Afghanistan in Post-9/11 American Poetry: A Creative Response to Orientalism

Abstract: On the basis of the assumption that poetic response to Edward Said's Orientalism is rare, this article seeks to read three post-9/11 American poems on Afghanistan – “The Weavers” and “Burka Women” by Gerald Wheeler, and “Kabul 2002 (From Dislocations)” by Dr. Bronwyn Winter - as a significant intellectual departure from the standpoint alleged to be held by the previous American Orientalism. In his polemic, Said alleges that American Orientalism is devoid of literature, it is politically motivated and has a stereotypical view of Islam, internalizing many aspects of its European counterpart. The very fact that the poems under discussion are a part of American Orientalism, but characterized by a different perspective and written in a socio-political situation when certain other post-9/11 American poems confront the issue of Orientalism, potently makes the point that these poems can be taken as an implicit creative response to Orientalism. In this way, the three poems all of which appeared in An Eye for an Eye Makes the Whole World Blind, a major anthology of 9/11 poetry published in the immediate aftermath of the terrorist attacks of 9/11, constitute a landmark in the field of American Orientalism.

Key Words: American Orientalism, inter-textual reading, empirical verifiability, binary opposition, just war theory, totalization.

Though there has been a massive amount of reaction to Edward Said's Orientalism, or any part of it, in the form of critical writings, any significant poetic reaction to it is, undoubtedly, rare. And this rare phenomenon has been made possible to a certain extent by the terrorist attacks of 9/11, which raise among certain poets the issue of Orientalism. As Laurence Goldstein asserts in “The Response of American Poets to 9/11: A Provisional Report”, “They (the poets of September 11, 2001: American Writers Respond, an anthology of 9/11-poems, essays and memoirs) wrestle with an intractable dilemma: they
wish to condemn the attacks while avoiding the kind of Orientalism that gathers all Muslims, or Arabs, into a monolithic category.” Richard Gray also suggests this dilemma and the issue of Orientalism that it entails when he interprets “The Pilots”, a reflective post-9/11 poem, in “Imagining the Crisis in Drama and Poetry” and comments that this “poem walks a delicate tightrope between acknowledging the humanity of those (the terrorists) it considers – the humanity they (the terrorists) shared, after all, with their victims and with us, the readers – and insisting on the inhumanity of their actions, the degree to which an acknowledgement of shared humanity was wiped out, obliterated in their minds by their dedication “to the cause”” (175).

In this article I would like to read three post-9/11 American poems on Afghanistan as a significant intellectual departure from the previous standpoint as, Said claims in Orientalism, held by American Orientalism. My aim is to make the point that such shift in attitude suggests a creative response to the theoretical claims regarding American Orientalism, made by Said in his polemic. The poems are as follows: “The Weavers” and “Burka Women” by Gerald Wheeler, and “Kabul 2002 (From Dislocations)” by Dr. Bronwyn Winter. These poems occur in one of the earliest and major anthologies of 9/11-poetry, An Eye for An Eye Makes the Whole World Blind, edited by Allen Cohen and Clive Matson, which came into being in the immediate aftermath of the terrorist attacks of 9/11, a period characterized by an increased level of poetry reading and poetry writing. The three poems also represent a perspectival departure from most of the other poems in the same anthology that, basically, assumes a complicity of American foreign policy in the terrorist event of 9/11 and condemns, as the title of the anthology suggests, any American act of vengeance in the form of war. In the words of Allen Cohen, this collection of poems is meant “to establish a different historical record of these monumental events (the terrorist attacks of 9/11 and its aftermath: the war on Islamic terrorism and Afghanistan, the anthrax problem, the abolition of certain American constitutional rights and so on)” (Cohen i), that challenges “the combination of propaganda and spin coming through the corporate controlled media, presidency, and congress” (Cohen i). In contrast to this
standpoint of Cohen, the poems I have chosen implicitly support the war in Afghanistan by representing the extremely pathetic condition of Afghan women and children under the Taliban regime.

