point was noted in Chapter Four in relation to Bush's "evil-doers" and in Chapter Five for the 'comprehensive war' against 'terrorists' and the states that harbour them, it is also noteworthy here for two reasons. Most importantly, this tactic continues the Cold War extrapolation from Soviet communism to all forms of communism, including state communism in China, Korea, and Cuba, and so-called 'communist insurgencies' such as the Sandinistas, the African National Congress, and the Palestinian Liberation Organisation. This continuity therefore frames the 'war on terror' within a Cold War narrative, familiar to the 'American people', the wider Western world, and beyond, of the universal communist threat. As a consequence, there is no distinction between 'good terrorism' and 'bad terrorism'; the 'war on terror' is simply against all forms of terrorism. Secretary of State Colin Powell (2001n) made this extrapolation clear, when asked about the possibility of regional 'war on terror' cooperation in the Middle East with Iran after its sympathetic response to 11 September 2001, in an interview on CNN's Late Edition five days later: "They can't say 'We will help you fighting terrorism here, but we will not help you fighting terrorism elsewhere'". "Terrorism", Powell (2001n) declared, "is terrorism".

Secondly, because this continuity extends the 'war on terror' from the 'second Cold War', as local variations of communism were considered to be just as threatening as Soviet communism, this synonymy homogenises the 'terrorist threat' and in so doing prepares the de-contextualisation of other scenarios in which 'terrorism' occurs. In other words, because there was no need to consider the geopolitical context of communism during the Cold War, so there is also no need to consider the geopolitical context of 'terrorism' now. As Powell (2001aa) also explained in a 26 September press conference: "we are focussing on terrorism and going after
terrorists, not only those who are responsible for this event on the 11\textsuperscript{th} of September, but who are responsible for other terrorist activities of a global reach”; that is, regardless of the circumstances surrounding that ‘terrorism’. The potential danger here is forewarned in the Cold War extrapolation from Soviet communism to other forms of communism: by interpreting local Vietnamese communism as Moscow-inspired, the United States employed its policy of ‘containment’, leading to the Vietnam imbroglio. The combined effect of this extrapolation continuity, however, was to establish a Cold War-like carte blanche legitimation for a ‘war on terror’ against any threat deemed to be ‘terrorism’ by the United States and its allies. Thus ‘terrorism’ becomes a generic label, just as ‘communism’ did, to attach to any enemy ‘Other’ and so justify, as the extrapolation of the communist threat underpinned a temporally and spatially unlimited ‘war on communism’, a temporally and spatially unlimited ‘war on terror’.

Spatialisation

The second geopolitical continuity extends the first: extrapolating to ‘terrorism’ in all its forms also spatialises the ‘terrorist threat’ as a ubiquitous global danger. This spatialisation was achieved by the frequent use of the ‘tree root’ metaphor to represent Bush’s “global terror network”. This metaphor portrays ‘international terrorism’ as extending outwards from a ‘nerve-centre’ (the tree) as a network of tangled, interconnected, and underground threads (the roots). This system of ‘tree roots’ spreads around the world below the surface of (and therefore invisible to) legitimate politics and only becomes visible when violent acts of terrorism, such as 11 September 2001, are committed that ‘break the surface’; just as tree roots occasionally do. The ‘tree root’ metaphor therefore reinforces the ‘terrorist threat’ as an organic, naturally occurring and continually spreading danger that, through advection, did and will encroach underneath the territory of the United States and its allies and then break through the surface in a ‘surprise attack’; as it did on 11 September 2001. Again, Powell was particularly adept in using this metaphor to both represent the threat and legitimate the US response to it through ‘aggressive gardening’. In a Fox TV Special Report on 20 September Powell (2001\textsuperscript{t}), comparing ‘terrorism’ to Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait a decade earlier when he was Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, argued that “it’s a much more complicated problem, with terrorists operating in many countries throughout the world, with networks that keep them interlinked to information and financial systems, and we’ve got to root all of that out, we’ve got to pull it all out”.

The ‘tree root’ metaphor is a second continuity because it reworks the ‘infectious disease’ metaphor commonly used to portray the worldwide spread of communism during the Cold War. This metaphor spatialised ‘communism’ as an ‘infectious disease’ spreading through the living
body of the world, with all parts of this healthy (i.e., democratic, capitalist, liberal) global anatomy vulnerable to this indiscriminate contagion. Although these metaphors are slightly different, their continuity is the spatialisation of a global threat: both communism and terrorism threaten to engulf the remaining ‘non-infected’ spaces of the world. Again, Powell (2001x) explained this idea in an interview on ABC TV’s *This Week* on 23 September:

QUESTION: “Okay, terrorism exists throughout the world...Mr Secretary, the State Department has 31 organisations as foreign terrorist organisations on its list. How many of these have global reach?”

POWELL: “Quite a few of them. And quite a few of them will go after our interests in the regions that they are located in and right here at home. And so we have to treat all of them as potentially having the capacity to affect us in a global way”.

The effect of this spatialisation was reminiscent of the Cold War’s ‘infectious disease’ metaphor: the ubiquitous global threat of ‘terrorism’ helps justify worldwide military preparedness by the United States and its ‘war on terror’ allies. Spatialising the ‘terrorist threat’ in this way erroneously assumes, however, that all ‘terrorism’ is connected (just like communism) by an international network that primarily exists underground (just like communism). The problematic consequences of this assumption were illustrated by the US foreign policy elite’s ‘mistake’ (intentional or otherwise) that Iraq was partly responsible for 11 September 2001. Instead, for political geography and critical geopolitics the *global spatial pattern* of ‘terrorism’, as the geographic expression of the specific geopolitical contexts of this form of violence, requires explanation, not obliteration through this spatialisation of a ubiquitous worldwide danger (Figure 6.2). As such a spatial explanation would begin with the ‘why’ of ‘terrorism’, however, this Cold War-like spatialisation suits those who benefit from the de-contextualisation of this violence.

**Substitution**

The third geopolitical continuity also extends its predecessor: ‘communism’ was effectively substituted by ‘terrorism’ as the new ‘threatening other’ of the United States and the west. This substitution was evident in numerous Cold War-like rhetorical devices, which in many instances maintained their coherence and meaning when the words ‘terrorist’ and ‘terrorism’ were replaced with ‘communist’ and communism’. Powell’s (2001a) hurried speech to the Organisation of American States on 11 September 2001 illustrates how the ‘war on terror’ has a very similar rhetoric to the Cold War:
“Once again we see terrorism (communism), we see terrorists (communists), people who don’t believe in democracy, people who believe that with the destruction of buildings, with the murder of people, they can somehow achieve a political purpose. They can destroy buildings, they can kill people, and we will be saddened by this tragedy; but they will never be allowed to kill the spirit of democracy. They cannot destroy our society. They cannot destroy our belief in the democratic way...Terrorism (communism)...is everyone’s problem and there are countries represented here who have been fighting terrorism (communism) for years...It is something we must all unite behind. And we unite behind it as democratic nations committed to individual liberties, committed to the rights of people to live in peace and freedom (and) in which they and not terrorists (communists) select their leaders”.

Inversely, the opposite was also true: rhetorical devices in Dalby’s (1990b) argument could have the words ‘communist’ and ‘communism’ replaced with ‘terrorist’ and ‘terrorism’ and their coherence and meaning, in a contemporary ‘war on terror’ context, were also maintained. For example, Dalby (1990b:7) writes that much of the Committee on the Present Danger’s creation
of the 'second Cold War': “relates to the processes whereby the CPD (or the US foreign policy elite) attempted to establish their ways of dealing with the USSR (terrorists) as the correct ones. In their discourse the USSR (terrorism) is the dangerous Other that has to be contained, controlled and monitored using their superior and their ‘correct’ knowledge to ensure the security of the USA”. The ‘war on terror’ not only sounds like the ‘second Cold War’ but the ‘second Cold War’ sounds like the ‘war on terror’. Again, this continuity provides familiarity to post-11 September 2001 uncertainty and also justifies Cold War-style foreign policies to counter the ‘terrorist threat’. This substitution of communism with ‘terrorism’, however, risks further misunderstandings of this form of violence. Equating the two is dangerous because ‘terrorism’ and communism are very different phenomena: at the very least it is clear that terrorism is only a method of violence, while communism is a political ideology. The two are also very different given the absence of the bipolar Cold War structure of international relations (to which increased ‘terrorism’ is partly a response) so there is considerable room here for a more appropriate understanding. While the parallels between ‘terrorism’ and communism serve the purpose of rendering the ‘war on terror’ familiar, and thus provide the unknown a sense of the known, it does not necessarily help deal more effectively with this new ‘threatening Other’.

Anxieties

A fourth continuity was the occasional raising of public anxieties over the ‘terrorist threat’, which was done in two ways. Initially, the ‘terrorist threat’ was extended as ongoing by the issuing of general warnings of imminent terrorist attacks on US and other Western targets. Such warnings were given many times during the weeks, months, and even years (the latest came in August 2004, over possible attacks on various financial centres and the Republican Party convention in New York the following month) following 11 September 2001; but none of these warnings materialised. The veracity or otherwise of these warnings, however, is not the issue here. Rather, the point is that these warnings, by not specifying where or when these impending attacks would occur, maintain the credibility of the ubiquitous ‘terrorist threat’. In other words, all places are at risk at all times; ‘terrorism’ was a danger that could not be easily forgotten with these overt warnings. One month after 11 September, for example, Bush (2001w) offered this typical alert: “Today, the Justice Department did issue a blanket alert. It was in recognition of a general threat we received. This is not the first time the Justice Department have acted like this. I hope it’s the last, but given the attitude of the evil-doers, it may not be”. In addition to these warnings, constant media reference to ‘a group linked to al-Qaeda’ when reporting incidents of ‘terrorism’ added to this anxiety continuity also extended the Cold War; when the fall of dominoes and the threat of nuclear exchange frequently appeared as an impending danger.
This continuity, however, was double-edged because the United States foreign policy elite also reassured the US public that the government was in control of the situation and encouraged the ‘American people’ to get back to a normal way of life and not live in fear. This contradiction, or rather its effect, was raised in the 11 October Bush (2001w) press conference quoted above:

QUESTION: “After the FBI warning...that there would be retaliatory attacks over the next several days, given the complete generality of that warning, what does it really accomplish, aside from scaring people into not doing what you’ve urged them to do – getting back to their normal lives? What should they do with it?”

BUSH: “I’m aware of the intelligence that caused the warning to be issued, and it was a general threat on America. And as I mentioned earlier, had it been a specific threat, we would have contacted those to whom the threat was directed. But I think it is important for the American people to know their government is on full alert. And that’s what that warning showed. We take every threat seriously”.

Raising public anxieties of further attack, but balancing these with reassurances to avoid outright panic, was a clear attempt to control the ‘American people’ (and other states and their citizens), and thus justify any and all ‘war on terror’ policies.

Second, this ongoing ‘terrorist threat’ was exacerbated by raising anxieties over the possibility of an attack involving ‘weapons of mass destruction’ (WMD). This WMD-threat continued the Cold War danger of a nuclear confrontation with the Soviet Union, and the possibility was given credibility by Powell (2001m) on CBS TV’s Face the Nation on 16 September:

QUESTION: “Are you worried about biological and chemical retaliation?”

POWELL: “I think we have to be worried about any of these threats, chemical, biological, radiological...You can’t dismiss that possibility”.

Moreover, this threat of WMD-terrorism was also connected to the end of the Cold War and the resulting proliferation of nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons to ‘rogue states’ and ‘terrorist organisations’ (an issue discussed with regard to Iraq in Chapter Seven). This Cold War
to ‘war on terror’ continuity was made by Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld (2001d) during a 20 September press conference:

“... of asymmetrical threats, of terrorism and ballistic missiles, cruise missiles, cyber attacks, and weapons of mass destruction, are something that are front and centre to us because of the problem of proliferation. And the problem is that with the end of the Cold War, there was a relaxation of tension and almost anything that people want, they can get their hands on, if they’re determined and if they have the money. And the weapons are of increasing power and lethality. And it does call on all of us to recognise the importance of dealing with the problem of proliferation. Given the reality of what we’ve seen here, with thousands of lives lost, how important counter-proliferation is in seeing that those weapons of vastly greater power don’t come into the hands and are not used by the kinds of people that attacked the United States”.

The effect of raising public anxieties, whether through warnings of a ‘terrorist’ attack or the potential threat of WMD-‘terrorism’, was to again legitimate any and all counter-terrorism policies, foreign and domestic, that could be related, even if only remotely, to the ‘war on terror’. Although the rhetorical maintenance of the credibility of the ‘terrorist threat’ is ‘better’ (in that it is less dangerous) than ongoing real instances that prove the existence of that threat, it also means that the ‘threat’ can easily be inflated. The appearance of over-inflation is especially clear when warnings do not materialise, giving the impression that this raising of anxieties is based as much on paranoia, self-justification, and public control than it is on a credible threat.

**Vigilance**

Regardless of these motivations, however, the fifth continuity benefited from the combined effect of the first four, and emphasised the need for constant vigilance against all forms of ‘terrorism’ as a ubiquitous global danger that could strike at any moment, in any place, and possibly with weapons of mass destruction. This requirement was again reminiscent of the Cold War, when the never-ending strategies of containment, forward defence, and nuclear deterrence were justified by the omnipresent communist threat. To illustrate, the continuity between the spatialisation of the communist and ‘terrorist’ threat is crucial here, because the ‘tree root’ metaphor has the same effect in the ‘war on terror’ that the ‘infectious disease’ metaphor had in the Cold War: the justification of constant vigilance against a ‘threatening Other’. As a
ubiquitous global danger, ‘terrorism’ demands a high state of alertness amongst the United States government, military, and population, and its allies around the world. The initial link between this spatialised threat and policy response was clear when Powell (2001y) explained, in a 23 September interview on NBC TV’s Meet the Press, the spatial distribution and threat of the ‘terrorists’: “They’re everywhere. They’re in Europe, they’re in America. You can find connections to them all around. And we have to get them all, or else we will always have a degree of uncertainty and a degree of insecurity within not only American society but within societies all over the world”.

In the same interview Powell then articulated the US foreign policy elite’s consequent demand for constant vigilance against the new ‘terrorist’ enemy: “I think we have to be vigilant during this time of heightened tension. And you can be sure the United States government is doing everything it can to discern whether there are any threats coming our way. And this is a time for...heightened additional security...(and) heightened vigilance”. This continuity returned the United States to a Cold War-like foreign policy mentality, with the US government, military, and the ‘American people’ always on the lookout for the ‘terrorist threat’.

**Duration**

This need for constant vigilance led directly to the final continuity arguing that the ‘war on terror’ would be a Cold War-like world order of an indefinite duration. In other words, counter-terrorism policies, whether political, legal, economic, financial, or military, would last for as long as necessary to defeat ‘terrorism’. Bush (2001) indicated this longevity in his speech to Congress on 20 September when he declared that: “Our war on terror begins with al-Qaeda, but it does not end there. It will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped, and defeated”. This task would not be easy or quick, however, because ‘terrorism’, like communism, is a difficult adversary to overcome, as it is faithfully adhered to by its proponents, well-organised and hard to disrupt and prevent, exists in numerous countries around the world, and operates in the shadows. These characteristics meant that counter-terrorism policies, as Cheney (2001b) explained in a speech on 18 October, would exist for some considerable time: “These weeks have brought some changes into people’s lives and a good deal of uncertainty... Americans reasonably wonder, ‘How long will it last?’ The answer is that many of these changes we’ve made are permanent, at least in the lifetime of most of us. Vigilance against the new threat is not just a temporary precaution; it is a long-term responsibility that we all share”.

The impending duration of the 'war on terror', as it would necessarily include numerous battles against 'terrorism' in specific places across the globe, was therefore years, even decades, long. Indeed, the conclusion of the 'war on terror' was a distant endpoint, too far off to be relevant to most people's lives, and thus it would define the structure of world politics, the behaviour of states, and the lives of millions of people, for the foreseeable future. The 'war on terror', in other words, would last so long that it would indeed become the 'new' new world order of the twenty-first century. The 'terrorist threat' would therefore indefinitely justify the 'war on terror', just as the perennial communist threat justified US Cold War strategies for half-a-century.

The certainty of a United States 'victory' in the 'war on terror' was in no way diminished, however, by the indefinite duration required to defeat 'terrorism'. The continuity of a US victory drew on memories of its winning of the Cold War as represented by Fukuyama's (1989, 1993) "End of History" thesis. After 11 September 2001, victory meant the triumph of freedom, democracy, and liberty over 'terrorism'. Thus the US national exceptionalism myth was again invoked to establish a 'new' new world order in which these principles, as a universal good, would do battle with 'terrorism' and, like the Cold War, would end in the defeat of the latter by the former. The 'war on terror', therefore, was another opportunity to spread US freedom, democracy, and liberty around the world, beginning with Afghanistan but continuing through all 'terrorist' interstices. This territorial expansion of 'American' values and civilisation would also (although this was never admitted lest it draw attention to oil and economic motives) spread capitalism and free-market economics as part of the relentless march of globalisation. Thus, in addition to its resolve to fight this 'war on terror' and to persevere despite the duration, effort, and losses required to defeat the 'terrorist' enemy, winning the 'war on terror' was never in doubt because of US exceptionalism and the righteousness of its cause.

This familiar story of a long war against a difficult enemy but with a certain victory at its end were the geopolitical continuities used by the United States foreign policy elite in its attempt to establish the 'war on terror' as a 'new' new world order. These similarities to the previous world order extended the 'second Cold War' concept, in my extension of Dalby's (1990b) phrase, into the geopolitical continuity of the 'third Cold War'. This continuity, however, constituted only one half of this hybrid attempt to create a 'new' new world order. In contrast, the second half modified the 'war on terror' by drawing attention to the differences between this new and the old world order. The third section therefore explores the geopolitical discontinuities representing the 'war on terror' as a 'new war'. 
The Geopolitical Discontinuities of the 'First War of the Twenty-First Century'

This section explores the discursive strategies employed to differentiate the 'war on terror' from the Cold War by invoking various (but not all) aspects of the 'new wars' concept (Figure 6.2). These geopolitical discontinuities modified the 'war on terror' to the specific post-11 September 2001 'geopolitical realities' of world politics, which assisted in justifying particular policies within this proposed 'new' new world order. The first geopolitical discontinuity used to modify the 'war on terror' into a 'new war' was to conceptually distinguish Bush's (2001e) "first war of the twenty-first century" from the previous Cold War era of 'old wars'. This distinction was furthered by specific comparisons between the 'war on terror' and previous 'old wars', as both a generic category and specific examples thereof, and even other 'new wars' of the preceding decade. Consequently, because the methods of conducting an 'old war' are no longer appropriate to this 'new war', the 'war on terror' requires new means to fight and win it. These new 'new war' means, in turn, demand the transformation of the US military from its current configuration to fight 'old wars' to a 'new war' focus. These geopolitical discontinuities between the previous world order and this 'new' (war) new world order are now explored in detail.

First war

The first geopolitical discontinuity between the Cold War and the 'war on terror' conceptually separated the two 'wars'. While the Cold War was used to provide the 'war on terror' a sense of familiarity, it was also a very different war because it will occur in and characterise an altogether new era in world politics; that of the twenty-first century. This distinction is encapsulated in Bush's (2001e) declaration, just two days after 11 September 2001, that the 'war on terror' was the "first war of the twenty-first century". During a 19 September press conference, however, White House Press Secretary Ari Fleischer (2001b) explained that Bush's recognition of 11 September 2001 and the 'war on terror' as "a new kind of war" in which "the front lines will look different from the wars of the past" (Bush 2001m) occurred immediately: "I was with the President all day on Tuesday last week...and as the President arrived back into Washington...(he) could see out the left window of the helicopter the smoke coming out of the Pentagon. And the President, looking out the window, said out loud, and to nobody in particular, he said, 'The mightiest building in the world is on fire. What you're just witnessing is the first war of the twenty-first century'".
Figure 6.3: The geopolitical discontinuities of the “first war of the twenty-first century”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DISCONTINUITY</th>
<th>Explanation of Discontinuity / Discursive Tactic</th>
<th>Example of Discontinuity / Discursive Tactic</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. FIRST WAR</td>
<td>The ‘war on terror’ is conceptually different from the Cold War</td>
<td>&quot;America and the world must understand that this is the first war of the twenty-first century&quot; George Bush, press conference, 13 September (2001e)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. COMPARISONS</td>
<td>Comparison of the ‘war on terror’ with generic ‘old wars’ category</td>
<td>“I understand this is an unconventional war. It’s a different kind of war. It’s not the kind of war we’re used to in America” George Bush, press conference, 11 October (2001v)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. With generic old wars</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. With specific old wars</td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;We’re engaged in something very different from World War Two, Korea, Vietnam, the Gulf War…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. With specific new wars</td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;...Kosovo, Bosnia...the kinds of things that people think of when they use the word ‘war’...&quot; Donald Rumsfeld, press conference, 20 September (2001d)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. NEW MEANS</td>
<td>Invisible enemy will be made visible by new means</td>
<td>“The enemy is sometimes hard to find. They like to hide. They think they can hide, but we know better” George Bush, press conference, 26 September (2001o)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. (In)visible enemy</td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;Since the end of the Cold War there has been a relaxation of tension...(and) it’s led to the movement toward asymmetrical threats as opposed to more conventional threats&quot; Donald Rumsfeld, press conference, 12 September (2001a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Asymmetrical threat</td>
<td>New means needed to deal with asymmetrical threats</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. TRANSFORMATIONS</td>
<td>The ‘terrorist’ enemy demands new thinking by US military</td>
<td>&quot;We’re also a nation that is adjusting to a new type of war. This isn’t a conventional war that we’re waging. Ours is a campaign that will have to reflect the new enemy” George Bush, press conference, 17 September (2001i)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. New thinking</td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;We must defeat the terrorist network responsible for the September 11 assaults. But just as importantly, we need to prepare now for the emerging threats we will face in the next decade and beyond. Each of these tasks...is an enormous challenge, but we have the challenge of doing both at the same time&quot;. Paul Wolfowitz, testimony*, 3-4 October (2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. New war re-configuration</td>
<td>Re-configuration of US military essential to fight this ‘new war’</td>
<td>zeigt an, dass es sich um eine komplexe Aufgabe handelt...&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Testimony to the House of Representatives Armed Services Committee
As noted in Chapter Four, the use of the term ‘war’ was questioned on the day after the attacks after Bush’s description of 11 September 2001 as an “act of war” and of the response as a “war on terror”. Here, Powell’s (2001c) defence of the use of the term ‘war’, when he emphasised the non-legal declaration of ‘war’ but the broad mobilisation for war-like purposes, conceptually separated the ‘war on terror’ from the conventional military understanding of ‘war’:

**QUESTION:** “Secretary Powell, the newspaper headlines in New York today, a lot of them, screamed the word ‘war’. I wonder, is that appropriate? Do we regard this as the equivalent to war?”

**POWELL:** “The President believes that it was an act of war against us...It doesn’t mean necessarily that it results in, say, a declaration of war – Congress would have to make that judgment anyway – but it means we have to really mobilise ourselves and all of the assets at our disposal – political, diplomatic, legal, law enforcement, intelligence and military – to deal with those who perpetrated this act of war against us”.

This conceptual difference was further made along spatial and temporal dimensions. Spatially, the ‘war on terror’ is different because of the unprecedented penetration of the continental United States; on 11 September 2001 war had come to ‘homeland America’ for the first time in the modern era. This loss of invulnerability was a common theme and Rumsfeld (2001g) concisely expressed it in a 27 September press conference: “For most of our history, combat has been something that has largely taken place on foreign soil. These strikes were the first on American soil since the Second World War, and the first attack on the Capitol by a foreign enemy since the War of 1812. These assaults have brought the battlefield home to us...(There is) also a recognition that the world has changed, that we can no longer count on future wars being waged safely in their regions of origin”. There is an irony here in that, after at least a decade of ‘new wars’ (Kaldor 1999), ‘global media events’ (Wark 1994), and ‘the CNN factor’ (Robinson 2002), the US is only realising now, after 11 September 2001, that violence and conflict has impacts far beyond its local contexts. This irony was also evident in Deputy Secretary of Defence Paul Wolfowitz’s (2001) testimony to the Armed Services Committee on 3-4 October that: “in the twenty-first century, we can no longer count on conflicts remaining contained within their region of origin far from our shores”.

Similarly, the numerical designation of the ‘war on terror’ as the conceptual ‘first war’ represents a temporal distinction, one made easier by the close proximity to the new millennium, between
this and previous wars. This designation was behind Bush’s immediate “first war of the twenty-first century” description, but 11 September 2001 and the ‘war on terror’ mark not only the real beginning of the arbitrary new millennium, but also a new era in world politics. This connection was made by Rumsfeld (2001a): “We are...seeing the definition of a new battlefield in the world, a twenty-first century battlefield” and summarised by Bush (2001:q) just four days before the war on Afghanistan: “We are aware...that we’ve entered into a new era...the imagery is vivid in people’s minds”. By conceptually, spatially, and temporally distinguishing the ‘war on terror’ from the Cold War, the United States foreign policy elite began its invocation of Kaldor’s ‘new war’ concept as the second half of its hybrid attempt to establish a ‘new’ new world order.

Comparisons
The second discontinuity compared the ‘war on terror’ with both the ‘old wars’ of the past (Cold War) era and the ‘new wars’ of the previous (post-Cold War) decade as a means of distinguishing it from any and all previous wars. This comparison was initially made with ‘old wars’ as a generic category, and was soon undertaken by Powell (20011) in a press conference on 14 September: “I was raised a soldier and you are trained: there is the enemy occupying a piece of ground. We can define it in time, space and other dimensions, and you can assemble forces and go after it. This is different. The enemy is in many places. The enemy is hidden. The enemy is very often right here within our own country”. Bush (2001i) then summarised this general comparison in a press conference three days later: “This will be a different type of war than we’re used to. In the past, there have been beaches to storm, islands to conquer...But I know that this is a different type of enemy than we’re used to”.

