

# 9/11 and the American Empire

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9/11 and the American Empire: How Should Religious People Respond? An Address by David Ray Griffin C

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[Note: This lecture was delivered at the University of Wisconsin at Madison on April 18, 2005, and first broadcast by C-Span2 (BookTV) on April 30. Although this text does not correspond exactly to the lecture as orally delivered, all the differences are trivial except that, of course, the oral presentation had to get along without footnotes. – David Ray Griffin]

I will begin by unpacking the key terms in the title of my talk: '9/11,' 'American empire,' and 'religious people,' beginning with the last one.

## 1. Religious People

Although I am a Christian theologian, I am in this talk addressing religious people in general. I am doing so because I believe that religious people should respond to 9/11 and the American empire in a particular way because of moral principles of their religious traditions that are common to all the historic religious traditions.[1] I have in mind principles such as: Thou shalt not covet thy neighbors' oil. Thou shalt not murder thy neighbors in order to steal their oil.

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbors, accusing them of illicitly harboring weapons of mass destruction, in order to justify killing them in order to steal their oil. This language is, of course, language that we associate with the Abrahamic religions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. But the same basic ideas can be found in other religious traditions.

I turn now to 'American empire,' which has been a highly contentious term.

## 2. American Empire: Divergent Views

In his 2002 book *American Empire*, Andrew Bacevich points out that it was long a 'cherished American tradition [that] the United States is not and cannot be an empire.' [2] The words 'American empire,' he adds, were 'fighting words,' so that uttering them was an almost sure sign that one was a left-wing critic of America's foreign policy. But as Bacevich also points out, this has all recently changed, so that now even right-wing commentators freely acknowledge the existence of the American empire. As columnist Charles Krauthammer said in 2002: 'People are coming out of the closet on the word 'empire.' [3] This new frankness often includes an element of pride, as exemplified by Krauthammer's statement that America is 'no mere international citizen' but 'the dominant power in the world, more

dominant than any since Rome.'[4]

Given this consensus about the reality of the American empire, the only remaining matter of debate concerns its nature. The new frankness about the empire by conservatives is generally accompanied by portrayals of it as benign. Robert Kagan has written of 'The Benevolent Empire.'[5] Dinesh D'Souza, after writing in 2002 that 'American has become an empire,' added that happily it is 'the most magnanimous imperial power ever.'[6] According to Krauthammer, the fact that America's claim to being a benign power 'is not mere self-congratuation' is shown by its 'track record.'[7]

Commentators from the left, however, have a radically different view. A recent book by Noam Chomsky is subtitled America's Quest for Global Dominance.[8] Richard Falk has written of the Bush administration's 'global domination project,' which poses the threat of 'global fascism.'[9] Chalmers Johnson was once a conservative who believed that American foreign policy aimed at promoting freedom and democracy. But he now describes the United States as 'a military juggernaut intent on world domination.'[10]

Andrew Bacevich is another conservative who has recently changed his mind. Unlike Johnson, he has not come to identify with the left, but he has come to agree with its assessment of the American empire.[11] He now ridicules the claim 'that the promotion of peace, democracy, and human rights and the punishment of evil-doers-not the pursuit of self-interest-[has] defined the essence of American diplomacy.'[12] Pointing out that the aim of the US military has been 'to achieve something approaching omnipotence,' Bacevich mocks the idea that such power in America's hands 'is by definition benign.'[13]

### **3. 9/11: Four Interpretations**

If 'American empire' is understood in different ways, the same is all the more true of the term '9/11.'

For those Americans who accept the official interpretation, 9/11 was a surprise attack on the US government and its people by Islamic terrorists.

For some Americans, '9/11' has a more complex meaning. This second group, while accepting the official interpretation of the attacks, thinks of 9/11 primarily as an event that was used opportunistically by the Bush administration to extend the American empire. This interpretation is effectively presented by writers such as Noam Chomsky, Rahul Mahajan, and Chalmers Johnson.[14]

For a third group of Americans, the term '9/11' connotes an event with a more sinister dimension. These citizens believe that the Bush administration knew the attacks were coming and intentionally let them happen. Although no national poll has been taken to ascertain how many Americans hold this view, a Zogby poll surprisingly indicated that almost half of the residents of New York City do.[15]

According to a fourth view of 9/11, the attacks were not merely foreknown by the Bush administration; they were orchestrated by it. Although thus far no poll has tried to find out how many Americans hold this view, polls in Canada and Germany some time back indicated that this view was then held by 15 to 20 percent of their people.[16]

### **4. 9/11 and the American Empire**

Religious people who take the moral principles of their religious tradition seriously will probably have very different attitudes toward the American empire, depending upon which of these four views of 9/11 they hold.

If they accept the official view, according to which America was the innocent victim of evil terrorists, then it is easy for them to think of America's so-called war on terror as a just war. This is the position taken by Jean Bethke Elshtain, a professor of ethics at the University of Chicago's Divinity School, in a book called *Just War Against Terror*.<sup>[17]</sup> From this perspective, the 'war on terror' has nothing to do with imperial designs. It is simply a war to save the world from evil terrorists.<sup>[18]</sup>

The second interpretation of 9/11, according to which the Bush administration cynically exploited the 9/11 attacks to further its imperial plans, has quite different implications. Although it thinks of the attacks as surprise attacks, planned entirely by external enemies of America, it usually regards these attacks as 'blowback' for injustices perpetrated by US imperialism. This second view also typically regards the American response to the attacks of 9/11, which has already led to hundreds of thousands of deaths, as far worse than the attacks themselves. This interpretation of 9/11 would lead people who take their religion's moral principles seriously to support a movement to change US foreign policy.