However, in critiquing American Orientalism, Said focuses exclusively on the Islamic Middle East. So, the question naturally arises at this point as to the applicability of his ideas to the case of Afghanistan. But, then, it is worthwhile to note that, though Afghanistan is, geographically, not a part of the Middle East, it is basically Islamic in its social, cultural and religious identity, and that the Middle East as a geographical entity hardly matters to Said in *Orientalism*. Therefore, if Said can criticize American Orientalist attitude to the Middle East, he should have also done the same to Afghanistan, had American Orientalism and foreign policy engaged themselves so much in that country up to the time of his writing the thesis on Orientalism. It is necessary now to specify those aspects of American Orientalism that Said criticized in his seminal work and are relevant to my innovative, inter-textual reading.

Firstly, in the section “The Latest Phase” of *Orientalism*, Said clearly points out that an important feature of American Orientalism, unlike its European counterpart, is “its singular avoidance of literature” (291). Specialists in this field of knowledge are much more interested in “‘facts’ of which a literary text is perhaps a disturber” (291). This absence, according to him, has resulted in the continued reduction of the Arab or the Islamic Orient into a set of “statistics”, or in making it “dehumanized” (291). Said seeks to reinforce his point by claiming that a literary text, whether it is Arab or English or French, can bring us into direct contact with “a living reality” through “the power and vitality of words that, to mix in Flaubert’s metaphor from *La Tentation de Saint Antoine*, . . . make them (the Orientalists) drop those great paralytic children – which are their ideas of the Orient – that attempt to pass for the Orient” (291).

Secondly, by referring to the speech of John Pickering, the President of American Oriental Society, at its first annual meeting in 1843, and to “a cultural relations policy” meant for “much better American understanding of the forces which are contending with the American idea for acceptance by the Near
East” (qtd. in Said 295), Said asserts that American Orientalist researches are chiefly an outcome of America’s post-war (World War II), imperial concern - committed to the maintenance of its imperial strategy and security - and therefore political in their conceptual framework. He adds that the Middle East Institute served as a model for such concern, and such organizations laid the foundation for “...the Middle East Studies Association, the powerful support of the Ford and other foundations, the various federal programs of support to universities, the various federal research projects” and so on (295).

Thirdly, Said resents the American Orientalist attitude to Islam, which characterizes it as a single entity incapable of making progress, and antithetical to any liberal civilization. As an illustration of his standpoint he describes the viewpoint of Gustave von Grunebaum who “has no difficulty presuming that Islam is a unitary phenomenon, unlike any other religion or civilization, and . . . antihuman, incapable of development, self-knowledge, or objectivity, as well as uncreative, unscientific, and authoritarian” (296). This “unitary” view of Islam, Said claims immediately after describing Abdullah Laroui’s analysis of von Grunebaum, is retaliatory and has given rise to a discursive binary, “an invidiously ideological portrait between “us” and “them”” (299), symptomatic of a cultural hostility towards Islam.

Moreover, according to Said, American Orientalism is characterized by the principal dogmas of “old Orientalism” (300), or its European counterpart. These dogmas make “the absolute and systematic difference between the West, which is rational, developed, humane, superior, and the Orient, which is aberrant, undeveloped, inferior” (300). Another aspect of them, which is quite relevant to my intertextual reading in this article and is I think based on the foregoing dogma, is the idea that “the Orient is at bottom something either to be feared (the Yellow Peril, the Mongol hordes, the brown dominions) or to be controlled (by pacification, research and development, outright occupation whenever possible)” (301).

