Introduction

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On September 12, 2001, a *New York Times* editorial described the horrific attacks of the previous day as "one of those moments in which history splits, and we define the world as 'before' and 'after.'"[1] Yet as all of us know, history never rips in two. "Before" and "after" are never entirely severed, even in the moments of greatest historical rupture. The discontinuities of the past always remain within the whole cloth of the *longue durée*. In fact, historians devote entire careers to placing the seemingly new in historical contexts.

In the aftermath of September 11, the editors of the *Journal of American History* heard from colleagues and friends who longed for such historical perspective. Some wanted to teach about September 11 in their history classrooms; others hoped that historians would have a voice in shaping the public discourse on war, terrorism, and national ideas. In response, we decided to invite a handful of scholars to write short essays for the *Journal*. At first, we proposed a forum on the concept of terrorism and its history. But as we discussed the possibilities with our editorial board and other colleagues, we discovered demand for a broader range of investigation. In the end, we chose scholars with noted expertise on issues pertaining to terrorism, anti-Americanism, the Middle East, fundamentalist religious movements, and foreign relations, and we asked them for deliberative essays, scholarly pieces with deeper research and greater intellectual engagement than typically found in newspapers and magazines. The resulting essays first appeared in the September 2002 issue of the *Journal*.

The *Journal of American History* is read primarily by professional historians, but the events of September 11 are clearly of concern to a broader audience, including teachers and students. So we decided to reprint the essays as a book that could be used in a variety of history courses. For this volume, we included the original essays in the *Journal*'s special issue, and we added a new essay by Marilyn Blatt Young that addresses more recent developments in U.S. foreign policy. We also included a set of primary source documents, which supplement the essays

with reports, speeches, and commentaries that illustrates the larger points that our historian essayists make.[2]

The essays in this book draw on several scholarly traditions—international relations, cultural studies, and religious studies, as well as history—and the authors approach their topics from different points on the political map. Nonetheless, a few themes appear throughout the essays. Our authors comment on the dangers of forging or analyzing policy without keen awareness of history, and they tell cautionary tales involving critical moments in the past. They reject the sweeping panoramas that portray an age-old "clash of civilizations" between Islam and the West. They ask us to look instead at particular times and places and to remember the specific histories of American nationalist ideals, anti-American sentiments, U.S. involvement in Afghanistan, the war on terrorism, Islamic fundamentalism, and U.S. foreign policy. The histories they relate are neither symbols nor rallying cries; they are instead nuanced accounts that involve contestation, ambiguities, and unintended consequences.

When the essays turn inward to the United States, they bring renewed attention to American national identity, to the stories Americans have told themselves and others about the meaning and power of this nation. After September 11, the legitimate anger and sense of injury led to stories in the popular press and elsewhere about "American" values and promoted fantasies of revenge and rescue in the name of a powerful nation done wrong. In his essay in this collection, Michael H. Hunt finds a "long-lived but perhaps hollow American nationalism" that obscures the history of U.S. interventions abroad and the complexities of local politics in other regions of the world. This nationalism has reduced complicated and multifaceted interactions to a temptingly simple struggle of "us" against "them" or good versus evil, and it has also promised more than it can deliver. Hunt calls for careful attention to the complicated history of U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East and asks us to replace caricatures of fanatic Islamic fundamentalists with serious analyses of Islamic politics.

Other authors in this volume also place nationalist ideals within a longer history of American culture and U.S. foreign policy. Some of the nationalist stories told today rework older stories about America as the paternalist protector of the weak, the iconic beacon of freedom, or the benevolent vanguard of modernity. Emily S. Rosenberg, for example, examines older nationalist narratives about America as a patriarchal nation

that rescues women and children. After the events of September 11, she finds, the Bush administration expressed a new interest in rescuing the women of Afghanistan from the oppressive dictates of the Taliban regime. The stories about rescuing women and children echoed older tales of America as a "civilized" nation that protects the weak from alleged foreign barbarity and as a manly nation that safeguards dependent women from violation by other men. She contrasts that tradition of humanitarian rescue and masculine strength with a competing tradition of transnational women's networks that work to end the subordination of women. The Bush administration, it seems, drew, at least temporarily, on both of these traditions. Nick Cullather focuses on the stories of "modernization" that have justified U.S. interventions in other parts of the world. In these stories, the United States appears at the forefront of modernity, destined to bring technology and progress to allegedly backward nations. In both their older and newer guises, these narratives of the nation tend to hide the *realpolitik* of self-interest, as well as the practical blunders, that often accompanied the language of morality, liberty, and progress, and in so doing they tend to reinforce long-standing myths of America as an exceptional and superior nation.