An even stronger reaction would normally be evoked by the third interpretation, for it entails that the Bush administration allowed thousands of its own citizens to be killed on 9/11, deliberately and cold-bloodedly, for the sake of advancing its imperial designs, and then used this event as an excuse to kill hundreds of thousands of people in other countries, all the while hypocritically portraying itself as promoting a 'culture of life.' Of course, those who accept the previous interpretation know that hypocrisy with regard to the 'sanctity of life' has long been a feature of official rhetoric. And yet most Americans, if they learned that their government had deliberately let their own citizens be killed, would surely consider this betrayal qualitatively different. For this would be treason, a betrayal of the oath taken by American political leaders to protect their own citizens.

If this third view implies that the Bush administration is guilty of a heinous and even treasonous act, this is all the more the case with the fourth view. For many Americans, the idea that we are living in a country whose own leaders planned and carried out the attacks of 9/11 is simply too horrible to entertain. Unfortunately, however, there is strong evidence in support of this view. And if we find this evidence convincing, the implications for resistance to US empire-building are radical.

As Bacevich has emphasized, the only remaining debate about the American empire is whether it is benign. The interpretation of 9/11 is relevant to this debate, because it would be difficult to accept either the third or the fourth interpretation and still consider American imperialism benign.

I turn now to some of the evidence that supports these views. I will look first at evidence that supports (at least) the third view, according to which US officials had foreknowledge of the attacks.

## **5. Evidence for Foreknowledge by US Officials**

A central aspect of the official story about 9/11 is that the attacks were planned entirely by al Qaeda, with no one else knowing the plans. A year after the attacks, FBI Director Robert

Mueller said: "To this day we have found no one in the United States except the actual hijackers who knew of the plot." [19] Since that time, federal officials have had to admit that they had received far more warnings prior to 9/11 than they had previously acknowledged. But these admissions, while raising the question of why further safety measures were not put in place, do not necessarily show that federal officials had specific foreknowledge of the attacks. One could still, as did the 9/11 Commission, accept the conclusion published at the end of 2002 by the Congressional Joint Inquiry, according to which 'none of [the intelligence gathered by the US intelligence community] identified the time, place, and specific nature of the attacks that were planned for September 11, 2001.' [20]

Unfortunately for the official account, however, there are reports indicating that federal officials did have that very specific type of information. I will give two examples.

**David Schippers and the FBI Agents:** The first example involves attorney David Schippers, who had been the chief prosecutor for the impeachment of President Clinton. Two days after 9/11, Schippers declared that he had received warnings from FBI agents about the attacks six weeks earlier—warnings that included both the dates and the targets. These agents had come to him, Schippers said, because FBI headquarters had blocked their investigations and threatened them with prosecution if they went public with their information. They asked Schippers to use his influence to get the government to take action to prevent the attacks. Schippers was highly respected in Republican circles, especially because of his role in the impeachment of Clinton. And yet, he reported, Attorney General Ashcroft repeatedly failed to return his calls. [21]

Schippers' allegations about the FBI agents were corroborated in a story by William Norman Grigg called 'Did We Know What Was Coming?', which was published in *The New American*, a very conservative magazine. According to Grigg, the three FBI agents he interviewed told him 'that the information provided to Schippers was widely known within the Bureau before September 11th.' [22]

If Schippers, Grigg, and these agents are telling the truth, it would seem that when FBI Director Mueller claimed that the FBI had found no one in this country with advance knowledge of the plot, he was not telling the truth.

**The Put Options:** The government also would have had foreknowledge of the attacks because of an extraordinarily high volume of 'put options' purchased in the three days before 9/11. To buy put options for a particular company is to bet that its stock price will go down. These purchases were for two, and only two, airlines—United and American—the two airlines used in the attacks, and for Morgan Stanley Dean Witter, which occupied 22 stories of the World Trade Center. The price of these shares did, of course, plummet after 9/11. As the *San Francisco Chronicle* said, these unusual purchases, which resulted in profits of tens of millions of dollars, raise 'suspicions that the investors . . . had advance knowledge of the strikes.' [23]

For our purposes, the most important implication of this story follows from the fact that US intelligence agencies monitor the market, looking for signs of imminent untoward events. [24] These extraordinary purchases, therefore, would have suggested to intelligence agencies that in the next few days, United and American airliners were going to be used in attacks on the World Trade Center. This is fairly specific information.

These two examples imply the falsity of the Joint Inquiry's statement that 'none of [the

intelligence gathered by the US intelligence community] identified the time, place, and specific nature of the attacks.’ Indeed, one of the FBI agents interviewed by William Grigg reportedly said: ‘Obviously, people had to know. . . . It’s terrible to think this, but this must have been allowed to happen as part of some other agenda.’[25]

He was right. This would be terrible. There is considerable evidence, however, that the full truth is even more terrible—that the reason some US officials had foreknowledge of the attacks is because they had planned them.

## **6. Evidence that US Officials Planned and Executed the Attacks**

The evidence for this fourth view consists largely of features of the attacks, in conjunction with behavior by US officials, that cannot be explained on the assumption that the attacks were planned and executed entirely by foreign agents. I will give four examples.

**The Military’s Failure to Prevent the Attacks and Its Changing Explanations:** One feature of the attacks that suggests complicity by US officials is the twofold fact that the US military failed to prevent the attacks on 9/11 and then, since that time, has give us conflicting explanations for this failure. These changing stories suggest that the military has been trying to cover up the fact that a ‘stand-down’ order was given on 9/11, canceling the military’s own standard operating procedures for dealing with possibly hijacked airplanes.