Interestingly, the very fact that the three American poems I have chosen concentrates on Afghanistan and are, thus, a part of American Orientalism, now frees the latter of the first charge, brought
by Said, that it completely lacks literary output, although Said was right when he posited his thesis on Orientalism. In the journalistic mode of representation, the three poems deal with three successive stages of Afghanistan – “The Weavers” with the so-called “War on Terror” between the Taliban and the American forces, “Kabul 2002 (From Dislocations)” with the country under reconstruction after the war, and “Burka Women” with an intermediate stage between the two -- evoking “a living reality”, to borrow Said’s own words. “The Weavers” is a potent representation of Afghan refugee children who embroider “stars, birds, sun / crescent moons, / & harvest’s bounty -”, on woolen fabric to afford to buy food in the midst of war; of ominous “mullahs” who teach “sequestered boys . . . in other rooms”; and of “hunkered robed men”, or Taliban terrorists who plot hateful conspiracies against the formation of a free, liberal society. “Burka Women” articulates the extremely pathetic condition of Afghan women who are forced to perform hard domestic duties, physically tortured by “religious police”, for sending their daughters to places of education, and have no alternative but to grieve over the murder of their intimate ones, committed by the evil Taliban. However, as the speaker of the poem asserts, the members of the Taliban themselves are physically insecure as they are attacked by “jet bombers sent by liberators”. The poem ends with an overt tone of optimism communicating that such socio-political condition soon will end, and be followed by the public recognition of all Afghan women:

. . . His dark eyes glint

first light of Kabul. He hears a soft voice

whisper, “Soon we’ll shed these veils

and hoarded dreams, recognize our sisters

in public, walk to work

& our daughters to school.” (25-30)
“Kabul 2002 (From Dislocations)” is an eyewitness account of Kabul, Parwan, Panjshir, Peshwar and Shalman. While Kabul welcomes the speaker not only with savage heat, dust and market-flies, but also with the sights of children being educated and of warm hospitality, Panjshir smacks only of abandonment and dereliction. He / She regrets that Peshwar is “not a gentle place” (160), “unsafe” (161), and constantly under the threat of terrorism; and Shalman, “where water and hope are rare / Where Kabul Kunduz Mazar are memories / And Peshwar only a thought” (161), is much worse than that.

The very vitality of these three poems depends on their ability to expose the reader to the empirical reality of Afghanistan with a sense of immediacy and a willingness to get into the emotional world of its people, but without any preconception or stereotypical generalization. This kind of representation sharply contrasts with the representation of the same sort of reality through a prosaic set of “statistics” that allegedly characterized the previous American Orientalism. The empirical verifiability of these poems can be shown in reference to a number of sources including certain confidential United Nations documents obtained by Newsday, a media outlet, and cited in its report entitled “Taliban Atrocities: Confidential UN report details mass killings of civilian villagers” by a staff correspondent, Edward A. Gargan. The Newsday report dated October 12, 2001, directly claims that some confidential UN documents accessed by Newsday makes responsible the members of the Taliban militia and the Taliban leader, Mullah Mohammed Omar, for deliberate contemporary massacres motivated by a desire to intensify control over northern and western Afghanistan. Moreover, according to those documents, as Newsday claims, there were witnesses to the radio conversations between Omar and the killers, found by the UN officials in charge of the investigation of the sequential massacres in Yakaolang.

After pointing out the denial of the Yakaolang killings by the Taliban in January, 2001, and the then UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan’s desire for “a more thorough investigation” in April, 2001, the Newsday report adds that “UN staffers in Afganistan collected eyewitness accounts of the massacres, visited mass graves of their victims, and in July, wrote a detailed 55-page report that they said was sent
to Annan’s office and to that of the UN High Commissioner for human rights, Mary Robinson.” After a few paragraphs, the media report offers a detailed account of the process of the massacres:

Based on interviews with several hundred people who survived or who witnessed the massacres, as well as preliminary forensic work on grave sites, the report (UN report) was written to provide the basis for a prosecution of Taliban commanders and leaders for crimes against humanity. It describes victims being lined up, their hands tied behind their backs, shot and dumped in mass graves, of a young boy being skinned alive, of civilians being beaten to death, all during a two-week reign of terror by some of the Taliban’s most senior commanders and Arab militants.

