

# Rereading America

## *Cultural Contexts for Critical Thinking and Writing*

Sixth Edition

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own knowledge of U.S. foreign policy. Administer the survey to fellow students, friends, relatives, or members of your local community, and report your results in class. Do your findings suggest that we are, in fact, as “oblivious” as Hertsgaard suggests?

11. Do further research on the concept of “blowback” by reading the articles by Chalmers Johnson that Hertsgaard mentions in this selection, originally appearing in *The Nation* magazine on October 15 and December 10, 2001, or by consulting additional articles written by Johnson or those written in response to his 2000 book *Blowback: The Costs and Consequences of American Empire*. What might the idea of “blowback” suggest in relation to assessing the long-term consequences of U.S. actions in nations like Afghanistan and Iraq?
12. Since the formulation of the Defense Planning Guidance draft in 1992, which first articulated the case for American military domination in the post-Cold War era, the idea of a new American “empire” has been growing in popularity. Research the idea of American empire and related concepts like “the Bush Doctrine” to learn more about what Hertsgaard terms the new “grand strategy of American foreign policy.” What, if anything, might be wrong with the idea of establishing an “empire” as a goal for America in its dealings with the rest of the world?

## *The War on Terrorism*

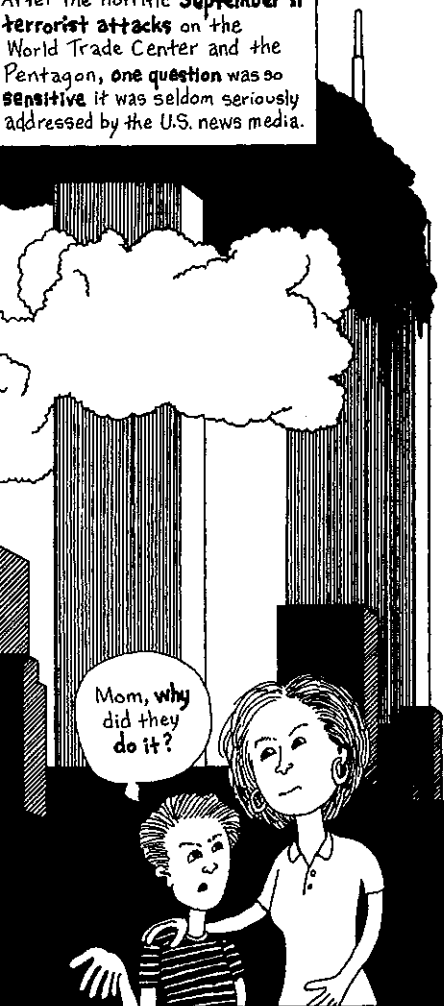
JOEL ANDREAS

*You might think that comics are all about teenage superheroes or ducks in short jackets, but not if you've ever encountered the source of this selection. Joel Andreas's Addicted to War: Why the U.S. Can't Kick Militarism (2002) is a cultural phenomenon—a comic book with a deadly serious subject that, in an era of ever increasing international tensions, has emerged as a nationwide best-seller. Joel Andreas (b. 1956) became a committed political activist while attending antiwar demonstrations with his parents in Vietnam-era Detroit. He completed his Ph.D. in sociology at UCLA and now teaches at Johns Hopkins University. In addition to Addicted to War, Andreas has published two other “illustrated exposés”: The Incredible Rocky, an unauthorized biography of the Rockefeller family and Made with Pure Rocky Mountain Scab Labor (1977), a comic broadside in support of a strike by Coors Brewery workers.*

# Chapter 4

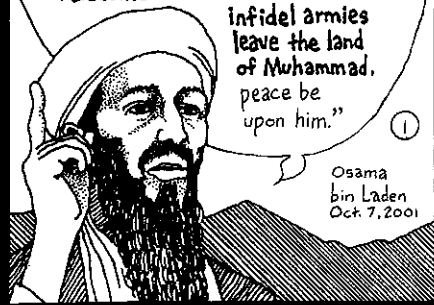
## The "War on Terrorism"

After the horrific **September 11 terrorist attacks** on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, **one question** was so **sensitive** it was seldom seriously addressed by the U.S. news media.



To find out, it makes sense to ask the **prime suspect** himself. As U.S. warplanes began bombing Afghanistan, **Osama bin Laden** released a videotaped message. He **praised the September 11 attacks** and called for more attacks on the United States. Then he spelled out his **motivations** quite clearly!