It is clear that some agency—either the military or the FAA—failed to follow standard procedures on 9/11. When these procedures are followed, the FAA, as soon as it sees signs that a plane may have been hijacked, calls military officials, who then call the nearest air force base with fighters on alert, telling it to send up a couple fighters to intercept the plane. Such interceptions usually occur within 10 to 20 minutes after the first signs of trouble. This is a routine procedure, happening about 100 times a year.[26] (One of the many falsehoods in the recent debunking essay in *Popular Mechanics* is its claim that in the decade before 9/11, there had been only one interception, that of golfer Payne Stewart’s Learjet.[27] Actually, at about 100 a year, there would have been closer to 1,000 interceptions during that decade.) On 9/11, however, no interceptions occurred.

Why not? The military’s first story was that no planes were sent up until after the Pentagon was hit. The military leaders were admitting, in other words, that they had left their fighters on the ground for almost 90 minutes after the FAA had first noticed signs of a possible hijacking. That story suggested to many people that a stand-down order had been given.[28]

By the end of the week, the military had put out a second story, saying that it had sent up fighters but that, because the FAA had been very late in notifying it about the hijackings, the fighters arrived in each case arrived too late. One problem with this story is that if FAA personnel had responded so slowly, heads should have rolled, but none did. An even more serious problem is that, even assuming the truth of the late notification times, the military’s fighters still had time to intercept the hijacked airliners before they were to hit their targets.[29] This second story implied, therefore, that standard procedures had been violated by the military as well as the FAA.

To try to defend the military against this accusation, The 9/11 Commission Report gave us, amazingly, a third version, according to which the FAA, after giving the military insufficient warning about the first hijacked airliner, gave it absolutely no notification of the other three

until after they had crashed. But as I have argued in *The 9/11 Commission Report: Omissions and Distortions*, this account is wholly implausible. Besides portraying FAA personnel, from top to bottom, as incompetent dolts, the 9/11 Commission's account rests on claims that contradict many credible and mutually supporting testimonies. In some of these cases, the fact that the Commission is simply lying is abundantly obvious.[30] In addition, this third story implies that the military's second story, which it had been telling for almost three years, was almost entirely false. If our military leaders were lying to us all that time, why should we believe them now? And if our military is lying to us, must we not assume that it is doing so to cover up its own guilt?

In sum, the behavior of the military both on 9/11 and afterwards, combined with the fact that the 9/11 Commission had to resort to lies to make the US military appear blameless, suggests that military leaders were complicit in the attacks. A similar conclusion follows from an examination of the attack on the Pentagon.

**The Strike on the Pentagon:** One of the debates about this attack is whether the Pentagon was hit by American Airlines Flight 77, as the official account says, or by a military aircraft. Either story, however, implies that the attack was, at least partly, an inside job.

If we assume that the Pentagon was struck by Flight 77, we must ask how this could have occurred. The Pentagon is surely the best defended building on the planet, for three reasons. First, it is only a few miles from Andrews Air Force Base, which has at least three squadrons that keep fighter jets on alert at all times to protect the nation's capital. To be sure, part of the official story is that Andrews was not keeping any fighters on alert at that time. But as I argued in my critique of *The 9/11 Commission Report*, that claim is wholly implausible.[31]

Second, the US military has the best radar systems in the world. One of its systems, it has bragged, 'does not miss anything occurring in North American airspace.' This system is also said to be capable of monitoring a great number of targets simultaneously, as would be necessary in the case of a massive missile attack.[32] Given that capability, the official story, according to which Flight 77 flew toward the Pentagon undetected for 40 minutes, is absurd, especially at a time when the Pentagon knew the country was under attack. Any unauthorized airplane coming towards the Pentagon would have been detected and intercepted long before it got close.

Third, the Pentagon is ringed by anti-missile batteries, which are programmed to destroy any aircraft entering the Pentagon's airspace, except for any aircraft with a US military transponder.[33] If, by some fluke, Flight 77 had entered the Pentagon's airspace, it could have escaped being shot down only if officials in the Pentagon had deactivated its anti-aircraft defenses.

So, even if we accept the official story, according to which the Pentagon was hit by Flight 77 under the control of al Qaeda hijackers, we must conclude that the attack succeeded only because the Pentagon wanted it to succeed.

There are, furthermore, many reasons to reject the official story. First, the alleged pilot, Hani Hanjour, was a terrible pilot, who could not possibly have flown the trajectory allegedly taken by Flight 77. Second, this aircraft hit the Pentagon's west wing, which for many reasons would have been the least likely spot for alien terrorists to target: Hitting the west



wing would have required a very difficult maneuver; this wing was being renovated, so it contained very few people, and many of them were civilians working on the renovation; the renovation involved reinforcement, so that a strike on the west wing caused much less damage than would have a strike on any other part of the Pentagon; and Rumsfeld and all the top brass, whom terrorists surely would have wanted to kill, were in the east wing, as far removed from the west wing as possible. A third problem with the official story is the fact that the initial damage caused to the west wing was far too minimal to have been caused by the impact of a Boeing 757. A fourth problem is that photographs and eyewitnesses in the immediate aftermath failed to provide any unambiguous evidence of the remains of a Boeing 757. Fifth, the fact that the aircraft was not shot down by the Pentagon's anti-aircraft defense system suggests that it was an aircraft of the US military. Sixth, there are videos that would show whether what struck the Pentagon was really a Boeing 757, but the FBI confiscated these videos right after the strike and, since then, authorities have refused to release them.[34]

So, whether we accept or reject the claim that the Pentagon was struck by Flight 77, the evidence indicates that the attack was, at least partly, an inside job.

The Collapse of the WTC Buildings: We can conclude the same thing about the attacks on the World Trade Center. Why? Because the collapses of the Twin Towers and Building 7 had to have been examples of controlled demolition, brought about by thousands of explosives placed throughout each of the buildings. No foreign terrorists could have obtained the kind of access to the buildings that would have been required.