This discontinuity was then narrowed to specific examples of ‘old wars’. In particular, after 11 September 2001 many comparisons were made with the Japanese ‘surprise attack’ on Pearl Harbour, Hawaii on 7 December 1941. The similarities were obvious (an unannounced aerial attack on an otherwise peaceful American morning), but the differences were synonymous with the differences between the ‘war on terror’ as a ‘new war’ and World War Two as an ‘old war’. National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice (2001) used the opportunity presented in a press conference a week later, when a reporter asked her to comment on the parallels between President Roosevelt’s speech to Congress after Pearl Harbour and President Bush’s coming speech to Congress, to make this (non)comparison: “Well, I think the President is going to deliver the speech on its own terms. But, you know, it allows an interesting point, which is that this isn’t Pearl Harbour. I know that there are a lot of comparisons to Pearl Harbour, but this is
different, and it’s different in a lot of ways... In that case we had a country with a capital, with marching armies and beaches to storm and islands to take... That is not the nature of this war”.

Indeed, the morning after the attacks, in an interview on National Public Radio, Powell (2001d) explained that the ‘war on terror’ would not be “a war of the kind that we have seen before such as World War Two or Korea or Vietnam”. More specifically, for example, four days later on CNN’s Late Edition of 16 September Powell (2001n) explained the difference between the ‘war on terror’ and the Gulf War against Iraq: “That war was easy to see, easy to define, with an enemy that essentially sat there waiting to be attacked, and we finally did attack it. In this case, the enemy is clever, more resourceful, broken down across the world in many, many countries in small cells, doing everything to remain hidden, with a long time horizon. They will take months and years to plan an operation. And so, it is a much more difficult enemy to find and fix”.

Finally, the ‘war on terror’ was even distinguished from other ‘new wars’ conducted by the United States since the end of the Cold War. In his 20 September speech to Congress, for example, Bush (2001l) explained that: “this war... will not look like the air war above Kosovo two years ago, where no ground troops were used and not a single American was lost in combat. Our response involves far more than instant retaliation and isolated strikes. Americans should not expect one battle, but a lengthy campaign unlike any other we have ever seen”. By negatively comparing the ‘war on terror’ with ‘old wars’ (in general and specific examples) and even other ‘new wars’ the “first war of the twenty-first century” was raised to a level where it could indeed become a ‘new’ new world order as an indefinite, difficult, and multifaceted campaign against an implacable foe.

**New means**

As simply a military war, however, the ‘war on terror’ would be fought with new means, and these constitute the third discontinuity. As Bush (2001w) explained from the White House one month after the attacks and four days after the start of the ‘new war’ on Afghanistan: “This is a different kind of war that requires a different type of approach and a different type of mentality”. In particular, the ‘tree root’ metaphor was used here to justify the ‘new war’ means of making visible, through aggressive gardening, the otherwise invisible danger of the ‘terrorist threat’. The roots of terrorism would be pulled-up from their underground hiding places and removed from the environment which sustains them. The invisible character of the ‘terrorist threat’ was present in the constant references to how the ‘terrorists’ were ‘burrowed in’ in caves in Afghanistan. During a press conference on 17 September, for example, Bush (2001i) declared that “It’s an
enemy that likes to hide and burrow in...and they like to hit and then they like to hide out, but we're going to smoke them out”. Such metaphors were the core of Bush's ‘wild west’ rhetoric, such as expressed in the same press conference of 17 September, which justified new means to overcome this invisible enemy: “They know what I know, that when we start putting the heat on...(we) will get them running...And once we get them running, we have a good chance of getting them, and that's exactly what our intent is”. In a more formal articulation, Bush (2001v) not only legitimated these new means but also declared their success, just four days into the war:

“We have ruined terrorist training camps, disrupted their communications, weakened the Taliban military and destroyed most of their air defences. We're mounting a sustained campaign to drive the terrorists out of their hidden caves and to bring them to justice. All missions are being executed according to plan...The terrorists have no true home in any country or culture or faith. They dwell in dark corners of earth, and there, we will find them...Over time, with patience and precision, the terrorists will be pursued. They will be isolated, surrounded, cornered until there is no place to run or hide or rest”.

The invisibility of the 'terrorist' enemy was not its only trait that necessitated new means. The 'asymmetrical threat' of al-Qaeda and the Taliban also demanded that the United States military find original ways to conduct this particular new war, even though the notion of an uneven conflict has been apparent since at least the ('old'?) war in Vietnam. Asymmetrical threats, however, have become more evident in recent years because of conventional and nuclear US military power. During a 20 September press conference, Rumsfeld (2001d) explained the emergence of these unequal foes in simple terms: “Because of the end of the Cold War, and because of the Gulf War, which told people not to compete against the US with armies, navies, and air forces, countries do look for asymmetrical ways they can threaten the United States and western countries”. The result is ‘terrorism’, unconventional attacks on non-military targets, as opposed to conventional state-to-state conflict of ‘old wars’ or, in the case of the Cold War, nuclear confrontation between superpowers.

As a consequence of this asymmetry between the two sides involved in the ‘war on terror’ and the need for new means, the United States had to think of innovative ways to conduct the war on Afghanistan. In an interview on ABC's This Week on 16 September, Rumsfeld (2001b) explained that: “The people we're dealing with have no armies or navies or air forces or battle
ships or carriers or capitol cities even, or high-value targets”. Instead, he continued: “What they have is a lot of people, in the case of al-Qaeda...(and) they may be operating in 50 or 60 countries”. A week later, on NBC TV’s Meet the Press, Powell (2001y) explained the character of the Taliban co-enemy and its influence on US military thinking:

“The Taliban regime has a military force that has succeeded in gaining control of some ninety percent of the country. But it is not a modern force by any means. It is a very dispersed force, at the lower end of the ability to conduct modern warfare. But it is a force that one would have to take seriously because of their experience in the kind of warfare that is typical of Afghanistan. And as we develop our plans...that go after al-Qaeda we will try to take advantage of whatever weaknesses exist there and play to our strengths and not act against their strengths”.

This different type of enemy therefore required new means to fight it and as such represented a third discontinuity between the Cold War and the ‘war on terror’.

Transformations

The ‘war on terror’, therefore, required not only new means but also new thinking, as Bush (2001i) declared on 17 September: “I know that this is a different type of enemy than we’re used to...And we’re adjusting our thinking to the new type of enemy”. Moreover, this demand was made across the entire United States foreign policy elite, as Bush (2001w) explained during an 11 October press conference: “All of us in government are having to adjust our way of thinking about the new war”. This quote is also notable because of the explicit use of Kaldor’s phrase and, as Bush (2001i) had previously explained during the same 17 September press conference, the United States military was at the forefront of this new ‘war on terror’ thinking: “It’s going to require a new thought process, and I’m proud to report our military, led by the Secretary of Defence, understands that; understands it’s a new type of war”. Hence the fourth discontinuity demands the transformation of the US military itself to ensure it can better fight, and win, the (new) ‘war on terror’. In a White House press conference one month after the attacks on New York and Washington, Bush (2001w) signalled this necessary reorganisation: “we need to rethink how we configure our military...so that we more effectively respond to asymmetrical responses from terrorist organisations”. Earlier, on ABC TV’s This Week of 16 September, Rumsfeld (2001b) explained the need for transformation from a focus on the Soviet Union: “In terms of being ready and transformed to deal with these asymmetrical threats, the short answer is
clearly we are not. Clearly, we are still... organised and arranged to deal with the kinds of threats that are still there – they’re not gone – but not fully arranged to deal with the new set of threats. And that is why we have been focussing on them”.

By agreeing with this criticism, Rumsfeld cleverly turns the conversation to his advantage and justifies the need for military transformation in the face of the new ‘terrorist’ threat. Later, in testimony to the Armed Services Committee, Wolfowitz (2001) was less subtle and expressed the necessity of transformation in life-and-death terms:

“We therefore have two missions before us today: First, to prepare for a war that is already upon us – to break the network of terrorist states and terrorist organisations responsible for these acts, and cripple their ability to threaten our people with further violence. And second, to prepare for the future – to transform our Armed Forces so they can defend America and her allies against the many different and dangerous threats we will face in the twenty-first century, to ensure that we can deal with the surprise of the next decade and the decade to come. Both of these missions are critical and urgent: What is at stake in the first is our lives and our way of life; what is at stake in the second is the lives and the futures of our children and grandchildren”.

The effect is that the (new) ‘war on terror’ justifies not only continued but increased military spending, policy development and financial investment in what President Eisenhower famously called the US ‘military – industrial complex’. The effect of this discontinuity, therefore, is that like the Cold War nuclear arms race it too prioritises the military, allocates large sums of money to defence, and sustains extensive US weapons and weapons technology industries.

In combination, these geopolitical discontinuities between the Cold War and the ‘war on terror’ were the discursive strategies used by the United States foreign policy elite in its attempt establish the ‘war on terror’ as a ‘new’ new world order distinct from the previous world order. These discontinuities, constituting the second half of this attempt, invoked Kaldor’s (1999) concept of ‘new wars’ in order to articulate the character of the “first war of the twenty-first century”. The use of these geopolitical (dis)continuities was, as is implicit in the above discussion of the last two sections, contradictory: the ‘war on terror’ is simultaneously similar to yet different from the Cold War.
Ironies, Paradoxes, and Resistances

This hybrid attempt by the United States foreign policy elite to establish the 'war on terror' as a 'new' new world order contained a number of ironies and paradoxes that undermined the coherency and credibility. The ironies relate to the supposed geopolitical continuities between the Cold War and the 'war on terror', while the paradoxes relate to the peculiar and partial geopolitical discontinuities of the 'war on terror' as modified by the 'new wars' concept. These ironies and paradoxes were evident from the very start, being present in the primary data from the month following 11 September 2001. This section concludes, however, by arguing that these early ironies and paradoxes opened up spaces for the numerous worldwide resistances to this 'war on terror' as 'new' new world order argument that increased after the war on Afghanistan and as the US foreign policy elite moved towards war on Iraq in 2002. The final section of this chapter therefore outlines these ironies, paradoxes, and resistances before detailing this opposition in the next chapter.

Ironies of the 'third Cold War'

The first irony of the 'third Cold War' was that the 'war on terror' would include political and military cooperation between the United States and its former Cold War adversaries; especially Russia and other former republics of the Soviet Union, but also China. Bush (2001m) made the end of the Cold War, and therefore its irrelevance to contemporary US – Russia relations, clear in a 24 September press conference:

"I had an hour-long discussion... with (Russian) President Putin on Saturday. He was very forthcoming in his willingness to work closely with the United States in our efforts to battle terrorism... When I was on Air Force One (on Tuesday 11 September) and ordered increased alert status for our troops, President Putin's call was the first call I got and he made it clear that he would stand down their troops. In other words, to me it was a moment where it clearly said to me that he understands the Cold War is over. In the past... had the President raised the DEFCON levels of our troops, Russia would have responded accordingly and there would have been inevitable tension... Vladimir Putin clearly understands
that the Cold War is over and that the United States and Russia can cooperate. We can cooperate with a new strategic arrangement; we can cooperate in the battle against terrorism”.

This anecdote includes two notable ironies. Most importantly, it is indeed ironic that President Putin was the first to call President Bush and stood down Russian troops, an inverse Cold War response that immediately opened the way for US – Russian cooperation in the ‘war on terror’. It is also ironic that the President of the United States should think that the President of Russia (that is, not the President of the Soviet Union) is a decade behind in realising that the Cold War has ended and suggesting that Putin has only realised this because of 11 September 2001. Indeed, given Bush’s reputation for limited knowledge of the world beyond the United States and international affairs and in contrast to Putin’s previous career with Soviet intelligence, this comment is ironic in the extreme!

The immediate possibility for United States – Russia cooperation led to further ironies. In a 19 September press conference with Russian foreign minister Igor Ivanov, for example, Powell (2001r) noted a shift in attitude amongst the people of the former Soviet Union: “Deputy Secretary (of State Richard) Armitage called me from Moscow this morning to also tell me what it was like in Moscow to have Russian citizens coming by our embassy to place flowers and candles and otherwise remember those who lost their lives”. Powell (2001u) also identified the possibility of cooperation between the US and another Cold War (and still communist) foe in a 21 September press conference with Chinese foreign minister Tang Jiaxuang: “(China) has influence in that (Central Asian) region. It has knowledge and information. It has intelligence that might be of help to us. And our counter-terrorism experts will be getting together next week to explore every way in which the two sides can cooperate”. Such United States – Chinese cooperation was not only ironic in the context of the supposed geopolitical continuities between the Cold War and the ‘war on terror’, but also in the light of the March 2001 crisis, just six months earlier, following the mid-air collision between a US spy-plane and a Chinese fighter aircraft in Chinese air-space. The overall irony, therefore, was that in just a decade of geopolitical transition the US and its former communist enemies had gone from implacable enemies to allies. These ironies actually disconnect the ‘war on terror’ from the Cold War, despite their supposed continuity in the attempt to establish it as a ‘new’ new world order.
A related irony was present in the possibility of cooperation between the United States and the former Soviet republics of Central Asia. This possibility was raised in an interview with Powell (2001n) on CNN’s Late Edition on 16 September:

QUESTION: “If you look at the map of Afghanistan, it’s landlocked. To the north, there’s Uzbekistan, one of the republics of the former Soviet Union. Is there any need for cooperation, for example, from Uzbekistan?”

POWELL: “We will be talking to the Uzbek authorities. There may be something they can assist us with. But we’ll explore that with them”.

This possibility also indicates a (re)learning of geography in the United States: the coming war on Afghanistan reveals a much more complex cartography of Central Asia than previously imagined through simple maps of the monolithic Soviet Union. Indeed, in a press conference eight days later Bush (2001k) noted that these Central Asian republics had been “forthcoming in their statements about their understanding of a potential campaign”. This irony was then epitomised the next day, 25 September, when the possibility of allowing a US military presence on the territory of its former enemy was raised in a press conference with Rumsfeld (2001f):

QUESTION: “Mr. Secretary, a report from Moscow today quotes...your counterpart, Defence Minister Sergeyev, as saying that Tajikistan will offer the airport in its capital city for possible strikes. The direct quote... says, ‘Dushanbe airport may be offered to the US Air Force to carry out a retaliation strike, if the need arises’. How significant is that?”

RUMSFELD: “The United States has in fact been in touch with Russia on a number of occasions...as well as any number of other countries. As I have said earlier...I’m going to let them speak for themselves, but the answer is, yes, we are discussing things with Russia as well as any number of other countries in that part of the world”.

This irony did come true later, when the United States military used bases in the Central Asian republics to launch military strikes on Afghanistan. In the light of the contemporary oil geopolitics and ‘New Great Game’ considerations that Chapter Four argued contextualise 11 September 2001, this cooperation is doubly ironic. Indeed, the ongoing presence of US military forces in Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan suggests Washington has taken the opportunity
of the war on Afghanistan to establish a foothold in the Central Asian territory of its former Cold War adversary.

Similarly, the use of this territory once closed to United States access (especially military) leads directly into another irony: US – Russian cooperation over military activity in Afghanistan. This cooperation was first raised in two consecutive Powell (2001c, 2001j) press conferences on 12 and 13 September, when the utility of a pre-existing US – Russia “working group” on Afghanistan was raised with regard to possible military action. That such a “task force” exists at all is ironic, but it became especially so when discussions broached the topic of the difficulties of conducting military operations in Afghanistan, as experienced by the Soviet Union itself during its decade long occupation of the 1980s. Indicating how quickly Afghanistan was identified as a likely target in the ‘war on terror’, this irony was first raised in a 13 September press conference with Powell (2001j):

QUESTION: “...the Russians know Afghanistan very well from their time in the ‘80s. They will be able to be helpful on topography, installations, (and) what kinds of (other) things?”

POWELL: “I’m sure they’ll be helpful on many things. It's their neighbourhood. They do have a great deal of experience in Afghanistan and we will draw on all of that experience”.

In an interview on NBC TV’s Meet the Press ten days later, on 23 September, Powell (2001y) argued that the (exceptional) United States military would be able to use this previous experience of the Soviet Union in Afghanistan in its coming ground war and avoid a similar humiliation:

QUESTION: “The Russians, when – then the Soviet Union – engaged in a 10-year war with Afghanistan, lost about 30,000 people according to unofficial estimates. One gentleman, who was in the service there, now in the Russian Parliament, Yevgeny Zelinov, said that no matter how they prepare for a ground operation, it is hopeless in that environment”.

POWELL: “It depends what kind of a mission you are trying to achieve and what your objectives are before you declare hopelessness. And I am sure our military leaders have a pretty good idea of the difficulties of operating in Afghanistan. And I am sure all of our military leaders have studied carefully previous experience...of the Russian army”.
These two passages hide another irony: by presenting the Soviet Union as the 'experts' on fighting a war in Afghanistan, and the United States as novices, the problematic US involvement in the mujaheddin war of the 1980s is concealed. This selective Cold War history also conceals Washington's responsibility for the civil wars, which eventually led to the rise of the Taliban, which followed its abandonment of Afghanistan after the Soviet withdrawal. Indeed, this irony was epitomised, given the revelations about the "Afghan trap" discussed in Chapter Four, the following day when Rumsfeld (2001a) was asked:

QUESTION: "President Putin said today that the Russian government is going to actively now supply military equipment and arms to the Afghan opposition. Does the United States also intend to provide military support to the Afghan opposition in order to get rid of the Taliban?"

RUMSFELD: "We don't have any announcements to make with respect to the activities either with the Afghan Northern Alliance or with the various tribes in the southern part of the country".

Despite this denial, it is the question that reveals the irony here: Russia is now supplying the Afghan 'opposition', whereas the Soviet Union had invaded to support the 'government' in the 1980s. Equally, the second part of the question includes a potential irony: that the United States may also be supporting (as it did in the 1980s against the Red Army) the Afghan 'opposition' means that Washington and Moscow are now aiding the same clients in Afghanistan. Indeed, as the war transpired and the US military supported the Northern Alliance forces against the Taliban this irony did indeed materialise.

In combination, therefore, these ironies illustrate that the 'war on terror' was not quite the geopolitical continuity from the Cold War that the United States foreign policy elite had argued. Clearly, the 'war on terror' was presented as a 'third Cold War' when to do so served their purposes; when spatialising a ubiquitous global danger that demands constant vigilance, for example. These ironies, however, demonstrate that when Cold War continuities were unhelpful, they were either rejected or obscured the comparison; for example, the assertion of a mutual understanding that the Cold War was over or acknowledging Washington's previous experience in and knowledge of Afghanistan. As a result, the attempt to establish the 'war on terror' as a 'new' new world order was contradictory and thus was undermined; opening-up space for numerous resistances to this attempt. This weakness was also evident in a number of paradoxes of the invocation of the 'new wars' concept.
**Paradoxes of the ‘first war of the twenty-first century’**

The first and most obvious paradox of the “first war of the twenty-first century” is that the ‘war on terror’ is not, numerically, the first war of the twenty-first century. Since the dawn of the new millennium war has continued, started, or reignited in, *inter alia*, Chechnya, Congo, Liberia, and Sierra Leone, and Zaire; to label the ‘war on terror’ as the “first war of the twenty-first century” therefore obscures other wars. This downplaying of less well-known wars is paradoxical to the ‘new wars’ concept, which emphasises the interconnectedness of local violence to global scale processes and politics.

The claim that the ‘war on terror’ is a conceptually different ‘new war’ because it includes supposedly unique characteristics was also paradoxical; many of these ‘new’ features were not ‘new’ at all. For example, on 26 September Bush (2001o) claimed that the ‘war on terror’ would be “unlike any other war that our nation is used to...It’s a war that’s going to require cooperation with our friends. It is a war that requires the best of intelligence”; but collaboration with allies and a high standard of intellect are hardly uncommon qualities in the history of warfare. Similarly, on 4 October Bush (2001r) declared that the ‘war on terror’ was nothing less than “a unique type of war. It’s a war that is going to require us building a broad coalition of nations who will contribute one way or the other to make sure we all win”; but again alliance forming, a division of labour, and the pursuit of victory is hardly unprecedented, in either ‘old wars’ or ‘new wars’. These paradoxes illustrate that the ‘war on terror’ is not so ‘new’ after all, and that in its entirety this “first war of the twenty-first century” was neither an ‘old war’ nor a ‘new war’. Instead, the ‘war on terror’ is consistent with the evolution of warfare in world politics rather than a discrete change from one category to the next (as Kaldor allowed for by tracing the origins of ‘new wars’ to before the end of the Cold War) that involves the presence and absence of various features of previous ‘old wars’ and ‘new wars’.

Consequently, the comparing the ‘war on terror’ with other ‘old wars’ and ‘new wars’ was also paradoxical. Comparing the “first war of the twenty-first century” with previous ‘old wars’ did not, as the above quotes illustrate, really explain how or why the ‘war on terror’ was ‘different’; the most that was provided were broad brushstrokes. Moreover, proposing the ‘war on terror’ as a ‘new war’ by contrasting it with ‘old wars’ was an empty tautology: it is not what it is not. As a ‘new war’, therefore, the ‘war on terror’ was established on rather flimsy rhetorical foundations; something of a paradox for an attempt at a ‘new’ new world order. Distinguishing the ‘war on terror’, the supposedly “first (new) war of the twenty-first century”, from other ‘new wars’ was
also paradoxical. Such contradictory comparisons were especially made with NATO’s aerial ‘new war’ on Serbia in 1999. In his 20 September speech to Congress, for example, Bush (2001) distinguished the ‘war on terror’, as argued above, from the hitherto understood (Ignatieff 2000; Der Derian 2001) as almost the quintessential ‘new war’ over Kosovo: “Now, this war...will not look like the air war above Kosovo two years ago, where no ground troops were used and not a single American was lost in combat”. The distinction was also made by Rumsfeld (2001b) on ABC TV’s This Week on 16 September: “People think of the wars we’ve seen lately, the kind of antiseptic wars where a cruise missile is fired off, shown on television landing in some smoke and so forth. That is not what this is about”. This comparison is therefore paradoxical because, as a geopolitical discontinuity from both the Cold War and from ‘old wars’, the ‘war on terror’ is also distinguished from Kosovo and other ‘new wars’. Again, this paradox renders the ‘war on terror’ an empty tautology: it is neither an ‘old war’ nor a ‘new war’.

Indeed, Rumsfeld’s separation of the ‘war on terror’ from other ‘new wars’ contains an obvious but shameful paradox of position. While these ‘new wars’ may have been waged with minimal United States casualties because of the Information Technology-driven Revolution in Military Affairs, they have been anything but “antiseptic” for those unfortunate to be on the receiving end in Iraq, in Sudan and Afghanistan, in Serbia, in Afghanistan again, and now in Iraq again. As Naomi Klein (2001) wrote on 13 September 2001: “Since the Gulf War, American foreign policy has been based on a single brutal fiction: that the US military can intervene in conflicts around the world...without suffering any US casualties. This is a country that has come to believe in the ultimate oxymoron: a safe war”. Consequently, establishing the meaning of the ‘war on terror’ by contrasting it with both the ‘old wars’ of the Cold War era but also the ‘new wars’ of the post-Cold War era is in some ways a meaningless exercise, because the “first war of the twenty-first century” is both similar to and different from both forms of violence. Indeed, the futility of defining the ‘war on terror’ through comparison was epitomised in a 20 September press conference with Rumsfeld (2001d) when he responded to the suggestion that US military preparations for the war on Afghanistan looked very similar to the build-up to the first Gulf War by saying: “if I could do anything today, I’d like to disabuse people of trying to draw parallels between previous conflicts and this one. I think it’s not useful and I think it will prove to be in a direction that is not helpful and not going to be a correct one”. Amidst the constant use of both ‘old wars’ and ‘new wars’ to explain the ‘war on terror’, this response is a significant paradox that undermines those comparisons.
The absence of detail on the specific differences between the ‘war on terror’ and previous ‘old wars’ and ‘new wars’ was especially apparent regarding the new means required to fight this “first war of the twenty-first century”. Very little was revealed on what these new means would be, in practice, in the war on Afghanistan. Instead, the demand for new means was merely a rhetorical device to describe the military aspects of the ‘war on terror’ as a ‘new war’ different from past wars. The resulting paradox is that while the different characteristics of the new ‘terrorist’ enemy and its ‘asymmetrical threats’ were central to the ‘war on terror’ as a ‘new war’, the consequent focus on the necessary new means to fight and win this ‘war on terror’ inverts concern over the reasons for the rise of that threat itself and why it is directed against the United States into what that threat means for US war fighting capabilities. Thus the paradox focuses attention on treating the symptoms rather than the disease.

Indeed, even within the supposed new means (such as they were articulated) of fighting the ‘war on terror’ a couple of notable paradoxes existed. First, despite the new, asymmetrical character of the ‘terrorist’ threat the ‘war on terror’ did not warrant a complete overhaul of the Cold War-era western alliances. This paradoxical point was made by Powell (2001e) the following day in an interview on ABC TV’s Dateline:

QUESTION: “Mr Secretary, you grew up as a military man and in a bipolar world. We formed NATO, the greatest military alliance in the history of mankind, to face down the Russians if it ever came to that. Are we going to have to form more permanent alliances now to deal with terrorism long term, not short term?”

