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**NAVAL
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MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

THESIS

**REVOLT AGAINST THE WEST: A COMPARISON OF
THE BOXER REBELLION OF 1900-1901 AND THE
CURRENT WAR AGAINST TERROR**

by

Sven Lange

June 2004

Thesis Advisor:
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**REVOLT AGAINST THE WEST: A COMPARISON OF THE BOXER
REBELLION OF 1900-1901 AND THE CURRENT WAR AGAINST THE WEST**

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
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from the

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ABSTRACT

This thesis compares the Western response to two radical challenges in eras considerably removed in time: the 1900-1901 Boxer rebellion in China and today's Islamic terror. It brings a much-needed historical perspective to bear in assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the contemporary Western conceptualization of the al-Qaeda and Taliban threat as a "clash of civilizations."

Two years after the al-Qaeda terror attack on the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York and the global fight against terrorism run by the USA and its allies has started, there is still no agreement on how these incidents are to be classified and assessed historically. In the USA, September 11 immediately aroused memories of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941. An association with the Boxer Uprising was not made, although it would have been possible with great justification. Whereas the Japanese attack had been an expression of classical state power politics, the Boxer Uprising and the attack on the World Trade Center were non-sovereign terror attacks, symbolizing the fight against the dominance of Western culture and Western influence, sensed as being overpowering. A comparison with the Boxer revolt contributes to a common understanding that Islam and Confucianism are particularly at odds with Western civilization and its democratic, secular, and liberal social and political ethos because of their fundamentally different belief and value system. As it has been the case for the Boxer rebellion, the inevitability of a clash with militant Islamists derives from the universalistic vocation of Western civilization as well as from its global appeal and hence its existential challenge to other civilizations.

The thesis demonstrates that the current struggle against Islamic fundamentalism is not an altogether new challenge to Western interest and values. Al-Qaeda and the Taliban are in the end an expression of the same forces of resistance that also led to the origination of the Boxers in 19th century China. The cultural pressure that the West unavoidably developed by its imperialistic policy in the 19th and early 20th centuries was replaced by the penetration of the world with values, standards and symbols of the Western way of life and civilization in the course of globalization. The West ought to understand that the current terrorist threat is not "the next stage of history," as some

scholars erroneously puts it, but a known historical phenomenon in a new form, for which neither the West nor other cultures bear the blame.

Although there can be no doubt about the fact that both phenomena are the results of unique and complex historical processes, a precise comparison of these differing incidents, separated by less than 100 years, opens our eyes for the specifically new and unique elements of the current challenge to the West. A historical comparison of the West's reaction to the Boxer Rebellion with the efforts by the USA and its allies to counteract the al-Qaeda terror network and the Taliban, who provided it with protection and a safe haven, therefore also permits further statements about the chances of success for the approaches to a solution so far pursued by the West.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Two years after the al-Qaeda terror attack on the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York and the global fight against terrorism run by the USA and its allies began, there is still no agreement on how these incidents are to be classified and assessed historically.¹ Are they the harbingers of the “clash of civilizations” forecast by Samuel P. Huntington? A form of resistance against globalization based on Western values and laws? The result of profane economic interests in power, a question of the control over the global strategic stocks of oil and enormous profits? Or are they a new chapter in the long-lasting historical conflict between the Islamic world and the Occident? Europeans and Americans have realized that there is a unifying streak of anti-Americanism and anti-Westernism pervading Muslim societies all over the world and that fighting it will entail a global enterprise. But as with the 1900-1901 Boxer crisis, the West again has difficulties to agree on a common counter strategy for it does not entirely understand the roots of this *Kulturkampf* between the West and Islam.

In the USA, September 11 immediately aroused memories of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941² An association with the Boxer Uprising was not made, although it would have been possible with great justification to an historically informed observer. Whereas the Japanese attack had been an expression of classical state power politics, the Boxer Uprising and the attack on the World Trade Center were non-sovereign terror attacks, symbolizing the fight against the dominance of Western culture and Western influence, which was perceived to overpowering. A comparison with the Boxer revolt may have contributed to a common understanding that Islam and Confucianism are particularly at odds with Western civilization and its democratic, secular, and liberal social and political ethos “because of their fundamentally different belief and value system.” As it has been the case for the Boxer rebellion, the inevitability of a clash with militant Islamists “derives from the universalistic vocation of Western civilization as well as from its global

¹ See Michael Radu, *Terrorism after the Cold War: Trends and Challenges*, Orbis (2002), pp. 275-287, p. 275-276.

² See Lee Harris, *Civilization and Its Enemies. The Next Stage of History*, New York 2004, p. 3; Bruce Lincoln, *Holy Terrors. Thinking about Religion after September 11*, Chicago 2003, p. 17; Paul Rogers, *A War on Terror. Afghanistan and After*, London 2004, p. 15-16.

appeal and hence its existential challenge to other civilizations.”³ Nevertheless, the often-made comparison of the terror attacks of 9/11 with the Japanese attack in 1941 proves the need and usefulness of an historical perspective for any analysis of the West's current confrontation with Islamic extremism.

In the combat against terror, in particular in the campaign against the Taliban in Afghanistan, analogies to imperial China in 1900 become apparent. In both cases, the enemy frequently remained out of focus and, it soon became clear, could not be beaten by military means alone. Whereas the European colonial powers, including the United States of America and Japan, saw themselves confronted with an equally ant-Western, xenophobic and religiously motivated challenge to their imperialistic claim to power at the start of the 20th century, the current terror in the name of Islam is interpreted as a fight against the cultural and ideological leadership of the West and as a “clash of civilizations.”⁴ Boxers and Islamists have in common a furious rejection of Western culture and values and the wish to preserve their own, century-old civilization which is dangerously threatened by the global spread of Western power, economics, way of life and culture. As Hedley Bull already demonstrated in 1984, this negative reaction to Western cultural domination goes along with a revolt against everything the West stands for:

But the re-assertion by [...] non Western peoples of their traditional and indigenous cultures, as exemplified in Islamic fundamentalism [...] has raised the question whether what has been widely interpreted as a revolt against Western dominance carried out in the name of Western values, is not a revolt against Western values as such.⁵

As in the past, from a superficial point of view, the West today sees itself confronted with similar risks and challenges similar to those in dealing with the Boxers and reacts with comparable strategies. Against this background, it appears helpful to use the historical example of the Boxer Rebellion as a reference in the analysis and

³ Shireen T. Hunter, *The Future of Islam and the West. Clash of Civilizations or Peaceful Coexistence*, Westport 1998, p. 6.

⁴ See Glenn E. Perry, *Huntington and His Critics: The West and Islam*, *Arab Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 24 (2002), no.1, pp. 31-48.

⁵ Hedley Bull, *The Revolt Against the West*, in Hedley Bull/Adam Watson (ed.), *The Expansion of International Society*, Oxford 1984, pp. 217-228, p. 223.

assessment of the current phenomenon of Islamic terror and, in particular, in the search for suitable and promising possibilities of reacting to this threat.

In the condemnation of part or the entire West by the Boxers and Islamists, the West has been and still is often described as innocent. While the Boxer movement is described as an effort to preserve an ancient Confucian society and to stop Western modernization that threatened its very existence, it has been – and still is – argued that the Islamists’ revulsion toward the West stems from Muslim feelings of humiliation occasioned by the fact that Islamic countries have found themselves subordinate to the West since the late 18th century.⁶ In this explanation, mainly given vent to by Bernard Lewis, it is argued that there are vestiges of an originally Manichaean belief in “cosmic power struggle between Good and Evil” in all three great monotheistic religions, but “Islam’s problem” is that it never got rid of the dangerous implications this has because it did not experience anything similar to the Enlightenment and subsequent separation of church and state. Now that the Muslim world has been subjugated on a global scale, it is regarded as inevitable that Muslims continue their 14 centuries-old struggle between East and West, Islam and (post-) Christianity. Regardless of what the West does, this struggle will rage until “more tolerant Islamic traditions” prevail. Such is the argument of Bernard Lewis in his famous *Roots of Muslim Rage*.⁷

The reasoning of Lewis and like-minded writers completely ignores the socio-economic factors that drive people against their current regimes and against the West, which is regarded as an exploitive power. Neither does it pay attention to political factors like the fact that these regimes are known to be corrupt and not to offer much chance for a fast growing population. Most importantly for this discussion, Lewis downgrades the importance of concrete Western civilizing pressure. A first attempt to put the current widespread hating of the West in its historical background and “trace their historical roots” is Ian Burumas and Avishai Margalits recent published work *Occidentalism: The*

⁶ See Hunter, *The Future of Islam and the West*, p. 14-15. “Militant and revolutionary Islam, however, appears to recognize no boundaries between the private and the public domains and attempts to regulate the totality of individual and collective life. It is viewed as a totalitarian – an antidemocratic and anti-Western creed. It is backward looking and xenophobic, which makes it fear Western ideas and presence. It opposes Western presence in the Muslim lands and challenges the West’s global supremacy. The Islam that preaches this is the nemesis of Western civilization.”

⁷ Bernard Lewis, *The Roots of Muslim Rage*, in *The Atlantic Monthly*, Vol. 266 (1990), no. 3, pp. 47-60; an extended version is published recently: Bernard Lewis, *The Crisis of Islam: Holy War and Unholy Terror*, New York 2004

West in the Eyes of Its Enemies.⁸ Buruma/Margalit coin the expression “Occidentalism” to describe “the dehumanizing picture of the West painted by its enemies”.⁹ Using examples of German, Japanese, and Russian ant-Western philosophy, they try “to understand what drives Occidentalism”.¹⁰ The aim of this paper is to widen this much needed historical perspective in assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the contemporary Western conceptualization of the al-Qaeda and Taliban threat as a “clash of civilizations”. A comparison with the historical Boxer phenomenon may in particular help to examine the Western impact on the Islamic world, the Western cultural pressure and its consequences.

Although there can be no doubt about the fact that both phenomena are the results of unique and complex historical processes, a precise comparison of these differing incidents separated by less than 100 years opens our eyes for the specifically new and unique elements of the current challenge to the West. A historical comparison of the West's reaction to the Boxer Rebellion with the efforts by the USA and its allies to counteract the al-Qaeda terror network and the Taliban, who provided it with protection and a safe haven, therefore also permits further judgments about the chances of success for the approaches to a solution so far pursued by the West.

⁸ Ian Buruma/Avishai Margalit, *Occidentalism: The West in the Eyes of Its Enemies*, New York 2004.

⁹ *Ibid*, p. 5.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 11.

II. PRELIMINARY REMARKS

A. THE WEST – THEN AND NOW

In this thesis, reference is made to an uprising against “the West”, and so this term needs to be defined more precisely and rendered as a hypothesis. Above all, we need clarification of whether and, if so, why the Western states were sensed as a threat at the beginning of both the previous and also the present century. Regardless of this, it is a question of recognizing that “the West” as a uniform bloc of albeit independent and self-supporting, but finally replaceable states does not exist.¹¹ Hence, the idea of “the West” seems problematic.¹² Despite all they have in common, the incidents following 9/11 and after the second Gulf War have made clear that the West appears to be a long way away from a unified policy.

Although no consensus exists as to a definition of the West, scholars of the subject typically acknowledge its derivation from three distinct sources: the classical culture of Greece and Rome, the Christian religion - particularly Western Christianity, and the Enlightenment of the modern era. The conflicts, creative tensions, and unstable equilibrium among the West’s three constitute some of the most distinctive features of the West. Individual and community, faith and reason, liberty and law, market and society – all coexist as a series of uneasy pairings. Of course, variants of these four tensions have existed within most societies, and in some senses they are universal. Only in the West, however, have they been embodied and sustained in separate political institutions and social elites over long periods of time.¹³

The differences among the Western states can be seen in a closer comparison. Whereas Great Britain, the USA and France developed parliamentary democracies by the end of the 19th century, Russia was still an autocratically shaped country in which the czar ruled to a great extent absolutely. The German Reich and Italy were mixed forms having elected parliaments and crowned heads of state, whose throne was hereditary. In

¹¹ See Buruma/Margalit, *Occidentalism*.

¹² See Maja Zehfuss, *Forget September 11*, *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 24 (2003), No. 3, pp. 513-528.