"What America is tasting now is something insignificant compared to what we have tasted for scores of years. Our nation (the Islamic world) has been tasting this **humiliation and degradation** for more than **80 years**. Its sons are killed, its **blood is shed**, its sanctuaries are attacked and no one hears and no one heeds. Millions of innocent children are being killed as I speak. They are being killed in **Iraq** without committing any sins.... To **America**, I say only a few words to it and its people. I swear to God, who has elevated the skies without pillars, **neither America nor the people** who live in it will **dream of security** before we live it here in **Palestine** and not before all the **infidel armies leave the land of Muhammad**, peace be upon him." ①



Osama  
bin Laden  
Oct. 7, 2001

<sup>1</sup>Bin Laden cited in *Wall Street Journal* online, October 7, 2001.

Few people anywhere in the world, including the Middle East, support bin Laden's terrorist methods. But most people in the Middle East **share his anger** at the United States. They are angry at the U.S. for supporting **corrupt and dictatorial regimes** in the region, for **supporting Israel** at the expense of the Palestinians and for imposing **U.S. dictates** on the Middle East through **military might** and **brutal economic sanctions**.



The Bush Administration immediately instructed U.S. television networks to "**exercise caution**" in airing bin Laden's taped messages.

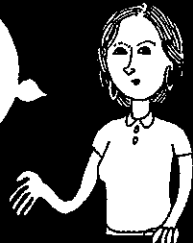
The official reason?



The tapes may contain **secret coded messages** for terrorist operatives

But were **covert messages** the Administration's main concern? Perhaps it was more worried about the impact of bin Laden's **overt message** - that the **September 11** attacks were carried out in **retaliation** for U.S. foreign policy and particularly **U.S. military intervention** in the Middle East.

If Americans realized that U.S. military intervention abroad brought retaliation - causing **death and destruction at home** - we might **think twice** about whether the U.S. should be so **eager to go to war overseas**



The Pentagon has demonstrated time and again that its advanced weaponry can **devastate countries** targeted for attack, **leveling basic infrastructure** and **killing thousands**, even hundreds of thousands of people.

It would be **naive** to think there would be **no retaliation**



Over the last several decades the **true costs** of the wars the U.S. has waged overseas have been largely hidden. We have had to **pay the military bills** but few Americans have died. The **death and destruction** was all **overseas**. That changed on **September 11**.

The violence reached the United States



The September 11 attacks, however, were not simply acts of **retribution**. They were also **provocation**. Bin Laden expected the U.S. to respond with **massive violence**, knowing this would bring him **new recruits**. Ultimately, he hoped to win the majority of the Muslim world to support his **holy war on the U.S.**

More martyrs, more recruits.



The Bush Administration responded according to **bin Laden's script**. George W. Bush declared a **"War on Terrorism"**, using "good vs. evil" rhetoric that mirrored bin Laden's. Bush and his advisors were ready, **even eager**, for the war bin Laden wanted. They saw the September 11 attacks as a **grand opportunity** to boost military spending and demonstrate U.S. military power.

"This will be a monumental struggle of **good versus evil**... This **crusade**, this **war on terrorism**, is going to take a while"



G.W. Bush, Sept. 12 and 16, 2001

Bush's **"War on Terrorism"** began with U.S. warplanes **bombing Afghanistan**. The Bush Administration refused to negotiate or consider any **alternatives to war**. When the Afghan government asked for evidence against bin Laden, a reasonable request that might have made it possible to cooperate with the U.S., Bush replied:

I said **no negotiations!** Cough up bin Laden now or **die along with him!**



Relatives prepare the bodies of four small children for burial after a U.S. airstrike. Kabul, October 2001.



The people of Afghanistan **suffered the consequences**. **U.S. bombing** killed many civilians and the war cut off relief supplies to millions already **facing starvation**. The total number of deaths will never be known, but it's likely there will be many times more **civilian deaths** in Afghanistan than in the World Trade Center.

<sup>2</sup>Bush cited in "The President's Words," *Los Angeles Times*, September 22, 2001.

<sup>3</sup>Millions were endangered because the war cut off relief supplies (<http://www.observer.co.uk/afghanistan/story/0,1501,577996,00.html>). Analyzing media reports, Marc Herold of the University of New Hampshire estimated that U.S. bombs killed 3100 to 3700 Afghan civilians (<http://www.mhnares.unh.edu/~mwherold>). The *New York Times* estimated

As warplanes of the world's **richest and most powerful** country bombed people in one of the **poorest and most miserable** countries on earth, the streets of cities throughout the Muslim world filled with **angry demonstrations**. Not only religious radicals were angry. Almost everybody in the Muslim world **opposed the war**.