POWELL: “I think we do have to form other kinds of alliances. I’m not sure we need a new organisation. I mean, you saw what NATO did today. They invoked Article V of the Washington Treaty, which was never designed for this kind of purpose, but when you look at the spirit of the Washington Treaty, where all of these nations are going to come to each other’s aid in time of danger in the event of an attack, this in the twenty-first century is the kind of attack that we have to be prepared to defend against, to respond to. And NATO came forward today and understood the nature of this new threat, and I think correctly invoked Article V of the Washington Treaty”. 
The paradox here is that although ‘terrorism’ represents a new type of threat requiring a new type of war Cold War-style political alliances and military organisations do not need to be overhauled. Similarly, Wolfowitz (2001), in testimony to the Armed Services Committee on 3-4 October, paradoxically wanted to adapt Cold War deterrence thinking to the supposedly ‘new war’ against ‘terrorism’, claiming that ‘terrorists’: “may be less likely to be discouraged by traditional deterrence. The threat of massive US retaliation certainly did not stop the September 11th assault on the Pentagon or the World Trade Towers. We cannot be certain it will stop other adversaries. What this means is we need a new approach to deterrence for the twenty-first century. What worked against the Soviet threat may not work against the threats we face in the decades ahead. We are facing enemies that are increasingly capable – and willing – to bring war to the American homeland. We must find new ways to deter them”. The paradox here is that, despite Bush’s (2001i) previous call for a “new type of thinking” and his admission that the inevitable US retaliation did not prevent 11 September 2001, the Deputy Secretary of Defence was still locked in to a Cold War-style reasoning about the usefulness of ‘deterrence’, even if a modified version, as a (supposedly) new means of fighting and winning the ‘war on terror’.

Such paradoxes undermine the credibility of the calls for ‘new means’ for the ‘war on terror’, and reduce them to rhetorical devices to justify the transformation of the United States military. Transforming the US military, which is still largely configured for an ‘old war’ against a state enemy, to ensure it can undertake these required (but unspecified) new means may sustain the high level of defence spending and the domestic military – industrial complex, but it again serves to focus the issue of ‘terrorism’ on the US and its own defence against the threat, rather than on a critical understanding of ‘terrorism’ and the ways to address the causal factors. Indeed, as Johnson (2002:x) explains, the untransformed US military was part of the problem of the ‘war on terror’: “Although the United States set out to track down and capture Osama bin Laden, alleged to be the supreme commander of the terrorists of September 11, it quickly turned out that the only tool the US had at its disposal, its high-tech military apparatus, was useless for simply capturing a criminal. Therefore, the Bush administration chose a more accessible objective – overthrowing by military force the repressive government of Afghanistan, which was harbouring bin Laden”. The result, for innocent Afghan civilians, was the unjust war on Afghanistan.

Indeed, another paradox arose from the importance of conflict management and resolution in Kaldor’s “cosmopolitan project” within the ‘new wars’ concept and the difficulties of post-conflict reconstruction within the ‘failed state’ literature more generally. For the majority of the one-month study period, however, the United States foreign policy elite demonstrated a lack of
concern for the impact of the war on Afghan civilians and for the difficulties of a post-Taliban Afghanistan. Not only was this omission conspicuous by its absence, but Fleischer was especially adept at turning media questioning regarding the aftermath of the war into an opportunity to re-emphasise Washington’s security concerns emanating from, rather than present within, Afghanistan. For example, in a press conference on 21 September Fleischer (2001c) was asked to comment on the role of the exiled former King, the Northern Alliance, and the United Nations in the administration’s plans for a post-Taliban Afghanistan, to which he replied: “The objective again is to protect the American people and people from around the world from terrorism...so they can live without fear”. The effect was to portray the United States, paradoxically, as unconcerned about the consequences of its ‘new war’ and focussed only on its own ‘security’. This impression changed, however, in the last few days before and in the first few days after the war began. Suddenly, the United States foreign policy elite began representing the war on Afghanistan as a humanitarian undertaking with the announcement and commencement of airdrops; problematic though they may have been. Fleischer and others even began to answer questions regarding a post-Taliban Afghanistan without mentioning ‘terrorism’, ‘harbouring’, and ‘national security’; ill-defined as the answers on post-conflict reconstruction, nation-building, and economic development were. The paradox, however, remained: these crucial aspects of the ‘new wars’ and ‘failed state’ intervention were not invoked to distinguish the ‘war on terror’ as the “first war of the twenty-first century”.

In combination, therefore, these paradoxes illustrate that the ‘war on terror’ was not quite the full geopolitical discontinuity from the Cold War that the United States foreign policy elite had argued. As with the ‘third Cold War’, the ‘war on terror’ was presented as the “first (new) war of the twenty-first century” when to do so served their purposes; when using the invisibility and asymmetry of ‘terrorism’ to justify new means to counter that threat and thus the transformation of the US military, for example. The paradoxes, however, also demonstrate that when Cold War discontinuities were unhelpful they were either rejected or obscured the comparison; for example, the dismissal of concern for post-Taliban Afghanistan or the confusing distinction between this (new) ‘war on terror’ and other ‘old wars’ as well as ‘new wars’. The effect was the same as the ironies: the attempt to establish the ‘war on terror’ as a ‘new’ new world order was contradictory and thus was undermined; opening up space for numerous resistances to this attempt. This resistance is now summarised.
Resistances to the ‘new’ new world order

Resistance to the ‘war on terror’ as a ‘new’ new world order argument came from many government, organisations, publics, and individuals around the world. The international sympathy for the United States and consequent unity of purpose following 11 September 2001 slowly evaporated during and after the war on Afghanistan. Despite the defeat of the Taliban and al-Qaeda forces, the failure to find Osama bin Laden and many of his top aides exposed the difficulties of war-based counter-terrorism. The conduct of the war, in which many thousands of Afghan civilians were killed, also undermined the justification and usefulness of military force. Occasional but strong warnings of an imminent terrorist attack, both in the United States and beyond, gave the impression that the terrorist threat had not been significantly reduced. Instead, the ‘war on terror’ was quickly gaining the image of a vengeful US using 11 September 2001 for its own imperial ambitions in the Middle East, and risked worsening relations with the Arab and Muslim worlds and the irony, therefore, of being counter-productive regarding reducing the threat of more ‘terrorism’.

These resistances gathered strength as the United States foreign policy elite began, in early 2002, its moves towards a second phase on Iraq. In the terms of this thesis this move can be conceptualised as the attempt to enforce the ‘war on terror’ as a ‘new’ new world order. Despite the many ironies and paradoxes, this enforcement was encapsulated by Bush (2001v) in a speech at the Pentagon on the one month anniversary of the 11 September 2001 attacks, and therefore just four days after the start of the war on Afghanistan, when he summarised that: “The attack took place on American soil, but it was an attack on the heart and soul of the civilised world. And the world has come together to fight a new and different war, the first, and we hope the last, of the twenty-first century; a war against all those who seek to export terror and a war against those governments that support or shelter them”. Although this crucial middle sentence probably refers to the hope that US victory in the ‘war on terror’ will usher in a peaceful remainder of the twenty-first century, this statement could also be read as a hope that the ‘war on terror’ will last for that entire period; that is, that the ‘war on terror’ will come to define world politics for this new era. Indeed, the subsequent moves towards war on Iraq, the imminent identification of a three-state ‘axis of evil’, and indications that the United States regarded forty to fifty states as having links to ‘terrorism’ all gave the impression of Washington imposing the ‘war on terror’ as just such a ‘new’ new world order.
Although such a proposition may have been hegemonic in the United States, or at least within the United States foreign policy elite, for the reasons noted above it was clearly anything but dominant at the global scale. The enforcement of the ‘war on terror’ as a ‘new’ new world order, therefore, was the site of another contest between a conflict discourse legitimating an indefinite military-based war and a resisting conflicting discourse de-legitimating “perpetual war” (Vidal 2002). This second example of the contest for hegemony between conflict(ing) discourses was apparent in the following 29 October press conference with Rumsfeld (2001m), where the US determination to enforce the ‘new’ new world order was clear despite growing resistance around the world:

QUESTION: “Mr Secretary, you’ve said that the centre of gravity for the American people is definitely behind the strategy that you have evolved. Quite clearly, out in the region, to name three – Egypt, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia – we’re beginning to hear from the very top leadership a bit of discomfort in the way the campaign is being conducted and the length of it. Is this going to alter you’re thinking? I know you’ve said from time to time that the coalition is not going to distract the United States from its goal. But when these top leaders, critical American friends, speak like this, is it altering your game plan or do you just go straight ahead?”

RUMSFELD: “Clearly, anyone listens to friends and important nations. They have a set of problems that are distinctive to their circumstances and their neighbourhood, and we do of course listen to them. The problem is that the United States faces very serious threats from terrorists, and the threats involve very powerful weapons that can kill lots of people. It is our task as Americans to work with those countries on the face of the earth who can help us in various ways to see that we go after this threat. And that’s what we’re doing and that’s what we intend to do”

QUESTION: “Mr Secretary, undeterred by their concerns?”

RUMSFELD: “Interested in their concerns and reflecting those concerns from time to time. But we have a big task, and we are hard at it, and we intend to continue it”.

For the United States foreign policy elite, in other words, the ‘war on terror’ continues regardless of the growing resistances to this imposed ‘new’ new world order. As this contest between these conflict(ing) discourses developed, however, the resistance amongst many governments,
organisations, publics and individuals around the world prevented the 'war on terror' from becoming a hegemonic 'new' new world order at the global scale. This failure is another reason why the 'war on terror' is always placed in inverted commas. This thesis now moves on to explore one local example of this global resistance to the 'war on terror' as a 'new' new world order argument and the specific contest between the two conflict(ing) discourses of its second phase on Iraq.

Conclusion

This chapter has explained the geopolitical (dis)continuities between the Cold War and the concept of 'new wars' as employed by the United States foreign policy elite in its attempt to establish the 'war on terror' as the 'new' post-11 September 2001 new world order. Dalby's concept of a 'second Cold War' and Kaldor's concept of 'new wars' provided the conceptual context of, respectively, the geopolitical continuities and the geopolitical discontinuities of the 'war on terror'. The former provided a sense of familiarity to the 'third Cold War' while the latter modified this proposed 'new' new world order into the "first war of the twenty-first century". This hybrid attempt, however, contained a number of ironies and paradoxes that rendered the 'war on terror' different from the Cold War and only a partial and selective invocation of the 'new wars' concept. These internal contradictions meant the attempt was undermined and incoherent.

More importantly, though, the US foreign policy elite failed in its attempt to establish the 'war on terror' as a 'new' post-11 September 2001 world order because of the numerous resistances to the 'third Cold War' around the world. Governments, publics, organisations, and individuals around the world resisted this US-imposed world order, especially once Washington began its moves towards war on Iraq. The marginalised critiques of the surprise attack explanation of 11 September 2001 and the legitimation of the first phase of the 'war on terror' against Afghanistan became more visible, audible, and credible. The power of these conflicting discourses ultimately prevented the hegemony of the 'war on terror' as a 'new' new world order, despite its dominance within the United States, and more specifically amongst the US foreign policy elite. In other parts of the world, however, it was the resistance to the 'war on terror' that was dominant, and Chapter Seven provides one local example of that resistance: the case study of New Zealand and its reaction to 11 September 2001 and the consequent 'war on terror'.
Chapter Seven

Resisting the ‘New’ New World Order:
New Zealand, 11 September 2001
and the ‘War on Terror’

“We must see this attack not only as an attack on the United States but as an attack on all civilised nations. It is imperative for all nations to work together to recover as quickly as possible from the attacks in order that terrorists know they cannot bring the world to its knees”.

Acting Prime Minister Jim Anderton, Wednesday 12 September 2001

“It’s not possible for New Zealand with its history of commitment to multilateralism and to the institution of the United Nations in particular to back intervention outside the UN framework... There’s not evidence of the weaponry. There’s evidence of a pattern of deception... Our concern from the outset about a war has been that it will act as a catalyst for more Islamic extremism. It could badly unsettle governments which are generally friendly to the West. And that obviously the consequences for the sorely pressed Iraqi population would be catastrophic”.

Prime Minister Helen Clark, Thursday 6 February 2003
Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a local example of this global resistance to the ‘new’ new world order by exploring the impact of 11 September 2001 on New Zealand politics and the consequent effect on the domestic debate regarding, and the government’s foreign policy towards, the ‘war on terror’. The New Zealand case study is pertinent because there is a precedence of Kiwi resistance to the ‘second Cold War’ and also because it resonates with the impact of these global events in many other states. New Zealand, like virtually the entire world, responded to 11 September 2001 with shock at the attacks, sympathy for the victims, and political support for the United States; as encapsulated in Acting Prime Minister Jim Anderton’s opening quote. For many states, including New Zealand, this reaction translated into military participation in the first phase of the ‘war on terror’ on Afghanistan. Such global support, however, was eroded as the United States and the euphemistic ‘coalition of the willing’ prepared for the second phase of the ‘war on terror’ on Iraq. When this war started on 21 March 2003 New Zealand, like many other governments and publics around the world, opposed the use of force; as encapsulated in Prime Minister Helen Clark’s opening quote. New Zealand’s transition from supporter of the war on Afghanistan to opponent of the war on Iraq is therefore a specific local example of the growing global resistance to the ‘war on terror’ as a ‘new’ new world order. In effect, this case study brings the preceding global analysis ‘back home’ to examine 11 September 2001, the ‘war on terror’, and conflict(ing) discourses in a local context.

The discussion is divided into three sections. The first section establishes the pre-existing geopolitical context because this is the only way to understand the impact of 11 September 2001 and the ‘war on terror’ on New Zealand’s domestic politics and foreign policy. New Zealand’s reaction to these global events, as for all states, is the result of their refraction through the specific local prism of domestic (and geo)politics. The second section then explains New Zealand’s reaction to 11 September 2001 and its impact on the subsequent domestic debate about and foreign policy towards the war on Afghanistan. As noted, the New Zealand position, along with many other states around the world, shifted from one of support to one of opposition to the war on Iraq. The third section therefore takes this analysis ‘back out’ to the global scale and details the United States foreign policy elite’s second ‘war on terror’ conflict discourse to legitimate the war on Iraq. As with the Afghanistan war, this section also presents some important worldwide critiques, again as a conflicting discourse, which sought to de-legitimize the Iraq war. This second and clearer example of the contest between conflict(ing) discourses leads into the Chapter Eight conclusion.
The New Zealand Geopolitical Context

This first section uses my own 2004 article, "Beyond the 'Outer Crescent': The Mackinder century in New Zealand geopolitics", to establish New Zealand’s unique pre-existing geopolitical context. This paper was published in a special issue of the Geographical Journal commemorating 100 years since its original publication of Sir Halford Mackinder’s (1904) influential "The geographical pivot of history" paper, which is commonly held to have founded modern geopolitics. In this paper I argue that, although Mackinder never mentions New Zealand and it is a long way from his ‘pivot area’, ‘inner crescent’, and perhaps even beyond the ‘outer crescent’, for a number of reasons New Zealand is amenable to a Mackinderian geopolitical analysis of its foreign policy throughout the Mackinder century. As I repeat in the following discussion here, I argue(d) that Mackinder's ideas of 'imperial defence' (later updated by himself, Nicholas Spykman and practical geopolitics) to ‘collective security’ during the Cold War) and ‘global interconnectedness’ “have characterised three periods in the geopolitics of New Zealand’s security relationships”. These ‘security relationships’, by which “I mean New Zealand’s defence policies and its interactions with other states regarding local, regional, and global military security issues”, “are the focus here because this aspect of New Zealand foreign policy is the most appropriate for an opening geopolitical analysis” (Mayell 2004:369).

I use the phrase “opening geopolitical analysis” because “the geopolitics sub-discipline of political geography... has never been strong in New Zealand universities” (Mayell 2004:368). “Instead, Kiwi academics documenting New Zealand ‘geopolitics’ reside in international relations (e.g. Kennaway and Henderson 1991), history (e.g., McGibbon 1991), and sociology (e.g., Clements 1988)”. Although political geographer Harris (1991) has written on New Zealand foreign policy and ‘geostrategy’, for current purposes his discussion is limited “by a nuclear-free focus, the global upheavals of the time, and because ‘geopolitics’ is mentioned only twice”. My contribution to the Mackinder centenary issue, therefore, was an attempt to “initiate an overdue discussion of New Zealand geopolitics” (Mayell 2004:369). Similarly, this chapter is a follow-up attempt to approach New Zealand foreign policy, and in particular its security relationships, from a specific (critical) geopolitics perspective in order to understand the domestic reaction to 11 September 2001 and its consequent position regarding the ‘war on terror’.

In doing so I must acknowledge the role of the only two other pieces of literature specifically written on New Zealand geopolitics. The first is Ron Johnston’s (1997) article, “Geopolitical transition and international realignment: The case of New Zealand”, which argues that during
times of global geopolitical stability small states, like New Zealand, have a relatively consistent foreign policy, but that during periods of "geopolitical transition" small states are forced to "realign" their foreign policy. Johnston then presents New Zealand as a small state typifying such "realignment" of its "geopolitical relationships" during the second half of the twentieth century. The second is Simon Dalby's (1993) article "The 'Kiwi disease': Geopolitical discourse in Aotearoa / New Zealand and the South Pacific", which focuses on the (critical) geopolitics of the nuclear-free movement / policy and the consequent ANZUS crisis of the mid-1980s. Dalby argues that for the United States and its hegemonic Cold War "bipolar geopolitics" 'nuclear-free New Zealand' represented a dissident 'Kiwi disease' of "anti-geopolitics", "regional security" and "feminist insecurity" that threatened to spread to other vulnerable states, endangered the health of the western alliance, and thus risked losing the life-and-death confrontation with the Soviet Union. Both papers were crucial in formulating my argument regarding the geopolitics of New Zealand's security relationships during the Mackinder century and I again draw on Johnston and Dalby here to articulate my argument to establish the New Zealand geopolitical context for this case study.

My argument proposes three phases in New Zealand's foreign policy and security relationships. The initial dependent security phase until 1973 was characterised by Mackinder's ideas of the 'imperial defence' of Britain and the 'collective security' of the western alliance, led by the United States, during the Cold War. In 1973 a transitional security phase began that was characterised by a shift from Mackinder's 'collective security' to his idea of 'global interconnectedness' that, with the end of geographical exploration, all parts of the world were now connected and events in one place could affect all others. This transition was completed in 1990/91 and for the last fifteen years an interdependent security phase has been characterised by Mackinder's 'global interconnectedness'. As 11 September 2001 and the 'war on terror' occurred within this phase it provides the geopolitical context within which their impact and New Zealand's response must be understood.

**Dependent security**

The first period in the geopolitics of New Zealand’s security relationships, which lasted until 1973, was characterised by its "unconditional commitment to the 'imperial defence' of Britain and, after 1945, to US-led 'collective security' during the Cold War" (Mayell 2004:370). This dependent security was based on two geopolitical assumptions. First, New Zealand assumed that
its security interests were synonymous with those of Britain and the United States. This assumption led New Zealand to subordinate its foreign policy to London and Washington and thus it depended on Britain and then the United States for guidance, if not instruction, on security issues in world politics. Second, New Zealand assumed that Britain and then the United States was as committed to New Zealand’s security as it was to theirs. This assumption led New Zealand to contribute to wars fought by Britain in defence of its Empire and the United States for ‘collective security’ against communism and thus it depended on London and Washington as, if and when it was threatened, its military security guarantors. It is also noteworthy that during this time of “subservient dependency” (Johnston 1997:60) New Zealand’s economic security was also dependent on Britain.

This dependency was a common feature of New Zealand’s security relationships regardless of which of the two major political parties, the leftist Labour party or the rightist National party, was the government. Indeed, this dependent security phase fits Johnston’s (1997:48) explanation that “During settled periods in a country’s geopolitical relationships a single world-view dominates: there is a consensus regarding the country’s position in the world and little debate within the political and diplomatic elites regarding other than the detail of security and foreign policy matters”. The result was what Johnston (1997:51; following Hoadley 1997:300) calls “bipartisan consensus” between the political parties and very little domestic debate amongst the general public over the character and conduct of New Zealand’s security relationships, or even foreign policy more generally. The crux of Johnston’s (1997:48) argument, however, comes during “unsettled periods” which will be “characterised by considerable debate as a new position is forged in the light of changed circumstances”; the idea of “international realignment” during “geopolitical transition” as encapsulated in the title of Johnston’s paper.

The origins of such a transition in New Zealand lie in the 1960s, when it slowly became apparent that both dependent security assumptions were problematic. The process of decolonisation raised the contradiction between New Zealand’s political support for the principle of self-determination and its military participation in British operations against ‘insurrections’ in Borneo, Malaya, and Indonesia. In particular, the increasing public opposition to New Zealand’s involvement in the controversial United States intervention in Vietnam, which “became as unpopular in New Zealand as it did in the US” (Mayell 2004:372), asked questions about its security relationship with Washington. This relationship was codified in the 1951 Australia – New Zealand – United States (ANZUS) Treaty that formalised defence and intelligence cooperation between the three partners. However, the inclusion of the conventional ‘collective security’ clause, common to
other western security agreements like NATO and the Baghdad Pact, that ‘an attack on one member is an attack on all members’ meant that ANZUS effectively incorporated New Zealand into the Cold War western alliance. Indeed, it was exactly this ‘collective security’ clause that led New Zealand (and Australia) to deploy troops to Vietnam during the 1960s and the 1970s.

The unpopularity of the Vietnam war, however, raised the possibility that New Zealand’s security interests were not always synonymous with those of its great power patrons. Moreover, the initial anti-Vietnam movement, which included faith-based groups, women’s organisations, environmentalists, peaceniks, socialists, and rank-and-file Labour members, also challenged the assumptions of the Cold War, the dangers of the superpower arms race, and New Zealand’s entanglement in such machinations via its membership of the western alliance through the ANZUS Treaty. As the Vietnam intervention was scaled down from the early 1970s, the focus of this dissent shifted to the “broader Cold War problematic of nuclear weapons and deterrence as represented by French nuclear testing in the South Pacific” (Mayell 2004:372). The embryonic anti-nuclear movement, which was loosely associated with Labour, “heralded major foreign policy debates within both the New Zealand political elite and the general population” (Johnston 1997:54) for the first time in the country’s history. The end of the dependent security phase, therefore, was marked by the end of “bipartisan consensus” between Labour and National as well as the beginnings of domestic debate about New Zealand’s security relationships.

**Transitional security**

Consequently, the second period in the geopolitics of New Zealand’s security relationships was characterised by “a growing dissatisfaction with this dependency and a simultaneous recognition that New Zealand’s security, despite its geographic isolation, is mutually dependent on political, economic, and military events in other parts of the world” (Mayell 2004:370). In 1973 three major events marked the beginning of this transitional security phase from Mackinderian ‘imperial defence’/‘collective security’ to ‘global interconnectedness’. Initially, Britain’s accession to the European Economic Community on 1 January exposed the reliance, and thus vulnerability, of New Zealand’s vital agricultural export industries. Similarly, the first oil crisis highlighted New Zealand’s dependence on imported oil and its potential jeopardy by a close alignment with the United States. Third, New Zealand’s small nuclear-free movement moved into mainstream politics through two interrelated events. New Zealand succeeded with is legal appeal to the World Court for an injunction against France’s atmospheric nuclear testing because
of detrimental environmental and health effects over the South Pacific (Clements 1988). Labour Prime Minister Norman Kirk then despatched *HMNZS Otago* to Mururoa Atoll to protest at a French nuclear test conducted in defiance of the World Court ban. These three events began a transformation of New Zealand's security relationships by asserting a national identity that began to break the previous "subservient dependency" and established a period of "self reliance, independent action, moral example, and South Pacific identity" (Johnston 1997:60).

The momentum of 1973, however, immediately stalled. In 1974 Kirk, a staunch advocate of a "realignment" of New Zealand's foreign policy and of a nuclear-free New Zealand, died in office. The following year the Labour government lost the election, beginning a decade of National rule. The new Prime Minister, Robert Muldoon, was committed to a close alignment with the United States and the western alliance and reinvigorated New Zealand's commitment to Cold War 'collective security'. This return to ANZUS as the cornerstone of New Zealand's security relationships coincided with the creation of the 'second Cold War' (Dalby 1990b) during the first Reagan administration. This conflation resulted in an increase in US Navy nuclear-ship visits to New Zealand ports and joint military exercises. Moreover, Muldoon's domineering personality expelled the nuclear-free sentiment from the corridors of power.

The reinvigoration of New Zealand's dependent security, however, was opposed by an increasingly popular "grassroots 'nuclear-free zone' movement" (Dalby 1993:438) that gathered significant momentum as households, businesses, schools, churches, streets, neighbourhoods, and local councils declared themselves nuclear-free. The National government's arguments in defence of nuclear-ship visits, ANZUS, and Cold War 'collective security' only emboldened the nuclear-free movement. Increasing protests at ongoing underground French nuclear testing at Mururoa and nuclear-ship visits highlighted the growing divergence between public sentiment and government policy. The Labour opposition, having always been on the fringes of the nuclear-free movement, became the focus of mainstream attempts to re-shape government policy. The first serious assault came in early 1984, when Labour proposed legislation that would ban both nuclear power generation and the production, storage, or transit of any nuclear material including, most significantly, nuclear weapons from New Zealand territory and waters. When two of National's own members of parliament voted for the bill — it was only defeated because two independent members voted against it — Muldoon called a snap election.

Labour's nuclear-free policy assisted in its election victory on 14 July 1984. New Zealand's transitional security at the government level resumed. There would be no going back this time.
The incoming government, led by the new Prime Minister David Lange, began implementing the nuclear-free policy. A diplomatic crisis within ANZUS, particularly between Washington and Wellington, immediately erupted. United States Secretary of State George Schultz was the first of many Western representatives to visit Wellington to admonish the government for its misguided legislation and to warn the New Zealand public of its naïveté. According to the Cold Warriors, New Zealand was reneging on its agreement with its ANZUS partners and western allies. The accusation followed that New Zealand was getting a ‘free-ride’ by living under the Western nuclear umbrella but not bearing its share of the burden (Graham 1987). Whatever the good intentions and democratic merits of the nuclear-free policy, the Soviet threat demanded that New Zealand tolerate nuclear testing and accept nuclear-ship visits. New Zealand, regardless of its smallness, isolation, and unique geopolitical perspective, would not be allowed to get away with this nuclear-free nonsense, lest the ‘Kiwi disease’ (Dalby 1993) spread to other states and infected the whole western alliance. In other words, the rules of Mackinderian ‘collective security’ had to be fully adhered to by all.