One reason for concluding that these three buildings were brought down by explosives is the very fact that they did collapse. High-rise steel-frame buildings have never—before or after 9/11—been caused to collapse by fire, even when, as in the Philadelphia fire of 1991 and the Madrid fire of February 2005, the fires were much larger, much hotter, and much longer-lasting than the fires in the Twin Towers and Building 7.

The second reason is the specific nature of the collapses, each feature of which points to explosives. For example, the buildings collapsed straight down, and at virtually free-fall speed, as in controlled demolitions, and then the rubble smoldered for months. With regard to the Twin Towers in particular, many people in the buildings said that they heard or felt explosions; virtually all the concrete of these enormous structures was pulverized into very fine dust (try dropping a piece of concrete from a great height; it will merely break into small pieces, not turn into very fine dust particles); much of this dust, along with pieces of steel and aluminum, was blown out horizontally several hundred feet; most of the steel beams and columns came down in sections about 30-feet long, conveniently ready to be loaded on trucks; and pools of molten steel were found beneath the rubble. These and still more effects point to the existence of very powerful, precisely placed explosives.[35]

The third fact supporting the theory of controlled demolition is evidence of a deliberate cover-up. If the buildings' steel beams and columns had indeed been broken by explosives, an examination of the steel would have revealed this fact. However, although it is normally a federal offence to remove evidence from a crime scene, the steel was quickly loaded on trucks and put on ships headed for Asia.[36]

I will mention one more sign of a deliberate cover-up. Insofar as there is an official theory as to why the towers collapsed, it is the 'pancake' theory, according to which the floors above the destruction caused by the airplanes collapsed to the floor below, which then started a

chain reaction. This theory does not even begin to explain the actual nature of the collapses, such as the fact that they occurred at virtually free-fall speed. But even if the pancake theory were otherwise remotely plausible, it would not explain what happened to the 47 massive steel columns that constituted the weight-bearing core of each tower. They should have still been sticking up many hundreds of feet in the air (just like the spindle of the old-fashioned phonograph player, when the records pancaked). The 9/11 Commission Report avoided this problem, incredibly, by simply denying the existence of these columns. After saying, falsely, that most of the weight of each tower was born by the steel columns in its exterior walls, this supposedly authoritative report said: 'The interior core of the buildings was a hollow steel shaft, in which elevators and stairwells were grouped.' [37] Such a desperate lie is a sure sign of a deliberate cover-up.

In any case, when we look at all these features of the collapses, the idea that they could have caused by the impact of the airplanes plus the resulting fires is ridiculous. This is even clearer with regard to Building 7, which was not hit by an airplane. Its collapse remains so impossible to explain, except as controlled demolition, that The 9/11 Commission Report did not even mention it—as if there were nothing remarkable about the fact that for the first time in history, fire alone was said to have caused the sudden collapse of a high-rise steel-frame building (an event that would have been even more remarkable given the fact that the building had fires on only a few floors). [38]

In sum, the collapses and the cover-up—like the strike on the Pentagon, the military's failure to prevent the attacks, and its changing stories—show that the attacks must have been planned and executed by our own political and military leaders.

The same conclusion can be inferred from the behavior of the Secret Service agents with the president that morning.

The Behavior of the Secret Service: As everyone who saw Michael Moore's Fahrenheit 9/11 knows, President Bush was in a second-grade classroom in Florida when he was informed about the second strike on the World Trade Center. This report left no doubt that the country was suffering a terrorist attack. And yet the president simply sat there. Many people have asked why he did not spring into action, assuming his role as commander-in-chief.

But the real question, which Michael Moore mentions in passing, is why the Secret Service did not immediately rush him away from the school to a safe place. Bush's location had been highly publicized. And if the attacks were a complete surprise, executed solely by foreign terrorists, the Secret Service agents would have had no idea how many planes had been hijacked. They would have had to assume that the president himself might be one of the targets. For all they would have known, a hijacked airliner might have been headed towards the school at that very minute, ready to crash into it. And yet these agents, who are highly trained to respond instantly in such situations, allowed the president to remain in the classroom another 10 minutes. They then allowed him to deliver his regularly scheduled TV address, giving any suicide hijackers and even wider window of opportunity. This behavior makes sense only if the head of the Secret Service detail knew that the planned attacks did not include an attack on the president. And how could this be known for certain unless the attacks were being carried out by people within our own government?

Although many more examples could be given, these four are sufficient to suggest that there is no escape from the frightening conclusion that 9/11 was engineered by members of the Bush administration and its Pentagon. As to why they would do this, at least part of the



answer is clear from the way in which they have used 9/11: to advance the American empire. Immediately after 9/11, in fact, members of the Bush administration repeatedly referred to the attacks as an opportunity—in the words of Donald Rumsfeld, an opportunity ‘to refashion the world.’[39] Seeing this connection between 9/11 and US imperial ambitions can be a stimulus to face up fully to the awful truth about the American empire.

### **Fully Facing the Truth about the American Empire**

To be sure, as Chomsky, Falk, and Chalmers Johnson illustrate, strong portrayals of American imperialism as far from benign can be drawn without any suggestion that the Bush administration arranged 9/11. These portrayals can be drawn from publicly available documents.

One such document is the ‘National Security Strategy of the United States of America,’ published by the Bush administration in September of 2002. David North says, not unfairly, that this document ‘asserts as the guiding policy of the United States the right to use military force . . . against any country it believes to be, or it believes may at some point become, a threat to American interests.’ ‘No other country in modern history,’ adds North, ‘has asserted such a sweeping claim to . . . world domination.’[40]

Another such document, called ‘Vision for 2020,’ was published in February of 1997 by the US Space Command. The mission statement at the head of this document reads: ‘U.S. Space Command—dominating the space dimension of military operations to protect US interests and investment.’[41] There is no mention of democracy and human rights. In the body of the document, in fact, we find this amazingly candid statement: ‘The globalization of the world economy . . . will continue with a widening between ‘haves’ and ‘have-nots.’” The point of this statement is that as the domination of the world economy by the United States and its allies increases, the world’s poor will get still poorer, making the ‘have-nots’ hate America all the more. We will need, therefore, the power to keep them in line.