¹³ See Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation. The political and Economic Origins of Our Time*, Boston 1944.

Great Britain's empire, which was based on unique marine power, the sun never set. After its expansion, Russia became an Asiatic power since the 17th century, but essentially remained a purely land power. After defeat in the German-French War, France expanded its own colonial empire, during which it repeatedly got into conflicts of interest with Great Britain, the other major colonial power. The USA completed the annexation of the North American continent and became a colonial power with the annexation of the Philippines, although it maintained its anti-colonial rhetoric from the days of the War of Independence.¹⁴ The German Reich rose to become the greatest power in Central Europe following its unification, but it was only able to undertake naval competition with Great Britain in a half-hearted way due to its geographical location and thus remained, above all, a territorial and second-class colonial power, despite all its efforts.¹⁵

Developments that followed could lead to a mistaken merit in talking of the “West” with great justification now than at that time. However, the Western states probably formed a more harmonious cultural and political unit on the eve of the Boxer Uprising than nowadays, despite the mutual deep lack of trust and the enormous conflicts of interest among the European powers. At the end of the 19th century, the degree of intermeshing and of cultural and economic exchange between the Western states was higher than in the 1960's.¹⁶ Europe had already become a global civilization in the course of its aggressive colonization policy to a degree quite similar to today's. The international system of states created by Europe, an “international society that was universal in the sense that it covered all the world” additionally developed.¹⁷ The European nations

¹⁴ See Stuart Creighton Miller, “Benevolent Assimilation”. The American Conquest of the Philippines, 1899-1903, New Haven 1982.

¹⁵ See Robert K. Massie, Dreadnought. Britain, Germany and the Coming of the Great War, New York 1991.

¹⁶ See John Maynard Keynes eloquent and oft-cited description of the pre-World War I economy: “What an extraordinary episode in the economic progress of man that age was which came to an end in August, 1914! [...] Life offered, at a low cost and with the least trouble, conveniences, comforts, and amenities beyond the compass of the richest and most powerful monarchs of other ages. The inhabitant of London could order by telephone, sipping his morning tea in bed, the various products of the whole earth. [...] he could at the same moment and by the same means adventure his wealth in the natural resources and new enterprises of any quarter of the world. [...] But, most important of all, he regarded this state of affairs as normal, certain, and permanent, except in the direction of further improvement, and any deviation from it as aberrant, scandalous, and avoidable.” John Maynard Keynes, Economic Consequences of the Peace, London 1919.

¹⁷ Bull, The Revolt Against the West, p. 217.

became “a diplomatic club with a new set of rules: the law of nations.”¹⁸ The European nations set legal and economic standards and were resolved to assert their universal validity, even with force if need be, as the example of the Boxer Uprising made clear. Europe determined the form and function of international law as it saw fit and for its own benefit. According to Hedley Bull, the dominance of the European or Western powers at the turn of the century

was expressed not only in their economic and military power and in their commanding intellectual and cultural authority but also in the rules and institutions of international society. This society was seen as an association of mainly European and Christian states, to which outside political communities could be admitted only if and when they met the criteria for membership laid down by the founding members as Japan by 1900 was widely deemed to have done and China not yet to have done. The rules of international law which then prevailed had been made, for the most part, by these European or Western states, which had consented to them through custom or treaties concluded among themselves; [...] The international legal rules, moreover, were not only made by the European or Western powers, they were also in substantial measure made *for* them: part, at least, of the content of the then existing international law [...] served to facilitate the maintenance of European or Western ascendancy.¹⁹

Nevertheless, the Western states appear superficially to be a lot more homogeneous today than they were in 1900. The USA and the states of the EU share similar democratic forms of government and are alliance partners in a joint security and defense organization, NATO. Not least thanks to its solidarity, the West was able to banish the threat of communism and to decide the Cold War for itself. But it is precisely in the current battle against Islamistic terror that great differences among the Western powers can be seen. What appears new about this is less and less a difference of opinion about influence and political objectives than differences in mentality.²⁰ The West appears no longer to be able to come to an agreement about how the world is to be ordered and the circumstances under which military force can be justified. In a highly regarded essay,

¹⁸ Michael Freeman, Human Rights, Asian Values and the Clash of Civilizations, *Issues & Studies*, Vol. 34 (1998), no. 10, pp. 48-78, p. 54.

¹⁹ Bull, *The Revolt Against the West*, p. 217.

²⁰ See Steven Everts, *Unilateral America, Lightweight Europe? Managing Divergence in Transatlantic Foreign Policy*, Working paper, Centre for European Reform, February 2001.

Robert Kagan insinuates that the European powers no longer regard force as an admissible means of politics and exclusively stress international law, negotiations and international cooperation. Whereas the USA continue to be convinced of the validity of an anarchic world view and the necessity of realist politics connected with this, the Europeans, Kagan polemicists, have increasingly gone into a “post-historical paradise of peace and relative prosperity, the realization of Kant’s 'Perpetual Peace'.”²¹ The reasons for the increasing drift apart of Europe and the USA are to be found long in the past. The West is in the process of losing its unity, says Kagan:

That is why on major strategic and international questions today, Americans are from Mars and Europeans are from Venus: They agree on little and understand one another less and less. And this state of affairs is not transitory – the product of one American election or one catastrophic event. The reasons for the transatlantic divide are deep, long in development, and likely to endure. When it comes to setting national priorities, determining threats, defining challenges, and fashioning and implementing foreign and defense policies, the United States and Europe have parted ways.²²

Kagan's criticism, even if justified, does not answer the question whether these rupture lines within the West are also perceived from the outside. For the Boxer Uprising, we can state with great certainty that a differentiation of the West by the Chinese did not take place. Europeans and Americans, even Japanese, were equated to a great extent and generalized as “foreign devils”. As a matter of fact, “in their attitudes to other peoples [...] the Western powers displayed a measure of unity, of which a striking expression on 1900 was their intervention in China to suppress the Boxer Rising.”²³

Although al-Qaeda has made a number of efforts to separate the USA from the European allies by promises and threats, there can be little doubt that Islamic terror hardly makes the effort to differentiate and mainly perceives the West as a monolithic, and hostile bloc. Osama bin Laden's ultimatum of April 2004 and Spain's reaction to the

²¹ Robert Kagan, Power and weakness, Policy Review, 113, p.

²² Ibid.

²³ See Bull, The Revolt Against the West, p. 220.

attacks of 3/11 make no change to this attitude.²⁴ In any case, the USA is regarded as the spearhead of globalization and thus as the main representatives of the Western threat. In his article *Global Triumph or Western Twilight?*, James Kurth makes the special position of the USA as the “sole superpower,” the leading nation in information technology and as the most progressive post-modern society in the Western world his subject. “If America is the fulfillment of the West”, he draws his balance, “then the triumph of America in the world is the triumph of the West.”²⁵ So the essential fact remains is that knowledge of whether the West actually forms a unit only has a slight influence. On the other hand, the fact that it is only perceived as such from the outside is of decisive importance.²⁶

Back in 1897, the noted naval strategist Alfred Thayer Mahan argued that the coming century was likely to see a conflict of civilizations, specifically between the West and East. The rise of the non-West, in particular East Asia, was bound to challenge Western supremacy in world affairs. This, however, was an inevitable outcome of the coming closer together of peoples and races, which itself had been made possible by modern technological advances that established a “multiplication of communication” throughout the world. A non-West untouched by modern civilization was no threat to Western civilization, but a modernized East, Mahan believed, clearly was. To cope with this coming crisis, it would be imperative for the Western powers to ensure that non-Western peoples become spiritually as well as materially westernized. But if such prospect could not be counted upon, and Mahan was very pessimistic in this regard, then the West would have no choice but to strengthen its military in preparation for the expected onslaught by non-West.²⁷

²⁴ In an audiotape a speaker claiming to be Osama bin Laden offered a truce with Europe. It said that any state in Europe that stopped “attacking Muslims or interfering in their affairs” would be spared al-Qaida operations, but offered no such deal to the United States. “Bin Laden” offers Europe truce, http://new.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/3627775.stm, last visited on May 1, 2004.

²⁵ James Kurth, *Global Triumph or Western Twilight*, in *Orbis* 45, 3 (2001), pp. 333-341, p. 337.

²⁶ James Kurth, *The War and the West*, *Orbis*, Vol. 46 (2002), no. 2, pp. 321-332, p. 321: „The war is actually one between Western nations (who think themselves as being less Western than they really are) and Islamic terrorists (who think of themselves as being more representative of Islam than they really are). But because the war involves nations that are both Western in fact and Western in the minds of the Islamist terrorists, it engages the West. The way that the leading nation of the West, the United States, wages this war will be greatly shaped by the nature of Western civilization.”

²⁷ Abstract taken from Akira Iriye, *The End of the Century: Emerging Themes, Disappearing Themes, Issues & Studies*, Vol. 34 (1998), no. 10, pp. 10-24, p. 11.

Mahan's conclusions seem to have stood the test of time. Although the means by which Western civilization claims dominance over the world have changed since the end of the 19th century, the effect in the present is similar. Then as now, the West is perceived above all as an alien civilization by other countries of the world, the innovative power and vitality of which is sensed as a threat, exercising a high pressure of transformation. Even a Europe that relies less on military power than on the power of international law and international cooperation in the concert of states propagates a system that declares Western values and standards to be universal. Samuel Huntington therefore draws the conclusion:

The problem for Islam is not the CIA or the U.S. Department of Defense. It is the West, a different civilization whose people are convinced of the universality of their culture and believe that their superior, if declining, power imposes on them the obligation to extend that culture throughout the world. These are the basic ingredients that fuel conflict between Islam and the West.²⁸

Bernard Lewis sees things similarly in his recently published study *The Crisis of Islam*. According to him, Moslem hatred is less a result of the rejection of certain interests, actions, political measures or individual states, but of the rejection of the Western civilization per se. The actual hatred of the Moslems is aimed at principles and values to which the West confesses and which run counter to the core of Moslem civilization.²⁹ Immediately after the terror attacks of 9/11, Norman Podhoertz exclaimed in the *Wall Street Journal* that a "barbaric culture had declared war not because of our policies but for what we stood for – democracy and freedom."³⁰ The Islamist's campaign is rooted in a visceral hatred and contempt for Western civilization as such and resentment at its global ascendancy.

Then as now, the West should not only become conscious of its impact, but also gain the insight that it is confronted with a civilization that is convinced of the superiority of its own civilization to an equal extent and that understands itself as the spearhead of

²⁸ Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, New York 1996, p. 217-218.

²⁹ Lewis, *The Crisis of Islam*, p. 26.

³⁰ Norman Podhoertz, *Israel Is Not the Issue*, *Wall Street Journal*, September 20, 2001.

the development of humanity. This self-perception of the Chinese and Moslem civilization is the object of the examination which now follows.

B. THE HERITAGE OF PAST GREATNESS

The West's expansion and civilization pressure since the 18th century increasingly caused the necessity of modernization and westernization of the societies in other regions of the world.³¹ However, the ability to react to this threat differed among the countries affected, as can be seen from a comparison of two societies with a Confucian character: Japan and China. Essentially, non-Western countries had three alternatives. They were able to adopt the model of the West completely and bring about both a modernization and also a westernization of their societies. This was rare. Instead, most cultures restricted themselves to carrying out a partial modernization, above all in the military field.³² A radical transformation of society on a Western basis, i.e. a take-over of Western political and social institutions, was regularly resisted by the understandable wish to maintain cultural identity. This limited adaptation was quite obvious, as the military/technical superiority of the West left hardly any doubt about the necessity of a change, but Western civilization was rejected as being alien and unfitting. The third and most radical reaction to the challenge of the West was a rigorous rejection of both facets of Western expansion. Neither the achievements of modern Western society nor the civilization of the West were recognized as being exemplary and worth aiming at.

³¹ See Buruma/Margalit, *Occidentalism*, p. 38.