The popular nuclear-free movement and the government’s nuclear-free policy were of course juxtaposed against this Cold War geopolitical reasoning. The great Soviet threat that so worried the western alliance was essentially imperceptible in New Zealand (Kennaway 1991). After Vietnam, against all predictions, the dominoes had not fallen. There were no signs of a Moscow takeover ‘down under’. The closest Soviet military base at Cam Ranh Bay in Vietnam was nearer to Paris than Wellington. There was no discernible domestic ‘threat’ as Kiwi ‘communism’ barely existed in any organised form. In the absence of a clear and present Soviet danger, therefore, the New Zealand nuclear-free movement perceived the nuclear arms race between the superpowers and the dangerous (il)logic of nuclear deterrence as detracting from, not contributing to, global, regional, and New Zealand security. That the Cold War came to New Zealand and the South Pacific only via its allies, through French nuclear testing and US nuclear-ship visits, was an untenable “anti-geopolitics” (Dalby 1993:445) paradox: these activities were the source of rather than the answer to threats to national and regional security. Moreover, “feminist insecurity” challenged the patriarchal character of Cold War definitions of security and juxtaposed the costs of military hardware with alternative objects of government spending, such as “childhood vaccinations, free education and anger management courses for abusive husbands” (Dalby 1993:449), that would increase the security of New Zealand women. Indeed, nuclear-testing and nuclear-ship visits were in fact the intolerable costs of New Zealand’s commitment to an unwanted nuclear umbrella (Johnston 1997). Lastly, popular fears of the ‘nuclear winter’ hypothesis, which proposed that the fallout from a northern hemisphere nuclear war would
spread around the world obscuring the sun and plunge the southern hemisphere into indefinite darkness, also contributed to this anti-nuclear sentiment. The Lange government, reflecting the views of the electorate, was determined to break this (in)security dependency. In other words, nuclear-free New Zealand and the ‘Kiwi disease’ represented a significant local resistance to the global ‘second Cold War’.

The nuclear-free movement/policy and the consequent ANZUS crisis epitomised New Zealand’s transitional security because it transformed its “security relationships away from Mackinderian ‘collective security’ and towards his second ‘global interconnectedness’ idea” (Mayell 2004:373). For while the nuclear-free policy rejected nuclear weapons and deterrence it maintained, even reinvigorated, New Zealand’s commitment to conventional ‘collective security’ by recognizing that it was not separate from the rest of the world. Indeed, this ‘global interconnectedness’ was precisely the reasoning behind banning nuclear weapons. As Lange (quoted in Kennaway 1991:73-4) explained: “If we watched the northern hemisphere destroy itself, it would be in the certainty that there is no escape for us. The nuclear winter would not spare the South Pacific. We would be condemned by decisions in which we had no part, and by calculations in which we had no influence”.

New Zealand’s transitional security was consolidated between 1985 and 1990 by three major events. First, France’s bombing of the Greenpeace vessel Rainbow Warrior, which was about to lead a peace flotilla to Mururoa, in Auckland harbour on 10 July 1985 entrenched the perception that New Zealand’s ‘allies’ actually posed the greatest threats to its security. Second, in 1987 the Labour government passed the nuclear-free legislation, the Nuclear-Free New Zealand Act, and consolidated its own position by winning that year’s election. Third, after defeating the Labour government in the 1990 election the National opposition, such a vociferous advocate of an active ANZUS relationship with the United States and opponent of the nuclear-free legislation during the 1980s, kept its campaign promise not to repeal the nuclear-free legislation, making nuclear-free New Zealand a bipartisan policy. This volte face signalled the beginnings of a return to “bipartisan consensus” between the two major parties and effectively amounted to an agreement to pursue an interdependent foreign policy.

Moreover, during this time ANZUS became a dead-letter when the United States and Australia ended military cooperation, intelligence exchanges, and the ‘collective security’ provision with New Zealand. Wellington and Washington settled into a new security relationship as the US officially downgraded New Zealand’s status from ‘ally’ to ‘friend’. For present purposes the
nuclear-free drama remains crucial because New Zealand’s nuclear-free status is the core of the ongoing problematic security relationship with the United States and thus still frames domestic discussions about foreign policy and security, as occurred regarding 11 September 2001 and the ‘war on terror’, and therefore provides the specific pre-existing geopolitical context of the following case study.

**Interdependent security**

The third and current period in the geopolitics of New Zealand’s security relationships began in 1990/91 and has been “characterised by Mackinder’s ‘global interconnectedness’ idea” (Mayell 2004:373). Here, the start of the 1990s is crucial for three reasons. First, the disintegration of the Soviet Union meant that the ‘Kiwi disease’ was no longer the major infection to the United States-led western alliance that it had been just a few years beforehand. The irony was that, after western alliance arguments during the ANZUS crisis that nuclear controls were impossible, curbing nuclear proliferation amongst the newly independent former Soviet republics became a major priority. Second, the passing of the Cold War caused a decrease in US and western alliance adherence to Mackinderian ‘collective security’ and a simultaneous increase in the importance of ‘global interconnectedness’. There was widespread recognition that, despite the euphoria of the Cold War’s demise, the new era held other dangers that had impacts throughout a closed worldwide political system. Nuclear proliferation was merely at the top of a new list of global security issues that the United Nations, free of its superpower veto paralysis, would now be able to deal with and thus fulfil its original promise of global governance. Third, Iraq’s 1990 invasion of Kuwait provided the UN with an opportunity to prove it could fulfil the post-Cold War hope of a ‘new world order’ by using its Chapter VII enforcement mechanisms to restore international peace and security free from superpower veto. The US-led multinational coalition that subsequently evicted Iraq from Kuwait appeared to live up to this new expectation.

The Gulf War was the first opportunity for New Zealand to demonstrate its new interdependent security focussed on the United Nations, the rule of international law, a commitment to human rights, participation in international institutions, the necessity of multilateral action, and the Security Council’s monopoly on the legitimate use of force (Hoadley 1992). The new National government thus perceived Iraq’s invasion as a breach of the prohibition on the use of force and as a significant threat to international peace and security. Moreover, the *status quo ante* could only be restored by an enforcement action mandated by the Security Council. Consequently,
New Zealand committed itself to the UN Charter and supported peaceful efforts to reverse Iraq’s invasion. When those diplomatic attempts failed, New Zealand demonstrated its new commitment to a New York (rather than London or Washington) notion of ‘collective security’ and contributed military engineers, air transport, and medical teams to Operation Desert Storm (Macintyre 1991).

Given New Zealand’s previous enthusiasm for foreign wars it is notable that its Gulf War contribution did not include combat troops. This non-combat role represented the beginning of a renewed emphasis on peaceful, constructive, and integrated roles for its small military as an extension of its history of extensive involvement in peacekeeping. After the breakdown of ANZUS and the end of the Cold War, New Zealand reorganised its forces for peacekeeping, surveillance, disaster relief and post-conflict reconstruction roles. A National government White Paper advocated a new ‘internationalist approach…(requiring) a level of armed forces sufficient to deal with small contingencies affecting New Zealand and its region, and capable of contributing to collective efforts where our wider interests are involved” (quoted in Henderson 1991:93). This new interdependence was again demonstrated by New Zealand’s renewed commitment to UN peacekeeping operations, including contributions to the troubled missions in Bosnia and Somalia. Regional commitments were prioritized, however, with New Zealand extensively involved in the Bougainville peace process, the transitional trauma of East Timor, ethnic violence and a coup d’etat in Fiji. These operations illustrate how Mackinder’s ‘global interconnectedness’ idea characterises New Zealand’s current interdependent security phase that provides the pre-existing geopolitical context of the following case study.

11 September 2001 and the ‘War on Terror’

This second section examines the impact of 11 September 2001 and the ‘war on terror’ in New Zealand and emphasises the transition from one of political and military support of the United States for the war on Afghanistan to a position of resistance over the war on Iraq. This transition encapsulates both the flexibility and difficulties of interdependent security: New Zealand was able to express initial solidarity with the US but then to carefully extract itself from such a position under different circumstances. Moreover, New Zealand’s transition to resisting the second phase of the ‘war on terror’ on Iraq resonates with a similar transition by many governments, publics, and citizens around the world between the immediate aftermath of 11 September 2001, through the build-up towards war from the middle of 2002, to the start of
hostilities on 21 March 2003. This discussion therefore connects the local New Zealand resistance with the global resistances of the attempt elite to establish the ‘war on terror’ as a ‘new’ new world order that the moves toward war on Iraq represented.

The first part of this section examines the New Zealand reaction to 11 September 2001 and how these domestic impacts were reflected back to the outside world in New Zealand’s foreign policy towards the ‘war on terror’. The New Zealand public, at national and local scales, expressed shock at the attacks and sympathy for the victims. The immediate economic impacts included a dive in share value, a weakening of the New Zealand dollar, and fears for the long-term implications for New Zealand’s vital tourist industry. At the political level the immediate effect was to (re)ignite domestic debate about New Zealand’s ability, given its nuclear-free status and problematic post-ANZUS relationship with the United States, to contribute militarily to the ‘war on terror’. This question therefore renewed for and against arguments, across the political spectrum, reminiscent of the nuclear-free debate during the 1980s. The second part of this section then examines how 11 September 2001 and the first phase of the ‘war on terror’ subsequently refracted through New Zealand domestic politics and why the government’s foreign policy shifted from support for the war on Afghanistan to resistance of the war on Iraq. The debate over New Zealand’s military contribution to Afghanistan split the junior coalition partner, the Alliance, and prompted an early general election in July 2002. The election resulted in the annihilation of the Alliance, reconfigured the make-up of parliament, and thus dramatically altered the New Zealand political landscape. The early resistance to the ‘war on terror’ by the Alliance’s rank-and-file was even more widespread regarding the coming war on Iraq. The government, in particular, also shared this disapproval and consequently withdrew its support of post-11 September 2001 United States military action and did not militarily participate in the Iraq war. In a sense, this resistance is a second outbreak of the ‘Kiwi disease’, although New Zealand’s commitment to an interdependent foreign policy remained firm through the government’s contribution of military personnel to post-conflict reconstruction in Iraq.

**Reaction and reflection**

As noted in Chapter One, the events in New York, Washington, and Pennsylvania actually occurred, in New Zealand time, during the early hours of Wednesday 12 September, so it was one of only a few countries to experience 11 September 2001 a day later. Except for mid-week party-goers, night-shift workers, parents with young babies, and insomniacs, New Zealanders
thus awoke to the news hours after the events and watched replays or heard recounts of the attacks with their breakfast. The morning newspapers were full of only ‘ordinary’ news, the events having occurred after nocturnal deadlines. Citizens soon caught-up with events from the Eastern United States time zone 16 hours behind New Zealand as the news media, workplaces, homes, and streets were full of conversation about the overnight events. New Zealanders shared in the emotions that swept the world in those immediate hours and days after the attacks. Around the country numerous churches held memorial services on that Wednesday evening, and many more followed over the next few days. As an immediate precaution, for the first time in New Zealand aviation history domestic passengers were “screened by metal detectors and their baggage X-rayed” (Walsh 2001) after a government directive to strengthen airport security.

In my home city “an open service to honour ‘our friends in America’” (Conway 2001) was held in the Anglican Cathedral. The Christchurch City Council opened a condolence book for residents to sign at its offices. A local radio station organised a ‘sympathy scroll’ of messages to be sent to the United States. The Christchurch Press published a special afternoon edition to compensate for the unfortunate timing of the events for normal newspaper deadlines. The recently erected Millennium Chalice in the central city Cathedral Square, already the subject of an architectural controversy within the city, was transformed into an impromptu shrine when resident Kate Spackman laid flowers at its base, with a simple message attached: “In memory of the people who died in the United States” (Christchurch Press 2001a). Her personal memorial was soon followed by many others. New Zealanders very much seemed to fit the sentiment of Le Monde that “Today, we are all Americans”.

During this aftermath it soon also became clear that New Zealand, despite its distance from New York, Washington, and Pennsylvania, was not unaffected by the attacks. Most significantly, two expatriate New Zealanders had been killed. John Peter Lozowsky, 45, worked for Marsh and McLennan in the World Trade Centre and Alan Beaven, 48, was a passenger on board United Airlines Flight 93 that crashed in Pennsylvania. In the confusion of the immediate aftermath, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade mission to the United Nations attempted to track approximately 1,000 New Zealanders known to be living and working in New York or Washington; the number of Kiwi tourists in the cities was unknowable. Of these, 760 were contacted in the first three days, and the whereabouts of only three people were considered to be of concern beyond the weekend, but they were later accounted for. While these numbers are not large in terms of the populations of New York and Washington, they do mean that the network of New Zealand families and friends affected was extensive, requiring a free 0800 information
hotline to be established for the two-way exchanging of information between concerned Kiwis and the Ministry. The reverse also applied to the similarly small number of US citizens residing in or visiting New Zealand, who not only had to deal with the emotional impact of the assault itself but concerns for the safety of family and friends at home (Christchurch Press 2001b). As with many states, cities, and localities around the world, therefore, these individual and familial connections meant the events instantly connected the United States and New Zealand.

The impact of 11 September 2001 on New Zealand also extended to the economic realm. Unlike the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE), the New Zealand Stock Market did open for trading on the morning of Wednesday 12 September; although an hour late as a mark of respect. The overnight events, however, triggered “panic selling” which, in the first half-hour of trading, resulted in a six per cent drop from 1980 to 1860 points. By the end of the day though “bargain hunters” had steadied the market, but it closed that evening 4.6 per cent down after NZ$1.85 billion had been wiped-off the value of New Zealand shares. In addition, interest rates fell sharply and the New Zealand dollar dropped 2.3 per cent against the Greenback, to US42.50c (Birss 2001). Undoubtedly, all these effects would have been worse had the NYSE been open.

Moreover, the immediate suspension of international air travel from the United States raised significant concerns about the financial impacts on tourism, one of New Zealand’s biggest income earners. With approximately 100,000 annual US visitors to New Zealand, it was feared even the temporary disruption of flights could lead to the cancellation of individual or package tourism, with potentially severe short-term impacts on Kiwi tourism operations (Moffat 2001). Worse, the possible longer-term fear of flying that 11 September 2001 may instil in the US and global public meant the New Zealand tourism industry was immediately concerned about an overall and indefinite down-turn in international visitors. In an interesting (even ironic) twist on geography and distance, however, Christchurch and Canterbury Marketing chief executive Darryl Park noted that New Zealand tourism could look very attractive to international tourists after initial post-11 September 2001 fears had relaxed, because New Zealand is “as far away from this as possible” (Moffat 2001).

Geographically this may be true, but as already illustrated this was not so emotionally, socially, or economically. In addition, New Zealand was also connected to rapidly emerging reactions within the United States, at the political and popular level, against Arabs and Muslims; or, more precisely, to the pre-emption of those reactions being repeated here. Reflecting New Zealand’s increasingly multicultural society, Anwar Ghani (quoted in Booker 2001), the President of the
Federation of Islamic Associations of New Zealand, issued a statement condemning the attacks and distancing the perpetrators from Islam: “The New Zealand Muslim community categorically repudiates these cowardly and vicious assaults on civilians. We offer our deepest condolences to the families whose near and dear ones have been killed or injured in this barbaric incident. We condemn it as fundamentally un-Islamic and against all principles of our faith”.

More specifically, an Afghan refugee living in Christchurch urged New Zealanders, and the international community, not to blame all Muslims for the attacks of 11 September. This plea, however, came from no ordinary refugee, but from Dr Najibullah Lafræie, the former Foreign Minister of the ‘government’ of Afghanistan in the early 1990s. After 11 months in hiding from the Taliban, who had already executed one brother and arrested another in their search for him, Lafræie escaped Kabul and made his way to Pakistan. His wife and four children were soon able to join him, but visits by Pakistan’s secret police to the Afghan University of Peshawar, where he was employed, convinced the Lafræies that there was no future for them in Afghanistan. After three years of waiting, the Lafræies were accepted into New Zealand via a United Nations relocation programme (Batchelor 2001). In responding to early reports of verbal and physical attacks on Muslims in the United States and New Zealand, Lafræie “urged people not to vent their anger on the Muslim community” and “pleaded for the international community to refrain from laying the blame on those of Muslim faith” (Booker 2001). In his own words, Lafræie (quoted in Booker 2001) demanded that: “Even if (Islamic) terrorists are behind this, it is important to distinguish between them and the Muslim people. This (terrorism) is totally against the teachings of Islam which I practice myself and which say if one person’s life is taken it is as if they have killed all humanity. Unfortunately some people and groups commit this kind of action in the name of religion”. The Lafræies now live in Dunedin, where Najibullah works at the University of Otago.

For present purposes, however, the most important reaction to 11 September 2001 was in the political sphere, which resonated with the New Zealand public and the rest of the world by expressing shock at the attacks, sympathy for the victims and their families, condemnation of the perpetrators, and declaring solidarity with the United States. Because Prime Minister Helen Clark had departed for a week-long trip to Europe and was in transit when the attacks occurred, New Zealand’s immediate official response was left to Deputy (and thus Acting) Prime Minister Jim Anderton. In his message to President Bush (quoted in Watson 2001), Anderton highlights these sentiments: “We have heard with disbelief and shock of the events in New York, Washington, and Pennsylvania over the last few hours. The people of New Zealand will share
your, and the international community’s, sense of outrage and pain, especially for the loss of many innocent lives. Our thoughts are with you and with the American people”. Anderton then added that New Zealand “will stand ready to offer help in any way we can”.

On arrival in Italy Prime Minister Helen Clark expressed deep distress at the attacks on the World Trade Centre and announced that she would abort her European tour and, “in light of these devastating events”, would be “returning to New Zealand on the first available flight”. She described the attacks as “acts of cold-blooded and utterly incomprehensible violence that would shock all New Zealanders” and that “New Zealanders’ thoughts are with President George Bush, his Government and the American people who have borne the brunt of this outrage”. Clark also articulated her concern for all those caught up in this “horrific violence”. She ended her comments by stressing that it was important that the international community fight the “scourge of terrorism” and indicated that New Zealand would do whatever it could to help with the global response (Watson 2001).

Back at home, Governor General Dame Silvia Cartwright “sent a message of condolence to Mr Bush and the American people” which declared that “New Zealanders felt both shock and outrage at the attacks and shared America’s pain” (Watson 2001). “Mr President”, the Queen’s representative concluded, “above all, here in New Zealand there is deep sorrow at your country’s tragic and devastating loss of innocent lives”. Finally, with the leader of the main opposition National party, Jenny Shipley, also out of the country, her deputy, Bill English, was left to respond. English repeated the common superlative that after the day’s events “things would never be the same again” and declared that “the threats to freedom and security have changed – if we weren’t sure yesterday, then we do know today”. In a brief return to “bipartisan consensus” of a bygone era that temporarily suggested agreement on a clear roadmap of the foreign policy terrain ahead, English concluded by also confirming that New Zealand “will stand with the international community in its efforts to…better protect free people from the threat of terrorism” (Watson 2001). These expressions by New Zealand politicians represented the rapid circulation of dominant understandings of 11 September 2001 around the world.

Indeed, the Labour-led coalition government soon announced that its political support of the United States would be backed-up by a small military contribution to the first phase of the ‘war on terror’. Units of the elite Special Air Service (SAS) would be deployed alongside US, British, and Australian ground forces in Afghanistan. New Zealand navy vessels in the Persian Gulf assisting in the enforcement of the United Nations (UN) sanctions against Iraq would be
reassigned to help with the war on Afghanistan. Finally, following the defeat of the Taliban regime and al-Qaeda forces, a post-conflict Provincial Reconstruction Team operated in Afghanistan from early 2002. These contributions were made because New Zealand, in keeping with the geopolitics of its interdependent security, perceived al-Qaeda, the Taliban, and ‘terrorism’ emanating from Afghanistan as a clear and significant threat to international peace and security. Moreover, as the UN Security Council had authorised Operation Enduring Freedom in Resolutions 1368 and 1373 to address this threat, this legal basis for the use of force was also consistent with New Zealand’s interdependent security and the adherence to international law and the sole legitimacy of UN-mandated force. This foreign policy towards the first phase of the ‘war on terror’ on Afghanistan was largely supported by the New Zealand public, but the impression of “bipartisan consensus” between Labour and National (or rather ‘multi-partisan consensus’ given the numerous political parties now sharing the New Zealand political spectrum) was to be a short-lived moment of political unanimity.

The government immediately came under considerable attack from opposition political parties, and even from those within its own coalition, for its foreign policy on the war on Afghanistan and a vociferous domestic debate followed. From the right, the National and Association of Consumers and Taxpayers (ACT) opposition parties accused Labour of not doing enough to support the United States. In particular, Clark was attacked for not invoking the ANZUS Treaty which, as noted in the preceding section, includes the standard Cold War collective security clause that ‘an attack on one member shall be regarded as an attack on all’. The same clause in the NATO treaty had been invoked by the NATO Council on Wednesday 12 September, and in a press conference on Friday 14 September US Secretary of State Colin Powell (20011) had noted that he was “pleased at the actions of the Australian Government in activating the ANZUS Treaty as an expression of support” and that “those alliances that we hold dear and have used so effectively to keep us together as friendly nations over these many years are now, it seems to me, paying off as people come forward to help us”. In the dichotomous post-11 September 2001 world the implication, whether intentional or not, was that invoking such treaties designated one as a “friendly nation” keen to help the United States; while not doing so indicated something very different.

Indeed, the difference between Australia and New Zealand positions, and their relationship with the United States, was ironically highlighted by the 50th anniversary celebrations of the signing of the ANZUS Treaty in Washington on 10 September 2001. Neither US President George Bush nor Australian Prime Minister John Howard mentioned New Zealand or its absence. Four days
later a joint US – Australia statement invoking Article IV of ANZUS, for the first time ever, was issued. According to its main critics, therefore, the government’s refusal to invoke ANZUS was a foreign policy miscalculation with potentially dire consequences for New Zealand’s already problematic relationship with the United States.

ACT Party leader Richard Prebble, ironically the former Labour cabinet minister during the 1980s who had sponsored the nuclear-free legislation through to its realisation as the Nuclear Free New Zealand Act, seized on this perceived error. A week after the attacks Prebble proposed a motion for Parliament to declare that it “believes the terrorist attack on the United States to be, under ANZUS, an attack on New Zealand, and that Parliament authorise and instruct the Government to act accordingly”. The motion was defeated by Labour, Alliance, and Green Party Members of Parliament (MPs), prompting Prebble to accuse the government “of driving a wedge between itself and its allies by not taking the same course” as Canberra, which by enacting ANZUS had demonstrated that it regarded 11 September 2001 as “an attack on Australia” (Langdon 2001). National Party Defence spokesman Max Bradford was even more scathing of the government’s inaction, claiming that not invoking ANZUS “was not a credible moral or military stance” and that “the decision was a reflection of Ms Clark’s ‘dislike’ of the US and Australia and her ‘sympathy’ for groups who disliked the US” (Robson 2001). Unable to resist the opportunity to score a cheap political point, in his own words Bradford (quoted in Robson 2001) charged that: “This is the true Helen Clark coming out – her true anti-American, anti-Australian stance. She will talk and talk and do nothing. Neither the Australians or the Americans can rely on us”. Such personal criticisms were reminiscent of accusations against Lange and others during the ANZUS crisis, while Bradford’s last remark, although probably unintentional, was an ironic reminder of the reputed comment by then US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, during the negotiation of Treaty itself, that Australia and New Zealand were “the only two dependable countries in the Pacific area” (quoted in Johnston 1997:53).

These criticisms by Prebble and Bradford, however, were easily countered by Clark, who responded that as New Zealand had not been a functioning member of ANZUS since the late 1980s it was effectively impossible and practically pointless to invoke the ‘attack on one is an attack on all’ clause, claiming that “New Zealand was no longer bound by the treaty and that the US should feel under no obligation to defend New Zealand in the future”. Indeed, New Zealand’s absence from the 50th anniversary commemorations was a stark indication that it is no longer considered part of ANZUS. Moreover, as a relic of the Cold War ANZUS seemed barely relevant to helping any of the partners to fight ‘terrorism’ because “it is important for the
response to go beyond what is normally considered by the Western countries”. Clark then rendered ANZUS, and thus the supposed controversy over the government’s non-invocation of it, irrelevant when she declared that New Zealand “does not need a treaty to tell us how to react to 11 September 2001” and offer its support to the United States (quoted in Robson 2001).

Criticisms of the government position on the war on Afghanistan also emanated from the two parliamentary parties to its left and with which it was in coalition government. The Green Party, and in particular its defence and foreign affairs spokesman Keith Locke, cautioned Labour “not that it opposes the use of military force against terrorism” but that “military might should be wielded under the auspices of the United Nations” (Luke 2001). That even the peacenik Greens and the dovish Locke should implicitly condone a military response indicates the cross-spectrum unifying power of the 11 September 2001 attacks. The Greens, however, were almost a lone voice in demanding that New Zealand’s offer of SAS troops be conditional on United Nations command and under appropriate international law, which it doubted Security Council Resolutions 1368 and 1373 achieved. The Alliance supported this motion in parliament, but when it was defeated one of its MPs, Matt Robson, argued that “a further UN Resolution might be needed before the SAS was deployed, and that the troops should not fight with the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance” (Luke 2001). Prime Minister Clark, however, countered that the government’s advice was that the initial Resolutions were sufficient to mandate the use of force and that New Zealand’s offer of its SAS troops was unconditional. Despite these criticisms from across the political spectrum within New Zealand’s domestic politics, therefore, the Labour-led government maintained an interdependent foreign policy on the ‘war on terror’ by reacting to the ‘terrorist’ threat to international peace and security and reflected this in its consequent contribution to the United States-led war on Afghanistan.