The United States can do this—and this is the document’s main message—through ‘Full Spectrum Dominance,’ which will involve merging ‘space superiority with land, sea, and air superiority.’ Dominance in space will include, the document frankly says, the power ‘to deny others the use of space.’

By speaking only of the Space Command’s effort to develop a ‘missile defense system,’ the Pentagon and the White House like to suggest that its purpose is purely defensive. But the goal includes weaponizing space so as to give US forces, in the words of a more recent document, a ‘prompt global strike capability, whether nuclear or non-nuclear, [that] will allow the US to rapidly and accurately strike distant . . . targets.’[42] The fact that the U.S. Space Command’s program is an aggressive one is announced in the logo of one of its divisions: ‘In Your Face from Outer space.’[43]

Simply from these and other documents, taken in conjunction with the actions of the Bush administration and the US military, we can see through the claim that the US project of creating the first truly global empire is a benevolent or at least benign enterprise. However, we can fully grasp the extent to which this project is propelled by fanaticism based on a deeply perverted value system only when we realize that the terrorist attacks of 9/11 were orchestrated by our own leaders—and that they did this to provide the justification, the fear, and the funding for the so-called war on terror, which would be used as a pretext for enlarging the empire.

I will illustrate this point with one of the most brazen examples of the use of 9/11 to get funding. Shortly before the current Bush administration took office, a document entitled *Rebuilding America's Defenses* was published by an organization called the Project for the New American Century,[44] founding members of which included Dick Cheney, Paul Wolfowitz, and Donald Rumsfeld. This document focused primarily on getting more tax money allocated for the technological transformation of the US military, with the centerpiece of this technological transformation being the US Space Command's project to weaponize and thereby control space. Because this transformation of the US military will be very expensive, the document said, it will probably proceed very slowly—unless America suffers 'some catastrophic and catalyzing event—like a new Pearl Harbor.'[45] It is interesting that on the night of 9/11, President Bush reportedly wrote in his diary, 'The Pearl Harbor of the 21st century took place today.'[46]

In any case, earlier that evening, Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld was on message. We might assume that he would have been disoriented by the fact that the Pentagon had just, on his watch, suffered an unprecedented attack. Instead, he was ready to use the attacks to obtain more money for the US Space Command. In front of television cameras, Rumsfeld berated Senator Carl Levin, then chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, saying:

Senator Levin, you and other Democrats in Congress have voiced fear that you simply don't have enough money for the large increase in defense that the Pentagon is seeking, especially for missile defense. . . . Does this sort of thing convince you that an emergency exists in this country to increase defense spending . . . ?[47]

This strategy worked. Congress immediately appropriated an additional \$40 billion for the Pentagon. Since then, furthermore, the president has gotten every additional appropriation he has sought for the so-called war on terror.

Besides being a rousing success in obtaining increased spending for military purposes, 9/11 also provided the pretext for putting many military bases in Central Asia. Zbigniew Brzezinski, in his 1997 book, *The Grand Chessboard*, had said that doing so would be crucial for maintaining 'American primacy,' partly because of the huge oil reserves around the Caspian Sea. Indeed, it may have been from this book that the Project for the New American Century got its idea that a new Pearl Harbor would be helpful. Brzezinski, explaining that the American public had 'supported America's engagement in World War II largely because of the shock effect of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor,'[48] suggested that Americans today would support the needed military operations in Central Asia only 'in the circumstance of a truly massive and widely perceived direct external threat.'[49] And indeed, thanks to the attacks of 9/11, the Bush administration was able to carry out its plan to attack Afghanistan—a plan that, we now know, had been formulated several months before 9/11.[50] The White House now has a friendly government in Afghanistan and the Pentagon has military bases there and in several other countries of Central Asia.

We also know that the intention to invade Iraq existed long before 9/11 and that this intention was based on imperial designs, not disgust with Saddam's wickedness.[51] In the Project for the New American Century's 2000 document, we read: 'While the unresolved conflict with Iraq provides the immediate justification, the need for a substantial American force presence in the Gulf transcends the issue of the regime of Saddam Hussein.'[52] The US military is now intending to build several permanent bases in Iraq, which has the world's second largest known oil reserves. The attacks of 9/11 again provided the pretext, as the Bush administration deceived a majority of the American people into believing that Saddam

was connected with Osama bin Laden and even directly responsible for the attacks of 9/11.

I suggested earlier that seeing the true connections between 9/11 and the global domination project helps us understand how fully this project reflects 'fanaticism based on a deeply perverted value system.' This is a value system that is diametrically opposed to the value systems on which all the great religious and moral traditions of the world have been based. These traditional value systems say that we should not covet, steal, and murder, and that we should make sure that everyone has the necessary means for a decent life. But our government's project for global domination is carried out in the name of the greed of the 'haves' of the world to have still more, even if it means killing hundreds of thousands of people and letting millions more die every year of starvation and poverty-related diseases. We can now see, furthermore, that some political and military leaders are so fanatically infected with these perverted values that they are willing to kill thousands of their own citizens, then endlessly use a deceptive account of these terrorist attacks to justify 'a war on terror,' in the name of which they claim the right to do virtually anything they wish, ignoring all principles of morality and international law.

### **How Should Religious People Respond?**

I now turn, finally, to the question of how religious people should respond to 9/11 and the American empire. My discussion of this question must be very brief, consisting merely of four suggestions.