As for the verification of oppression of Afghan women by the Taliban, we can safely turn to the well-documented results of the three-month research on Afghan women’s health and human rights concerns and conditions, conducted by Physicians for Human Rights (PHR). As the report of this organization clearly points out:

The Taliban . . . has targeted women for extreme repression and punished them brutally for infractions. To PHR’s knowledge, no other regime in the world has methodically and violently forced half of its population into virtual house arrest, prohibiting them on pain of physical punishment from showing their faces, seeking medical care without a male escort, or attending school.

. . .

Taliban policies that restrict women’s rights and deny basic needs are often brutally
and arbitrary enforced by the “religious police” (Department for the Propagation of Virtue and the Suppression of Vice) usually in the form of summary, public beatings. (2-3)

Among other sources for the oppression of Afghan women, mention must be made of “Afghan Women under the Taliban” by Nancy Dupree Hatch and *Women of Afghanistan in the Post-Taliban Era: How Lives Have Changed and Where They Stand Today* by the renowned American sociologist, Rosemarie Skaine, who almost echoes in her book the findings of PHR.5

The power of the three poems under discussion to bring us into direct, lively contact with the empirical reality of Afghanistan occasionally takes a metaphorical turn which functions as a link between factual and aesthetic planes of reality. In “The Weavers”, for example, the pathetic condition of the poor Afghan refugee children is photographically represented, and then their embroidery attains a metaphorical dimension for suggesting their frustrated desire for a bountiful life. Towards the end of the poem, the act of weaving itself becomes metaphorical as it also applies to the terrorists who plot obnoxiously and self-destructively against liberty:

as hunkered robed men

in caves

weave hate,

plotting against freedom

& themselves. (28-32)

Though there is no remarkable metaphorical tendency in “Burka Woman”, the poem intensely appeals to us due its thematic conflict between the forces of life and death, represented by the veiled Afghan women and the Taliban respectively. Same kind of conflict also
characterizes “Kabul 2002 (From Dislocations)” where images of wildness and destruction are juxtaposed with those of education and hospitality:

Kabul greets you with destruction

Plane carcasses lined up along the runway

Ghosts of military welcomes past

Bombed out hangars house bombed out planes

Office buildings conduct business as usual

Next to gaping holes in their facades (18-23)

Kabul teaches its children

In half remaining rooms

Tarpaulins make up the difference

UN protection from the June sun

Classroom posters show the alphabet numbers landmines

The basics of Afghan literacy

... 

The teachers invite us for tea

Later under their burqas

Screens muffling their voices their eyes
I remember their smiles (33-45)

The three poems, thus, not only evoke “a living reality” and suggest a limitation of Said’s first charge against American Orientalism, but also negate any probability of their complicity in the foregoing two of the so-called “old Orientalist” dogmas that Said pointed out. To explain, no binary opposition has been constructed in these poems either between the Orient and the West, or between Afghanistan and the West, on the basis of intellectual, humanistic and technological superiority. The binary that these poems do entail is between the good and the evil – which is alarmingly threatening and must be squashed – irrespective of any division along racial line, and Afghanistan represents both sides of the binary. So, the very idea of the Orient as “something either to be feared . . . or to be controlled” applies only to a part of Afghanistan, not to the whole of it.