³² For the Muslim countries see John L. Esposito, *The Islamic Threat. Myth or Reality*, 3rd ed., New York 1999, p. 75: "while most [Muslim states] looked to the West for the basis of their systems of modern constitutional government, law, and education, they have also injected Islamic provisions into their constitutions, requiring that the head of state be a Muslim or that Islamic law be recognized as a source of law." For China see Buruma/Avishai, *Occidentalism*, p. 38-39: "Chinese imperial rule was justified by a cosmic order. China was in the centre of the world, and the dragon throne occupied the spiritual and political centre of the Chinese empire. The scientific challenge of this cosmic order, imported from the West, was apolitical challenge as well. And so, of course, were liberalism, individualism, and Christianity. The rejection of these Western influences, more often than not, was a defense of a monopoly of power, of the divine monarch and his courtiers. So the nineteenth-century Chinese establishment scholars found an indigenous formula: Western knowledge for practical matters, such as weaponry, and Chinese learning for spiritual and moral affairs."

The Boxer Movement and also modern Moslem extremism shared radical rejection as a joint characteristic. This lack of willingness and ability for transformation can only be explained by reference to a self-image marked by past historical greatness. Both Chinese civilization and the Moslem world had been able to develop a sense of superiority of civilization over the West with a certain justification. The fact that the West, regarded as barbaric and uncivilized, could not only catch up with their own level of development, but also even overtake their own civilization, was basically unimaginable, as both the Chinese civilization as well as the Moslem world conferred the top position inside the development of humanity to themselves per definition, albeit for differing reasons. Falling behind the West could therefore only be a temporary matter and the only explanation for short-term failure was treason.³³

So if Chinese and Islamic civilizations are similar in their postulated superiority compared with the West, they fundamentally differ in two regards, and it is precisely these differences which make the challenge of the West by modern Islamism appear particularly threatening. Unlike Chinese civilization, Islam overcomes borders of races and states and was therefore able to develop a universal claim from the outset.³⁴

Both Christianity and Islam claimed a universal mission; each was a transnational community based upon common belief and a vocation to be an example to the nations of the world, the vehicle for the spread and triumph of God's kingdom.³⁵

On this point, Islam and Christianity are similar. The theological similarities of Christendom and Islam, however, put the two on a collision course. Each believes in the history of God's revelation and that its revelation and messenger marked the end of revelation and prophecy. Both have an urge to world-wide evangelism across the barriers of peoples and races as a common point, whereas the Chinese Empire tended to set up increasingly higher barriers between its own cultural territory as the assumed "center" of

³³ See Hunter, *The Future of Islam and the West* p. 12: "Islam is a proselytizing creed with a belief in its own ultimate victory and universal prevalence, no matter how serious the tribulations of the journey."

³⁴ See Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, New York 1992, p. 45: "The appeal of Islam is potential universal, reaching out to all means as means, and not just to members of a particular ethnic or national group."

³⁵ Esposito, *The Islamic Threat*, p. 36.

the world and the uncultivated, “barbaric” peoples on its periphery.³⁶ Bassam Tibi summarizes this dilemma as follows:

Islam has become the West’s leading challenger for one simple reason: [...] Islamic perspectives are not restricted to national or regional boundaries. In this respect, Islam resembles Western civilization, in the sense that it is universal in both its claims and its outlook. It is thus easy to understand why Islam and the West clash, more consistently than do other competing civilizations. Unlike Western civilization, however, Islam, though universal, has not been able to spread the *da’wa*/Islamic mission throughout the world. [...] In fact, the concept of world order posed by these fundamentalists competes with Western universalism.³⁷

On the other hand, the historical dimensions of the inter-cultural conflict differed. China regarded Europe's powers as peripheral, insignificant and under no circumstances on a par. If anything, they might become vassals obliged to pay tribute until the middle of the 19th century, when this opponent rose to become a deadly threat. Unlike this, the confrontation between the West and the Muslim world has a history of 1,300 years. The Western and Muslim worlds share a long, joint history, marked by conflict, mutual stimulation, religious ignorance and prejudices. It stands to reason to look for a cause of why the Moslem world feels so humiliated by the current superiority of Western civilization in precisely these years of familiarity.

1. “The Middle Kingdom” and the Western Barbarians at the Periphery

By the middle of the 19th century, the Manchu Ch’ing dynasty (1644-1911), the last phase of China’s *ancient régime*, reached a crossroads and entered a phase of decline. Nevertheless, the political system that it had created over an extended period was still capable of preserving political stability. Yet, Western imperialism finally brought about

³⁶ See Hunter, *The Future of Islam and the West*, p. 12: “Islam cuts across continents, nationalities, and ethnic groups and thus besides Christianity is the only other global religion. None of the other candidates – such as Confucianism – for the role of the West’s antagonist seems to match Islam as a system of beliefs, values, and guides for socio-political organization; they are too nebulous and unstructured. Confucianism is relevant only to China although it is influential in other parts of East Asia.”

³⁷ Bassam Tibi, *The Challenge of Fundamentalism, Political Islam and the New World Order*, Berkeley 1998, p. 15.

the disintegration of traditional institutions and Confucian culture. Ironically, it was the relatively greater stability of the Manchu dynasty³⁸ and Chinese traditional society that made it difficult for China to modernize as quickly as Japan, where a kind of aristocratic revolution from above made non-traditional responses and a Western-type overall transformation possible.³⁹ Unlike their predecessors, the Ch'ing, however, did not give way to a new reform in the pattern of the dynastic cycle but to a nearly complete decentralization of political power and the lack of internal leadership that characterized the warlord era. It was the convergence and interplay of internal factors with the Western imperialism after 1840 that eventually brought about the downfall of the Ch'ing dynasty, whereas the disintegration of traditional Chinese constitutions and Confucian values was caused by Western influence alone.⁴⁰

The longest lived and most populous polity in world history had changed so slowly over millennia that sometimes it seemed not to have changed at all. Then suddenly and nearly simultaneously, China was struck with equivalents of the enlightenment, the French Revolution and industrialization. Thus, as in the Islamic world today, Western intruders exerted disruptive influence on Chinese society, threatening the traditional economic system, elite prerogatives, and the Chinese world order. Moreover the Western powers became a danger to China's security and sovereignty. Defeating China in two wars (the Opium War 1840 and the Arrow War 1858-1860), they began to undermine the very foundations of the imperial system – the self-sufficiency of the agricultural economy, the bonds of the family system, the ideology of the classics, and the empire-tribute system – which had given the Chinese civilization its amazing cultural continuity.⁴¹

³⁸ See John K. Fairbank/Edwin O. Reischauer/Albert M. Craig, *East Asia: Tradition & Transformation*, revised edition, Boston 1989, p. 211: "In studying their [the Manchu] achievement, however, we cannot help wondering to what extent their very success in maintaining the traditional order may have been a factor in its later collapse. So well established was the Chinese tradition that a thoroughgoing change of institutions and values could not easily be imagined. The Manchu were more successful as inheritors than as innovators; it was not in them to remake the Chinese scheme of things."

³⁹ See Peter Duus, *Modern Japan*, Boston and New York 1998.

⁴⁰ See Paul Cohen, *Discovering History in China: American Historical Writing on the Recent Chinese Past*, New York 1984.

⁴¹ See Frederic Wakeman, *The Fall of Imperial China*, New York 1975, pp. 135-142.

The initial reaction of China's ruling Confucian intellectuals in the decade of the 1860's was to reinvigorate the old social order by reforms in the traditional manner and to strengthen the country against the menace of the Western powers by utilizing the very technological advances that had placed China at the mercy of Western imperialism. The objects of the reforms had been to insure the continued existence of the old order in the face of Western imperialism.⁴² China's intellectuals thus used the same tactics as the Islamists today. These efforts failed miserably. China's "response to the West" and China's responses to internal Chinese political conditions were inseparably linked. In the short lapse of time granted to China to create a modern industry and to renovate its military, between 1864 and 1894, it had simultaneously to end revolts, re-establish its authority in central Asia, make good all the destruction, and struggle on all sides against attacks from outside. Public opinion and important parts of the government were afraid that the creation of factories, mines, and railways would increase the hold of foreign capital on the Chinese economy, increase unemployment, and strengthen the power of the regional governors at the expense of the central authorities. In the matter of reforming and modernization, China tended to reject through xenophobic reflex what it would have accepted had it been more independent. Thus the Western intrusion not only caused in the long run the collapse of the traditional order but also prevented indirectly any attempts for reform. Again, the similarities with the Islamic world are evident.

The area in which even restoration officials accepted the need for innovation along Western lines best was the reorganization of China's military. Again, military modernization needed not disturb the equilibrium of the traditional society. But any modernized army with a competent officer corps would have disrupted the very social order the new army were designed to protect. The question was whether it was possible in general for the new to exist alongside the old and not exert strong pressure for further change.⁴³ The premise that revival of Confucian values and institutions could provide strength and stability was erroneous because China was slowly being westernized in spite

⁴² See Richard J. Smith, *China's Cultural Heritage: The Qing Dynasty, 1644-1912*, 2nd ed., Boulder 1994, p. 285: "Naturally enough, the conservative Manchu government did nothing to encourage the Westernization of Chinese culture during the nineteenth century. The Manchu had, after all, originally justified their conquest in terms of the protection of China's cultural heritage. They could therefore scarcely appear to abandon traditional values, practices, and institutions without compromising their political position."

⁴³ See *ibid*, p. 288.

of bureaucratic decisions. Dynamic forces for change were beginning to nibble away at the foundations of the Confucian system.⁴⁴

One of the major obstacles to modernization along Western patterns for both China and the Islamic world was (is) their strong confidence in the superiority of its culture and civilization. China saw itself as the cultural center of the universe and regarded all non-Chinese as “uncivilized” barbarians.⁴⁵ This belief was reflected in the Chinese name for their country as “The Central Kingdom” or “The Middle Kingdom.” The Chinese ruler, “the Son of Heaven,” was considered the ruler of all mankind; all other “barbarian” rulers were mere local chieftains owing allegiance to Peking.⁴⁶ Hence, there could be no Western-style diplomatic relations. As Frederic Wakeman states in his work *The Fall of Imperial China*:

all barbarians were placed beneath the Chinese in an ideal world order of which their empire was the Central Kingdom (Chung-kuo). China alone was thought to represent true civilization; only its ruler, the Son of heaven, deserved to sit at the apex of the hierarchy of earthly monarchs. Korean kings, Annamese monarchs, and Japanese emperors all ruled in their own right, but within the Confucian hierarchy they were ranked as younger brothers of the Chinese emperor, who was expected to ratify their investitures. People who failed to observe the Confucian rites of monarchy were placed much lower in the hierarchy, so that like a great ladder of being the entire world order descended from higher civilization to the lower rungs of barbarism.⁴⁷

Over the whole 18th century, the Ch’ing dynasty felt unrivalled. Never in history had the Chinese enjoyed such general security and power as during the middle years of the 18th century, the great “Indian summer” of their traditional history.⁴⁸ However, the *pax sinica* that the Manchu offered China had some serious side effects because it

⁴⁴ Jonathan D. Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, New York/London 1990, p. 140.

⁴⁵ See Smith, *China’s Cultural Heritage*, p. 137: “The Chinese views of other peoples, which evolved over many centuries of extensive contact with foreigners [...] was based on the essentially unchallenged idea of China’s cultural superiority to all other states.”

⁴⁶ See Buruma/Margalit, *Occidentalism*, p. 38.

⁴⁷ Wakeman, *The Fall of Imperial China*, p. 111.

⁴⁸ See Fairbank/Reischauer/Craig, *East Asia*, p. 211: “The Ch’ing period saw both the zenith and the nadir of the traditional Chinese state. In the eighteenth century the population and territory of the empire were the largest they had ever been, and the finesse and stability of administration were at high point.”

demanded self-restraint, maintenance and consolidation rather than initiative and exploration. In contrast to the Chōshū and Satsuma leaders in Japan or the Islamists in the Muslim world, the Manchu as an alien dynasty could not easily mobilize national and patriotic feelings to support attempts at modernization. By doing so, they unavoidably ran the risk of creating a danger for their own foreign rule, as the Boxer Rebellion proved.⁴⁹

China reacted not as a cultural subunit but as a large ethnocentric universe that remained quite sure of its cultural superiority, even if relatively inferior in military power. China refused to accept that Western aggression could become a question of survival. For the most of the 19th century, the Ch'ing seems to have been too weak militarily to protect itself from imperialism, but too strong culturally to surrender political initiative to Western-oriented modernizers. In fact, the long twilight of the tributary system helps explain China's lack of a sustained sense of crisis and its lingering Sino-centrism. Traditional concepts and explanations were all too effective in distorting reality.