First, discover and then speak the truth: I would suggest that religious people should—if they have not done so already—study about both 9/11 and the American empire to see if they find the claims I have made about them true. If they do, then they should do everything in their power to make others aware of these facts.

Second, create new means to spread the truth: It is clear that the mainstream press in America is complicit in the cover-up of the truth about the American empire in general and 9/11 in particular. For example, my second book, which exposes many outrageous lies in The 9/11 Commission Report, has not been reviewed by any mainstream publication; the same was true of my earlier book, The New Pearl Harbor. There are, of course, alternative publications, both in print and on the internet, that seek to expose the truth about the American empire. Most of these, however, fail to deal with 9/11. And most of them are indifferent or even hostile to religion, so they do not provide effective organs to communicate with religious communities. Perhaps the most important thing that could be done by religious groups concerned with getting out the truth about 9/11 and the American empire would be the creation of new means of communication, means through which the total contrast between the values of the religious traditions and the values of the global domination project can be made clear. On this basis, an ecumenical religious movement to oppose the global domination project, partly by exposing the truth about 9/11, might be formed.

Third, formulate proposals for subverting the global domination project: As such a movement begins to form, it will need to decide rather concretely how to go about trying to subvert the global domination project. We need, therefore, proposals for how to do this from religious thinkers of the various tradition. I will soon, I hope, be publishing my own proposal, which is centered around the idea of global democracy.[53] Other people will favor different proposals. But I stress the importance of having such proposals from religious thinkers. It is probably only such proposals, drawing explicitly on the moral principles of the religious

traditions, that will have the power to move large numbers of people.

Fourth, form alliances with other moral nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). I have emphasized that it is important for representatives from the various religious traditions who take their common moral principles seriously to join forces. Indeed, my motto is: 'Religions of the world unite! You have nothing to lose by your impotence.' But it is essential, at the same time, for these religious groups to forge alliances with what we can call the other moral NGOs of the world. Whether they are working for human rights, for peace, for ecological sustainability, or some related cause, the moral principles that motivate these NGOs are diametrically opposed to the values of the global domination project. By emphasizing the moral principles that we have in common, NGOs that are and are not explicitly religious can join forces in opposing that radically immoral project.

I will close with the observation that, insofar as Americans participate in this anti-imperialist movement, their activities will be deeply patriotic, because they will be seeking to call our nation back to its moral ideals, which stand diametrically opposed to the values implicit in the global domination project.

### **Notes:**

1. On the idea of moral principles common to all traditions, see Michael Walzer, *Thick and Thin: Moral Argument at Home and Abroad* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), and Gene Outka and John P. Reeder Jr., eds., *Prospects for a Common Morality* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993). This idea of a common morality presupposes moral realism, according to which some basic moral principles exist in the nature of things. I have defended moral realism in 'Morality and Scientific Naturalism: Overcoming the Conflicts,' in *Philosophy of Religion in the New Century: Essays in Honor of Eugene Thomas Long*, ed. Jeremiah Hackett and Jerald Wallulis (Boston: Kluwer Academic Publications, 2004), 81-104, and in 'Theism and the Crisis in Moral Theory: Rethinking Modern Autonomy,' in *Nature, Truth, and Value: Explaining the Thought of Frederick Ferré*, ed. George Allan and Merle Allshouse (Lanham, Md: Lexington Books, 2005).
2. Andrew J. Bacevich, *American Empire: The Realities and Consequences of U.S. Diplomacy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 30, 218-19.
3. Krauthammer's statement is quoted in Emily Eakin, 'All Roads Lead To D.C.,' *New York Times*, Week In Review, March 31, 2002.
4. Charles Krauthammer, 'The Bush Doctrine,' *Time*, March 5, 2001, quoted in Chalmers Johnson, *The Sorrows of Empire: Militarism, Secrecy, and the End of the Republic* (New York: Henry Holt [Metropolitan Books], 2004), 68.
5. Robert Kagan, 'The Benevolent Empire,' *Foreign Policy*, Summer 1998: 24-35.
6. Dinesh D'Souza, 'In Praise of an American Empire,' *Christian Science Monitor*, April 26, 2002.
7. Charles Krauthammer, 'The Unipolar Era,' in Andrew J. Bacevich, ed., *The Imperial Tense: Prospects and Problems of American Empire* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2003), 47-65, at 59. This track record, he says, proves that 'the United States is not an imperial power with a desire to rule other countries.'