Regarding Said’s next point that American Orientalist studies are a product of the imperial concerns of America, it is quite legitimate to point out that whether he was right or wrong in his own time, after the 9/11 terrorist attack, the idea of American empire has been rejuvenated by mass media and scholarly responses in a way that problematises the ethical dimensions of the idea. In Among Empires: American Ascendancy and Its Predecessors, Charles S. Maier, a Harvard historian, for example, indicates that “Since September 11, 2001 . . . if not earlier, the idea of American empire is back . . . Now . . . for the first time since the early Twentieth century, it has become acceptable to ask whether the United States has become or is becoming an empire in some classic sense” (Maier 2-24). The observation of Niall Ferguson, another historian of the same university, is that though the idea was referred to in past in the context of criticism of American foreign policy, “In the past three or four years [2001-2004], however, a growing number of commentators have begun to use the term American empire less pejoratively, if still ambivalently, and in some cases with genuine enthusiasm” (3-4). And Ferguson himself in Colossus: The Rise and Fall of the American Empire, the book in which he makes this significant observation, proposes an idea of American empire which “might not be wholly bad” (vii-viii), to reconcile the opposition between
American liberals who accept only the negative implication of the idea and American conservatives who completely deny its validity. However, this discussion on ethical complexity underlying the idea of post-9/11 American empire is never complete from the standpoint of the chief purpose of this essay, if we do not take into account the question about moral validity of the American invasion of Afghanistan that greatly informs the thematic cores of the poems under discussion.

With regard to this point, we must turn to the ideas of just war theorists like Brian Orend who in *The Morality of War* (2006) argues in favour of this act of invasion. On the basis of “Core Principle on Aggression” (CPA) (37) and a “symmetrical relation” (73-74) on aggression, he argues that by consciously providing material assistance to a terrorist organisation, al Qaida, who perpetrated aggression on a “minimally just” (36) state, that is, the United States, the Taliban also perpetrated aggression on the United States, and therefore deserved the exercise of “all necessary means” (37) for punishment. However, in “Just War Theory and the Invasion of Afghanistan”, after a careful consideration of Orend’s just war theory, Mark Vorobej counterargues that as the Taliban did not literally perpetrate aggression, but merely functioned as a “material accomplice” (Orend 74), it was necessary for Orend to address the specific nature of the Taliban’s alleged assistance in reference to historical facts. Secondly, Vorobej thinks Orend’s assertion that the Taliban did not co-operate with the American government as a justification for the American invasion, denies this regime’s willingness “to cooperate with the US and other nations on a plan that would have allowed the Americans to defeat al-Qaida without occupying Afghanistan” (47). Vorobej bases this idea upon the fact that “in October 2001, prior to November’s massive ground assault, the Taliban agreed to extradite Osama bin Laden to a neutral third country – most likely Pakistan – on the condition that the aerial bombardment ceased and they were provided with hard evidence of bin Laden’s involvement in the 9/11 attacks” (47). Vorobej also draws attention to the fact of America’s hasty aerial invasion started less than four weeks after 9/11, that Orend ignores and that indicates America’s “little interest in pursuing a careful and methodic legal resolution to the crimes under consideration” (48). This
omission, as Vorobej claims, was instrumental in Orend’s ignoring the fact that “this aerial assault . . .
conservatively estimated to have killed many hundreds of civilians that month (October, 2001) - was . . .
arguably without UN authorization” (49). In addition to it, Vorobej argues that in Orend’s moral
justification of American invasion “CPA operates pretty well independently of the other components and
constraints of just war theory – especially proportionality – that require further factual input” (50), and
that Orend has privileged the human rights of American citizens over those of their Afghan counterparts.
Out of such apparently sympathetic concern with the Afghan citizens, Vorobej points out “the death and
suffering that resulted within the Afghan population as a result of the American invasion” (51); a number
of “grim facts” (51), confirming the extreme poverty of Afghans; and “an impending humanitarian crisis
that placed over six million Afghans at risk of starvation” (53).

Now, Vorobej’s first point that Orend should have discussed the precise nature of the Taliban’s
alleged aggression is quite legitimate, and in this article I would like to fill up the gap in Orend’s argument.