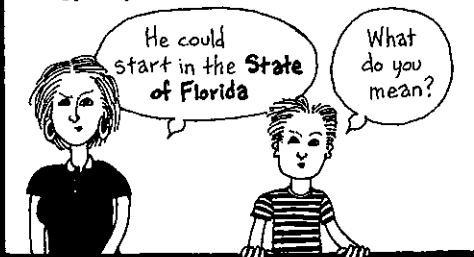
The war **added fuel** to simmering anti-American sentiments in the Middle East. Bombing Muslim countries and sending U.S. troops into this volatile region will only inspire more hatred for the United States and **more terrorist attacks** on Americans. Bush surely knows this, yet he decided to go ahead and **place us in greater danger** anyway.



The War on Terrorism **cannot possibly end terrorism**. Even if bin Laden is killed, **new converts will rally** to join his war to drive the U.S. out of the Middle East. The **spiral of violence** is escalating dangerously.



The self-righteous "**good vs. evil**" rhetoric of the War on Terrorism sharpens ironies that have long shadowed U.S. pronouncements against **state-sponsored terrorism**. President Bush, for instance, promises to scour the globe in search of **states that harbor terrorists**.



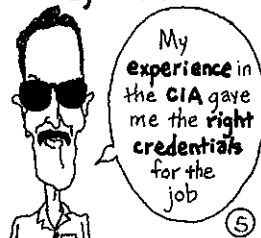
For over forty years, Miami has served as the base of operations for well-financed groups of **Cuban exiles** that have carried out violent **terrorist attacks on Cuba**.



It would not be difficult for the government to find evidence involving these terrorist organizations because the **CIA** and the **Pentagon** trained many of their members. Take, for instance, **Luis Posada Carriles** and **Orlando Bosch**, suspected masterminds of the bombing of a **Cuban passenger airliner** that claimed the lives of **73 people**.



Before Posada Carriles could be tried for the airline bombing, he **escaped** from a prison in Venezuela and found a job **supplying arms** to the CIA-backed **Nicaraguan contras**.



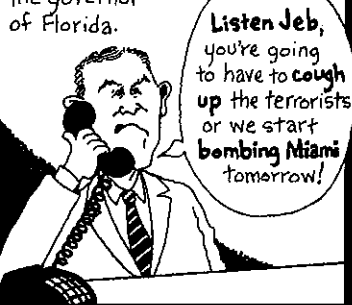
Posada's accomplice, Orlando Bosch, has long been **protected from extradition** by the U.S. government. Although Bosch was convicted of carrying out a **bazooka attack** on a ship in **Miami harbor**, President Bush's father, George H., at the urging of his brother, Jeb, prevented his expulsion from the country. He signed an **executive pardon** providing Bosch with **safe haven** in Florida. Bosch promised he would...



**Hold on!**  
Let me set the record straight. I **pardon only freedom fighters**, not terrorists!



If the younger Bush were serious about going after **all states** that **harbor terrorists**, he might issue his **next ultimatum** to his brother, the governor of Florida.



Posada, Bosch and their friends are **only a few** of the violent characters whose activities have been sponsored by the CIA. Many of the CIA's "**covert operations**" - **bombings, assassinations, sabotage, paramilitary massacres** - are terrorism by any definition. Many of the shadowy figures involved in these activities are still working with the CIA around the world. But others - including **Osama bin Laden** - have turned on their former partners.



<sup>4</sup>Bosch cited in Alexander Cockburn, "The Tribulations of Joe Doherty," *Wall Street Journal*, reprinted in the *Congressional Record*, page E2639.

<sup>5</sup>Cockburn; John Rice, "Man with CIA Links Accused of Plotting to Kill Castro," Associated Press, November 18, 2000; Frances Robles and Glenn Garvin, "Four Held in Plot Against Castro," *Miami Herald*, November 10, 2000; Jill Mollin, "The Burden of a Violent History,"



Despite the **hypocrisy** and the **counterproductive** nature of the "War on **Terrorism**," it has already produced major **benefits** for Bush and his friends in Washington, not the least of which was practically a **blank check** for the military.

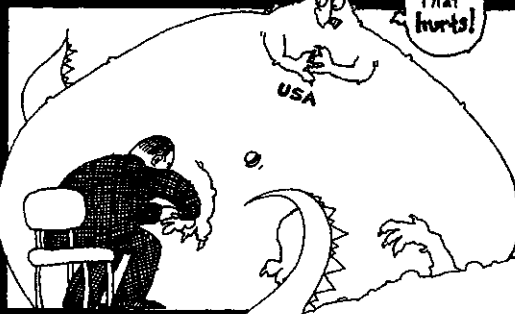


After the end of the **Cold War**, many in Washington were reconsidering the **humongous size** of the military budget, which had converted the U.S. from the biggest lender into the **world's biggest debtor**.