8. Noam Chomsky, *Hegemony or Survival: America's Quest for Global Dominance* (New York: Henry Holt [Metropolitan Books], 2003). As shown by this and many of Chomsky's previous books—one of which is titled *Deterring Democracy* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1992 [2nd ed.])—his reading of America's 'track record' is very different from Krauthammer's.
9. Richard Falk, 'Will the Empire Be Fascist?' *Global Dialogues*, 2003; 'Resisting the Global Domination Project: An Interview with Prof. Richard Falk,' *Frontline*, 20/8 (April 12-25, 2003).
10. Chalmers Johnson, *The Sorrows of Empire*, 33, 4.
11. In light of the fact that the present lecture was delivered at the University of Wisconsin at Madison (April 18, 2005), I should point out that Bacevich discusses two left-leaning historians from whose analysis of US foreign policy he has benefited, Charles Beard and William Appleton Williams, and that Williams studied at Madison (where Beard exerted great influence) and then began teaching there in 1957, becoming the founding father of what historians have dubbed the 'Wisconsin school' (see Bacevich, *American Empire*, 3-31).
12. Bacevich, *American Empire*, 7, 46.
13. *Ibid.*, 133, 52.
14. See Chomsky's *Hegemony or Survival*, his 9-11 (New York: Seven Stories, 2001), and his Foreword to Phyllis Bennis, *Before and After: US Foreign Policy and the September 11th Crisis* (Northampton: Olive Branch [Interlink Books], 2003); for Rahul Mahajan, see *The New Crusade: America's War on Terrorism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2003) and *Full Spectrum Dominance: U.S. Power in Iraq and Beyond* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2003); for Johnson, see *The Sorrows of Empire*.
15. See [www.zogby.com/news/ReadNews.dbm?ID=855](http://www.zogby.com/news/ReadNews.dbm?ID=855) . This information, however, was evidently not considered news fit to print by the New York Times and other mainstream sources. Also generally unknown is the fact that already in 2002, the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, believing that Congresswoman Cynthia McKinney had charged that the Bush administration had foreknowledge of the attacks, conducted a poll that asked its readers if they were 'satisfied the Bush administration had no advance warning of the September 11 attacks.' Surprisingly, 46 percent of the respondents said 'No, I think officials knew it was coming.' See 'Poll Shocker: Nearly Half Support McKinney's 9/11 Conspiracy Theory,' *Newsmax*, Wednesday, April 17, 2002 ( [www.newsmax.com/showinside.shtml?a=2002/4/17/144136](http://www.newsmax.com/showinside.shtml?a=2002/4/17/144136) ). I discussed the McKinney episode in *The New Pearl Harbor: Disturbing Questions about the Bush Administration and 9/11* (Northampton: Olive Branch [Interlink Books], 2004), 161-64, 242-44nn.
16. On the Canadian poll, see the *Toronto Star*, May 26, 2004. On the German poll, see Ian Johnson, 'Conspiracy Theories about Sept. 11 Get Hearing in Germany,' *Wall Street Journal*, September 29, 2003.
17. Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Just War Against Terror: The Burden of American Power in a Violent World* (New York: Basic Books, 2003).
18. This interpretation is given in the most extreme, simplistic, and misleading terms in David Frum and Richard Perle, *An End of Evil: How to Win the War on Terror* (New York: Random House, 2003). To mention Frum and Perle as publicly endorsing the official view of the 9/11 attacks does not, of course, imply that they actually hold this view.



19. I quoted this statement in The New Pearl Harbor (henceforth cited as NPH), 69.

20. This statement is contained in the summary of the final report of the Joint Inquiry conducted by the House and Senate intelligence committees, posted at <http://intelligence.senate.gov/press.htm> under December 11, 2002; it is quoted in NPH, 69.

21. See The Alex Jones Show, Oct. 10, 2001; 'David Schippers Goes Public: The FBI Was Warned,' Indianapolis Star, Oct. 13, 2001; and 'Active FBI Special Agent Files Complaint Concerning Obstructed FBI Anti-Terrorist Investigations,' Judicial Watch, Nov. 14, 2001.

22. William Norman Grigg, 'Did We Know What Was Coming?' The New American 18/5 (March 11, 2002).

23. The San Francisco Chronicle, Sept. 29, 2001. The 9/11 Commission tried to scotch these suspicions. Its most important claim is that it found that 95 percent of the puts for United Airlines were purchased by '[a] single U.S.-based institutional investor with no conceivable ties to al Qaeda' (The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States, Authorized Edition [New York: W. W. Norton, 2004], 499 note 130). But this argument is viciously circular. What is at issue is whether people other than al Qaeda knew about the attacks in advance, perhaps because they had helped plan them. But the Commission simply assumes that al Qaeda and only al Qaeda planned and knew about the attacks. Accordingly, runs the Commission's logic, if the investors who purchased the put options in question had no ties with al Qaeda, they could not possibly have had insider knowledge. They were simply lucky.

24. UPI, Feb. 13, 2001; Michael Ruppert, 'Suppressed Details of Criminal Insider Trading Lead Directly into the CIA's Highest Ranks,' From the Wilderness Publications ( [www.fromthewilderness.com](http://www.fromthewilderness.com) ), Oct. 9, 2001.

25. William Norman Grigg, 'Did We Know What Was Coming?' The New American ( [www.thenewamerican.com](http://www.thenewamerican.com) ) 18/5: March 11, 2002.

26. Major Mike Snyder, a NORAD spokesman, was quoted right after 9/11 as saying that interceptions are carried out 'routinely'; see Glen Johnson, 'Otis Fighter Jets Scrambled Too Late to Halt the Attacks,' Boston Globe, Sept. 15, 2001 ([http://nl.newsbank.com/nl-search/we/Archives?p\\_action=print](http://nl.newsbank.com/nl-search/we/Archives?p_action=print) ). With regard to the figure of about 100 times a year, the FAA has reported that there were 67 interceptions between September 2000 and June 2001 (FAA News Release, August 9, 2002, cited in William Thomas, 'Pentagon Says 9/11 Interceptors Flew: Too Far, Too Slow, Too Late,' in Jim Marrs, Inside Job: Unmasking the 9/11 Conspiracies [San Rafael: Origin Press, 2004], 145-49).