According to The 9/11 Commission Report:

The alliance with the Taliban provided al Qaeda a sanctuary in which to train and indoctrinate
fighters and terrorists, import weapons, forge ties with other jihad groups and leaders, and
plot and staff terrorist schemes. While Bin Ladin maintained his own al Qaeda guesthouses
and camps for vetting and training recruits, he also provided support to and benefited from
the broad infrastructure of such facilities in Afghanistan made available to the global network
of Islamist movements. U.S. intelligence estimates put the total number of fighters who under-
went instruction in Bin Ladin-supported camps in Afghanistan from 1996 through 9/11 at
10,000 to 20,000. (66-67)
This piece of information testifies to the point that the exact nature of the Taliban’s crime was very serious and equivalent of al Qaida’s. Secondly, the point about hard evidence that Vorobej has made, requires serious consideration. Presentation of hard evidence to the Taliban could jeopardize the national security of the United States as such evidence entailed classified and other types of valuable information that could be easily available to al Qaida, given its close contemporary connection to the Taliban. His next point that the war in Afghanistan was “arguably without U.N. authorization” is also of questionable legitimacy as, Ryan T. Williams demonstrates in “Dangerous Precedent: America’s Illegal War In Afghanistan”, “America’s initial involvement in Afghanistan arguably comported with international law” (565). As to Vorobej’s last point, it could be counterargued that Orend has definitely ignored such moral restraint as the law of proportionality. So has Vorobej himself. As a result, though Vorobej is apparently concerned with the sufferings of innocent Afghan civilians, he completely overlooks the Taliban’s gross human rights violations noted earlier in this article and the post-war attempt at reconstruction of Afghanistan, that could turn the tables on the Taliban and support the American invasion. In “Introduction” to Afghan Modern: The History of a Global Nation, Robert D. Crews also acknowledges that in 2001 “Afghans became the object of an American-led humanitarian mission that was, simultaneously a campaign to remake Afghans in the name of American security” (9).

Of the three poems I have chosen, “Burka Women” explicitly equates the members of the Taliban who are “led by robed bearded men / hunkered in caves of shadows / & terror planning evil under sky”, with despicable villainous creatures, and the senders of jet bombers and tracer fire with “liberators”, who can bring about emancipation of Afghan women. In “Kabul 2002 (From Dislocations)”, the speaker implicitly supports the process of reconstruction of Afghanistan following the destruction of the Taliban regime by American invasion. This attitude of the speaker is specially reflected in the lively, sympathetic representation of Afghan girls who “proudly recite their lesson / “The value of sharing water” / And jostle to smile for our cameras” (157), and of female teachers who “invite us for tea / later under their burqas /
Screens muffling their voices their eyes” (157). It could be safely concluded, therefore, that there is, definitely, an ideological connection between the post-9/11, literary study of Afghanistan and the U.S. invasion of the same, but the connection is hardly morally objectionable.

As to Said’s point about the American Orientalist outlook on Islam, it is worth noting that two of the three poems under discussion are rather interested in depicting the suspicious attitude of the Taliban mullahs who impart religious knowledge to Afghan boys in secret rooms, and of “religious police” who brutally torture Afghan women, than in focusing on Islam. This representational shift on the one hand frees these poets of the charge of ‘totalisation’ about Islam, and on the other lends empirical credibility to their mode of representation. There is also the subtle suggestion in “The Weavers” that the Taliban mullahs may have complicity with the “hunkered robed men” to a certain degree, and are inseparably connected to the insidious ideological machinations of the Taliban terrorist regime, while the “hunkered robed men” stand for the violently coercive instrument of the same administration.