But if we learned anything from the events of September 11, we should have learned, once again, that we cannot understand American history by dwelling solely on the United States. The attacks of September 11 force us to turn outward and to see the United States not in isolation, but in and of a world in which other peoples have sometimes embraced, sometimes reframed, and sometimes repudiated the mythic promise of America. Ussama Makdisi, for example, provides us with an interpretive overview of two hundred years of Arab-American relations. In the early twentieth century, he finds, many Arabs admired the United States and contrasted it with the invasive imperial powers of Europe. After World War II, though, specific U.S. foreign policies inspired the anti-American sentiments that still exist today. As the U.S. government attempted to win the Cold War and to protect American oil interests, its responses to Arab and Iranian nationalism and its support for Israel contributed to the deterioration of American standing in much of the region. Anti-Americanism, then, is not ageless, but has a specific and recent history.

In this volume, as in many recountings of twentieth-century world history, the Cold War plays a significant part. Our authors refer to the legacies of Cold War patriotism, the policies and programs used to as-

sert and maintain US. power in the face of the perceived Soviet threat, and the limited wars, covert operations, and peculiar alignments of allies and enemies that followed. The anti-American sentiments that resulted swept across the nations of the Third World and help answer the question, Why do they hate us?, asked so often today. In a case study of Turkey, Nur Bilge Criss reminds us that 1960s anti-Americanism involved secular protesters more than it involved religious fundamentalists. Leftist radicals opposed the U.S. government's violations of other nations' sovereignty, violations that were strikingly routine during the Cold War era and perhaps still routine today. In Turkey, the Cold War-era protests led to internal battles that raged through the 1970s between leftist factions, on the one side, and right-wing ultranationalists and Islamic fundamentalists, on the other.

Our authors also demonstrate how Cold War visions led the United States to enter Afghanistan from the late 1940s on. Nick Cullather looks at the failed American attempts to reform Afghanistan—and ally it with the United States—in the 1950s and 1960s. The centerpiece of the nation-building effort was an ambitious project to construct dams and canals and irrigate desert for agricultural use. The attempt to impose American technological know-how on the different terrain and cul- ture of Afghanistan resulted in sustained environmental damage, undermined the local pastoral economy, and elicited resistance from both the nomads and the farmers who inhabited the region. John Prados investigates a subsequent phase in this history, the 1980s anti-Soviet forays of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in Afghanistan. In order to fight the Soviet Union, the CIA engaged in a secret war to support the Muslim fundamentalists who opposed Communist rule, and thus the U.S. government ended up promoting the very forces that supported the September 11 attacks. In sum, the recent war in Afghanistan has a Cold War history, replete with earlier U.S. attempts to reconstruct a nation and to woo allies among the warring peoples of Afghanistan.

The events of September 11 also direct us to other lines of international fracture. Most notably, they underscore the significance of the Middle East as a key zone of conflict in the late twentieth century. The Iranian revolution of 1979 now appears as a neglected turning point or perhaps a harbinger of post-Cold War American and world history. The hostage crisis that ensued demonstrated the depth of anti-Americanism in the Muslim world, promoted the decline of the Cold War mentality among American foreign policy makers, and brought international terrorism into American public culture in unprecedented ways. The Iran-

ian revolution also made manifest a new stage in the politication of Islam. In this volume, R. Scott Appleby and Bruce B. Lawrence examine the history of the new Islamic fundamentalism, which was not an ancient tradition, but a modem adaptation. Fundamentalists—Christian, Jewish, and Muslim—have a particular vision of the past, Appleby argues, characterized by a story of declension, in which the faithful endure persecution, suffering, and humiliation, all as a prelude to a dramatic, apocalyptic reversal that will usher in a godly future. Modern Islamic fundamentalists emerged in the 1920s and formed an influential organization, the Muslim Brotherhood, in Egypt in 1928. Their intellectual leaders wrote a history of modem moral and religious decline that accompanied their call Islamic law and Islamic government. That version of history helped inspire Islamic extremism in the Iranian revolution, in the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, and in Osama bin Laden's Al-Qaeda terrorist network, to name just a few of the most obvious cases. Bruce B. Lawrence emphasizes the economic roots of modem Islamic extremism. He looks to the history of poverty and shifts our attention away from religious fundamentalism and toward global inequities.