Refraction and resistance

The controversy over New Zealand’s foreign policy towards the first phase of the ‘war on terror’, and in particular its military contribution to the war on Afghanistan, continued to refract through domestic politics after the war began and throughout 2002. The junior coalition partner, the Alliance, split into two distinct factions along support for and opposition to the war and, more specifically, over New Zealand’s contribution. In support were the ten Alliance MPs loyal to leader and Deputy Prime Minister Jim Anderton. The majority of rank-and-file Alliance members, however, opposed both the war on Afghanistan and New Zealand’s participation. This
division eventually came to a head at the Alliance annual conference in November 2001, and the organisation literally tore itself apart over the issue (which represented a more general disagreement over the Alliance – Labour relationship). According to its own website at www.alliance.org.nz, “Jim Anderton attempted to force the resignation of the President, party officers, and the party’s ruling body – the Alliance Council. He failed and has decided to start his own party – Jim Anderton’s Progressive Coalition, along with three of the ten Alliance MPs”.

“This very public infighting”, the website admits, “had, predictably, a negative effect on the Alliance’s poll ratings”, down from around three per cent in mid-2001 to between one and two per cent by the end of the year.

In early June 2002 the fracturing of the Alliance and the subsequent loss of public confidence in the coalition government prompted Prime Minister Clark to bring that year’s general election, which are normally held in November, forward to 27 July; thus giving just six weeks notice. The demise of the Alliance had added to Labour’s popularity and it was now consistently polling in the low to mid 50 per cent range. Moreover, the absence of a strong centre-right governing option focussed on National meant that Labour perceived an opportunity to govern on its own, without the need for a troublesome junior coalition partner. Clark took the gamble, but Labour failed to gain 50 per cent of the vote and was forced to seek another junior partner, this time United Future, to form a governing coalition. The consequences for the Alliance, however, were more catastrophic: it was annihilated in the election, failing to make the five per cent threshold to have a parliamentary representative, and subsequently ‘old labour’ or ‘quasi-socialist’ positions disappeared from the political landscape. The Progressive Coalition persists as a minor coalition partner, almost indistinguishable from Labour, with just two parliamentary seats. As a direct result of the controversy over New Zealand’s ‘war on terror’ foreign policy and military contribution to the war on Afghanistan, prompted by 11 September 2001, the general election therefore reshaped domestic politics by significantly altering the composition of Parliament (Figure 7.1) and the 2002 – 2005 coalition government. Indeed, this change meant that the coalition shifted from a left-leaning government to a more overtly centre-left, neo-liberal ‘new Labour’ alignment.

The new government convened just as the United States began, in August 2002, to intensify its moves towards war on Iraq. This coincidence meant that similar issues to the ones faced by the previous government over the war on Afghanistan would continue. As for many governments and publics around the world, however, for New Zealand domestic politics the war on Iraq became a much more controversial proposition than the war on Afghanistan. From the beginning
the new Labour-led coalition was against this second phase of the ‘war on terror’. While the abhorrence of Saddam Hussein and his Ba’athist regime was never disputed, the government had a number of concerns regarding the justification for war. Foremost amongst these anxieties, as it was around the world, especially in France and Germany, was the veracity of the United States’ (and its small number of ‘coalition of the willing’ allies, notably the United Kingdom, Spain, and Australia) claims about the credibility and immediacy of Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction threat. In keeping with the sentiments of many other states and New Zealand’s own interdependent foreign policy, the government preferred to have the existence of Iraq’s alleged weapons of mass destruction (WMD) proved before condoning war. Continuing diplomatic negotiations and UN-sanctioned weapons inspections, to which New Zealand made a small contribution of personnel in late 2002, was the government’s preferred path.

Indeed, if and when the WMD threat was proved, New Zealand was adamant that any use of force to compel Iraq to disarm must be mandated by the Security Council and carried out under United Nations auspices. This prerequisite raised the secondary concern over the apparent willingness of the United States and the United Kingdom to wage a ‘pre-emptive war’ without incontrovertible proof of Iraq’s WMD capability. Again, like much of the rest of the world the New Zealand government doubted the legitimacy of such a war under international law and was concerned that an extra- or even il-Iegal war would establish a dangerous precedent. The prospect of a Labour-led New Zealand government, with an interdependent foreign policy that no longer promotes a ‘special relationship’ between Wellington and Washington, was always

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<th>Party</th>
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<td>Greens Alliance Progressive Labour</td>
<td>United National NZ First ACT</td>
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unlikely to support (let alone make a contribution to) the neo-conservative Bush administration’s use of force against Iraq; unlike, ironically, its ‘new Labour’ counterparts in the United Kingdom. Indeed, these concerns transformed the government’s position from one of support to one of resistance to the military dimension of the ‘war on terror’; and thus, in some sense, a second outbreak of the ‘Kiwi disease’. When the war began on 21 March 2003, however, New Zealand continued its interdependent foreign policy by contributing a detachment of Army engineers, based in Basra for 2003 and most of 2004 to assist in the rebuilding of local infrastructure, for post-conflict reconstruction.

Despite the apparent consistency (with New Zealand’s interdependent foreign policy), commonality (with other governments opposed to the war on Iraq), and popularity (with the general Kiwi public) of this policy, once again there were criticisms of the government’s position from both ends of the political spectrum. As usual, the right attacked the government for not supporting New Zealand’s traditional allies, the United States and the United Kingdom, and consequently for taking New Zealand’s inclusion in the western world for granted. The supposed price of this failing would be nothing less than a free trade agreement, like the one Australia was currently negotiating, with the United States. Critics noted that New Zealand’s continued nuclear-free status made such an agreement difficult anyway, but the government’s non-support of the war sacrificed any remaining chance. In comparison, Canberra was an ardent supporter of the United States and the war on Iraq and the benefit of a free trade agreement was at hand. By disregarding long-term trade opportunities upon which New Zealand’s economy depends, the government was being short-sighted and irresponsible. Advocates of a closer economic relationship with the US argued that the obvious and easy solution was to politically and militarily support the war on Iraq and even to repeal the inhibitive nuclear-free legislation.

At the other end, the left accused the government for not doing enough to stop the march to war. Whatever the legal standing of SC Resolutions 1368 and 1373 regarding the war on Afghanistan, there was no such Resolution forthcoming from the divided Security Council, and as such the war on Iraq was simply illegal; regardless of the proof or otherwise of its weapons of mass destruction. Instead, the war was seen as an imperialist war for its own oil security thinly disguised under the rhetoric of spreading freedom, democracy and liberty to the Middle East and the Iraqi people. Moreover, the left demanded that not only should New Zealand not participate in the war but also that it should also not contribute to the post-conflict reconstruction of Iraq as this would be the responsibility of those who started the war; unless the United Nations became involved after hostilities. Lastly, it was pointed out that a free-trade agreement with the United
States was not dependent on New Zealand’s small military making a contribution. Even if it was, then the merits of a free-trade agreement were debatable anyway, and certainly not worth the price of New Zealand’s nuclear-free status.

This resistance was increasingly common throughout the world amongst governments, organisations and publics as the war on Iraq drew closer. In New Zealand, this global resistance was perhaps summarised by Prime Minister Clark when she lamented that ‘the Iraq war might not have happened had Al Gore been President’. The comment was widely reported in the New Zealand media and caused a diplomatic incident with first the US Embassy in Wellington and then, once it had been forwarded on to Washington, with the Department of State. For the right, the comment added fuel to the fire over the government’s continued bungling of its foreign policy on the ‘war on terror’ and New Zealand’s limited prospects of a free-trade agreement with the United States. Not surprisingly, the controversy forced Clark to apologise by both opposition parties keen to score a political point and by the diplomatic offence the remark caused. Notably absent, however, was a genuine and widespread public outcry; probably because the majority of the New Zealand electorate were also opposed to the war and, while many may not have agreed with her remark, most could not have entirely disagreed with it either.

This case study has demonstrated the impact of 11 September 2001 and the ‘war on terror’ on domestic politics and the consequent debate over New Zealand’s foreign policy. The discussion also illustrated the difficulties of steering an interdependent foreign policy through the aftermath of these global events. While New Zealand’s interdependent foreign policy recognises the importance of its traditional security relationships with the United States, United Kingdom, and other western allies this no longer means Wellington will always agree with them and follow their lead. This interdependence was apparent in New Zealand’s transition from a position of support for the first phase of the ‘war on terror’ on Afghanistan to one of opposition to the second phase of the ‘war on terror’ on Iraq; a second outbreak of the ‘Kiwi disease’ in resistance to the ‘war on terror’ as a ‘new’ new world order. This transition was similar to the transformation of government, organisation, and public support for the United States around the world between late 2001 and early 2003. Hence, this local example of this transition is now taken ‘back out’ to the global scale through an analysis of this second example of the contest between a conflict discourse and a conflicting discourse over the war on Iraq. The next section presents the Iraq conflict discourse of the United States foreign policy elite (and the ‘coalition of the willing’) and the Iraq conflicting discourse of many other governments, organisations, publics and individuals around the world. This second example of the concept of conflict(ing)
discourses examines the (ir)resistibility of the war on Iraq and is the culmination of the research argument presented throughout the four substantive chapters.

(Ir)Resisting the War on Iraq

This third section examines the contest between two conflict(ing) discourses to (de)legitimate the second phase of the ‘war on terror’ against Iraq. This second phase was a clearer and more obvious example of the struggle to justify violence than the original contest between the surprise attack conflict discourse and the blowback conflicting discourse (de)legitimating the war on Afghanistan. Without another ‘11 September 2001’ the United States, despite the attempt by the foreign policy elite to prove Iraqi involvement, did not have the same ‘moral authority’ or ‘natural right’ of retaliation. As a consequence, a second conflict discourse, again including both a geopolitical storyline and a geopolitical script, was needed to legitimate the second phase of the ‘war on terror’. This Iraq conflict discourse was therefore more easily recognised as an ‘invented’ legitimation of violence and was subsequently contested by a dissident conflicting discourse, again with its own de-legitimation storyline and script. Examining this second example of the contested process of legitimating violence thus brings the case study analysis of the previous section ‘back out’ to the global scale and leads into the implications of this research into conflict(ing) discourses discussed in Chapter Eight.

This section is divided into two halves. The first half explores the specific discursive strategies used by the United States foreign policy elite to construct its Iraq conflict discourse. These strategies built on those underlying discursive strategies still applicable from the surprise attack conflict discourse. To avoid unnecessary repetition, however, the Iraq conflict discourse is presented through the discursive strategies used to write the Iraq war legitimation storyline and script. The second half explores the numerous discursive critiques that presented an alternative storyline and script that sought to de-legitimate the war on Iraq. This conflicting discourse also drew on relevant aspects of the blowback conflicting discourse. Again, to avoid unnecessary repetition only the specific critiques of the Iraq conflicting discourse are presented here.
The Iraq legitimation storyline and script

As noted in Chapter Three, the research method for conducting the discourse analysis of the Iraq conflict discourse was different than for the initial one-month study period following 11 September 2001. Analysing all the speeches, interviews, and press conference transcripts of the 12 members of the United States foreign policy elite between 11 September 2001 and the start of the war on Iraq on 21 March 2003 would be an impossible task. Instead, the Iraq conflict discourse analysis was conducted by focussing on a handful of key moments or events during this 18 months period. The first was the initial one-month period, when little mention was made of Saddam Hussein or Iraq, but was clearly a related contextual topic. On 29 January 2002, however, Iraq became an overt issue when President George Bush (2002a) included it, along with Iran and North Korea, in his ‘axis of evil’ in his State of the Union address. The first anniversary of the 11 September attack provided an opportunity to reinvigorate the ‘war on terror’ through overt moves towards war on Iraq. Four months later, President Bush’s (2003a) next State of the Union speech and Secretary of State Colin Powell’s (2003b) presentation to the United Nations Security Council on Iraq’s supposed weapons of mass destruction programmes, capability, and threat indicated that war was close at hand. This protracted build-up towards war culminated six weeks later in the middle of March.

The analysis of key speeches given during these five critical moments identified a number of discursive strategies central to the construction of the Iraq conflict discourse (Figure 7.2). The first five wrote the Iraq war’s geopolitical storyline: Iraq was in “material breach” of international law, was pursuing weapons of mass destruction and missile technology, was a ‘terrorist state’, was ruled by an evil dictator in Saddam Hussein, and consequently was an imminent threat to global peace and security. The consequent geopolitical script legitimated the war on Iraq as both a second Gulf War to deal with this specific threat and a second phase of the ‘war on terror’ to defend the United States and its allies, spread freedom and democracy in the Middle East, and liberate the Iraqi people. This storyline and script combine as the conflict discourse that legitimated the 2003 war on Iraq.
### Figure 7.2: The Iraq conflict discourse

<table>
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<tr>
<th>STORYLINE / SCRIPT Discursive Strategy</th>
<th>Explanation of Discursive Strategy</th>
<th>Example of Discursive Strategy</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>STORYLINE:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1. International Law</td>
<td>Iraq is in 'material breach' of international law, especially 16 UNSC Resolutions</td>
<td>&quot;I don't trust Iraq, and neither should the free world. For 11 years, they have deceived the world. They have said, 'we'll conform to resolutions'. They've never conformed to resolutions...Sixteen times they've defied Security Council Resolutions&quot; George Bush, speech, 19 September (2002d)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Weapons of Mass Destruction</td>
<td>Iraq continues to pursue nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons and missile technology</td>
<td>&quot;Since 1998, when the UN inspection teams left Iraq because of the regime's flagrant defiance of the UN, the Iraqi regime has been free to pursue weapons of mass destruction&quot; Colin Powell, testimony*, 19 September (2002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Terrorist State</td>
<td>Linked to 'international terrorism', threatens neighbours and world, represses own people</td>
<td>&quot;Saddam Hussein's regime continues to support terrorist groups and to oppress its civilian population. And although the regime agreed in 1991 to destroy and stop developing all weapons of mass destruction and long-range missiles, it has broken every aspect of this fundamental pledge&quot; George Bush, speech, 14 September (2002c)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Evil Dictator</td>
<td>Saddam Hussein oppresses own people, invades neighbours, and threatens world</td>
<td>&quot;You mentioned Iraq. There's no question that the leader of Iraq is an evil man. After all, he gassed his own people. We know he's been developing weapons of mass destruction&quot; George Bush, speech, 11 October (2001w)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Imminent Threat</td>
<td>Iraq is an imminent and considerable threat to international peace and security</td>
<td>&quot;By supporting terrorist groups, repressing its own people, and pursuing weapons of mass destruction in defiance of UN resolutions, Saddam Hussein's regime has proven itself a grave and growing danger&quot; George Bush, speech, 14 September (2002c)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>SCRIPT:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Second Gulf War</td>
<td>War justified as a continuation of the first Gulf War in 1991</td>
<td>&quot;Iraqi intransigence brings us to a situation where we see that regime continuing to confront the fundamental choice between compliance with 1441 and the consequences of its failure to disarm...Iraq's time for choosing peaceful disarmament is fast coming to an end&quot; Colin Powell, press conference, 27 January (2003a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. 'War on Terror', Part Two</td>
<td>War justified as an extension of the 'war on terror' from Afghanistan</td>
<td>&quot;Our second goal is to prevent regimes that sponsor terror from threatening America or our friends and allies with weapons of mass destruction&quot; George Bush, State of the Union speech, 29 January (2002a)</td>
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* Testimony to the House Committee on International Relations
The storyline

The Iraq storyline begins by emphasising Baghdad’s disregard of international law since its invasion of Kuwait in August 1990. In particular, the United States foreign policy elite cited the numerous United Nations Security Council Resolutions that Iraq had failed to abide by during the previous decade. No less than 16 Resolutions were identified that the regime of President Saddam Hussein, in the words of Resolution 1441 passed on 8 November 2002 as Iraq’s “final opportunity to comply with its disarmament obligations”, was or had been in “material breach” of since the Gulf War. Consequently, by its own track record, as Bush (2002f) explained in his weekly radio address to the ‘American people’ three days after the first anniversary of 11 September, Iraq was an “outlaw regime”: “Saddam Hussein has made the case against himself. He has broken every pledge he made to the United Nations and the world since his invasion of Kuwait was rolled back in 1991. Sixteen times the United Nations Security Council has passed Resolutions designed to ensure that Iraq does not pose a threat to international peace and security. Saddam Hussein has violated every one of these 16 resolutions – not once, but many times”. In a critical speech to the UN General Assembly two days earlier, Bush (2002b) had identified, with supporting evidence not repeated here, some of these breaches, which included:

“In 1991, the UN Security Council, through Resolutions 686 and 687, demanded that Iraq return all prisoners from Kuwait and other lands. Iraq’s regime agreed. It broke its promise...In 1991, the UN Security Council, through Resolution 687, demanded that Iraq renounce all involvement with terrorism, and permit no terrorist organisations to operate in Iraq. Iraq’s regime agreed. It broke this promise...In 1991, Iraq promised UN inspectors immediate and unrestricted access to verify Iraq’s commitment to rid itself of weapons of mass destruction and long-range missiles. Iraq broke this promise”.

The only possible reason for these ongoing breaches of international law, the reasoning continued, was because Iraq “has something to hide from the civilised world” (Bush 2002b). That something was Iraq’s active pursuit, despite international condemnation, eight years of UN inspections, and a decade of economic sanctions, of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and the missile technology needed to deliver these nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons to its enemies. Again, in his critical speech to the UN General Assembly on 12 September, Bush (2002b) accused Iraq of its WMD ambitions in each of these four key areas, claiming that:
"From 1991 to 1995, the Iraqi regime said it had no biological weapons. After a senior official in its weapons programme defected and exposed this lie, the regime admitted to producing tens of thousands of litres of anthrax and other deadly biological agents for use with Scud warheads, aerial bombs, and aircraft spray tanks...UN inspections also revealed that Iraq likely maintains stockpiles of VX, mustard and other chemical agents, and that the regime is rebuilding and expanding facilities capable of producing chemical weapons...And in 1995, after four years of deception, Iraq finally admitted it had a crash nuclear weapons programme prior to the Gulf War. We know now, were it not for that war, the regime in Iraq would have likely possessed a nuclear weapon no later than 1993...Iraq also possesses a force of Scud-type missiles with ranges beyond the 150 kilometres permitted by the UN. Work at testing and production facilities show that Iraq is building more long-range missiles so that it can inflict mass death throughout the region".

The procurement of weapons of mass destruction and missile technology would thus render an already 'rogue state' a regional and global threat to international peace and security. This danger, and Iraq conflict discourse, was encapsulated in Powell's presentation to the Security Council on 5 February 2003. In a scene reminiscent of US Ambassador to the United Nations Adlai Stevenson's disclosure of Washington's evidence of Soviet missiles in Cuba during the 1963 missile crisis, Powell presented the US dossier on Iraq's WMD programme, links to 'international terrorism', and abuses of human rights. The presentation was a clear attempt to convince the Security Council, and the watching world, that Iraq's response to its "final opportunity" under Resolution 1441 had been insufficient, and that Baghdad should now face the "serious consequences" for not doing so that the same Resolution required. Powell's (2003b) conclusion clearly indicated that "serious consequences" must now mean a SC Resolution authorising a US-led war against Iraq: "Today, Iraq still poses a threat and Iraq still remains in material breach. Indeed, by its failure to seize on its one last opportunity to come clean and disarm, Iraq has put itself in deeper material breach and closer to the day when it will face serious consequences for its continued defiance of this Council...We must not shrink from whatever is ahead of us. We must not fail in our duty and our responsibility to the citizens of the countries that are represented by this body".
Six weeks later, despite the United States failing to get a second Security Council Resolution, the war on Iraq began. The military action, however, was justified not only because of Baghdad’s pursuit of weapons of mass destruction and its failure to disarm, but also because Iraq was a ‘terrorist state’, for three reasons. First, the Sunni Arab regime’s long and brutal repression of the Sunni Kurds in northern Iraq on ethnic grounds and the Shi’ite Arabs in southern Iraq on religious differences was another point in Bush’s (2002b) list of Baghdad’s violations of international law presented to the UN General Assembly on 12 September. “In 1991”, Bush reminded the world, “Security Council Resolution 688 demanded that the Iraqi regime cease at once the repression of its own people, including the systematic repression of minorities – which the Council said, threatened international peace and security in the region. This demand goes ignored”. Thus in a globalised world it was now possible to use internal repression as a means of condemning a state on the international stage.

Second, Baghdad’s long and ongoing connection to ‘international terrorism’, whose agents had committed acts of violence throughout the Middle East and around the world, also reprimanded Iraq as a terrorist state. To begin with, the possible connection between 11 September 2001 and Iraq was raised on a few occasions in the original primary data. On CNN TV’s Late Edition of 16 September, for example, Powell (2001n) acknowledged that: “So far, we have not discerned any link between the Iraqi government and what happened the other day. But we are certainly examining links that might exist between what happened the other day and any country and any terrorist organisation in the world”. Four days later on Fox TV’s Special Report, however, Powell (200lt) made the general connection between Iraq and ‘terrorism’ by declaring that the United States has “no illusions about what kind of a regime it is, and that it does sponsor terrorism”. A year later Bush (2002b) told the UN General Assembly that Iraq remained an active ‘terrorist state’: “In violation of Security Council Resolution 1373, Iraq continues to shelter and support terrorist organisations that direct violence against Iran, Israel, and western governments...Iraq’s government openly praised the attacks of September the 11th. And al-Qaeda terrorists escaped from Afghanistan and are known to be in Iraq”. The conflation of Iraq with ‘international terrorism’ not only served to condemn Saddam Hussein’s regime even further but also placed the coming war within the context of the ‘war on terror’.

Most significantly, Iraq was a ‘terrorist state’ because it represented, in Powell’s (2003b) words, a “new nexus” between weapons of mass destruction and ‘international terrorism’ that, for the first time in history, raised the possibility of ‘WMD-terrorism’. Again, in his address to the General Assembly Bush (2002b) spoke of the ‘terrorist state’ of Iraq in apocalyptic terms: “our
greatest fear is that terrorists will find a shortcut to their mad ambitions when an outlaw regime supplies them with the technologies to kill on a massive scale. In one place, in one regime, we find all these dangers, in their most lethal and aggressive forms”. Bush (2002b) then concluded that this “new nexus” was “exactly the kind of aggressive threat the United Nations was born to confront”; a clear attempt to mobilise the international community alongside the United States.

If the straightforward transfer of a weapon of mass destruction from a government to a terrorist group seemed an implausible act in the Iraq war storyline, then the next discursive strategy of Saddam Hussein as an evil dictator proved otherwise. Saddam Hussein’s track record in oppressing the Kurds and Shi’ite, previous use of chemical weapons against domestic and foreign enemies, and belligerence in attacking his neighbours was recited to prove his evilness and thus the credible fear that he could provide a primitive nuclear, biological, or chemical weapon (a so-called ‘dirty bomb’) to a terrorist group such as al-Qaeda. The demonising of Saddam Hussein had started a decade earlier and was well understood before 11 September 2001, but five days after the attacks on New York and Washington Powell described him, firstly on CBS TV’s Face the Nation and then CNN TV’s Late Edition, as “an irrelevant individual... with a broken regime... He is the greatest threat in that region because he refuses to abide by the simplest standards of civilised behaviour” (2001m) and as “one of the more despicable persons on the face of the earth” (2001n). According to Bush (2002a) in his State of the Union speech four months later it was therefore quite possible that Saddam Hussein “could provide these arms to terrorists” which would give them “the means to match their hatred” and consequently 11 September 2001 “would be a prelude to far greater horrors”.

This storyline concluded by combining these first four discursive strategies and presenting Iraq as an imminent and severe threat, at the local, regional, and global scales, to international peace and security. The Iraqi threat was summarised by Bush (2002a) in his State of the Union speech on 29 January, when Iraq was included in a rhetorical “axis of evil” with Iran and North Korea. The resonance of “evil” within the national exceptionalism myth was, as already discussed, profound. The metaphor of an “axis”, however, is less clear, but it seemed to imply the main nodes of coordination for ‘terrorist’ networks and perhaps, given the equivalent number (three), a reference to the Axis powers of World War Two to again provide historical familiarity and continuity. Despite the notoriety this phrase gave the speech, and by implication the current geopolitical reasoning of the United States foreign policy elite, Bush used it only once, and Iran and North Korea warranted only one sentence each. In contrast, Iraq demanded a whole five sentence paragraph, in which Bush encapsulated the discursive strategies that would come to
characterise the Iraq war storyline over the next 14 months: “Iraq continues to flaunt its hostility toward America and to support terror. The Iraqi regime has plotted to develop anthrax, and nerve gas, and nuclear weapons for over a decade. This is a regime that has already used poison gas to murder thousands of its own citizens – leaving the bodies of mothers huddled over their dead children. This is a regime that agreed to international inspections – then kicked out the inspectors. This is a regime that has something to hide from the civilised world”.

The next paragraph transformed this concise storyline into the beginning of the consequent geopolitical script written to legitimate the war on Iraq to deal with this imminent threat. Referring to Iran, Iraq, and North Korea, Bush declared that: “States like these, and their terrorist allies, constitute an axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world. By seeking weapons of mass destruction, these regimes pose a grave and growing danger. They could provide these arms to terrorists, giving them the means to match their hatred. They could attack our allies or attempt to blackmail the United States. In any of these cases, the price of indifference would be catastrophic…America will do what is necessary to ensure our nation’s security”. Ensuring the national security of the United States against the imminent threat of an “outlaw regime” pursuing weapons of mass destruction in a ‘terrorist state’ led by an evil dictator became the legitimation storyline of the war on Iraq.