27. This 'fact' in the cover story of the March 2005 issue of Popular Mechanics, '9/11: Debunking Myths,' is typical of the quality of research provided by its 'senior researcher,' 25-year old Benjamin Chertoff, cousin of Michael Chertoff, the new head of the Department of Homeland Security (see Christopher Bollyn, 'Ben Chertoff of Popular Mechanics: Cousin of Homeland Security Director, Michael Chertoff,' [www.911wasalie.com/phpwebsite/index.php?module=pagemaster&PAGE\\_user\\_op=view\\_page\&PAGEid=33](http://www.911wasalie.com/phpwebsite/index.php?module=pagemaster&PAGE_user_op=view_page\&PAGEid=33) ). Young Chertoff's debunking article, published shortly after a coup at this Hearst-owned magazine in which the editor-in-chief was replaced (see Christopher Bollyn, 'The Hidden Hand of the C.I.A. and the 9/11 Propaganda of Popular Mechanics,' [www.rumormillnews.com/cgi-bin/members/forum.cgi?bem=67011](http://www.rumormillnews.com/cgi-bin/members/forum.cgi?bem=67011) ), has itself been

effectively debunked by many genuine 9/11 researchers. See, for example, Jim Hoffman, 'Popular Mechanics' Deceptive Smear Against 9/11 Truth,' <http://911review.com/pm/markup/index.html> , and Peter Meyer, 'Reply to Popular Mechanics re 9/11,' [www.serendipity.li/wot/pop\\_mech/reply\\_to\\_popular\\_mechanics.htm](http://www.serendipity.li/wot/pop_mech/reply_to_popular_mechanics.htm) . To be sure, these articles by Hoffman and Meyer, while agreeing on many points, take different approaches in response to some of the issues raised in Chertoff's article. But both articles demonstrate—in their distinctive points as well as the points they have in common—that Popular Mechanics owes its readers an apology for publishing such a massively flawed article on such an important subject. (As a professor, I would give it a D-, unless, of course, it had been written for a class in the art of composing effective propaganda, in which case a grade of B- would be assigned—nothing higher because its distortions and outright falsehoods can be so easily exposed by anyone knowing much about the topic.)

28. See David Ray Griffin, *The 9/11 Commission Report: Omissions and Distortions* (Northampton: Olive Branch [Interlink Books], 2005), 141-43 (this book is henceforth cited as 9/11CROD).

29. See 9/11CROD, 143-51.

30. My accounts of the Report's lies aimed at defending the US military's behavior, which I cannot even begin to summarize here, fill Chapters 12-16 of 9/11CROD.

31. 9/11CROD, 159-64.

32. Thierry Meyssan, *Pentagate* (London: Carnot, 2002), 115, quoting 'PAVE PAWS, Watching North America's Skies, 24 Hours a Day' ([www.pavepaws.org](http://www.pavepaws.org)).

33. Thierry Meyssan, *9:11: The Big Lie* (London: Carnot, 2002), 112, 116.

34. For my discussion of these problems in the official story, see either Chapter 2 and the Afterword of NPH (updated edition) or Chapter 3 of 9/11CROD. Confirmation from the Department of Justice that such videos (from the Citgo Gas Station and the Sheraton Hotel near the Pentagon) do exist is provided at <http://www.flight77.info/pics/2.jpg>.

35. For discussion of these features of the collapses, see NPH, Chapter 1 and the Afterword (updated edition), or 9/11CROD, Chapter 2.

36. See NPH, 20, 177; 9/11CROD, 30.

37. The 9/11 Commission Report (see note 23, above), 541 note 1.

38. See NPH 20-23 or 9/11CROD 28-32.

39. 'Secretary Rumsfeld Interview with the New York Times,' New York Times, October 12, 2001. Condoleezza Rice made a very similar comment, which is quoted in Chalmers Johnson, *The Sorrows of Empire*, 229. Also The National Security Strategy of the United States of America, published September 2002, frankly said on page 28: 'The events of September 11, 2001 opened vast, new opportunities' ( [www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss.html](http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss.html) ).

40. David North, 'America's Drive for World Domination,' in Bacevich, ed., *The Imperial Tense*, 66-77, at 66.

41. This document, which was signed in February 1997 by then USAF Commander in Chief Howell M. Estes III, was at one time available at [www.spacecom.af.mil/usspace](http://www.spacecom.af.mil/usspace). This website is, however, no longer functional. Also, although the US military has a website devoted to 'Joint Vision Historical Documents' ([www.dtic.mil/jointvision/history.htm](http://www.dtic.mil/jointvision/history.htm)), the February 1997 document is not included. There is a document from May of that year entitled 'Concept for Future Joint Operations,' which is subtitled 'Expanding Joint Vision 2010.' The website also has that previous document (Joint Vision 2010), which was published during the tenure of General John Shalikashvili as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (1993 to 1997). But it as if the document from February 1997 never existed; perhaps it was later deemed too candid. However, at this writing it could still be found on the website of Peace Action Maine (<http://www.peaceactionme.org/v-intro.html>). And it was discussed in Jack Hitt, 'The Next Battlefield May Be in Outer Space,' The New York Times Magazine, August 5, 2001.

42. Air Force Space Command, 'Strategic Master Plan FY06 and Beyond,' October 1, 2003 ( [www.peterson.af.mil/hqafspc/Library/Library.asp](http://www.peterson.af.mil/hqafspc/Library/Library.asp) ).

43. Quoted in Hitt, 'The Next Battlefield May Be in Outer Space.'

44. The Project for the New American Century, Rebuilding America's Defenses: Strategy, Forces and Resources for a New Century, September 2000 ( [www.newamericancentury.org](http://www.newamericancentury.org) ).

45. Ibid., 51.

46. This according to the Washington Post, Jan. 27, 2002.

47. Department of Defense News Briefing on Pentagon Attack ( [www.defenselink.mil/cgi-bin/dlprint.cgi](http://www.defenselink.mil/cgi-bin/dlprint.cgi) ), quoted in The New Pearl Harbor, 100.

48. Zbigniew Brzezinski, The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives (New York: Basic Books, 1997), 24-25.

49. Ibid., 212; cf. 35-36.

50. See NPH 89-92 or 9/11CROD 122-28.

51. See NPH 92-95 or 9/11CROD 129-34.

52. Rebuilding America's Defenses, 14.

53. Fair-minded people will, of course, wait until I have actually published this proposal, with my explanations of what I mean-and do not mean-by 'global democracy' and why I believe it to be necessary, before they proceed to offer criticisms of it.

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