If nationalist ideals, anti-Americanism, U.S. interventions in Afghanistan, and politicized Islam have their own (sometimes overlapping) histories, then so too does the U.S. war on terrorism. Melani McAlister tells us that "the war without end" had its beginnings well before September 11, 2001. In the 1970s the American mass media presented sympathetic stories on Israel's war on terrorism, and in the 1980s the Reagan administration explicitly formulated anti-terrorist policies. In the 1970s, in the wake of the Vietnam War, journalists, commentators, policy makers, and politicians engaged in serious debates about how to define terrorism and whether military power could win a war against it. By the 1980s, after Iranian revolutionaries had held fifty-two Americans for 444 days, the war against terrorism provided a rationale for military buildup and intervention in the Middle East. Meanwhile, the mass media, especially Hollywood movies, told and retold stories about combating terrorists, stories that had recognizable subplots concerning assertions of U.S. strength and the rescue of hostages. After September 11, McAlister points out, the "new" war seemed to drawn the Hollywood version of the war on terrorism and also seemed to erase the earlier moment of serious discussion and open debate.

The war on terrorism also pushes, us to rethink the history of U.S. foreign policy. In this volume, Bruce R. Kuniholm looks to the shifting geopolitical contexts in which U.S. presidents since World War II have

set forth doctrines or rationales to guide their foreign policy practices in the Middle East and Southwest Asia. In a primer on foreign policy, Kuniholm reviews those doctrines, from President Harry S. Truman's commitment to contain communism to President Bill Clinton's determination to contain the hegemonic operations of Iran and Iraq. What should a "Bush doctrine" look like? Kuniholm calls on President George W. Bush to elaborate on his vision of containing both terrorism and the regimes that sponsor them. He offers his own suggestions for a new presidential doctrine, which include a greater recognition of the need for international cooperation and more positive plans to alleviate the hardships of individuals in the region. A few months after Kuniholm wrote his essay, the Bush administration provided just the kind of fleshed-out doctrine that Kuniholm had requested. In a postscript to his essay, Kuniholm applauds this more recent foreign policy pronouncement.

In her afterword essay, written in the fall of 2002, Marilyn Blatt Young also addresses the more recent changes in U.S. foreign policy, but her assessment differs sharply from Kuniholm's. Young offers a forceful critique of the saber-rattling, war-making policies of the Bush administration. She remembers the restraint involved in the Cold War policies of containment and deterrence and the years of international cooperation in forging rules of acceptable conduct. Young sees ominous signs in the threats of unilateral and preemptive action, she worries that the Bush administration is moving toward an unabashed imperialism in which the U.S. government strong-arms other nations to embrace its vision of a U.S.-led world order.

Although we can outline the historical developments that shaped the attacks of September 11 and the U.S. responses to it, we can only begin to write the history of September 11 itself. What happened on that day and how did it transform the lives of the thousands of people directly affected by it? One way to approach that history is through oral history interviews. In this collection, Mary Marshall Clark describes an oral history project, sponsored by Columbia University, which has already interviewed close to four hundred people. The interviews give us a ground-level social history of confusion, terror, and trauma, and they show us how people construct events as memories and eventually as histories. They also demonstrate that the study of history includes more than the analysis of nations, nationalisms, wars, religions, and policies. A more comprehensive history also addresses the individual lives and everyday voices of ordinary people.

History is always political; that is, it always involves the political assumptions and standpoints of those who write it as well as those who make it. But the history of recent events is often more overtly politicized than the history of the more distant past. Some of the authors in this book comment directly on current events and broadcast their political views. We expect that readers of this book will have their own assessments of current events and their own political views. But all of us, we hope, can agree that we cannot make sense of the present or imagine the future unless we study the past.

Notes

1. *New York Times,* Sept. 12, 2001, p. A26.

2. In the chapter endnotes and in the primary source section, we have provided a number of relevant Web site addresses, all of which were active in 2002. We apologize if some of the Web addresses no longer work.

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