The script

The consequent legitimation script included two discursive strategies. The first justified the war on Iraq as an extension of the first Gulf War in 1991, because many of the reasons for war were outstanding issues unresolved during the intervening decade. This continuity was implicit in the occasional references to the Iraq issue in the original primary data and in Bush’s “axis of evil” construction, which invoked this problematic recent history, but was made explicit by the President in his 12 September speech to the UN General Assembly. “Delegates to the General Assembly”, Bush (2002b) lamented, “we have been more than patient. We’ve tried sanctions. We’ve tried the carrot of oil-for-food, and the stick of coalition military strikes. But Saddam Hussein has defied all these efforts”. Bush then offered an olive branch for Iraq to remedy its transgressions during and since the first Gulf War: “If the Iraqi regime wishes peace, it will immediately and unconditionally forswear, disclose, and remove or destroy all weapons of mass destruction, long-range missiles, and all related material…cease persecution of its civilian population…release or account for all Gulf War personnel whose fate is still unknown…(and) end all illicit trade outside the oil-for-food programme”. In typical diplomatic style, however, this peace opening also came with a jab from a blunt stick: “If Iraq’s regime defies us again, the
world must move deliberately, decisively, to hold Iraq to account. We will work with the UN Security Council for the necessary resolutions... The Security Council resolutions will be enforced. The just demands of peace and security will be met or action will be unavoidable. And a regime that has lost its legitimacy will also lose its power”.

Over the next six months a number of key events along the course to war also justified the second Gulf War according to this legitimation script, and these are summarised here. On 16 October the United States Congress passed a resolution authorising the use of force by the President, should it become necessary, at which point Bush (2002e) remarked: “I hope the use of force will not become necessary. Yet, confronting the threat posed by Iraq is necessary, by whatever means that requires. Either the Iraqi regime will give up its weapons of mass destruction, or, for the sake of peace, the United States will lead a global coalition to disarm that regime”. Three weeks later, on 8 November, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1441 which, as noted earlier, served as Iraq’s “final opportunity to comply with its disarmament obligations” or “it will face serious consequences as a result of its continued violations of its obligations”. For Bush (2002f), this Resolution meant that: “The world has now come together to say that the outlaw regime in Iraq will not be permitted to build or possess chemical, biological, or nuclear weapons... Now the world must insist that that judgement be enforced”.

The first step in that judgement came on 27 January 2003, when the Executive Chairman of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification, and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC), Dr Hans Blix, and the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Dr Mohammed el-Baradei, presented their reports, pursuant to Resolution 1441, on the latest weapons inspections and Iraq’s compliance (or otherwise) to the Security Council. Although Blix (2003) reported that Iraq had increased cooperation in some areas and el-Baradei (2003) argued that the inspections “be allowed to run their natural course” because they “should be able within the next few months to provide credible assurance that Iraq has no nuclear weapons programme”, the United States (and its pro-war allies, notably the United Kingdom, Spain, and Australia) focussed on Iraq’s intransigence in other areas and Blix’s summation that “Iraq appears not to have come to a genuine acceptance, not even today, of the disarmament that was demanded of it” (see Powell 2003a).

According to Washington, London, Madrid, and Canberra, Iraq’s final non-compliance meant that the critical moment was at hand and a second Gulf War was necessary. Indeed, in his State of the Union speech the following evening, Bush (2003a) declared: “let there be no
misunderstanding: If Saddam Hussein does not fully disarm, for the safety of our people and for the peace of the world, we will lead a coalition to disarm him". While many other states (including France, Germany, and New Zealand), organisations, publics and individuals around the world disagreed, the ‘coalition of the willing’ went to war on 21 March without a second Resolution authorising force; France had indicated it would veto such a resolution, so the US and the UK claimed that 1441 was sufficient. The second President Bush (2003b) declared the start of hostilities in terms reminiscent of his father’s announcement of the first Gulf War just over 12 years beforehand: “My fellow citizens, at this hour, American and coalition forces are in the early stages of military operations...On my orders, coalition forces have begun striking selected targets of military importance to undermine Saddam Hussein’s ability to wage war. These are opening stages of what will be a broad and concerted campaign. More than 35 countries are giving crucial support...Every nation in this coalition has chosen to bear the duty and share the honour of serving in our common defence”. The second Gulf War, which would also last just a few short weeks but this time with much greater ‘post-war’ ramifications through the ongoing ‘insurgent’ war against the US-led occupying forces, was underway.

A second discursive strategy also justified the 2003 war on Iraq not as a continuation of the first Gulf War but as a continuous second phase of the ‘war on terror’; an extension, instead, of the first phase against Afghanistan. This connection was first made explicit by Bush (2002a) in his State of the Union speech: “Our war on terror is well begun, but it is only begun...If we stop now – leaving terror camps intact and terror states unchecked – our sense of security would be false and temporary”. Bush (2002b) then melted the threat of ‘terrorist states’ like Iraq into the ‘war on terror’ in his speech at the UN General Assembly on 12 September: “Above all, our principles and our security are challenged today by outlaw groups and regimes that accept no law of morality and have no limit to their violent ambitions. In the attacks on America a year ago, we saw the destructive intentions of our enemies...In cells and camps, terrorists are plotting further destruction, and building new bases for their war against civilisation”.

More specifically, this second phase of the ‘war on terror’ was legitimated by a number of familiar invocations of the national exceptionalism myth. For example, the historical necessity of the war (rather than any specific United States self-interest) was declared by Bush in his two State of the Union speeches when he exclaimed that “History has called America and our allies to action” (2002a) and a year later that “we go forward with confidence, because this call of history has come to the right country” (2003a). In the latter speech Bush (2003a) also re-invoked US resolve in the ‘war on terror’: “Americans are a resolute people who have risen to every test
of our time. Adversity has revealed the character of our country, to the world and to ourselves”. He then went on to again explain how US aggression was a part of its just war against terrorism: “America is a strong nation, and honourable in the use of our strength. We exercise power without conquest, and we sacrifice for the liberty of strangers”. Indeed, when the war on Iraq eventually did come, Bush (2003b) noted that “our nation enters this conflict reluctantly, yet our purpose is sure”. Most importantly, the national exceptionalism myth was again used by Bush (2003b) in this speech to present the universalism of ‘freedom’ as a divine offering and ‘America’ as its earthly instrument: “Americans are a free people, who know that freedom is the right of every person and the future of every nation. The liberty we prize is not America’s gift to the world, it is God’s gift to humanity”.

This extended framework of national exceptionalism, and in particular the use of the universal principle of freedom, to present the war on Iraq as a second phase of the ‘war on terror’ culminated in the second Gulf War being legitimated as a war for freedom, democracy, and liberty. This final act of the legitimation script can be conceptualised as the implementation, by force, of Fukuyama’s (1993, 1996) “End of History” thesis through the geographic spread of the “Triumph of Liberalism” by the United States and the ‘coalition of the willing’. For example, in his 2002 State of the Union speech Bush (2002a), in specific reference to the need to confront Iraq, noted that for the US “it is both our responsibility and our privilege to fight freedom’s fight”. As such, the war on Iraq was a war to liberate Iraq and its long-suffering citizens, of all ethnicities and religions, as Bush (2002b) had previously explained to the UN General Assembly: “The United States has no quarrel with the Iraqi people; they’ve suffered too long in silent captivity. Liberty for the Iraqi people is a great moral cause, and a great strategic goal”. As a strategic goal, Iraq’s liberation would lead to the fulfilment of Fukuyama’s utopian vision: “The people of Iraq can shake off their captivity. They can one day join a democratic Afghanistan and a democratic Palestine, inspiring reforms throughout the Muslim world. These nations can show by their example that honest government, and respect for women, and the great Islamic tradition of learning can triumph in the Middle East and beyond”.

In seeking to minimise the violence of the coming war and no doubt to present the United States as a benevolent liberator to the people of Iraq and the entire Arab and Muslim worlds, in his State of the Union speech on 28 January Bush (2003a) declared that: “tonight I have a message for the brave and oppressed people of Iraq: your enemy is not surrounding your country – your enemy is ruling your country. And the day he and his regime are removed from power will be the day of your liberation”. The legitimation script climaxed in these Fukuyama-like terms when
Bush (2003b), announcing the start of the liberation of Iraq, concluded: “My fellow citizens, the dangers to our country and the world will be overcome. We will pass through this time of peril and carry on the work of peace. We will defend freedom. We will bring freedom to others and we will prevail”. Such inflated rhetoric, however, differed significantly from the numerous discursive critiques that contested this Iraq legitimation script and constituted an alternative de-legitimation script.

**The Iraq de-legitimation storyline and script**

While many acts of the Iraq war de-legitimation script were obvious and acted out by opponents of the second Gulf War throughout the 18 month build-up to 21 March 2003, this pre-war resistance has since intensified after the war and crystallised around three issues. First, the failure of the ‘coalition of the willing’ to find any usable weapons of mass destruction seriously undermined the(ir) main justification for the war. Second, the ongoing post-conflict (in)security problems in Iraq have substantiated antecedent fears that the war would increase animosity towards the invading powers and result in more ‘terrorism’ against the occupiers and potentially around the world. Third, the Abu-Ghraib prisoner abuse scandal of April 2004 especially infuriated Iraqis, Arabs, and Muslims around the world and epitomised the impression that the ‘liberation’ was a façade that had not bought the promised freedom and democracy to Iraq and its citizens. As a consequence of these post-war developments, the following discursive critiques constituting the Iraq war de-legitimation script are, where appropriate, partially written ‘in hindsight’ or a post-conflict tense.

As with the discussion of the blowback de-legitimation storyline and script presented in Chapters Four and Five, it is important to note that neither the Iraq conflicting discourse nor this presentation of it is not in any way a defence of Iraq, the Baghdad regime, or Saddam Hussein. Instead, this de-legitimation storyline and script is again an attempt to place the move towards war on Iraq in a more sophisticated geopolitical context. Similarly, this discussion does not seek to present a ‘blow-by-blow’ critique of the opposing Iraq conflict discourse. Instead, this account of an Iraq conflicting discourse, although following the broad acts of the above storyline and script, includes only general discursive critiques that serve the specific purpose of detailing the resistances to this second phase of the ‘war on terror’ as a ‘new’ new world order. This de-legitimation storyline and script therefore follows the same sequence of acts: international law, weapons of mass destruction, ‘terrorist state’, evil dictator, imminent threat, the second Gulf War
and the 'war on terror', part two. In so doing this discussion demonstrates the second contest between the Iraq war conflict(ing) discourses and suggests that a third phase in the 'war on terror' would be similarly, perhaps even more vigorously given the time since 11 September 2001, contested around the world.

The storyline
The de-legitimation storyline begins by making a two-pronged critique of the use of international law to justify war on Iraq. First, to accuse only Iraq of being in “material breach” of Security Council resolutions passed since its 1990 invasion of Kuwait is to present a familiar but one-sided story. For example, SC Resolution 687, the cease-fire resolution, also committed the United Nations and the multinational coalition that had just won the Gulf War to work towards regional (that is, not just Iraqi) disarmament; in recognition that Iraq’s invasion was a continuation of a highly militarised Middle East. This commitment has not, at least from a Baghdad perspective, been honoured and, in particular, Israel has apparently been exempt from this requirement (Hiro 2002). Indeed, Israel is important to the wider critique that it also has been in “material breach” of SC Resolutions for much longer than Iraq, notably 242 of 1948 (the ‘Partition Resolution’), but has faced no “serious consequences” for these violations, let alone military action. The difference in application of international law is representative of the wider Arab – Israeli conflict itself.

Second, the status of the second Gulf War under international law is also questionable and, indeed, is still being questioned. Although SC Resolution 1441 threatened “serious consequences” if Iraq did not immediately and fully comply with the rest of the resolution it did not explicitly authorise the use of force (Rai 2002). Hence Powell’s (2003b) ‘hard-sell’ to the Security Council on 5 February of Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction and ‘terrorism’ threat and the subsequent diplomatic manoeuvrings for a second resolution approving war. Along with numerous other states, the Security Council remained unconvinced and France, as a permanent member, threatened to veto a second resolution. The United States and the United Kingdom then argued that 1441 was sufficient to legalise their arguments for a ‘pre-emptive war’ of ‘self-defence’. The results of these litmus tests of international law, however, are still inconclusive. The United Nations Charter includes very specific rules defining ‘self-defence’ that allow for only very specific rules of engagement: immediate threat, proportional response, and hot pursuit which the war on Iraq does not fulfil (Mahajan 2002). Moreover, there are no international legal provisions for the concept of a ‘pre-emptive war’ so the war on Iraq again falls outside contemporary jurisprudence. Although two years have passed, the legality of the war, and
particularly the truthfulness of Prime Minister Tony Blair, has recently emerged as a controversial issue in the coming (May 2005) general election in the United Kingdom.

The weapons of mass destruction argument was the most controversial aspect of the Iraq legitimiation storyline, because the (in)credibility of the threat was the most debated. Put simply, many states, organisations, publics, and individuals doubted the validity of the intelligence information put forward by the White House and Downing Street asserting Iraq’s WMD-capability. Iraq’s much feared use of biological or chemical weapons during the first Gulf War, especially with its Scud missile attacks on Saudi Arabia and Israel, did not materialise. Given Saddam Hussein’s desperate situation then and supposed ‘evilness’ it seems unlikely that he would have refrained from using them had he been able to. Indeed, having used chemical weapons against the Kurds in 1988, it seems improbable, had Iraq’s WMD-capability still existed, that Saddam Hussein would not have used them again to crush the Shi’ite and Kurdish rebellions at the end of the first Gulf War. Since then, the eight years of weapons inspections and disarmament activities, despite Baghdad’s numerous and ongoing obstructions, did dismantle a significant amount of Iraq’s WMD infrastructure, programmes, and personnel (Ritter and Pitt 2002). In addition, it seemed even more unlikely that after a decade of economic sanctions, which had devastated most of Iraq’s civilian infrastructure and caused one million deaths, Baghdad had been able to rebuild its WMD capability during this same period. This contradiction was never acknowledged by Washington or London, because to do so would be to unravel the whole sanctions rationale. Moreover, the refusal of the United States and the United Kingdom to fully disclose its information (even Powell’s February 2003 presentation to the Security Council was only a partial disclosure) did not help international credulity.

Most importantly, for many doubters of Iraq’s alleged weapons of mass destruction threat the post-war failure to discover any nuclear, biological, or chemical weapons (even though the United States military could find a renegade former dictator in a hole in the ground) proved that the Baghdad’s capacity had been inflated beyond recognition. Without this ‘smoking gun’ evidence (or Iraq’s ‘weapons of mass disappearance’ according to one internet wit) this major pre-war justification was placed under enormous strain. Indeed, in three of the four major ‘coalition of the willing’ states, the US, UK, and Australia, all governments were forced to launch public inquiries into the credibility of Iraq’s WMD threat. All three inquiries subsequently found that the intelligence information upon which the political claims were made was credible and therefore that no exaggeration had knowingly taken place. This exoneration, however, contradicted the revelations by Dr David Kelly, a British government scientist who
allegedly informed the BBC that Downing Street had “sexed-up” its dossier on Iraq’s WMD capability. Especially controversial was the claim, repeated by Prime Minister Tony Blair in Parliament, that Iraq could launch a WMD attack within 45 minutes of an order from Saddam Hussein. Kelly’s suicide after being publicly identified as the media informant seemed to confirm his role and led to the Hutton Inquiry which indirectly addressed the question of Iraq’s WMD threat, and thus the justification for war.

The arguments regarding Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction rested as much on Baghdad’s previous use as it did on contemporary and disclosed intelligence information. Bush (2002a, 2003a) was particularly good at recalling Saddam Hussein’s track record of using chemical weapons during the 1980 – 1988 war with Iran against Iranian forces and Kurdish villages suspected of assisting the invaders. In his State of the Union speech on 29 January 2002, for example, Bush (as noted above) referred to a photo of the body of a Kurdish mother lying prone across the body of her infant child; a well-known image of Saddam’s chemical weapons attack against the Kurdish village of Halabja in February 1988 that killed an estimated 5,000 people (Chaliand 1993). In the primary data analysed here, however, such recollections excluded any mention of the United States’ patronage of Iraq during this time (to counter the threat of Iranian Shi’ite fundamentalism), that the US and the west had armed Iraq and assisted in its WMD development, and had responded to the Halabja incident and other chemical attacks with deafening silence. Instead, this history of US and western complicity was ignored in favour of the selective history of Saddam’s willingness to use such weapons and the consequent justification for war.

This partial memory was also evident in the representation of Iraq as a ‘terrorist state’ because of its internal repression of the Kurds and Shi’ite. What was denied here, for example, was the role of the United States, and in particular President George Bush senior, in inciting the rebellions by both groups at the end of the first Gulf War (Hiro 2002). Clearly desiring the removal of Saddam Hussein but with no UN mandate to invade Iraq nor then willing to do so unilaterally, Washington roused these internal proxies with a history of resistance to Baghdad through CIA involvement in northern and southern Iraq, Voice of America radio transmissions, and televised statements by Bush senior to rebel and overthrow Saddam Hussein and the Ba’athists. The Kurds and Shi’ite promptly did so but were crushed by Iraq’s elite Republican Guard, which had escaped the carnage in Kuwait, with thousands of deaths and a flood of Kurdish refugees to Iran and Turkey. Critical in this epitome of Iraq as an internal ‘terrorist state’ was the US decision, having incited the rebellions, to withhold military (and particularly air protection) support,
allowing Baghdad to deal with the insurrections with an unopposed iron fist. The geopolitical context of the war on Iraq was not quite as simple as that framing the above conflict discourse.

The same can be said regarding Iraq’s status as a ‘terrorist state’ because of its sponsoring of ‘international terrorism’. Although Iraq under Saddam Hussein has supported ‘terrorist’ organisations around the Middle East, the focus here is on the alleged connection between Baghdad and al-Qaeda. The first point of critique here is that, even after 11 September 2001, an alliance between Iraq and al-Qaeda, or even the Taliban, is more than improbable: Iraq is exactly the kind of corrupt, secular ‘Islamic’ regime that the fundamentalist al-Qaeda seeks to destroy and replace with ‘pure’ Islamic regimes like the Taliban; remember bin Laden’s offer to conduct another mujaheddin war. Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden are therefore from opposite ends of the Islamist spectrum and it is not surprising that, as Powell (2001x) admitted four days later, the United States could not find any suggestion of Baghdad involvement in 11 September 2001 (Rai 2002). In this context, Iraq as a ‘terrorist state’ consequently seems more rhetorical than real.

The irony is that, having used this problematic accusation as a justification for war, the ongoing post-conflict violence in Iraq suggests that it has become the magnet for ‘international terrorists’ from around the Arab and Islamic worlds to fight the perceived US imperial aggression of the United States. A year’s worth of car bombs, mortar attacks, and downing of aircraft have resulted in the deaths of thousands of Iraqi civilians and hundreds of US soldiers. The treatment of Iraqi inmates, many of them apparently innocent civilians, at Abu Ghraib prison (one of Saddam Hussein’s former torture sites) gave the impression that one dictatorial regime had been replaced by another and particularly enraged the Arab and Muslim world, undoubtedly strengthening the Iraq resistance and attracting more ‘foreign insurgents’. A new generation of ‘Arab Afghans’ have thus used the invasion of Iraq as another opportunity to confront a superpower, as their predecessors did in Afghanistan during the 1980s, antithetical to and waging war against Islam. As would be predicted from a blowback perspective, far from reducing the danger of Iraq as a ‘terrorist state’, therefore, the US invasion and occupation appears, paradoxically and tragically, to have increased this threat.

As a “new nexus” between state possession of weapons of mass destruction and their provision to ‘terrorist’ groups Iraq as a ‘terrorist state’ is also problematic. As argued earlier, the likelihood that Iraq had WMD to provide to ‘terrorists’ at any point since the first Gulf War is remote and probably non-existent given their post-war invisibility. Even if this was possible, the above
polarisation between the secular regime of Saddam Hussein and the 'fundamentalist Islam' of bin Laden mean that such a sharing of weapons would surely be a political impossibility: bin Laden would be as likely to use a 'dirty bomb’ against Baghdad as Washington (Rai 2002). The credibility of this justification for war therefore tends more towards the incredible and denies political insight in favour of political convenience.

Political convenience was surely the motivation behind the representation of Saddam Hussein as an evil dictator. As noted above, the rhetorical and visual image of a demonised Saddam Hussein was well understood in the United States, and beyond, from the first Gulf War, the occasional military strikes against Iraq throughout the 1990s, and his categorisation with bin Laden as the personification of 'international terrorism' after 11 September 2001. This representation, however, again relied on a selective history that denied the US role in creating the undeniable monster of Saddam Hussein. As also noted, for example, no mention was made of Saddam Hussein’s former status as a US client while he served the useful purpose of a bulwark against Shi’ite fundamentalism during the Iran – Iraq war. Historical amnesia clearly afflicted the US foreign policy elite, and in particular Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld (Figure 7.3), which conveniently forgot that Saddam Hussein had been the recipient of their considerable largesse and political support during the 1980s. If Saddam Hussein ever makes it to an open court, his preliminary appearance in front of an Iraqi judge in late 2004 suggests that his testimony will also remind the world that, according to him, in late July 1990 the US Ambassador to Saudi Arabia or Iraq gave him the diplomatic ‘green light’ for his invasion of Kuwait because Washington would not respond as it subsequently did. Indeed, Saddam Hussein is also likely to remind the world that, in the context of the accusation of Iraq’s following decade of violating SC Resolutions, nothing was done (either before or after the Gulf War) to address the reasons for his invasion. Again, none of this is to defend or exonerate the ‘evil’ of Saddam Hussein; merely to place that ‘evil’ within its more sophisticated geopolitical context.

The critiques of Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction capability, Saddam Hussein’s ‘evil’ preparedness to use nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons, and in particular the doubts over Baghdad’s ability to launch an attack within 45 minutes, all meant that this imminent threat which justified a pre-emptive war of self-defence was perhaps not so imminent after all. The inability of much of the world to perceive the same danger as the ‘coalition of the willing’, apart from frustrating the governments of the latter, downplayed this justification for war and instead emphasised the pursuit of ‘regime change’ for other political purposes. This disagreement was manifest in the desire of many states, including France (to the point were it indicated its
willingness to use its Security Council veto), Germany, and New Zealand, to give the UN weapons inspectors and diplomacy more time to avert war; thus indicating that, for them at least, an Iraq attack was not so imminent and the consequent resistibility of the war on Iraq. This argument was in opposition to the United States, United Kingdom, Spain, and Australia who argued that the time for diplomacy had expired and it was now time for military action. This irresistibility of the war on Iraq revealed the urgency with which the first member of the “axis of evil” was to be dealt with rather than the imminence of an Iraqi attack against the United States and/or its allies. By contesting the discursive strategies of the legitimation storyline these discursive critiques, in combination, therefore produced a de-legitimation storyline of the second phase of the war on Iraq.

Figure 7.3: Donald Rumsfeld meets Saddam Hussein, Baghdad 1984
Source: American University Website (http://american.edu/bgriff)
The script

Similarly, that alternative storyline also produced a de-legitimation script that began by critiquing the second Gulf war as a continuation of the first. This script drew attention to the real, but usually forgotten, justifications of that war: oil geopolitics. Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait, largely ‘justified’ by Baghdad as a response to the latter’s ‘slant drilling’ under the border and into Iraq’s oil deposits, gave it control of 25 per cent of the world’s known oil reserves. The next ‘domino’ of Saudi Arabia threatened by Iraq’s southward invasion controlled another 25 per cent. The oil dependent United States, fearing a significant loss of control of pro-Washington suppliers amongst the oil rich states of the Persian Gulf, responded with the multinational coalition under UN auspices to evict Iraq and restore its certainty of supply. The demise of the Soviet Union and the consequent first attempt to establish a ‘new world order’ gave the first Gulf War rhetorical camouflage.

Now, a decade later and with Saudi’s oil supplies running out, oil prices rising partly because of Iraq’s vast quantities being off-line through continued economic sanctions, and the oil scramble of the ‘New Great Game’ unresolved, the United States launched a second Gulf War for oil security imperatives (Hiro 2002). And as with the first Gulf War, the ‘war on terror’ and the consequent second attempt to establish a ‘new’ new world order also gave the second Gulf War rhetorical camouflage as well. Instead, the de-legitimation script argued that the war on Iraq would be a problematic imposition of ‘American values’ into the specific context of Iraq and, more broadly, the Middle East. The assumption of universalism was challenged as there was no automatic transfer of ‘freedom’, ‘democracy’, and ‘liberty’ from the US homeland to the centre of the Middle East. Rather, a transition period would be fraught with peril, not just because of ongoing Iraqi resistance to occupation forces but also because of complicated internal demographics and historical tension between the Sunni Arabs, Shi’ite Arabs, and Sunni Kurds. The ongoing post-conflict security problems and the Abu Ghraib prison scandal both contradict the stated goals of the war on Iraq to spread freedom and democracy and liberty.

This contest between the Iraq war conflict and conflicting discourses represent the (ir)resistability of the war on Iraq and a second more explicit and more controversial example of the concept of conflict(ing) discourses. Indeed, this second phase of the ‘war on terror’ demonstrates the utility of the concept of conflict(ing) discourses. The Iraq example, however, does indicate an important qualifier to the concept, which argues that the perpetration of violence indicates the hegemony of a conflict discourse over a subservient conflicting discourse, as proposed in Chapter One. The level of global resistance to the Iraq war (that is, the strength of
the conflicting discourse) was such that war should have been prevented; an example of the possibility of an unsuccessful legitimisation of violence noted earlier. As the Iraq war did occur, therefore, it is necessary to recognise the inherent and crucial *spatiality* of conflict(ing) discourses: that, in this example, a conflict discourse only needs to be hegemonic in certain centres of power (here, the White House, the Pentagon, Department of State, Downing Street and Whitehall) and not ubiquitous for violence to occur.