It was only a matter of time until the expansive, aggressive West, incapable of being contained within the Chinese traditional system of "tribute and trade," shattered the walls raised by China. The Treaty of Tientsin (1858) and the Convention of Peking (1860), which ended the first series of clashes with these Western countries, established formal equality between the rulers of China and Western powers.⁵⁰ By doing so, the Chinese claim that the "Mandate of Heaven" was global ended. The treaty undermined the ideological sanction of dynastic rule, a first step in the destruction of Chinese traditional imperial order. Moreover, the Opium War was not only broke down Chinese barriers against Western free trade and the acceptance of Western norms of state relations and international laws, as the West saw it. It was also the clash of two opposed political systems: the traditional world order of imperial China and the international order of nation-states that had emerged in the West since the treaty of Westphalia in 1648. When China was forced to open to the free flow of Western trade, when the Chinese government was forced to accept foreign nations on equal terms, and when Chinese law

⁴⁹ See Smith, *China's Cultural Heritage*, p. 289: "Despite their reform efforts, the Manchus became increasingly scorned and despised for their inability either to resist imperialism or to protect elite interests. Chinese nationalism no longer permitted alien rulers to claim legitimacy as the protectors of China's cultural heritage."

⁵⁰ See Wakeman, *The Fall of Imperial China*, p. 137-139.

and sovereignty judicial authority was discarded with respect to foreigners in China, the concept of the “Mandate of Heaven” was fatally affected.⁵¹ The Opium War and the Treaty of Nanking signaled the end of the imperial era because in its aftermath the imperial powers not only obtained more and more concessions within China but also began to interfere in the imperial government’s control over the dependent areas of empire.⁵²

At various points in their history, the Chinese had been able to accept being tutored in the arts of war by “barbarians.” China’s leadership, however, could not accept that military modernization along Western lines also required an overall reform of traditional society, economy and state.⁵³ The creation of new military institutions to deal with the Western countries was therefore only accepted as a temporary step.⁵⁴ Thus, even in those areas in which the reformers achieved some progressive changes, the generally noninnovative character of the Chinese policy in the 19th century was never challenged.

In short, unable and unwilling to undertake fundamental or even revolutionary reform steps, the Manchus sought salvation in a revival of Confucian values and institutions. Facing Western industrialized countries, that believed in social Darwinism and in a race between the nations, such a restoration of the traditional Chinese order was impossible because the requirements of a modern Chinese state able to resist Western imperialism proved to run directly counter to the requirements of the traditional Confucian order. Throughout its history, China has often shown a deep conservatism in regard to social, political, and economic change. Political and social innovations were

⁵¹ See Immanuel C. Y. Hsu, *The Rise of Modern China*, 4th edition, New York 1990, pp. 168-219.

⁵² See Ranbir Vohra, *China’s Path to Modernization: A Historical Review from 1800 to the Present*, Englewood Cliffs 1987, p. 64: “The competition between imperialist powers in China spilled over into the states on the periphery of China, resulting in weakening China in another unexpected way. The concept of the Central (Middle) Kingdom was good as long as China was surrounded by the ring of tributary states [...] By 1895 many of these states were removed from China’s orbit, thus destroying the world order in which China was ‘central’.”

⁵³ See *ibid.*, p. 76: “Even when it became an open secret that the Western military was superior to that of China, an attempt was made so separate ‘guns and ships’ from the Western civilization a polity that had produced these instruments of aggression.”

⁵⁴ Prince Kung and his associates underlined the temporary character of the reform efforts in their memorial requesting the establishment of the Tsungli Yamen: “As soon as the military campaigns are concluded and the affairs of the various countries are simplified, the new office will be abolished and its functions will [...] revert to the Grand Council for management so as to accord with the old system.” Cited in Teng Ssu-yü and John K. Fairbank, *China’s Response to the West: A Documentary Survey, 1839-1923*, Cambridge 1979, p. 48.

embedded within traditional patterns in order to legitimate their implementation.⁵⁵ The military and economic pressure of Western imperialism challenged China in a unique way and in doing so, created a crisis of such magnitude that no choice was left than to abandon cultural and political conservatism. Though the traditional Chinese world may have seemed the best of all worlds to the ruling group in China, it was no longer a possible one.

2. The Islamic Divine Order and the Empire of the True Believers

The tendency currently observed in a number of Moslem countries toward political radicalization of religion, to Islamism, has its origins in the gradual decline of the Islamic civilization and in the feeling of a continued humiliation by the West. The same attitude of high and modern civilization that the West currently claims for itself was one which Arabs and Ottomans assumed against medieval Europe, including the claim to modern state forms and economic as well as technical leadership. One of the explanations for the Islamists' anger is therefore finding oneself in the opposite situation nowadays.

In his video message of October 7, 2001, Osama bin Laden justified the attacks of September 11 with the continued humiliation of the Moslem world by the West: "What America is tasting now is only a copy of what we have tasted. Our Islamic nation has been tasting the same for more than 80 years of humiliation and disgrace, its sons killed and their blood spilled, its sanctities desecrate."⁵⁶ As early as 1990, Bernard Lewis distinguished three levels of this Moslem humiliation in his famous essay *The Roots of Muslim Rage*:

For a long time now there has been a rising tide of rebellion against this Western paramountcy, and a desire to reassert Muslim values and restore Muslim greatness. The Muslim has suffered successive stages of defeat. The first was his loss of domination in the world, to the advancing power

⁵⁵ See Fairbank/Reischauer/Craig, *East Asia*, p. 178: "One factor creating stability was the Chinese view of history as 'change within tradition'. The leaders of society were devoted to tradition; anything that happened in the present had to be fitted into the rich pattern of experience inherited from the past. Instead of the ideal of progress, which Westerners today have inherited from the nineteenth century, the Chinese of the Ming and Ch'ing saw their models far in the past."

⁵⁶ Cited after Bruce Lincoln, *Holy terrors*, p. 102.

of Russia and the West. The second was the undermining of his authority in his own country, through an invasion of foreign ideas and laws and ways of life and sometimes even foreign ruler or settlers, and the enfranchisement of native non-Muslim elements. The third - the last straw – was the challenge to his mastery in his own house, from emancipated women and rebellious children. It was too much to endure, and the outbreak of rage against these alien, infidel, and incomprehensible forces that has subverted his dominance, disrupted his society, and finally violated the sanctuary of his home was inevitable.⁵⁷

Unlike Christianity, Islam is both a religion and also a model for society.⁵⁸ Therefore, the Moslem world also does not recognize the separation of state and church. Mohammed in his capacity as a prophet was both the founder of a religion and a secular founder of a state who declared and made war, concluded treaties, set and spoke law. According to a known formula, Islam is “religion and state” (*al-Islam din wa-daula*) or, to put it more generally, “religion and world“ (*din wa-dunya*): no area of life can withdraw from its power.⁵⁹ Although this ideal of the extensive obligingness of Islamic values and standards was undermined in practice at an early stage, it was hardly questioned on a theoretical level.⁶⁰

Islam had no reformation like the one in Christian Europe in the 16th century. As Ahmed Hasim says in his paper *The World According to Osama bin Laden*, “the very notion” of the term is “theoretically alien to the Islamic community, or Umma.”⁶¹ Therefore, it can be no surprise that Moslem perception of themselves and others are still

⁵⁷ Lewis, *The Roots of Muslim Rage*, p. 49.

⁵⁸ See Tibi, *The Challenge of Fundamentalism*, p. 3: “In fact, Islam is both a world religion and a major civilization.”

⁵⁹ See Hunter, *The Future of Islam and the West*, p. 11: “Islam is a communal religion and, as such, in structure if not always in practice it present an all encompassing and internally cohesive set of rules – both legal and ethical – for the organization of collective and individual life and the mechanisms for implementation. Islam aspires to be the principal component of a Muslim’s self-identity and the main focus of allegiance.”

⁶⁰ See Akhavi, *Islam and the West in World History*, p. 547: “In its first 10 years (622-632) the Islamic community was ruled by the Prophet, who acted as both the religious and temporal leader of the Muslims. His early successors continued at this, but gradually the two spheres came to be separated *in fact* in the practice of Islamic rulers came to diverge from the high-minded ideals of the faith. However, *the theory* continued to emphasise the integration of the two spheres. This notion persists even into the early twenty-first century for a variety of Islamist movements whose goal is to reconstitute the integration of religion and politics that the exemplary model of the Prophet and his immediate successors had achieved.”

⁶¹ Ahmed S. Hashim, *The World According to Usama Bin Laden*, in *Naval War College Review*, 54, 4 (2001), pp. 11-35, p. 16.

primarily of a religious character. Whereas the Chinese substantiated their special position within humanity with their higher civilization, the Moslems deduce it from the circumstance that only they are in possession of true belief.⁶² As the founder of the religion and the state, Mohammed received his commission directly from the one and only God. The Moslem civilization was, in the end, divinely inspired and must accordingly be superior to all other, secular civilizations. Bernard Lewis describes this particular Muslim worldview and its concept of world order with the words:

In the classical Islamic view, to which many Muslims are beginning to return, the world and all mankind are divided into two: the world and all mankind are divided into two; The House of Islam, where the Muslim law and faith prevail, and the rest, known as the House of unbelief or the House of War, which it is the duty of Muslims ultimately to bring to Islam. [...] The Muslim world in its heyday saw itself as the center of truth and enlightenment, surrounded by infidel barbarians whom it would in due enlighten and civilize.⁶³

Unlike China, the actual inferiority of the Moslem civilization and the increasing dominance of the West did not manifest themselves suddenly, but were a creeping process. At the end of the first millennium, Islam enjoyed an incomparable triumphant advance.⁶⁴ From Mohammed's area of work on the Arabian Peninsula, the Moslem Arabs spread to Central Asia, North Africa and even Spain, creating a blossoming society and culture. The great empire of the Arabs collapsed in 1258 with the fall of Baghdad in the attack by the Mongolians and was replaced by rule from the outside and suppression. The fate of the Islamic world from then on was increasingly in the hands of the Ottomans, who came from Turkey. After the conquest of Constantinople in 1452, the Turkish Sultan

⁶² See Esposito, *The Islamic Threat*, p. 24: "Muslims believe that God first sent His revelation to the Jews and then to the Christians, but that revelation became distorted through human intervention and interpolation of the scriptures. [...] God subsequently sent down his revelation one more time through Muhammad, the last and final prophet. This, then, is the basis for the Muslim belief that the Quran, which Muslims view as the perfect, complete, and literal word of God, supersedes Jewish and Christian scriptures."

⁶³ Bernard Lewis, *The Roots of Muslim Rage*, p. 49.

⁶⁴ See Bernard Lewis, *The Crisis of Islam*, p. 4: "In the period which European historians see as a dark interlude between the decline of ancient civilization – Greece and Rome – and the rise of modern civilization – Europe, Islam was the leading civilization in the world, marked as such by its great and powerful kingdoms, its rich and varied industry and commerce, its original and creative sciences and letters. Islam, far more than Christendom, was the intermediate stage between the ancient East and the modern West, to which it contributed significantly."

carried the banner of Islam into the world. Under Suleyman the Splendid (1520-1566), the Ottomans ousted the Christians from the Aegean Sea, and in the mid-16th century, they twice tried to capture Malta, the gate to the Western Mediterranean.⁶⁵ They expanded their power to the Balkan, captured Baghdad in 1521 and Rhodes, the important outpost of the Christians in the Mediterranean, in 1522, and they were outside the capital of the Hapsburgs, Vienna, for the first time in 1529. Then and also in 1683, the Turks were prevented from subjecting a center of Western culture at the last minute by a unified Western world.