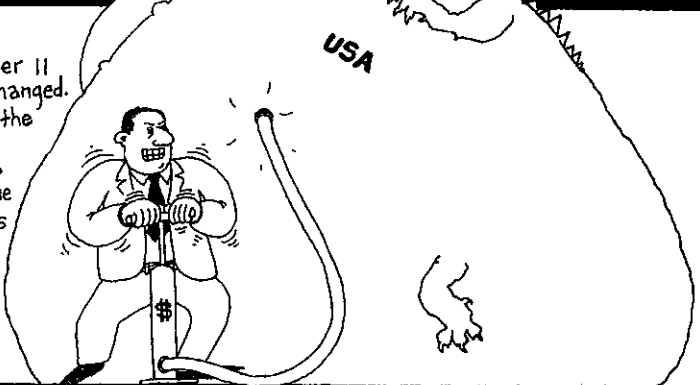


Ouch! That hurts!

In an effort to balance the federal budget, politicians were beginning to **trim** the Pentagon's **toenails**.



After September 11 all this changed. Bush and the Congress started to pump up the Pentagon's **bloated budget** without restraint.



<sup>6</sup>Joe Conason, "The Bush Pardons," <http://www.salon.com/news/col/cona/2001/02/27/pardons/print.html>.  
<sup>7</sup>Bosch cited in Cockburn.  
<sup>8</sup>William Blum, *Killing Hope: U.S. Military and CIA Interventions Since World War II* (Monroe, Maine: Common Courage Press, 1995).

September 11, 2001 marked the beginning of a new chapter in America's foreign wars. In this chapter, violence may be more continuous and widespread and there may be more impact at home. "Homeland defense" has become a slogan for eliminating civil rights protections long deemed inconvenient by the FBI and other police agencies.

The Pentagon and the CIA expect to have a freer hand in carrying out wars and covert operations around the world.

The enemies of America better watch out!

Yeah, from now on its going to be no holds barred!

WAR GAME ROOM

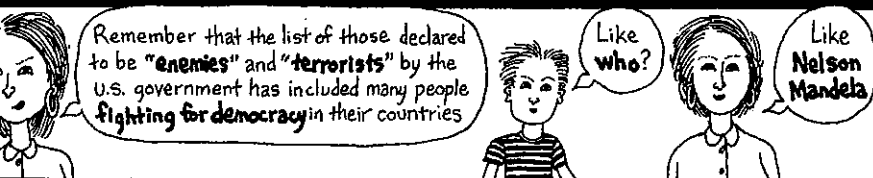
Agencies that often give priority to suppressing political opponents.



Remember that the list of those declared to be "enemies" and "terrorists" by the u.s. government has included many people fighting for democracy in their countries

Like who?

Like Nelson Mandela



In order to fund the new war effort, Congress has abandoned efforts to avoid budget deficits and preserve Social Security funds. The Army, Navy and Air Force are lining up to get money for expensive new weapons systems now packaged as essential for the War on Terrorism.

We can't afford to be without it!

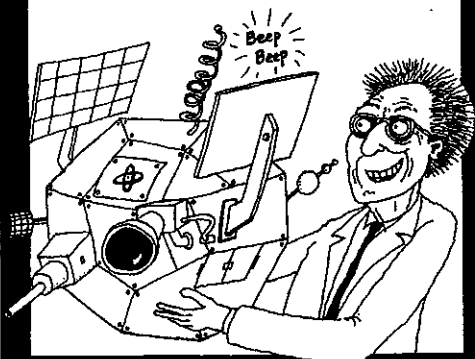
It's vital for homeland defense!

We have to close the window of vulnerability!

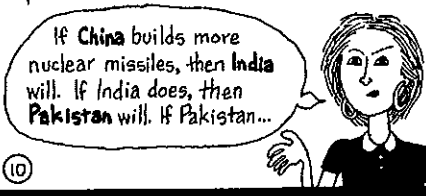


<sup>9</sup>Post-9-11 restrictions on Civil liberties: American Civil Liberties Union. <http://>

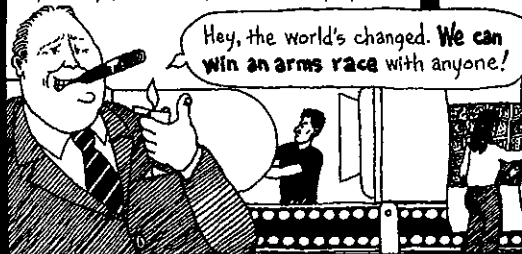
Even Congressional opposition to the far-fetched "missile defense program" collapsed.