It is axiomatic that, in keeping with the idea of disagreement within state foreign policy elites (Chapter Three), even within these centres of power the contest between conflict(ing) discourses will continue. The crucial point here, however, is that these centres have the power, as the Iraq example demonstrates, to render violence *effectively* hegemonic even though the dominance of the conflict discourse may not extend much beyond those centres (as the large anti-war protests in the US and the UK indicate) let alone at the global scale. Notwithstanding this important qualifier, the utility of the concept of conflict(ing) discourses as evident in the second Iraq example therefore substantiates the research argument proposed in Chapter One, explored throughout this thesis, and now critically assessed in the following Chapter Eight conclusion on the implications of this research.

**Conclusion**

This chapter set out to illustrate one local example of the global resistance to the attempt by the United States foreign policy elite to establish the ‘war on terror’ as a ‘new’ new world order. This resistance, both local and global, increased as the second phase of the war on Iraq, which epitomised this attempt, drew nearer. The discussion began by demonstrating New Zealand’s pre-existing geopolitical context in order to frame the following case study on the impacts of 11 September 2001 and the ‘war on terror’ on domestic politics and foreign policy. Three stages in the geopolitics of New Zealand’s foreign policy and security relationships were identified: dependent security, transitional security, and interdependent security. The case study illustrated New Zealand’s reaction to 11 September 2001 and how this was reflected, after vociferous domestic debates about its response, in its foreign policy towards the ‘war on terror’. The refraction of the first phase of the war on Afghanistan through New Zealand domestic politics were profound and were the catalyst for the shift from a supporter to an opponent of United States military action.
This second outbreak of the ‘Kiwi disease’ resonated with much of the rest of the world, and the widespread resistance to the construction of the second Iraq conflict discourse. This legitimation depended on a storyline of Iraq’s persistent “material breach” of international law, its ongoing pursuit of weapons of mass destruction, its status as a ‘terrorist state’, Saddam Hussein as an evil dictator, and the consequent imminent threat Iraq poses to global peace and security. The war on Iraq, therefore, would be a second Gulf War to resolve the outstanding issues from the first a decade earlier and a second phase of the ‘war on terror’ to reduce the threat of ‘international terrorism’ and spread freedom, democracy, and liberty to Iraq. In response, however, much of the international community beyond the ‘coalition of the willing’ was unconvinced by these arguments and actively resisted the war. Indeed, this resistance was so pronounced that this attempt to establish the ‘war on terror’ as a ‘new’ new world order was defeated. This second example of a conflict(ing) discourses contesting the (de)legitimation of violence now leads into the implications of this critical geopolitics of 11 September 2001 and the ‘war on terror’.
Chapter Eight

Conclusions

Reading Between the Li(n)es of Conflict(ing) Discourses

QUESTION: “Mr. Secretary, if I could just follow up. Will there be any circumstances, as you prosecute this campaign, in which anyone in the Department of Defence will be authorised to lie to the news media in order to increase the chances of success of a military operation or gain some other advantage over your adversaries?”

RUMSFELD: “The answer to your question is no. I cannot imagine a situation. I don’t recall that I’ve ever lied to the press. I don’t intend to. And it seems to me that there will not be reason for it. There are dozens of ways to avoid having to put yourself in a position where you’re lying”.

Donald Rumsfeld, Tuesday 25 September (2001f)
Research Implications

Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld (2001f) provides an appropriate summary for this thesis because his opening chapter quote encapsulates the theoretical and methodological *modus operandi* of this research. In wanting to understand the pre-conflict process of violence legitimation, this research demonstrated the "dozens of ways" that the United States foreign policy elite (to paraphrase Rumsfeld) 'avoided having to put itself in the position where it was lying'. These "dozens of ways" were conceptualised here as the discursive strategies and geopolitical (dis)continuities that constructed the surprise attack storyline of 11 September 2001, wrote the resulting legitimation script of the 'war on terror', attempted to establish this as a 'new' new world order, and finally built the Iraq conflict discourse. As was shown throughout this thesis, these discursive strategies and (dis)continuities were partial and situated political manoeuvres that excluded alternative storylines, scripts, resistances, and conflicting discourses. In effect they were, therefore, the voluntary 'lies of omission' preceding necessary 'lies of untruthfulness'. Moreover, in conducting a discourse analysis on the speeches, interviews, and press conference transcripts of twelve members of the United States foreign policy elite this thesis has, quite literally, read between the lies and the lines – the li(n)es – of the conflict(ing) discourses of 11 September 2001 and the 'war on terror'.

The purpose of this final chapter, therefore, is to bring this critical geopolitics research argument together to conclude this thesis. The discussion is divided into three sections. The first section considers the research implications, along empirical, methodological, and theoretical dimensions, of this thesis. The second section summarises the concepts of conflict discourses, conflicting discourses, and conflict(ing) discourses and considers the strengths, weaknesses, and future research possibilities of this conceptualisation of violence. The third section provides a brief conclusion to this critical geopolitics exercise of reading between the li(n)es of the conflict(ing) discourses of 11 September 2001 and the 'war on terror'.

**Empirical implications**

In order to summarise the empirical implications of this research, the first part of this section returns to the three original research questions. The discursive strategies and geopolitical (dis)continuities used by the United States foreign policy elite in the four substantive chapters of
this thesis are re-presented here (Figure 8.1). This discussion reiterates how each of these four stages extended the previous and relied on its predecessors' hegemony: hence the legitimation of the first phase of the 'war on terror' on Afghanistan was eased by the dominant surprise attack explanation of 11 September 2001 but, conversely, the Iraq conflict discourse was so controversial because the preceding attempt to establish the 'war on terror' as a 'new' new world order had been unsuccessful. The main empirical implication of this argument is that any 'war on terror', part three (as perhaps is already underway in early 2005 with occasional US concern over Syria, Iran, and North Korea) will be even more problematic than the 2003 Iraq war.

Research question one
The first research question asked: “What conflict discourse(s) did the United States foreign policy elite construct to explain 11 September 2001 and/or to legitimate the ‘war on terror’?”.

This question was specifically addressed in the second and third sections of Chapter Four and the first half of Chapter Five. The first section of Chapter Four established the pre-existing geopolitical context of the US national exceptionalism myth which provided the cultural reservoir for many of the discursive strategies of the conflict discourses. Following O'Tuathail's (2002) concept of "geopolitical storylines" explored in Chapter Two, the second section then explained how the surprise attack storyline was constructed by identifying the what, who, and why of 11 September 2001. The attacks were represented both as an ‘act of war’ against the United States, the ‘American people’, and their way of life and as an unannounced, unprovoked, and unjustifiable ‘surprise attack’. In turn, the perpetrators of the attacks, as President George Bush constantly described them, were “evil doers” driven only by irrational jealousy because there was no connection between US foreign policy in the Middle East and 11 September 2001. Finally, instead of exploring this possibility the straightforward ‘Why?’ question was transformed into the ‘Why do they hate us?’ question and answered that the perpetrators were motivated only by a simple hatred of US ‘freedom and democracy’. This explanatory storyline was therefore conceptualised as the first part of the surprise attack conflict discourse because it de-legitimated the violence of the ‘Other’.

The first half of Chapter Five then demonstrated how the hegemony of this storyline was used to justify a violent response. Following O'Tuathail's (2002) concept of “geopolitical scripts” also explored in Chapter Two, the discussion then presented the surprise attack legitimation script of the first phase of the ‘war on terror’ on Afghanistan. This script began by naturalising, through globalising, civilising, and dichotomising the ‘war on terror’, the post-11 September 2001 ‘geopolitical realities’ of world politics. The second act continued by normalising the ‘war on
terror’, by drawing upon the paired discursive strategies of religion and history, self-defence and inevitable, popular and deified, and resolve and defiance, as the only credible foreign policy option within these new certainties. The surprise attack legitimation script was completed by self-legitimating, through its very conduct as a secret, comprehensive, just, and mundane war, the war on Afghanistan. This legitimation script of the ‘war on terror’ was therefore conceptualised as the second part of the surprise attack conflict discourse because it legitimated the violence of the ‘Self’.

The surprise attack conflict discourse, however, did much more than, as the original research question intended, just explain 11 September 2001 and legitimate the ‘war on terror’. Chapter Six demonstrated how this hegemony was used in an attempt to establish a ‘new’ new world order. The first section explored Dalby’s (1990b) concept of the ‘second Cold War’ and Kaldor’s (1999) concept of ‘new wars’ to link the ‘war on terror’ to the notion of geopolitical world order. The second section then examined six geopolitical continuities from the Cold War, including the extrapolation, spatialisation, substitution, and anxiety of ‘terrorism’ requiring vigilance against and victory over the ‘terrorist’ threat. The third section then examined four geopolitical discontinuities that distinguished the ‘war on terror’ as a ‘new war’, including its designation, in President Bush’s term, as the “first war of the twenty-first century”, and the subsequent comparisons, new means, and transformations necessary to conduct it. This attempt at a ‘new’ new world order can be conceptualised as another effort to achieve the hegemony of a ‘war on terror’ conflict discourse that would legitimate violence for the foreseeable future.

This attempt to establish the ‘war on terror’ as a ‘new’ new world order became more obvious with its move towards war on Iraq during 2002/03. This second phase also had its own two-part conflict discourse legitimating violence. The storyline explained Iraq’s “material breach” of international law, its weapons of mass destruction capability, its status as a ‘terrorist state’, Saddam Hussein as an evil dictator, and in combination Iraq’s imminent threat to international peace and security. The consequent legitimation script justified war on Iraq as a necessary second Gulf War and second phase of the ‘war on terror’. Despite the numerous resistances (summarised shortly under research question two) to the war on Iraq the US foreign policy elite and its small ‘coalition of the willing’ went ahead with the war, demonstrating that conflict discourses do not need to be ‘hegemonic’ at the global (or even the national) scale for violence to occur; but only in those places that have the power to resort to war regardless of such resistances. This implication is an important one that will be discussed in detail later.
## Figure 8.1: The conflict discourses of 11 September 2001 and the 'war on terror'

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Explaining 11 September 2001: The Surprise Attack Storyline</th>
<th>Legitimating the 'war on terror': The Surprise Attack Script</th>
<th>Attempting a 'New' New World Order</th>
<th>The 'War on Terror', Part Two: The Iraq Conflict Discourse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WHAT:</td>
<td>NATURALISING:</td>
<td>COLD WAR CONTINUITIES:</td>
<td>STORYLINE:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An 'Act of War'</td>
<td>Globalising</td>
<td>Extrapolation</td>
<td>International Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A 'Surprise Attack'</td>
<td>Civilising</td>
<td>Spatialisation</td>
<td>Weapons of Mass Destruction</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Dichotomising</td>
<td>Substitution</td>
<td>Terrorist State</td>
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<tr>
<td>WHO:</td>
<td>NORMALISING:</td>
<td>Anxieties</td>
<td>Evil Dictator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Evil doers&quot;</td>
<td>Religion and History</td>
<td>Vigilance</td>
<td>Imminent Threat</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Self-defence and Inevitable</td>
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<td>Resolute and Defiant</td>
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<td>WHY:</td>
<td>CONDUCTING:</td>
<td>NEW WAR DISCONTINUITIES:</td>
<td>SCRIPT:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why do They Hate Us?</td>
<td>Secret War</td>
<td>First War of the 21st Century</td>
<td>The Second Gulf War</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Comprehensive War</td>
<td>Comparisons</td>
<td>The 'War on Terror', Part Two</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Humane War</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mundane War</td>
<td>Transformations</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
In response to the first research question, therefore, the United States foreign policy elite constructed the surprise attack conflict discourse to explain 11 September 2001 and legitimate the first phase of the ‘war on terror’ on Afghanistan. The hegemony of this conflict discourse was then extended by the ‘third Cold War’ and “first war of the twenty-first century” (dis)continuities in an attempt to establish the ‘war on terror’ as a ‘new’ new world order. This attempt was particularly evident in the second conflict discourse justifying the war on Iraq.

**Research question two**

The second research question asked: “What conflicting discourse(s) offered alternative explanations of 11 September 2001 and/or attempted to de-legitimate the ‘war on terror’?” This question was addressed in the second and third sections of Chapter Four and the second half of Chapter Five. The first section of Chapter Four explored Johnson’s (2000 and 2002) concept of ‘blowback’ as a means of bringing together the disparate perspectives in the critical comment material that provided the discursive critiques of the conflicting discourses. Following O’Tuathail’s (2002) concept of “geopolitical storylines”, the middle section simultaneously presented discursive critiques of the dominant surprise attack explanation of 11 September 2001 to construct an alternative storyline. This blowback explanation argued that it was US foreign policy that was attacked, that it was not a ‘surprise attack’, that the perpetrators (while undoubtedly ‘evil’) may have had legitimate grievances, and therefore that the US was not attacked out of irrational hatred and jealousy of its freedom and democracy. This explanatory storyline was therefore conceptualised as the first part of the blowback conflicting discourse because it sought a more critical understanding of the violence of the ‘Other’.

The second half of Chapter Five then demonstrated how this subservient storyline was used to challenge a violent response. Again, following O’Tuathail’s (2002) concept of “geopolitical scripts”, the discussion then presented the blowback de-legitimation script of the first phase of the ‘war on terror’ on Afghanistan. This alternative script contested the three acts of the legitimation script by un-naturalising the post-11 September 2001 geopolitical realities, abnormalising the ‘war on terror’ as the only credible foreign policy option within these supposedly objective new certainties, and demonstrating the looming mis-conduct of the war on Afghanistan. This de-legitimation script was therefore conceptualised as the second part of the blowback conflicting discourse because it de-legitimated the violence of the ‘Self’.

The blowback conflicting discourse, however, also did much more than, as the original research question intended, just offer a subservient explanation of 11 September 2001 and de-legitimate
the ‘war on terror’. The last section of Chapter Six demonstrated the inherent ironies and paradoxes of the attempt to establish the ‘war on terror’ as a ‘new’ new world order. The ironies resulted from the selective use of geopolitical continuities between the ‘second Cold War’ and the ‘war on terror’ while the paradoxes were a consequence of the partial use of the ‘new wars’ concept to promote Bush’s “first war of the twenty-first century”. The combined effect of these ironies and paradoxes was a contradictory and incoherent attempt to establish the ‘war on terror’ as the ‘new’ new world order, which in turn opened up space for the numerous and widespread resistances of governments, organisations, publics and individuals around the world.

Chapter Seven then presented one local example of these global resistances to the ‘war on terror’ as a ‘new’ new world order through the New Zealand case study. The first section established the unique pre-existing geopolitical context within which the impacts of 11 September 2001 and the ‘war on terror’ must be understood. The first half of the second section demonstrated New Zealand’s sympathetic reaction to 11 September 2001 that was reflected in its foreign policy supporting the United States and the war on Afghanistan. This initial support of the ‘war on terror’ as a conflict discourse was typical of the position of many states around the world in the aftermath of 11 September 2001. The second half of the second section, however, traced the transition in New Zealand’s position because of the refraction of these global events through domestic politics and the growing resistance to the war on Iraq. This second outbreak of the ‘Kiwi disease’ repeated the nuclear-free resistance to the ‘second Cold War’ but was much more widespread and resonated with the similar transition of many governments, organisations, publics, and individuals around the world from supporters to opponents of the second phase of the ‘war on terror’ on Iraq. These opponents advocated a de-legitimation storyline and script of the Iraq war which, although it failed to prevent the war on Iraq, demonstrated that even at the global scale this conflicting discourse was not subservient. This implication is an important one, not least because it suggests that any third phase in the ‘war on terror’ will be vigorously contested, which will be discussed in more detail later.

In response to the second research question, therefore, numerous critical commentators constructed the blowback conflicting discourse to offer an alternative explanation of 11 September 2001 and de-legitimate the first phase of the ‘war on terror’ on Afghanistan. The subservience of this conflicting discourse began to be overcome by the worldwide resistance to the attempt to establish the ‘war on terror’ as a ‘new’ new world order. This resistance was epitomised by the Iraq conflicting discourse that, while failing to prevent the war on Iraq in 2003, represented a reversal of its previous subservience.
Research question three

The third research question asked: “How did these conflict discourse(s) and conflicting discourse(s) interact as conflict(ing) discourses and how is hegemony achieved and subservience imposed?” This question was specifically addressed in the third section of Chapter Four and the second half of Chapter Five. Chapter Four explained that the surprise attack storyline of 11 September 2001 achieved hegemony over the blowback storyline by de-contextualising the attacks. As the United States foreign policy elite quickly provided an explanation that fitted the attacks into the pre-existing geopolitical discourse of the national exceptionalism myth that resonated profoundly with the ‘American people’, this surprise attack storyline simultaneously excluded any exploration of other possible geopolitical contexts of 11 September 2001. This exclusion was then able to circumvent any attempt to contextualise the de-contextualised by accusing those who proposed blowback explanations of 11 September 2001 as being ‘anti-American’ and the moral equivalent of the ‘terrorists’ because such attempts amounted to condoning the attacks. The hegemony of the surprise attack explanation of 11 September 2001 was thus quickly established, was effectively defended, and remains secure today.

Chapter Five then argued that this hegemony of the surprise attack storyline enabled the hegemony of the surprise attack legitimation script of the ‘war on terror’. In keeping with the proposed concept of conflict(ing) discourses in Chapter One, the proof that this second hegemony had been achieved was the commencement of the war on Afghanistan on 7 October 2001. This hegemony was achieved because the United States foreign policy elite was able to present its conflict discourse as an objective, normal, and only response to 11 September 2001, while conflicting discourses appeared subjective, partial, and soft on ‘terrorism’. Chapter Six demonstrated the interaction between the conflict discourse proposing the ‘war on terror’ as a ‘new’ new world order argument and the conflicting discourse focussed on the inherent ironies and paradoxes of, and the consequent resistances to, this attempt. Chapter Seven then demonstrated the interaction between the ‘war on terror’ as ‘new’ new world order conflict discourses and the conflicting discourses of the resistance that prevented this becoming hegemonic in both the local New Zealand case study and at the global scale over the war on Iraq.

In response to the third research question, therefore, these conflict(ing) discourses interacted as different perspectives were offered on the same issues. Discursive critiques were made of specific discursive strategies, indicating conflicting discourses are particularly attentive to the internal workings and effects of conflict discourses. Assessing the impact of conflicting discourses on conflict discourses, however, is a much more difficult problem and not really one
that can be assessed by this study. Conducting a discourse analysis of the primary data does not reveal how or why the United States foreign policy elite responded to external critiques. Again, this implication is an important one which is discussed more fully later. What is certain in response here, however, is that conflict discourses achieve hegemony over conflicting discourses by presenting themselves, as practical geopolitical reasoning does, as objective and specialised storylines and scripts that justify a particular foreign policy and exclude alternatives from consideration.

Methodological implications

The second part of this section considers the methodological implications of this research. In this discussion 'methodological' includes consideration of both the positionality issues raised by this research and the method issues encountered in actually conducting this thesis. The following discussion therefore begins with a reflexive piece on the personal experience of doing this doctorate and my own reaction to ongoing events in the 'war on terror' during the four year research process. Recalling from Chapter Two, this reflexivity is consistent with critical geopolitics' post-modern concern with the relationship between the researcher and the researched (Rose 1997). The discussion then explores both the advantages and the limitations of the research method employed in this thesis.

Reflexivity

As became clear in the 'formalised geopolitics' part of Chapter Two's 'personal geopolitics' section, in my early years at University 'traditional geopolitics' (and political science / international relations) was inadequate for me both academically and personally, but critical geopolitics appealed as it appeared to offer remedies to both sets of concerns. A critical geopolitics approach was therefore inevitable when I decided to undertake a doctorate. The issue now, however, is to reflect on the nature of this relationship between myself as the New Zealand researcher and this critical geopolitics of the conflict(ing) discourses of 11 September 2001 and the 'war on terror' as the researched. I would like to make a number of personal reflexive comments on my doctoral experience.

While I began this thesis with my 'emotional detachment' from the events of 11 September 2001, two events during the course of this research bought me, as the researcher, and 'terrorism' or political violence, as the 'researched', closer together. The first event affected friends from the
New Zealand men’s cricket team, who were on tour in Karachi when a car bomb exploded within metres of the team bus outside their hotel, shortly before the team departed for the first day of the second test against Pakistan, in May 2002. The attack targeted French naval personnel, 14 of whom were killed, who were staying at the hotel next door and was believed to have been conducted by al-Qaeda. One friend of mine, the team physiotherapist, was slightly injured in the attack and many others had narrow escapes, including a St Albans club mate of mine whose windows were blown in by the blast and covered his bed in glass; which he was fortunately not in at the time. I was in the United Kingdom at the time of the attack, and heard radio reports from the one New Zealand journalist meant to be covering a sporting tour, not a political incident. I knew many of the team personnel, feared for their safety, and dreaded what they were going through. I was not surprised – on 11 September 2001 New Zealand Cricket’s head office had immediately recalled the team, when they were in transit to Pakistan, from Singapore – but still quite relieved when I heard the tour had been cancelled and the team was returning home. Although the incident had occurred in a place as distant as New York and Washington, and without the live television coverage, knowing people there and having friends in danger made the threat and effect of ‘terrorism’ so much more real.

Five months later my diminishing ‘emotional detachment’ from ‘terrorism’ was further reduced with the news of the bombing of a Bali, Indonesia nightclub on Saturday 12 October 2002, which killed 202 people, including 88 Australians and three New Zealanders. When the news broke on the Sunday night, the name of the first New Zealander confirmed killed in the attack, a Mark Parker of Timaru, instantly bought the horrors of ‘terrorism’ home to me: I had met Mark through my involvement in cricket, which Mark had played for Canterbury age group and second XI teams in Christchurch when I was a match official. The identification of someone I knew as having been killed by ‘terrorism’ made me far more aware of the random danger and the devastating effect of such incidents on family and friends, especially when I saw television coverage of his funeral. Indeed, months later, when talking to the friend injured in Karachi about his experience, I learnt his partner was an ex-school mate of Mark Parker’s, and he relayed to me the injuries Mark suffered and his dying words to a fellow, but unknown to him, New Zealander. Slowly but surely ‘terrorism’, or rather its tragic effects on innocent individuals and their families, was significantly closer and less disembodied to me than on 11 September 2001.

I believe, however, that I did manage to maintain a degree of ‘emotional detachment’ from the researched during the course of this thesis. I recall, for example, a friend from the United States expressing some incredulity that my thesis topic was 11 September 2001, because she felt the
event was so traumatic that it would be impossible to study. Both her New Zealand husband and I immediately responded that it was precisely because the attacks were not so 'traumatic' for me, as a New Zealander who knew no-one killed or affected, that enabled me to begin and continue to conduct this doctoral research. This incident occurred at New Year 2002, and I have remembered it ever since and the recollection has certainly enabled me to keep researching from a position of 'emotional detachment', despite these two other events that made me more aware of 'terrorism' and its consequences.

Numerous other events at the local and global scale occurred during the study period that were peripheral to the thesis but complicated the research process by drawing attention, even if only temporarily, away from the central purpose. In New Zealand, for example, the case of Ahmed Zaoui, an Algerian refugee arrested at Auckland airport on suspicion of being linked to al-Qaeda in late 2001, presented an interesting and ongoing controversy that included many aspects of the 'war on terror' experienced around the globe. These aspects included the 'racial profiling' of suspected 'terrorists', the effect of post-11 September 2001 counter-terrorism legislation (New Zealand's post-11 September 2001 'Terrorism Act') on civil liberties, the implications for New Zealand's immigration policy, the role of the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS) and in particular the shroud of secrecy surrounding its evidence, and the wider debate about the nature and scale of the 'terrorist threat' to New Zealand. The Ahmed Zaoui case, which continues despite his release into New Zealand society after more than two years in detention, therefore provides a lucrative research topic on the circulation of global 'war on terror' discourses within New Zealand which was not given great attention here to maintain my focus on this research.

The same could be said for a specific local example in my home city of Christchurch. In the days after 11 September 2001 a memorial service in the Christchurch Cathedral was attended by personnel from the United States Antarctic Programme, which is based at Christchurch International Airport, and by members of the Christchurch Fire Brigade who came to mourn the loss of over 300 of their counterparts. This latter connection between Christchurch and New York was maintained during the course of this research. In September 2002 the world fire-fighter games were held in Christchurch and many representatives from the United States attended. These visitors presented the local brigade with a piece of steel girder from the World Trade Centre. The twisted and broken beams were subsequently erected as a memorial to those 300 fire-fighters opposite the Christchurch Central Fire Station. An accompanying plaque acknowledges the sacrifices of those fire-fighters and the comradeship between the colleagues in Christchurch and the United States. Again, such cultural connections, including heroism,
sacrifice, and solidarity, could have been explored to further understand the local circulation and (re)configuration of 11 September 2001 discourses, but were necessarily left aside given the focus of this research.

At the global scale, events after the war on Iraq were also relevant to this thesis. Most importantly, events within Iraq were noteworthy but again simply not able to be fully incorporated here, including the ongoing (in)security problems, the Abu-Ghraib prison scandal, the emergence of Abu Massad al-Zarqawi and Muqtada al-Sadr, the arrest of Saddam Hussein, and the January 2005 elections. Related events outside Iraq, such as al-Qaeda’s bombing of a Madrid train in March 2004 that killed more than 200 people, altered the Spanish general election, and prompted the new government to withdraw its troops from Iraq, were also of interest but were again excluded as they did not alter the central argument of this thesis.

Perhaps the most beneficial event that was not fully included here was the United States Presidential Election in November 2004. A passing interest in the campaign demonstrated that conflict(ing) discourses of the ‘war on terror’, and especially regarding the war on Iraq and its ongoing controversy, were not only a major part of the contest between George Bush and John Kerry, but were also framing that debate. Indeed, when another warning of an imminent ‘terrorist’ attack on the US homeland was issued shortly before the election even Kerry, a strong advocate of reviewing US involvement in Iraq and evidently of down-scaling the ‘war on terror’, responded with Bush-style rhetoric about the ‘barbaric threat’ of ‘international terrorism’ to the ‘civilised world’ that must be ‘defeated’. This example of “bipartisan consensus” speaks volumes about the influence of national exceptionalism on domestic politics and foreign policy.