The decline of imperial China is primarily to be put down to a general social and political rigidity, whereas the Islamic world lost its lead over the West in civilization and power politics by religious orthodoxy. Whereas the Europeans increasingly took over the inheritance of Greek philosophy and sciences from the Arabs and the Persians in the late middle Ages, revolutionizing their own view of the world and granting free thinkers greater development in this way, conservative theologians in the Orient began to oust thinking open to the world from the schools and universities. They only considered sciences to be desirable to the extent that they did not come into conflict with the interpretation of the Koran by spiritual scholars of law. Thomas Aquinas, the great theologian of the Catholic Middle Ages, published a similar guideline: science was to be a “maid” of theology. In the European renaissance, this relationship radically reversed. Whereas the philosophies of Enlightenment finally completely overcame the Middle Ages in the Christian Western world, Koran scholars guided by tradition suffocated all the impulses of enlightenment in the Islamic orient and led the majority of their believers back into the middle Ages. In this way, were formed the differences between the Western and the Islamic world which nowadays determine the relationship between the orient and the occident.⁶⁶

This reversal was to have far-reaching consequences. As the West was now able to develop its sciences freely, it encountered a dynamic, the threshold of which the Islamic civilization had already reached once. But the Europeans were aiming to exceed

⁶⁵ See Esposito, *The Islamic Threat*, p. 40-41.

⁶⁶ See Akhavi, *Islam and the West in World History*, p. 552: “The theoretical and actual separation of church and state in the West [...] greatly influenced the West’s ascendancy. Without the triumph of Cartesian radical rationalism, the disembedding of church and state and the scientific and industrial revolutions could probably not have occurred.”

this, because the churches no longer had the power to patronize, creating a pluralistic industrial civilization. This was a secular society, in which the political-social sphere was strictly separated from the religious – a society in which enlightenment asserted itself and social cohabitation was organized beyond religious dogmas. Around 1750, the world's first secular industrial society originated, and, by the middle of the 19th century, many of the main Western European countries had been fundamentally changed by an industrial revolution.⁶⁷ Parallel to this, early capitalist economic systems and modern democracies developed in England, the USA and France as early as the end of the 18th century. This epochal change gave the industrial nations in the West the military and economic impetus to extend their influence and their model of a civilization to other, even faraway peoples.

As a consequence, the Ottoman Empire was to suffer the same fate as the Chinese empire, which had been unshakable for centuries. The Islamic world felt the full force of the rapid growth in the power of the West as early as the 18th century. In the late 19th century, the Ottoman Empire had lost the majority of its power and had become “the sick man of Europe”. The Western colonial powers replaced the Ottomans as the ordering factor in the region and started to subject the Islamic world to their power and divide it up amongst them. The clearly defined order of Islam, the Moslem identity, was washed away by the circulation of the Western modernity from the West. As a consequence of colonization, the Islamic world was disconnected from the course of modern history, from industrialization and technical/scientific progress. Whilst the memory of the glorious times, the pride of conquests and achievements of the past remained alive, the power of the Moslem world to assert itself in reality died. Back in 1957, Wilfred C. Smith precisely regarded this discrepancy between claim and reality in the Muslim world as the actual „spiritual crisis in Islam“ which “stems from an awareness that something is awry between the religion which God has appointed and the historical development of the world which He controls.”⁶⁸

Similar to China, they were less and less successful in putting the claim of being a superior civilization and the spearhead of human development into harmony with the experience of a reality in which the technical-civilization superiority of the West became

⁶⁷ See Mark Juergensmeyer, *The New Cold War? Religious Confronts the Secular State*, Berkeley and Los Angeles 1993, p. 26-30.

⁶⁸ Wilfred C. Smith, *Islam in Modern History*, Princeton, New York 1957, p. 41.

more and more obvious. By the 19th century, John Esposito points out, “a clear shift of power had occurred, as the decline of Muslim fortunes reversed the relationship of Islam to the West. Increasingly, Muslims found themselves on the defensive in the face of European expansion.”⁶⁹

As in China, a time of insults and humiliations began. After a phase of economic expansion, European colonial powers, above all France and Great Britain, effortlessly penetrated into Moslem territory in the early 19th century and settled there. The conquest of Algeria in 1830 by the French was followed by the occupancy of Aden by the British in 1839. Colonization of the Moslem world continued with the British occupation of Egypt (1882), the expansion of French control to Tunisia (1881) and Morocco (1911), as well as the expansion of the British influence on the Persian Gulf. Like the Boxers in China, the Moslems also suffered the humiliating experience that the West was willing and in a position to declare zones of influence or to subject territories to its rule completely, almost as it liked. The British spoke of the “white man’s burden“ and the French of their “mission to civilize.“ As the balance of power and leadership shifted from the Muslim world to Europe, modernity was seen by the West as the result not simply of conditions that produced the Enlightenment and the industrial revolution, but also of Christianity’s inherent superiority as a religion and culture.

One Ottoman province after the other was lost to the heathens. The indigenous population and their governments had nothing to counter the imperialism of the colonial powers and the challenge of the modern Western world. Their own defenselessness against the Western expansion, caused by backwardness and a lack of willingness to reform, dug its way deep into the Moslems' collective memory as a trauma:

The realities of colonialism and imperialism, forgotten or conveniently overlooked by many in the West, are part of the living legacy, firmly implanted in the memory (however exaggerated at times) of many in the Muslim world.⁷⁰

The theme of European colonialism and imperialism, their impact in the past and their continued legacy, remains alive in Arabic and Middle East politics and throughout

⁶⁹ Esposito, *The Islamic Threat*, p. 48.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, p. 217.

the Muslim world from North Africa to Southeast Asia. Issues of foreign domination and dependence remain a bitter memory as well as a continued threat in the eyes of many Muslims today.⁷¹

Under these circumstances, it stands to reason that the actual and imagined humiliations which the Moslem world accused the West of are still combined in the accusation of “imperialism.” As Bernard Lewis states, however, the term has a different meaning in the literature of the Islamists than in the West. Whereas, in the West, it essentially describes the past politics of the European colonial powers and Western superpowers from the 18th to the 20th centuries and thus above all has power politics as its content, Islamists regularly use it in connection with a cultural expansion of the West. This imperialism is not to be confused with that of the West against China in the previous century. Since the conquest and division of the Islamic world by European powers has become a thing of the past, the West is instead being accused of an imperialism of civilization and religion. This is all the more despicable for Moslems as Islam is regarded as the superior, true religion:

Of all these offenses the one that is most widely, frequently, and vehemently denounced is undoubtedly imperialism – sometimes just Western, sometimes Eastern (that is, Soviet) and Western alike. But the way this term is used in the literature of Islamic fundamentalists often suggests that it may not carry quite the same meaning for them as for its Western critics. In many of these writings the term “imperialist” is given a distinctly religious significance, being used in association, and sometimes interchangeably, with ‘missionary’, and denoting a form of attack that includes the Crusades as well as the modern colonial empires. One also sometimes gets the impression that the offense of imperialism is not – as for Western critics – the domination by one people over another but rather the allocation of roles in this relationship. What is truly evil and unacceptable is the domination of infidels over true believers. For true believers to rule misbelievers is proper and natural, since this provides for the maintenance of the holy law, and gives the misbelievers both the opportunity and the incentive to embrace the true faith. But for misbelievers to rule over true believers is blasphemous and unnatural, since it leads to the corruption of religion and morality in society, and to the flouting or even the abrogation of God’s law.⁷²

⁷¹ See Hunter, *The Future of Islam and the West*, p. 12: “Muslim memories of Western domination are more recent and hence far more fresh than Western recollections of the fall of Gallipoli or the siege of Vienna.”

⁷² Bernard Lewis, *The Roots of Muslim Rage*, p. 53-54.

So a penetration of the civilization was connected with the economic and subsequent, partial military conquest of the Moslem world by the Western world. Impressed by the apparent military, technical and economic superiority of European industrial states, members of the Ottoman cultural class began increasingly to perceive their own civilization as being backward. The reforms held in the subsequent period were more or less half-hearted and were basically only intended to strengthen the fighting power of the military without initiating a really radically change of state and society, as has been the case in China. But even these few reform efforts of the Sultanate, initiated hesitantly and hardly having any effects, were enough to threaten the privileges of the elites and shattered traditional social patterns. Against this background, it appears doubtful whether this confrontation between the Western and the Moslem world alone can be deflated by a strengthening of the Moslem states and a balancing of the realities of power politics connected with it. Shahrourgh Akhavi, however, exactly suggests this in his article *Islam and the West in World History*:

In other word, today's criticism of the West in the Muslim World, frequently accompanied by a rejection of Western secular culture, seems to be positively correlated with the Muslim's sense of weakness and vulnerability in the face of powerful Western states and economic domination. This suggests that if the relationship between the Muslim and Western worlds were to become more equal in the future, Muslim rejectionism could be expected to be transformed into more tolerant attitudes and behavior.⁷³

Until the present, the gap between the past historical greatness, the feeling of a superiority of the civilization and the present reality of life has not been overcome, either in China or in the Moslem world.⁷⁴ The disproportion between their own widely based poverty, the lack of prospects for the youth and the mainly bad government and the high standard of living of the West and the comparatively great efficiency of its governmental

⁷³ Akhavi, *Islam and the West*, p. 559.

⁷⁴ See Esposito, *The Islamic Threat*, p. 49: "European colonialism and imperialism threatened Muslim political and religiocultural identity and history. [...] With the dawn of European domination of the Muslim world, the image [...] of Islam as an expansive worldwide force had been shattered."

systems is nowadays registered in the Moslem world.⁷⁵ The impact of the self-image exaggerated by the Arabic heyday and the religious identity with the hopelessness of everyday life generated massive inferiority complexes, which easily lead to hatred and violence. A formerly great civilization, conscious of its own superiority, which had provided important impulses for the development of Europe, experiences its weaknesses and impending dissolution. Colonial inheritance, the failed attempt at a modernization aligned to Western ideas, the enormous growth of the population and the rejuvenation connected with this, growing poverty with simultaneously growing alphabetization and urbanization as well as, above all, the feeling of a lack of dignity of a formerly great culture in the face of a gap in engineering and prosperity between the Western and the Islamic world which is growing even further – all of this forms the historical background and the breeding ground for totalitarian Islamism.

⁷⁵ See Robert A. Woltering, The Roots of Islamist Popularity, in *Third World Quarterly* 23, 6 (2002), pp. 1133-1143, p. 1139.

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III. THE BOXER UPRISING AS AN EARLY EXAMPLE OF INTERNATIONAL CRISIS MANAGEMENT AND MULTINATIONAL INTERVENTION

In far-away Europe and America, the incidents in north China, which kept the governments and the public on tenterhooks in the summer of 1900, are known under the title of the “Boxer Uprising”. The name “Boxer” was derived from its original name “Fists of Righteous Harmony” and the martial arts of which its members had a more or less good mastery and was described as “boxing” by many Western foreigners.⁷⁶ However, the term “uprising” itself is misleading, as the Boxers did not stand up against the rule of the Manchus and their Ch’ing dynasty. The movement proved to be loyal to the regime and was rather aimed in general against everything “foreign.”⁷⁷ This included both the foreign religion, i.e. Christianity and its Chinese converts, as well as the damaging influence of the Western colonial powers on Chinese politics and society as well as the foreigners in China themselves.⁷⁸

As Joseph Esherick states, the international powers and their Chinese negotiation partners agreed on interpreting the events as a rebellion against the Manchu rule after the Boxers had been crushed, as this was the only way to justify a continuation of the Ch’ing dynasty.⁷⁹ However, a functioning Chinese government appeared to be indispensable for the major powers as a negotiating partner, debtor and general stability factor in the giant empire. Nevertheless, the term “Boxer Uprising” does contain a historically correct core. Even if the uprising was not aimed against their own government, it was aimed against the Western colonial powers and Japan, who had been exploiting China economically through unilateral treaties since the 1840's and were increasingly eroding China's political self-determination. In addition, the traditional Chinese society, marked by Confucius, had

⁷⁶ See Diana Preston, *The Boxer Rebellion. The Dramatic Story of China’s War on Foreigners That Shook the World in the Summer of 1900*, New York 2001, p.22.

⁷⁷ See Joseph W. Esherick, *The Origins of the Boxer Uprising*, Berkeley 1987, p. xvi: „...from the very beginning the Boxers were a loyalist movement, and there never was an anti-dynastic phase“.