In the end, I would like to emphasize the point that the foregoing attitudinal shifts can be taken as an implicit creative response to Said’s stance on American Orientalism in Orientalism, a response that transcends the alleged limitations of the previous American Orientalism, offering imaginative insights into the psyche of Afghan women and children, and a materialist insight into the power structure of a terrorist system of government.
Endnotes


2. For another significant poetic response (implicit) to *Orientalism*, see Rehnuma Sazzad, “The Voice of a Country of Called ‘Forgetfulness’: Mahmoud Darwish as Edward Said’s “Amateur”,” *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge*, Vol. 11, No. 1, Article 10, 2013, p. 117, where the author discusses a parallelism between Said’s idea in *Orientalism* and that of the well-known Palestinian poet, Mahmoud Darwish. As the author asserts, “In *Orientalism*, Said challenges the constitution of an Oriental’s identity shorn off his/ her humanity. In the same way the core of Darwish’s poetry is formed by resisting the absence of his conqueror’s recognition of his people as humans.”

is both the national religion and the basis of its overriding culture and values, the majority of Afghans being Sunnis of the Hanafi school. Insofar as there has been a sense of unity in the country, it is Islam, with its concept of community and universality (umma), which has superimposed itself on the ethnic diversity and provided the main focus of loyalty”; and Kristin Mendoza, “Islam and Islamism in Afghanistan”, *Islamic Legal Studies Program, Harvard* (2008). Moreover, for knowledge of the connection between Islam and Afghan politics from around 1800 to the present time, see Asta Olesen, *Islam and Politics in Afghanistan*, Routledge, 2013.

4. The term, “War on Terror”, denotes the series of international battles and military actions against terrorism, with a special focus on countries connected to al-Qaeda, initiated by the U.S. government in the aftermath of 9/11. The term was first used by the U.S. president George W Bush in a formal speech to Congress a few days after he used the term “War on Terrorism” on 16th September, 2001. As Eric Schmitt and Thom Shanker point out in the newspaper article, “U.S. Officials Retool Slogan for Terror War”, Gen. Richard B. Myers, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, immediately found fault with the questionable term (“War on Terrorism”) and the term was finally reshaped by the Bush Administration to emphasise both the ideological and the military nature of the campaign against terrorism. For the sources of the term, “War on Terrorism”, see Kenneth R. Bazinet, “A Fight Vs. Evil, Bush and Cabinet Tell U.S.”, *Daily News*. New York. 17th Sept., 2001; and The White House, “Remarks by the President Upon Arrival”, 16th Sept., 2001. For the sources of the term, “War on Terror”, see The White House, “Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People”, 20th Sept., 2001; and also CNN., “Transcript of President Bush’s Address”, 20th Sept., 2001.

6. According to “Core Principle on Aggression” articulated by Brian Orend in *The Morality of War*, “the commission of aggression by any aggressor A, against any victim B, entitles V – and/or any third-party vindicator T, acting on behalf of V – to employ all necessary means to stop A, including lethal force, provided that such means do not themselves violate human rights” (37). According to “symmetrical relation” in the same text, “if Q (a non-state actor) commits aggression against R (a minimally just state), and Q had substantial support from P (a state actor) in doing so, then P also aggressed against R” (73-74).

7. See Kenneth Anderson, *What to do with Bin Laden and Al Qaeda Terrorists? A Qualified Defense of Military Commissions and United States Policy on Detainees at Guantanamo Bay Naval Base*, 25 Harv. J.L & Pub. Pol’y, supra note 53, p-609, where it is pointed out that though the 1980 Classified Information Procedures Act entails guidance on the presentation of sensitive information at trial in the U.S., the court proceedings become public; and that other valuable information might be easily accessed by the public as a result of a trial of an al Qaida terrorist in an open forum, e.g. “[p]ublications, as took place in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, of existent engineering data on the construction of towers; such information is public but not easy to obtain, unless, for example, it is brought into open court in a trial”. It can be safely concluded that there is an essential connection between hard evidence regarding Bin Ladin’s involvement in 9/11 attacks (whether to be produced at a trial, or handed over to the Taliban) and classified and other valuable information that could harm American national security, if accessed by al Qaida.


9. I have used the term, ‘totalisation’, as it is used in the postmodern context, that is, in the sense of perpetrating violent reconciliation of all oppositions, or systematic exclusion of those discordant elements that challenge such reconciliation. For postmodern use of the term, see Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, London: Penguin Books, 1977; and Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1969.
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