Implicit in this discussion of all these ongoing events and the inability to include them properly in this thesis is the difficulty I had in assessing when was the appropriate time to cease incorporating, or even to stop thinking about incorporating, empirical developments in the ‘real world’ into this thesis. This was perhaps the one major issue through which I learnt most about myself during the course of this doctorate: knowing what had to be included and what was acceptable to exclude. Maintaining the focus on the specific purposes of this thesis was difficult because the research possibilities of 11 September 2001 and the ‘war on terror’ are so numerous and complex. At times I could simply not decide on what was crucial to include and acceptable to exclude, and this undoubtedly slowed progress. I have read somewhere, however, that intelligent people assign equal value to all things, hence are unable to distinguish what is most important and what is unimportant; so I will claim this as my defence!
I also found the writing process extremely difficult. My writing would never flow as freely as I wanted it too, and when it did it was only for a maximum of about six hours per day, and then not often for many days in a row. I suspect this is quite normal, but the frustration of wanting to go faster was often counter-productive and slowed progress even further. Indeed, a number of times throughout this thesis I hit the proverbial ‘brick wall’ and needed a significant time away from the thesis. Fortunately, my involvement in cricket paid dividends twice in this regard, first with a week-long trip to Perth in October 2003 and then with a month-long tour of Bangladesh in October – November 2004 (both also after long Christchurch winters!). I have consequently learnt that I need more than one activity in life at any one time; a doctoral thesis on its own would have been even harder work than it was had I not had an outside interest as I have had over the past four-and-a-half years.

Advantages
The next aspect in considering the methodological implications of this research concerns the advantages of the method employed in this thesis. The first and most obvious advantage of this research method was its focus, through the use of speeches, interviews, and press conference transcripts from a one month period as primary data, on the specific explanations of 11 September 2001, legitimations of the ‘war on terror’, attempts at a ‘new’ new world order, and later justifications of the war on Iraq employed by the United States foreign policy elite itself. This focus meant that how these geopolitical discourses were modified by various filters, including the US and global media, public perception, and time and distance, were left aside and such complications avoided. In other words, because only the original, unmodified discursive strategies were examined the consequent analysis of the legitimation of violence is very robust.

The second advantage was the comprehensive view of the numerous discursive strategies employed by the various members of the United States foreign policy elite. The plethora of techniques deployed to explain 11 September 2001, legitimate the ‘war on terror’, establish a ‘new’ new world order, and justify war on Iraq were, generally speaking, used by all members at some point during the initial one month study period or in the latter build-up to the Iraq war. What was equally noticeable from the discourse analysis, however, was how different officials were more heavily involved in particular discursive strategies, clearly (and not surprisingly) relating to their specific ‘role’ within the Bush administration. For example, Powell was the member most involved in ‘naturalising’ the post-11 September 2001 geopolitical realities of world politics; Rumsfeld dominated ‘normalising’ the ‘war on terror’; while Bush was the most consistently involved in all of the discursive strategies.
Moreover, the discourse analysis also demonstrated how different discursive strategies were more prominent at certain times than others. Clearly, those discursive strategies explaining 11 September 2001 dominated the first days after the attacks, but these were soon overcome by those legitimating the first phase of the ‘war on terror’, especially during the remaining days of the ten-day geopolitical moment. After President Bush’s speech to the joint session of Congress on 20 September, however, those discursive strategies, as noted in Chapter Five, self-legitimating the war on Afghanistan dominated the two-and-a-half weeks between then and the start of the war on 7 October. Similarly, the geopolitical (dis)continuities deployed to establish the ‘war on terror’ as a ‘new’ new world order were more prominent in the lead-up to the start of the war, although these had certainly been noticeable from the outset of the crisis.

This temporal variation leads into the fourth advantage, which enabled the complexity of the violence legitimating process to be maintained throughout the discourse analysis. Originally, the primary data totalled more than 600 pages, and the subsequent analysis and re-organisation into the nine then five themes did not reduce this number significantly. As a consequence, although the analysis was long and laborious, the thorough method of reading, coding, re-organising, re-reading, re-coding, and again re-organising the primary data paid dividends because the complexity of the plethora of discursive strategies (and tactics!), and their interaction with one another, was maintained throughout the research. Indeed, one of the reasons this doctorate took so long to complete was turning this complexity into a presentable, coherent, and readable thesis without compromising this intricacy.

The final advantage of this research method was its use of critical comment material to critique the discursive strategies and conflict discourses without duplicating the discourse analysis process, but at the same time recognising this critical comment as also discursive. There is no doubt, for example, that the more ‘extreme’ critics like John Pilger, Noam Chomsky, and Robert Fisk conform to an equally partial and situated discourse, where the United States, the foreign policy elite, and US foreign policy itself (especially in the Middle East) are at the centre of the world’s ills. These critics have been used here, however, to highlight the contest of conflict(ing) discourses in the most stark terms possible, while trying to recognise the grey in between by not making judgements of ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ or assigning ‘blame’ and ‘innocence’. In other words, both conflict discourses and conflicting discourses and their advocates are seen as opposite ends of the same spectrum, not opposite sides of the same coin.
Limitations

The consequent limitation, however, is that the research did not subject the critical comment material to a second discourse analysis. This omission was again necessary to keep the research manageable, but it is unfortunate as it became obvious that these numerous perspectives, conveniently grouped together here under the blowback conflicting discourse umbrella, represent a discourse (or rather many discourses) and is therefore as amenable to a discourse analysis, especially given the critical geopolitics approach, as the primary data was. Again, this limitation was anticipated in Chapter Three, but it is noted here to declare the implicit ‘one-sidedness’ in subjecting only the primary data to a discourse analysis.

A second limitation is the exclusive focus on the United States foreign policy elite, which consequently does not consider how other governments, especially its main western and European allies, repeated and/or reconfigured these conflict discourses of 11 September 2001 and the ‘war on terror’. This limitation was partly addressed by the New Zealand case study, but the omission of the wider circulation of the surprise attack conflict discourse, the ‘war on terror’ as a ‘new’ new world order argument and the second Iraq conflict discourse is a notable inadequacy. Similarly, a related limitation is the exclusion of how these discourses percolated through and were modified by the mainstream US and global media, which is clearly a crucial part of the violence legitimating process, to public audiences. As noted in Chapter Three, however, this thesis was not intended to be a ‘media analysis’, but clearly the ‘success’ or otherwise in convincing citizens that violence is a credible foreign policy option is partly dependent on this communication, which was omitted here to keep the research manageable.

A third limitation is the omission of the ‘Other’ perspective on the (de)legitimation of violence following 11 September 2001 and during the ‘war on terror’. Applying the concept of conflict(ing) discourses in reverse means that 11 September 2001 had its own legitimating conflict discourse and the ‘war on terror’ has its own de-legitimating conflicting discourse. Although statements by Osama bin Laden were analysed as one form of discursive critique, by no means could they be (as they were not) taken as representative of the wider Arab, Middle Eastern, and Islamic worlds. The explanation of 11 September 2001 and the (de)legitimation of the ‘war on terror’ within Arab, Middle Eastern, and Islamic states, both governments and publics, is thus a notable omission from this thesis; although, and again as noted in Chapter Three, such research would undoubtedly be better undertaken by academics with more appropriate skills and in a better location than me.
Theoretical implications

The third part of this section considers the theoretical implications of this research. In this discussion ‘theoretical implications’ means the academic significance of this thesis and its contributions to existing knowledge and literatures. These implications are divided into three areas. The first considers the theoretical implications of this thesis for practical geopolitics; conceptualised here as the contemporary workings of traditional geopolitical reasoning within the United States foreign policy elite’s 11 September 2001 and ‘war on terror’ conflict discourses. Inversely, the critical comment material is regarded as the ‘practical geopolitics’ of critical geopolitics. The second aspect considers the theoretical implications of this thesis for critical geopolitics; as the pre-existing body of knowledge and literature that drove this research critiquing and deconstructing these dominant conflict discourses. The third aspect considers the theoretical implications of this thesis for the field of conflict research; recalling that one of the intentions of this research was to investigate whether critical geopolitics could contribute to this political science dominated but multi-disciplinary field by initially understanding the prerequisite process of violence legitimation.

Practical geopolitics

The theoretical implications of this thesis for practical geopolitics are numerous. Most importantly, this thesis has demonstrated how “geopolitical storylines” and “geopolitical scripts” were constructed following 11 September 2001 and operate in the ‘war on terror’. This extension of O’Tuathail’s (2002) initial theorisation of practical geopolitical reasoning was notable given its focus on the important issue of violence legitimation and conflict in contemporary world politics. Exploring the surprise attack conflict discourse revealed a particular form of practical geopolitical reasoning that draws on pre-existing discourses to explain new events and circumstances, in accordance with O’Tuathail’s idea of “cultural storehouses of common sense”. Moreover, in approaching 11 September 2001 and the ‘war on terror’ from this perspective this thesis has not only offered insights into the contemporary working of geopolitical storylines and geopolitical scripts, but also substantiated the current understanding of 11 September 2001 and the ‘war on terror’ as events themselves.

Also important has been the insights into the practical geopolitical reasoning (remembering that these are also discursive) of the alternative geopolitical storylines and scripts also presented in this thesis. The blowback conflicting discourse (or rather its many constituent strands of thinking) must also be regarded as a form of practical geopolitics, in the sense that it also offers
storylines and scripts of geopolitics that advocate particular courses of action in foreign policy. This is perhaps a new insight into ‘practical geopolitics’, which in the critical geopolitics literature is usually limited to the geopolitical practices of state foreign policy elites. Indeed, as many of the critical commentators used here are academics (e.g., Chomsky, Mahajan, and Smith), the distinction between practical (traditional) geopolitics and formal (critical) geopolitics is further blurred. Clearly, therefore, the discursive critiques presented throughout this thesis demonstrate that practical geopolitics can, and must, be conceptualised in a much broader, non-state elite specific sense.

Bringing these two points together, this thesis has demonstrated that practical geopolitics needs to include the interaction between and re-configuration of these state and non-state storylines and scripts. In contrast to traditional geopolitics, which held that geopolitics was the exclusive domain of state foreign policy elites, critical geopolitics includes other sites and sources in its conceptualisation of ‘the geopolitical’. Extending ‘practical geopolitics’ to not only alternative, dissident sites and sources but also to include the interactions between the two, and the re-configurations in each other, is an important theoretical implication of this research.

Critical geopolitics

In addition to the above, the theoretical implications of this thesis for critical geopolitics relate to the first two of the four original contributions intended by this research in Chapter One (page 16). The first of these was to begin “a conversation on the possibilities (or otherwise) of a contribution to conflict research”. This thesis has demonstrated that critical geopolitics is indeed in a good position to contribute to the field of conflict research. Chapter One explained the relevance of geopolitics, both traditional and critical, to the use of violence in world politics in a historical context and with regard to 11 September 2001 and the ‘war on terror’. Chapter Two then explored this relationship via my own personal interest in conflict and through a contemporary critical geopolitics approach to practical geopolitical reasoning, geopolitical storylines, and geopolitical scripts. Chapter Three detailed one possible set of research strategies to make the specific contribution of this thesis: to explore the role of geopolitics in the pre-conflict violence legitimation process.

The second was to “extend contemporary critical geopolitics by making, or at least proposing, this original contribution” to conflict research. This proposition was specifically made in the four substantive chapters that explored this process and demonstrated the rich potential of a critical geopolitics contribution to conflict research latent in this area. Chapter Four demonstrated that it
is critical to recognise the construction of storylines that legitimate violence as they occur. Chapter Five demonstrated that the legitimation of violence will then expand such storylines in order to justify particular foreign policies. Chapter Six demonstrated that such justification may be used beyond the response to a particular crisis. Chapter Seven demonstrated that the process of violence legitimation is therefore a perpetual one that operates at different geographic scales. Such implications are significant enough, but merely scratch the surface of what critical geopolitics could contribute on this important issue. Moreover, putting critical geopolitics to work specifically on this issue is also a unique purpose of the emerging sub-discipline. The original contribution of this thesis, therefore, is two-fold: in both its focus on violence legitimation and its attempt to connect this to conflict research. This research shows that this line of thinking is worth pursuing.

**Conflict research**

In this regard, the theoretical implications of this thesis for conflict research relate to the second two of the four original contributions intended by this research in Chapter One (page 16). The first of these was “to extend conflict research by bringing a critical geopolitics perspective to its field of study”. This thesis has indeed demonstrated that critical geopolitics has much to offer conflict research. Chapter One demonstrated the importance of geopolitics in understanding 11 September 2001 and the consequent emergence of the ‘war on terror’ in response during the ten-day ‘geopolitical moment’. Chapter Two demonstrated that critical geopolitics is the result of a review of the relationship between geopolitics and violence and therefore offers much to the understanding of historical and contemporary conflicts. Chapter Three demonstrated that alternatives to the dominant quantitative research methods within conflict research are possible and can complement such numerical approaches. The four substantive chapters demonstrated the role of geopolitics and conflict(ing) discourses in the pre-conflict violence legitimation process, which is often overlooked in conflict research in favour of methods and theories of conflict management. This opening of a critical geopolitics contribution, therefore, is specifically aimed at understanding violence and conflict before it erupts rather than dealing with its aftermath.

The second was to “expand the broader interdisciplinary dialogue between political geography and international relations”. In beginning the conversation about the possibilities of a critical geopolitics contribution to conflict research this thesis is already part of this dialogue. In demonstrating that this conversation could easily and significantly continue, this thesis suggests that these two often but unnecessarily separate sub-disciplines can be bought closer together by continued critical geopolitics research into violence and conflict.
As a starting point of this continued relationship, this penultimate section summarises the concepts of conflict discourses, conflicting discourses, and conflict(ing) discourses. In effect, this summary re-presents the research argument first proposed in the middle section of Chapter One and then substantiated in the sequential step-by-step argument of Chapters Four, Five, Six, and Seven. This summary is done in three brief steps. The first considers the strengths of the concept of conflict(ing) discourses ('The good...'), the second acknowledges its weaknesses ('...the bad...'), and the last identifies the urgent but complex future research possibilities generated by this thesis ('...and the ugly'). This agenda-setting discussion leads into the final, brief conclusion of this thesis.

'The good...'

The four substantive chapters demonstrated the utility of the concepts of conflict discourses, conflicting discourses, and conflict(ing) discourses. The justification of violence through the construction of conflict discourses, and in particular the two constituent parts of storyline and script, was evident in the surprise attack explanation of 11 September 2001 and the consequent legitimation of the ‘war on terror’ presented in Chapters Four and Five. The conceptual proposition that conflict discourses simultaneously de-legitimate the violence of the ‘Other’ and legitimate the violence of the ‘Self’ was evident in the hegemonic surprise attack conflict discourse. This dual purpose was also evident in the attempt to establish the ‘war on terror’ as a ‘new’ new world order and especially in the construction of the second Iraq conflict discourse presented in Chapters Six and Seven. The concept of conflict discourses, therefore, was a useful way of conceptualising the pre-conflict process of violence legitimation in an example where the outcome was initially ‘successful’ but was then only partially ‘successful’.

Equally, but conversely, the de-legitimation of violence through the construction of conflicting discourses, and the two constituent parts of alternative storyline and script, was evident in the blowback explanation of 11 September 2001 and the consequent de-legitimation of the ‘war on terror’ presented in Chapters Four and Five. The conceptual proposition that conflicting discourses simultaneously seek a more critical understanding of the violence of the ‘Other’ and de-legitimize the violence of the ‘Self’ was evident in the subservient blowback conflicting
Discourse. Again, this dual purpose was also evident in the resistance to the ‘war on terror’ as a ‘new’ new world order and especially in the construction of the second Iraq conflicting discourse presented in Chapters Six and Seven. The concept of conflicting discourses, therefore, was also a useful way of conceptualising the contest over the pre-conflict process of violence legitimation.

Consequently, the combined concept of conflict(ing) discourses was illustrated by the two examples presented in this thesis over the first and second phases of the ‘war on terror’. The first example regarding the war on Afghanistan showed that, despite the United States’ apparent right of retaliation for 11 September 2001 the process of violence legitimation was still necessary. Moreover, this process was also contested despite this assumed right and the global sympathy for the US and support for its response against the Taliban, al-Qaeda, and Osama bin Laden. The second example regarding the war on Iraq 18 months later was much more controversial, making the concept of conflict(ing) discourses that much more apparent and consequently useful. The interaction between the competing conflict and conflicting discourses was public, vociferous, and a nightly news event. Moreover, by first exploring the concepts of conflict and conflicting discourses in practice, conflict(ing) discourses also enabled an understanding of how the former achieve hegemony over the latter and thus impose subservience. The trilogy represented by the concept of conflict(ing) discourses, therefore, provides a useful framework for approaching the pre-conflict process of violence legitimation.

‘...the bad...’

On the downside, however, a number of points can be made. First, and as mentioned at the end of Chapter Seven and earlier in this discussion, an important qualifier from this study to the original proposition of the concept in Chapter One is the importance of the spatiality of hegemony and subservience in conflict(ing) discourses. The controversy over the war on Iraq demonstrated the need to allow for conflict discourses to be ‘hegemonic’ only in certain places and sites; that is, within the United States foreign policy elite and its counterparts in other states of the ‘coalition of the willing’. By no means, however, was the Iraq conflict discourse ‘hegemonic’ beyond this elite, either within the US itself or around the world. Similarly, by no means was the Iraq conflicting discourse ‘subservient’ in these non-elite spaces. The concept of conflict(ing) discourses, therefore, needs to recognise that violence in world politics can still occur even when there is considerable resistance in various places at different scales.
Consequently, the contest between conflict(ing) discourses to (de)legitimate violence may not always be a public one. The occurrence of the Iraq war despite widespread global resistance suggests that, in certain instances of conflict involving large states like the United States, the crucial violence legitimation process may occur 'behind closed doors' and within very small but powerful elites. This secret legitimation reflects the brief discussion in Chapter Three problematising the idea of 'elites' and the diversity of foreign policy opinion, positions, and goals contained within them; especially in an elite as large as the one studied here. The concept of conflict(ing) discourses, therefore, also needs to recognise that examining the public legitimations of violence, as this thesis has, may not always be the key to understanding this pre-conflict process.

Such secrecy around the legitimation of violence and the potential unimportance of external resistances to that violence also has implications for the interaction between conflict and conflicting discourses. Although this thesis has shown, broadly, the interactions between the surprise attack and blowback and then Iraq conflict and conflicting discourses, and their contest for hegemony, what this research was not able to do was demonstrate how they specifically respond to one another. In particular, the important interaction that was missed by this research method was if and how conflict discourses reconfigure themselves in response to critiques from conflicting discourses. While it was apparent that conflicting discourses were very attentive to the geopolitical reasoning within conflict discourses, the reverse was much less obvious. The concept of conflict(ing) discourses, therefore, needs to strengthen its conceptualisation of the interaction between conflict and conflicting discourses.

'...and the ugly'

The last task of this summary of the conflict(ing) discourse concept is to suggest possible future research avenues, either within critical geopolitics or at the new intersection with conflict research, arising out of this thesis. The possibilities here are numerous, but the following list is limited to those perceived to be most urgent because they are also the most complex; hence the above subtitle of this future research section as 'the ugly' of this critical geopolitics of 11 September 2001 and the 'war on terror'.

The first suggestion is to indeed conduct what was ruled out in Chapter Three but has been alluded to on at least two occasions in this thesis: a media analysis to determine the role of the
media in the violence legitimation process. As noted earlier in this chapter, for example, of apparently crucial importance is how ‘the media’, or rather specifically relevant parts of it, (re)circulate and (re)formulate the discursive strategies presented to justify war as a credible foreign policy option. In other words, the media is perceived to be a crucial filter through which conflict discourses must pass before being received by their target audiences; and as such can either reinforce or resist that attempted legitimation of violence. A media analysis could be focussed on a particular type of media (eg, television, radio, newspaper, magazine, or internet), a certain outlet (eg, Fox TV, National Public Radio, The New York Times, Time Magazine, or www.cnn.com), or throughout a specific ownership network (eg, Rupert Murdoch’s News Limited) in order to assess how conflict(ing) discourses contest each other within these precise parts of ‘the media’.

The second suggestion, which has also been alluded to during this thesis, is to research the impact of the United States foreign policy elite’s 11 September 2001 and ‘war on terror’ conflict discourses beyond US borders. The New Zealand case study demonstrated that the impact of these global events on local places around the world could be and were profound. These impacts were dependent on New Zealand’s unique geopolitical context, the character of its domestic politics, and its problematic pre-existing relationship with Washington. In addition, the future consequences of these impacts in reshaping those aspects are equally profound and, because the New Zealand experience resonated with many other states, other case studies would substantiate the understanding of the local impact of these global conflict discourses. Moreover, such analyses would highlight the construction of local conflict(ing) discourses of 11 September 2001 and the ‘war on terror’. The impact of these global events on the domestic politics and foreign policies of other small states, in particular, would continue the critical geopolitics concern with the interactions between global and local in the current era of ‘glocalisation’.

The third suggestion is to research other examples of conflict(ing) discourses by examining the contest between conflict discourses and conflicting discourses in previous, current, or future instances (whether between major powers and/or small states in an inter-state ‘old war’ or between failed states and/or private militias in an intra-state ‘new war’) of the violence legitimation process. As has been shown by this research, conflict discourses (and undoubtedly conflicting discourses as well) draw on pre-existing geopolitical discourses for many of the discursive strategies deployed when a crisis, supposedly requiring a violent response, erupts; the national exceptionalism myth, for example, was crucial to the United States foreign policy elite as a “cultural storehouse of common sense” after 11 September 2001. Understanding this latent
capacity of pre-existing geopolitical discourses to legitimate violence could hold another crucial key in exploring the violence legitimation process that precedes all conflicts. Moreover, because the actual resort to violence, by the ‘Self’ or by the ‘Other’, will reshape these ‘baseline’ discourses, it is crucial to also understand their ongoing development and thus their continuing effect on future conflict discourses. Nothing, in other words, legitimates violence like previous violence, and it is understanding this ongoing process that a critical geopolitics contribution to conflict research could best be made.

The final suggestion for future research is to continue this research and explore the conflict(ing) discourses of any possible third phase of the ‘war on terror’. At the time of writing, in early 2005, the United States foreign policy elite is already raising occasional concerns about North Korea’s ‘rogue state’ behaviour and confirmation of its own nuclear arsenal, Iran’s nuclear power and possible nuclear weapons programme, and Syria’s sponsorship of ‘terrorist’ groups in the Middle East to new levels and military action has certainly not been ruled out. The potential escalation of this rhetoric to an actual resort to violence would clearly involve the construction of a third ‘war on terror’ conflict discourse that would undoubtedly need to draw on but also modify, as occurred between the wars on Afghanistan and Iraq, these pre-existing conflict discourses. Keeping track of exactly how this violence legitimation process works, as well as the de-legitimating conflicting discourses that will inevitably accompany it, will continue the important work begun by this research.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I wish to return to the *raison d’etre* of this research, presented at the end of Chapter One: the personal desire to understand how violence, as the necessary prerequisite to conflict in world politics, is legitimated by state foreign policy elites as a credible foreign policy option. Michael Ignatieff’s (1998:35-36) description of his similar desire captures my own motivation to understand this process of violence legitimation: “I want to understand how neighbours are turned into enemies, how people who once had a lot in common end up having nothing in common but war... how neighbours once ignorant of the very idea that they belong to opposed civilisations begin to think – and hate – in these terms; how they vilify and demonise people they once called friends; how, in short, the seeds of mutual paranoia are sown, grain by grain, on the soil of a common life”. In conducting this research I have read between the li(n)es of the conflict(ing) discourses of 11 September 2001 and the ‘war on terror’, so I now know
something of this essential pre-conflict violence legitimation process. The challenge now, through the future research avenues identified, is to continue this critical geopolitics contribution to conflict research: perhaps with the goal of illuminating ways to counter this process and thus, eventually, informing conflict management and prevention.
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Interview on Fox television on Thursday 20 September.

Powell, Colin (2001u):
Press conference at the Department of State, Washington, DC on Friday 21 September.

Powell, Colin (2001v):
Interview on BBC television on Friday 21 September.

Powell, Colin (2001w):
Speech to the Organisation of American States in Washington, DC on Friday 21 September.

Powell, Colin (2001x):
Interview on ABC television on Sunday 23 September.

Powell, Colin (2001y):
Interview on NBC television on Sunday 23 September.

Powell, Colin (2001z):
Press conference at the Department of State, Washington, DC on Monday 24 September.

Powell, Colin (2001aa):
Press conference at the Department of State, Washington, DC on Wednesday 26 September.

Powell, Colin (2001ab):
Interview on National Public Radio, Washington, DC on Thursday 27 September.

Powell, Colin (2001ad): Interview on CBS television on Thursday 11 / Friday 12 October. [Which?!]


Rumsfeld, Donald (2001b): Interview on ABC television on Sunday 16 September.

Rumsfeld, Donald (2001c): Press conference at the Pentagon, Washington, DC on Tuesday 18 September.


Rumsfeld, Donald (2001h):
Press conference at the Pentagon, Washington, DC on Sunday 7 October.

Rumsfeld, Donald (2001i):
Press conference at the Pentagon, Washington, DC on Tuesday 9 October.

Rumsfeld, Donald (2001j):
Press conference at the Pentagon, Washington, DC on Thursday 11 October.

Rumsfeld, Donald (2001k):
Press conference at the Pentagon, Washington, DC on Thursday 18 October.

Rumsfeld, Donald (2001l):
Press conference at the Pentagon, Washington, DC on Friday 19 October.

Rumsfeld, Donald (2001m):
Press conference at the Pentagon, Washington, DC on Monday 29 October.

Wolfowitz, Paul (2001):
Testimony to the House of Representatives Armed Services Committee, Capitol Hill, Washington, DC on Wednesday 3 and Thursday 4 October.