⁷⁸ Ibid, p. 68: „The ‚foreign‘ which the Boxers proposed to exterminate could include ‚foreign people‘ (yang- ren), ‚foreign matters‘ (yang-wu), a term which applied particularly to the development of railways, telegraphs, ships and weapons), ‚foreign goods‘ (yang-huo) or the ‚foreign religion‘ (yang-jiao): Christianity“.

⁷⁹ Preston, *The Boxer Rebellion*, p. 310: “Common sense dictated that the Manchu dynasty should remain on the throne, and this became the allied policy.”

been placed under pressure of cultural transformation by the West, the dimensions of which are comparable with the current effects of globalization.

The “purely political and opportunist origin of the term”⁸⁰ was not the only myth connected with what happened in China of the year of 1900. In addition, there was the legend of the heroic, civilized and unified West, that resisted an uncivilized, uninformed “Yellow Peril”⁸¹ of peasant “Boxers,” corrupt civil servants, and reactionary soldiers who paid no regard to international law and were unjustifiably xenophobic, and that conquered them and finally taught them a well-deserved lesson by means of its ambassadors and a few soldiers. Soon, a further myth was set against this one in China, the myth of the intrepid poor Chinese farmers who had fought a just fight against the imperialist invaders from the West and their agents, the deceitful missionaries.⁸² Both of these myths developed – as is the nature of myths – independent of historical reality to a great extent and developed their own life, blocking the view to the actual historical happenings and making a factual assessment difficult for a long time.⁸³ A historical correction can only be done peripherally in the course of this paper. In the following sections, which outline the origin and the course of the Boxer Uprising, sets the historical frame for the later analysis of the events with the questions stated in the introduction.

A. ORIGINS OF THE BOXER MOVEMENT

Towards the end of the 19th century, China moved into the focus of interest of the European colonial powers. After the “scramble for Africa” had been completed in 1890,

⁸⁰ See Esherick, *The Origins of the Boxer Uprising*, p. xiv.

⁸¹ The defeat of China in 1894-95 by Japan’s army and navy, both organized and equipped along European lines, had shocked the world and prompted the German Kaiser Wilhelm II. To coin the expression “die Gelbe Gefahr” – “the Yellow peril”. See Heinz Gollwitzer, *Die Gelbe Gefahr. Geschichte eines Schlagwortes, Studien zum imperialistischen Denken*, Göttingen 1962.

⁸² For the different Western and Chinese myths of the Boxer Rebellion see Gerd Kaminski, *Der Boxeraufstand – entlarvter Mythos*, Wien 2000, p. 174-230.

⁸³ The communist regime in particular tried to use the Boxer movement for propaganda purposes by labelling them as early ‘anti-imperialist patriots’. See Cohen, *History in Three Keys*, pp. 211-288. In 1955 Chou En-Lai called the Boxer revolt “*one of the cornerstones of the great victory of the Chinese people fifty years later*”. Cited after Preston, *The Boxer Rebellion*, p. 347.

the Chinese defeat in the war against Japan (1894/95) appeared to ring in the colonialization of China. A territorial division of China according to the African model, the “carving up the Chinese melon,”⁸⁴ was however not practicable, on the one hand because of the increasing rivalry of the imperialist major powers amongst one another, and on the other hand because none of the European powers had the resources to control the enormous empire in the long run.⁸⁵ For this reason, the major powers only claimed zones of interest, in which they demanded specific privileges and which, together with minor geographical outposts, were to become the gates for a further penetration into the hinterland in question.⁸⁶

Alongside the general imperialist basic conviction of the time that only states which grew could assert themselves in the contest of the nations, the major powers were motivated above all by the hope for the fairy-tale riches of the Ch'ing empire. Great Britain and France had opened China for international trade in the two Opium Wars (1839-42 and 1858-61) and had asserted the right to station warships in Chinese waters on a permanent basis.⁸⁷ At the end of the century, all the major powers had warships in East Asia, in order to be able to defend or assert their claims and interests against the Chinese imperial court and their colonial competitors robustly. These marine units were given a special role in the suppression of the Boxer uprising.

The economic exploitation of China by the major powers and the penetration of Chinese society with Western values and ideas connected with this was possibly the most important reason, but not responsible on its own for the origination of the Boxer uprising. Instead, the Boxer movement fed on a series of quite differing political, social and regional sources, which only came together relatively late, but then all the more ferociously, in the Boxer movement.⁸⁸ These various sources required certain economic,

⁸⁴ See Chester C. Tan, *The Boxer Catastrophe*, New York 1967, p. 14.

⁸⁵ See Susanne Kuß/Bernd Martin, *Einleitung*, in Susanne Kuß/Bernd Martin (ed.), *Das Deutsche Reich und der Boxeraufstand*, München 2002 (Erfurter Reihe zur Geschichte Asiens, Bd. 2), p. 11.

⁸⁶ See Paul H. Clements, *The Boxer Rebellion. A Political and Diplomatic Review*, New York 1967, p. 26-40.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

⁸⁸ For the origins and the development of the Boxer Movement see Joseph W. Esherick, *The Origins of the Boxer Uprising*, Berkeley 1987; Lu Yao, *The Origins of the Boxers in: David D. Buck (ed.), Recent Chinese Studies of the Boxer Movement, Chinese Studies in History, XX:3-4, 1987, pp. 42-86; Paul Cohen, History in Three Keys. The Boxers as Event, Experience and Myth, New York 1997; Tan, The Boxer Catastrophe.*

ecological, political and social conditions, all of which the north Chinese province of Shantung offered at the end of the 19th century, in order to come together. In detail, these conditions included the following:

- The ecological instability and susceptibility to catastrophes of this region, manifested by a large number of floods and drought catastrophes, which had become even worse since the shift in course of the Yellow River, which had been flowing through West Shantung since 1855. The population lived in the permanent fear of the destruction of their harvests and the starvation that would result from this;⁸⁹
- The general poverty, increased by the gradual silting of the Great Canal – the main transport route in China – and by the loss of sales markets for domestic products, above all cotton thread, as a result of the penetration of Western products to North China;⁹⁰
- The inability of the Ch'ing dynasty to assert itself and control local regions, particularly making the extreme south-west of Shantung an area in which attacks by robbers were the order of the day and which became an ideal field of operation for salt smugglers, bandits and other outsiders of society;
- The activities of Christian missionaries, which had increased since the 1880's, aggressively winning over Chinese converts with questionable methods and frequently intervening in local legal disputes for the benefit of the converted Christians. This threatened the structure and the functionality of the traditional village community and led to grudges, which easily turned into violent conflicts.⁹¹

Against this background, the “Long Knives” (*Dadaohui*) appeared in the southwest of the province in 1896, a group with the original purpose of providing the major landowners with protection against attacks by bandits. Their members practiced traditional martial techniques. By reciting magic formulas and drinking the ash of sheets

⁸⁹ Cohen, *History in Three Keys*, pp. 31-35; Esherick, *The Origins of the Boxer Uprising*, pp. 273-181.

⁹⁰ See Esherick, *Origins of the Boxer Uprising*, p. 68-73.

⁹¹ See Horst Gründer, *Die Rolle der christlichen Mission beim Ausbruch des Boxeraufstandes*, in Susanne Kuß/Bernd Martin (ed.), *Das Deutsche Reich und der Boxeraufstand*, München 2002 (Erfurter Reihe zur Geschichte Asiens, Bd. 2), p. 25-43.

of paper with burnt magic formulas dissolved in water, they hoped to attain invincibility.⁹²

As a result of a dispute with a landowner who was under the protection of the Catholic Church, they attacked Western mission schools, but they were relatively quickly put back in their place by the local authorities. “Boxing schools” also shot up all over the north of the province of Shantung, in which particularly the young rural population practiced corresponding martial techniques under the leadership of experienced “boxing masters.” When the conflicts between the Christian and non-Christian parts of the population took on increasingly serious forms in the north-west of the province in 1898, the Boxers, who now called themselves *Yihequan* (“boxers united in righteousness”) intervened on the side of the non-Christians and began to proceed against Chinese Christians, Christian schools and churches.⁹³ In this context, the first posters and flags with the appeal “Support the Ch’ing Dynasty and destroy foreign things” (*fu Ch’ing mie Yang*) appeared, presumably with the objective of averting intervention by the provincial authorities.⁹⁴

More and more Boxer groups now appeared under a slightly changed name. They now called themselves “militias united in righteousness” (*Yihetuan*). By equating themselves by name with the “militias” (*tuan*) set up everywhere since the middle of the century to reinstate and to maintain order, they emphasized the pro-dynastic elements of the movement. In the course of the year of 1899, the movement propagated quickly and spread to the neighboring province of Zhili. It was the popular “ideology” of the Boxers – hatred of everything foreign, the easy-to-learn Boxer rituals and the “invulnerability” - that enabled the movement to leave its main area and to spread into other areas. By the end of the year of 1899, the Boxers intervened not so much against foreigners, but against Chinese Christians. According to incomplete statistics, more than 32,000 Chinese Christians and about 200 foreigners died in the unrest, the victims of the actual military disputes and the losses on the Boxers' side not being counted in this.⁹⁵

⁹² See Esherick, *The origins of the Boxer Uprising*, pp. 96-122.

⁹³ *Ibid*, pp. 136-141.

⁹⁴ See Chen Guizong, *Yihetuan de zuzhi he zongzhi* (Organization and principles of the Boxer movement), Changchun 1986, S. 161-163.

⁹⁵ See Edmund S. Wehrle, *Britain, China and the Antimissionary Riots 1891-1900*, Minneapolis 1966, p. 182.

B. THE “WHITE DANGER”

The colonial development of China by the West formed the background for the Boxer Uprising and explains why the fighting organization was able to get a decidedly xenophobic touch:

An enumeration of immediate determining causes of the Boxer rebellion is more to be found in diplomatic archives than in a study of any other sources. Leases, commercial servitudes, the loss of sovereignty over the finest harbors, the hypothecation of *likin* and salt revenues, the contracts to promoters and concessions to missionaries forced at the cannon's mouth, the talk of partition, the diplomatic wrangles over 'spheres of influence' and 'balance of power', the exaction of the last possible farthing as indemnity for acts for which neither Europe nor the United States would have granted indemnity or apology – the answer of the Chinese to all these humiliations was the outbreak of 1900. In fact, [...] the Boxer Rebellion was a foregone conclusion, and apology and blame for succeeding events should primarily be laid at Europe's door, not at China's.⁹⁶

However, like the case of the current Islamic terror, the foreign influence of the West on all the areas of life, which was sensed as a threat, formed an ideal resonance surface for social tensions and political dissatisfaction that already existed quite independently. Shandong, for example, was not even a province penetrated particularly strongly by symbols of the Western influence, but the consequences of this “clash of civilizations”, which were partly quite dramatic for the indigenous population, can also be seen here.⁹⁷ For example, the province lost its markets for cotton thread to the Europeans without there even being alternatives for the people there. Strange telegraph lines and railways passed through the country, and the foreigners ran mines in the area. Like the twin towers at 9/11, symbols of Western civilization became the first and primarily goals:

⁹⁶ Clements, *The Boxer Rebellion*, p. 75:

⁹⁷ See Esherick, *The Origins of the Boxer Uprising*, p. 72: “*It is difficult [...] to argue that the Boxer Uprising broke out where it did because the impact of imperialism was particularly intense. Quite the contrary: almost any locale along the coast of China or in the Yangzi Valley was more directly affected by foreign economic penetration than the Boxer areas of west Shandong. But that does not mean that Western and Japanese imperialism had no economic impact on this area. Rather it seems that these regions lost crucial markets to foreign imports of cotton yarn and cloth, yet were too isolated and too lacking in alternative resources to enjoy any of the stimulative effects that the treaty port economies sometimes generated in their more immediate hinterlands.*”

Disturbances are to be dreaded from the foreign devils; everywhere they are starting missions, erecting telegraphs, and building railways; they do not believe in the sacred doctrine, and they speak evil of the gods. Their sins are numberless as the hairs of the head. [...] The will of heaven is that the telegraph wires be first cut, then the railways torn up, and then shall the foreign devils be decapitated.⁹⁸

To start with, the population did not object much to these symbols of Western civilization and way of life. But the humiliation in the war against Japan in 1894/95 clearly showed them their government's weaknesses.⁹⁹

Whereas it is mainly the Western entertainment and pop culture that typifies the ideas of people from the West in the modern Islamic countries, the population in Shandong mainly came into contact with the West through the missionaries, whose activity was to prove to be just as aggressive and culturally threatening for the Confucian society as the current effect of McDonalds and MTV on Islamic societies. For the Chinese, the missionaries represented “the foreign” per se and thus became a suitable target for their hatred. The Western missionaries were regarded as the “advance-agent of his particular Government, sent to China not for religion’s sake but in a political capacity thus disguised.”¹⁰⁰ In particular, the Catholic missionaries provoked the population through their aggressive mission and their arrogant conduct and they practically tempted resistance. In their procedures, the missionaries – with certain exceptions – only showed a slight feeling for the religious/cultural and political/social structures in China. Even the Indians, Japanese and especially the Chinese, who were classified as being culturally higher – for example compared with Red Indians and Africans – were merely poor and confused “idol worshippers,” whose “idols' temples” were to be destroyed, in the eyes of Western missionaries, as far as their religious ideas were concerned.¹⁰¹

The missionaries were not subject to Chinese law – a privilege blackmailed from China in treaties with the West. This basis of power was made use of by the clergy in the

⁹⁸ A Boxer poster cited after Preston, *The Boxer Rebellion*, p. 47.