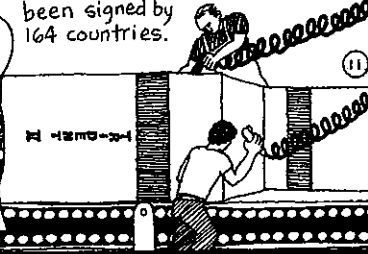
Missile defense, like the "War on Terrorism," promises to protect Americans from danger while actually creating a much more dangerous world. If other countries think there is any chance the U.S. could block their missiles, they will feel vulnerable to U.S. attack. China has already promised to build more and better missiles which could overwhelm the U.S. "missile shield." This will spur a nuclear arms race in Asia.



In 1972, the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. signed the **ABM Treaty** to try to avoid this kind of arms race. In order to pursue missile defense, the U.S. **unilaterally scrapped** the treaty. But that didn't bother missile defense proponents.



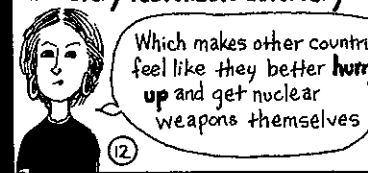
In this spirit, while the Pentagon has reduced its arsenal of vulnerable land-based missiles, it continues to spend billions to build more **submarine-based nuclear missiles**. And Congress has rejected the nuclear **test ban treaty**, which has been signed by 164 countries.



The U.S. is keeping enough nuclear firepower to wipe out most of humanity.



As potential nuclear targets in Russia have declined, the Pentagon has been re-targeting its missiles at "every reasonable adversary."

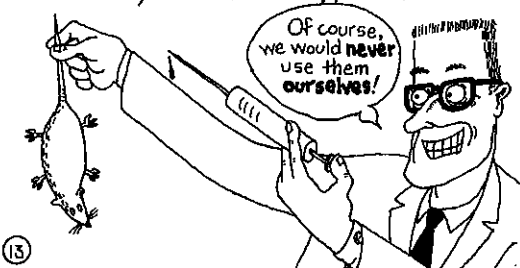


<sup>10</sup>Joshua Cohen, "An Interview with Ted Postol: What's Wrong with Missile Defense," *Boston Review*, October/November 2001; David E. Sanger, "Washington's New Freedom, and New Worries, in the Post-ABM-Treaty Era," *New York Times*, December 15, 2001.

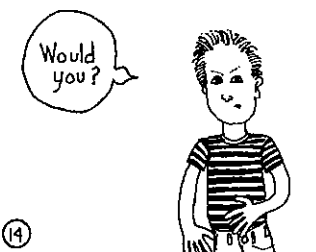
<sup>11</sup>Submarine-based missiles: <http://no-nukes.org/nukewatch/>.

<sup>12</sup>R. Jeffrey Smith, "U.S. Urged to Cut 50% of A-Arms: Soviet Breakup Is Said to Allow Radical Shift in Strategic Targeting," *Washington Post*, January 6, 1991, p. A1.

In the post-Cold War world order, the U.S. does not seem to want to be bound by any arms treaties. It **refuses to sign** a new protocol to the 1972 biological weapons treaty because it would require **international inspections** of its **biological weapons research facilities**, where it is creating **deadly new strains** including highly lethal **powdered anthrax**. U.S. officials say they are only creating germ weapons in order to study how to defend against them.



But can other countries **trust** a government that bombed Hiroshima and Nagasaki and actually developed plans to use **smallpox** and other biological weapons against **Vietnam** and **Cuba**?

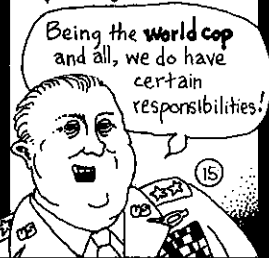


And U.S. "**weaponized**" germs not only represent a threat to people in other countries.

What if some of the Pentagon's powdered anthrax got into the hands of **some fanatic here** in the United States?



During the **Cold War**, the U.S. had a serious **military competitor** in the **U.S.S.R.** Today the U.S. maintains a huge **war machine** despite the lack of any serious competition. The U.S. military budget is now larger than the next 15 biggest spenders put together. It makes up a full **36%** of **total global military spending!**



<sup>13</sup>Judith Miller, "U.S. Seeks Changes in Germ War Pact," *New York Times*, November 1, 2001; William Broad and Judith Miller, "U.S. Recently Produced Anthrax in a Highly Lethal Powder Form," *New York Times*, December 13, 2001.

<sup>14</sup>William Broad, Judith Miller, *Germs: Biological Weapons and America's Secret War*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001); William Blum.