⁹⁹ See Esherick, *The Origins of the Boxer Rebellion*, p. 73-74.

¹⁰⁰ Clements, *The Boxer Rebellion*, p. 72.

¹⁰¹ Horst Gründer, *Die Rolle der christlichen Mission beim Ausbruch des Boxeraufstandes*, in Susanne Kuß/Bernd Martin (ed.), *Das Deutsche Reich und der Boxeraufstand*, München 2002 (Erfurter Reihe zur Geschichte Asiens, Bd. 2), p. 25.

regional conflicts for power and land. Further, they seriously interfered with the village structures: converted Chinese were legally placed under their personal protection. In this way, the Christian religion became particularly interesting for the people who were poor or persecuted by the Chinese government (e.g. bandits or members of sects). This fact caused the acknowledgement of the mission with the remainder of the population to drop further. The mission appeared to be a maid and an ally of the imperialistic powers, “anti-imperialistic” and “anti-Christian” became synonymous terms for the Chinese.¹⁰²

But particular hatred was felt for the converted Chinese, as their new religion placed them outside the traditional social structure of the villages and thus threatened its survival as a cult or ancestral community and economic unit. Converts were not able to inherit and were excluded from participating in ceremonies of the Taoist cult and festivals in their villages. Therefore they also did not contribute to the costs, which now had to be distributed amongst fewer people.¹⁰³ As Diana Preston states, the socially ostracized converts, in order to survive, became totally dependent upon the missionaries and worked as servants or porters: “Many were from the poorest groups anyway and were disparagingly called ‘rice Christians’ in the belief that they had converted only to fill their stomachs.”¹⁰⁴

So it was above all the Christian beliefs that threatened traditional social structures and hierarchies and caused resistance as a consequence of the military and economic expansion of the West. Today, Christianity appears to have lost most of its missionary power. The promise of healing as the tip of the Western way of life has been replaced by the democratically formed, laziest social system, frequently sensed by social, political and religious elites in Islamic states as being a challenge and a danger.

¹⁰² See Esherick who speaks of an “*alliance of Christian proselytizing and Western imperialism*”. Esherick, *The Origins of the Boxer Uprising*, p. 76.

¹⁰³ Fleming, *The Siege at Peking*, p. 41.

¹⁰⁴ Preston, *The Boxer Rebellion*, p. 26.

C. RELIGIOUS ORIGINS

Although there were common points between the “Boxers united in righteousness” and the “Long Knives” - in particular the belief in the necessary practices to attain invulnerability - there was a decisive difference in the fact that the northern Boxers additionally carried out a kind of invocation to the gods. The individual Boxers appealed to deities known from popular operas and the religion of the people, also going into a trance or a state of obsession. They were of the opinion that the deities – above all the God of War – thus became attached to their bodies and would ensure a quick mastery of the necessary fighting techniques and their invulnerability in this way.¹⁰⁵

In China, where it had been widely believed for centuries that there was a link between human behavior and the actions of Heaven, correction of human misconduct in order to establish cosmic harmony has been one means of responding to drought. Droughts had, more than other natural disasters, a religious and social dimension. To the most important collective tasks of the local communities belonged religious ceremonies with the purpose to make rain. The Boxers believed that only the physical elimination of every trace of the foreign from China would appease the gods and permit the rains once again to fall.¹⁰⁶

The arrogance of the West of standing for a higher civilization or a morally better way of living found its eloquent expression in the building of churches with pointed towers, through which the traditional harmony between man and nature was disturbed from a Chinese point of view. The Boxers assumed that their gods were angered by this and explained the permanent natural catastrophes in this way. “Annoyance by a church tower”, said an English observer, “was just as much a reason for a loud complaint as building an evil-smelling tannery next to Westminster Abbey would have been.”¹⁰⁷ The British embassy took the problem so seriously that it saw itself forced to write a circular to the missions recommending that they “show more respect for the prejudices of the Chinese and their superstitions in the shapes and the height of the buildings”.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ See Esherick, *The Origins of the Boxer Uprising*, p. xiii.

¹⁰⁶ Cohen, *History in Three Keys*, p. 89.

¹⁰⁷ Cited after Peter Fleming, *The Siege at Peking*, London 1959, p. 40.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid*, p. 40.

Alongside churches and other Christian symbols, technical innovations from the West also caused religious reservations with the Chinese. Above all, railways caused mistrust and resistance. Hardly a mile of tracks could be laid without the burial place of some predecessor of a Chinese, arbitrarily placed in the countryside, being desecrated. The telegraph lines also caused fear and desperation. Their purpose was unfathomable and their sight terrifying for the simple country people, whose tapestry of fields the big pillars crossed. When the wind blew, a quiet, pitiful plaint came out of the wires, and when they went rusty, the rain falling down from them was dyed red and reinforced the belief that the spirits were being tormented by this new invention of the “foreign devils.”¹⁰⁹

Even if they referred to the sensitivity of the spirits more with a wish to resist the unwelcome foreigners than from a deep belief, it must be stated that religious reservations had equal force with the rejection of the social, economic and cultural changes which the West caused. A similar flowing together of religious demarcation with social and political reservations against the Western influence also characterizes the ideological breeding ground on which the current Islamic terror feeds. The religiously motivated hatred manifesting itself nowadays in Islamic terror also exceeds animosity against certain interests, actions, and political measures of individual states in the West and translates into a total rejection of the Western civilization. It is not so much important what it does or what it is. The actual rejection applies to the principles and values which this civilization practices and to which it confesses. These principles and values are deemed bad per se and those who stand up for them or accept them are regarded as “enemies of God.” It is no pure chance that Boxers and Islamic fundamentalists use similar metaphors: the “foreign devils” are equated by the Western devils and the “great Satan” America.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, p. 48-49.

D. PUBLIC SUPPORT AND SOCIAL COMPOSITION

The enormous growth of the Boxer movement can only be explained by great support in the population.¹¹⁰ The penetration of the West had paralyzed complete local branches of industry, such as small peasants' cotton production or the transport trade, and drastically increased unemployment. In addition, natural catastrophes, such as the flooding of the Huanghe (1898/99) and a long drought (1900), hit North China and further exacerbated the economically tense circumstances of the rural population. The “foreign devils” and their Chinese henchmen, the converts, were made responsible for everything - including the weather - as scapegoats. Dispersion of the “foreign devils,” the Boxers promised, would not only appease the gods, but also mean a renovation of Chinese society and the advent of a new golden age for China. On leaflets and public notices, by means of which the Boxer messages were propagated, it said:

„Divinely aided Boxers,
United-in-Righteous Corps
Arose because the Devils
Messed up the Empire of yore.

They proselytize their sect,
And believe in only one God,
The spirits and their own ancestors
Are not even given a nod.

The men are all immoral;
Their women truly vile.
For the Devils it's mother-son sex
That serves as the breeding style.

And if you don't believe me,
Then have a careful view:
You'll see the Devils' eyes
Are all a shining blue.

No rain comes from Heaven.
The earth is parched and dry.

¹¹⁰ See Esherick, *The Origins of the Boxer Uprising*, p. 34: “Clearly the strange invulnerability rituals and spirit-possession of the Boxers would not have spread so rapidly if they had not struck some familiar chord in the popular imagination of north China peasants.”

And all because the churches
Have bottled up the sky.

The gods are very angry.
The spirits seek revenge.
En masse they come from Heaven
To teach the Way to men. [...]

Spirits emerge from the grottos;
Gods come down from the hills,
Possessing the bodies of men,
Transmitting their boxing skills.

When their martial and magic techniques
Are all learned by each one of you,
Suppressing the Foreign Devils
Will not be a tough thing to do.”¹¹¹

The ideas of the Boxer movement spread by word of mouth and at an unusual speed – a Chinese chronicler compared it with a tornado - although the Boxers had no leader and no organizational structure.¹¹² Such a group of gods in human form needed no leader and also would not have accepted a leader. This made suppression of the Boxer movement by the authorities more difficult. The policy successfully used in the past by which the leaders of uprisings were executed, but the large mass of the uprisers was spared and requested to spread out, no longer worked.¹¹³

To sum up, we can say that the Boxers, parallel to al-Qaeda and the Taliban, enjoyed wide support in the population - at least for their prime concern -, expulsion of the foreigners and suppression of the Western influence and way of life. In addition, their political objective - the renovation of Chinese society - remained just as vague as al-Qaeda's promise to unite all Moslems in a new caliphate.¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ Ibid, p. 299.

¹¹² See Preston, *The Boxer Rebellion*, p. 23.

¹¹³ See Esherick, *The Origins of the Boxer uprising*, p. 240: “*The possession ritual’s capacity to give anyone the identity of a god gave the Spirit Boxers the capacity to make anyone a leader. This was a movement which could not be easily controlled: not by the officials, not by the leaders themselves.*”

¹¹⁴ See Hunter, *The Future of Islam and the West*, p. 31-33.

E. GOVERNMENTAL SUPPORT

The Chinese leadership was split in its assessment of the Boxer movement. Traditionalist groups in the civil service saw the Boxers as a source of dissatisfaction which could be made use of politically and militarily against the foreign rule. The integration of the Boxer associations into local militias and, in June 1900, into the army aimed at this use of their services for official politics and the integrity of China. Civil servants open to Western innovations saw the Boxers as undisciplined rebels who had to be combated. Useless for any military dispute with Western troops, due to their weapons and their rituals alone,¹¹⁵ the Boxers also appeared to jeopardize the inner, traditional order in China and to provoke the foreigners even further. Thus, military disputes between Boxers and government troops occurred in early 1900, although a number of high civil servants toyed with the idea of instrumentalizing the mass movement of the Boxers and of expelling the unpopular foreigners from the capital and the entire country.¹¹⁶

The Imperial Court, above all the widow and regent Cixi (1863-1908), was caught between the two camps and tended towards one, then the other side, depending on the dominance of a grouping at Court. The Guangxu Emperor, a nephew of the Emperor's widow, had been under house arrest since the failed Reforms of the Hundred Days (1898).¹¹⁷ Blockage of these reforms increased the power of the conservatives at court and led to a massive setback for any kind of modernization in the country. In the situation of stagnation and unwillingness for reforms, it was only consistent to grant the Boxer Movement leeway than to protect the “foreign devils” in the event of a conflict.¹¹⁸ In fact, only few imperial civil servants subsequently took military measures to suppress the

¹¹⁵ A British Lieutenant described attacks of the Boxers as “bowling them over like so many rabbits” for “*They often stopped a few yards off and went through their gesticulations for rendering themselves immune from bullet wounds. Many were shot while kowtowing towards the trains and remained dead in that position.*” Preston, *The Boxer Rebellion*, p. 95.

¹¹⁶ See Esherick, *The Origins of the Boxer Uprising*, pp. 272-274.

¹¹⁷ See Clements, *The Boxer Rebellion*, p. 56.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid*, p. 100: “...*the inefficient methods of the army and the administration, and the half-hearted manner in which punishment was meted out, and then only when such action was absolutely necessary, convinced the shrewd Tzu His [Cixi] that the sympathies of the population lay with the disturbers of the peace and not with the restoration of order or the imposition of penalties such as Europe demanded.*”

movement. Some actions by high civil servants could even be assessed as tacit support by the Boxers.

F. THE BEGINNING OF THE UPRISING

During the spring and the early summer of the year of 1900, the uprising quickly spread in the direction of the two major cities of Peking and Tientsin. Amongst other things, a long drought, which plagued North China, contributed to this. Powerlessly, the peasant population saw the prospect of a catastrophic starvation emerge. The general desperation and hopelessness looked for an outlet.

For the foreigners, the situation became so threatening in January 1900 that a number of ambassadors demanded the suppression of the Boxer Movement. When they heard news of attacks by Boxers on the railway lines between Tientsin and the capital, the embassies in Peking decided to request their own soldiers for their protection on May 28.¹¹⁹ Even if all the powers except Japan sent more soldiers than the Chinese government had officially admitted, the international military force of more than 400 officers and soldiers which arrived in Peking on May 31 appeared still seriously small to the diplomats in the embassy quarter.¹²⁰ Their worries were not without reason: more and more news about further attacks by Boxers on missionaries and Chinese Christians occurred. After an attack on Belgian engineers near Paoting, to the east of Peking, and the murder of two missionaries by Boxers, it was the burning of the stands at the foreign race-course outside the gates of the Chinese capital - which was comparatively harmless in the heated situation - that caused the ambassadors to demand further troops.¹²¹

Against this background, a clear policy of the government towards the Boxers would have been necessary. Decisive intervention with the help of well-trained regular Chinese troops could have put the Boxers under control again. But at the court, there was

¹¹⁹ See Preston, *The Boxer Rebellion*, p. 96-97.

¹²⁰ See *ibid*, p. 65, who cites the wife of the U.S. second secretary: "It seems a very small number among tens of thousands of Chinese soldiers".

¹²¹ *Ibid*, p. 87-96.

no agreement on the mode of procedure to start with.¹²² Ironically, it appears to have been the request for reinforcement of the embassy guards by the foreign ambassadors that on the one hand ensured the defeat of the more prudent forces in the Chinese leadership and on the other enticed the Boxers to more decisive actions against foreigners.¹²³

G. THE GREAT POWERS' RESPONSE AND MILITARY INTERVENTION

The 17 international warships that gathered off Taku in the meantime thereupon put an expedition under the command of the British admiral Seymour as the senior officer. The expedition named after him, with more than 2,000 men, started for Peking on June 10. Even though the Boxers had repeatedly attacked the railways and destroyed the tracks again and again, Seymour expected to be able to reach Peking speedily. This optimism was based not least on a disdain for the military potential of the Chinese; it was assumed that a well-armed European force could beat any Chinese unit. This false estimation almost led to catastrophe. Only shortly after their departure, skirmishes with individual Boxer troops accumulated. At Langfang, about 60 km from Peking, the train was stopped on June 11. In the following days, there were repeated attacks. Nevertheless, Seymour was optimistic to start with that he could reach Peking in the next few days. The situation of the expedition became threatening on June 15, when he was given the news that retreat by train had been cut off. Seymour now gave the command to retreat to the next station in Lofa. In the middle of the preparations for the retreat, another attack came, this time with the participation of Chinese infantry and cavalry. With the deployment of regular Chinese troops, a further advance had finally become an incalculable risk.¹²⁴

This new phase of the Boxer Uprising had to do with both incidents in Peking and also off Taku. The situation in the capital was aggravated even further. On June 11, the

¹²² Esherick, *The Origins of the Boxer Uprising*, p. 274: "As a result of this division and confusion at court, any official proclamation prohibiting the Boxers was met by popular scepticism and resistance. The divisions were widely known, and the Boxers and their sympathizers simply dismissed any prohibition of Boxer activities as issuing from the anti-Boxer officials, and not representing the true will of the throne."

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p. 287.

¹²⁴ See Preston, *The Boxer Rebellion*, p. 138-139.

Japanese legation Counselor Sugiyama was cut to pieces by Chinese soldiers on the way to the station amid the applause of the surrounding spectators. The situation was heated even further when the German Ambassador Clemens von Ketteler locked two Boxers away in the embassy for questioning of his own accord.¹²⁵ Within a very short time, the wildest rumors started doing the rounds amongst the Chinese population in Peking, and the mood, which was tense to start with, became more and more aggressive. Aboard the warships off Taku, officers could only assume what was happening in the Chinese capital. With a view to the unclear situation, the senior officers of the international fleet decided that they had to get the Chinese coastal forts under their control at all costs – otherwise, they could contemplate neither supporting the Seymour expedition nor reproducing the connection to Peking.

The chiefs of the squadron gave the commanders of the Taku forts an ultimatum and simultaneously began preparing to attack the forts. A formal rejection of the ultimatum was not even possible, as fire was opened on the forts before it had expired. At 1.30 a.m. on June 17, 1900, the attack of the international gunboat fleet commenced. The battle lasted for a total of almost six hours, the last Chinese batteries only stopping firing at about 7 in the morning.¹²⁶

With the battle for the Taku forts, the international marine group had secured access to the country, but this success meant little due to the difficult situation of the Seymour expedition, which was still at Langfang and moved on from there on June 19. Only shortly after their departure, a new attack took place. On June 20, the front of the train was shot. The expedition was able to hide in a Chinese arsenal after that, but the regular Chinese troops with whom they were now fighting were distinctly more serious opponents than the Western disdain had admitted. The help they needed only arrived on June 25. The day after, the expedition was able to march off at last. With the return of the battered Seymour expedition, the enterprise found a happy end, although all of the connections to Peking remained interrupted.

At this time, the imperial Chinese court had already started supporting the Boxers openly. On June 17, the Chinese government demanded that all foreigners leave Peking.

¹²⁵ See Roland Felber/Horst Rostek, *Der 'Hunnenkrieg' Kaiser Wilhelms II.*, Berlin 1978.

¹²⁶ See Preston, *The Boxer Rebellion*, p. 153-156.

A decision was difficult for the ambassadors, as they were of the opinion that remaining in the capital would probably mean “carnage, going away a sure demise.” As no answer was received to various correspondences until shortly before the end of the ultimatum, the German Ambassador von Ketteler made his way to the Chinese Foreign Ministry on June 20. On the way there, he was shot in his sedan chair.¹²⁷ Foreigners, missionaries and numerous Chinese Christians fled in swarms to the embassy quarter, where the embassy guards began the stopgap strengthening of the area. The first attacks came shortly after the end of the ultimatum. The following siege was to last for 55 days.

By this time, the foreign powers put a relief force together, for which contingents from Japan, Russia and also from the British, American and French colonies were deployed. The actual advance on Peking was postponed repeatedly, as the military situation remained unclear and as estimates of the size the relief troop required reached record figures again and again. The actual advance did not begin until August. After a race to get to Peking, which met little serious resistance, the embassies were relieved by the 20,000 troops in the international force, composed of 3,000 British, 2,000 Americans, 5,000 Russians, 10,000 Japanese, 800 French, Italians, Austrians and Germans, on August 14, 1900.¹²⁸

Due to a lack of precise information, wild rumors circulated in Europe. In early July, the report that the embassies had been burnt down and all foreigners killed arrived. Further, it was reported that Boxer uprisings had broken out all over China and the movement was spreading towards the south. Although there were not actually any incidents south of Shantung, Western circles in Shanghai, Amoy, Hankou and even in Canton fantasized about the danger from the Boxers. As these fears were also shared by diplomatic representatives and could not be verified from Europe, the marine presence was reinforced in the whole of China.

In December 1900, the negotiations over a peace agreement with China began. After a series of high civil servants, made out to be the “main culprits” of the Boxer

¹²⁷ For details see Bernd Martin, *Die Ermordung des deutschen Gesandten Clemens von Ketteler am 20. Juni 1900 in Peking und die Eskalation des „Boxerkrieges“*, in Susanne Kuß/Bernd Martin (ed.), *Das Deutsche Reich und der Boxeraufstand*, München 2002 (Erfurter Reihe zur Geschichte Asiens, Bd. 2), pp. 77-102.

¹²⁸ The literature on the siege of the Legations in Peking is extremely extensive and highly confusing for the high number of existing Chinese and western diaries and memoirs. A good overview can be found in Peter Fleming, *The Siege of Beijing*, Hong Kong 1983 and in Preston, *The Boxer Rebellion*.

Uprising, had been executed, banished or degraded at the beginning of the new year, a treaty imposing high reparations on China and assuring military access to the embassies in Peking was signed in September 1901 under pressure by the Allies. For the German side, there was the demand in the text that a member of the Imperial Family was sent to Germany on a “penance mission” and that a monument was built at the spot where von Ketteler was murdered. These peace terms were unusually severe, and the last two were intended precisely to humiliate the loser.¹²⁹

¹²⁹ For the Boxer Protocol see Niels P. Peterson, *Das Boxerprotokoll als Abschluß einer imperialistischen Intervention*, in Susanne Kuß/Bernd Martin (ed.), *Das Deutsche Reich und der Boxeraufstand*, München 2002 (Erfurter Reihe zur Geschichte Asiens, Bd. 2), pp. 229-244.

IV. ISLAMISTIC TERROR AS THE NEW THREAT TO THE WEST

A. ORIGINS OF THE ISLAMIC TERROR

Western opinion on the causes of the Islamist's anti-Westernism is divided. Some scholars see the roots of the Islamist's anti-Westernism in addition to a fundamental civilizational incompatibility in the feelings of humiliation, fear, and envy that the Muslims harbor toward the West. There are elements of truth in these views as will be shown in the following sections. The humiliations factor, in particular, as a consequence of military defeats, colonization, and economic exploitation is certainly a major contributor to the anti-Western dimension of the Islamist's views. The envy factor and the attractiveness of Western culture are also important; in fact, many in the Muslim world who have turned against the West have done so because they cannot have access to it and to the benefits that flow from it.

Yet, it seems that the impact of the so-called seductive lure of the West has been somewhat overplayed. Like the Chinese Boxers in 1900, many Muslims today do not favor in particular the dissolution of their indigenous culture and its replacement by a poor imitation of Western popular culture. In fact, the West's attractiveness as a moral and spiritual model for the Muslims is declining.¹³⁰ Therefore it is necessary to take into consideration that the Islamist's anti-Western sentiments arise also from different and more complex sources as humiliation and pure envy. Some of these sources are congruent with the sources that fuelled the Boxer uprising. There are the legacy of colonialism, Western domination of the international economic and political systems that discriminate against the weaker states, Western support for unrepresentative and repressive governments in Muslim countries that are subservient to the West, and the selective and discriminatory application of international rules and principles. According to Shireen Hunter "the principal, although not the only, cause of the Islamists's anti-Westernism is

¹³⁰ See Akhavi, *Islam and the West in world history*, pp. 553-558.

their resentment of Western domination and a feeling – right or wrong – of having been unfairly treated; hence, the Islamists desire to change the balance of power.”¹³¹

Islam is not identical with Islamism and Islamism does not necessarily stand for violence, let alone terror.¹³² But in the course of this paper, it is above all the version of Islamism which propagates the armed fight against the heathens and the West which is of interest. What Taliban, al-Qaeda and other radical-Islamistic organizations have in common is the conviction that only an armed fight can help their holy cause to its breakthrough with a view to a superior enemy (the ruling, “godless” regime, “the Jews”, “the West” or an unholy alliance of these three), because the opponent will thwart any peaceful efforts. The *jihad* is legitimate, unavoidable and per definition defensive for this radical minority amongst the Moslems. The Moslems are, to a certain extent, in a state of siege, they not only have the right, but also the duty, to defend themselves by weapons.¹³³ Although it is incorrect to portray *jihad* exclusively in terms of armed conflict, the Islamists, through the vehicle of *jihad*, “does not seek negotiations, give-and-take, the securing of specific concessions, or even the mere seizure of political power within a certain number of countries.”¹³⁴ By the dictates of scripture, *jihad* cannot compromise, nor can it ever negotiate with its enemies.

Looking at the origins of Islam, it would appear that there exists complete scriptural justification for the militant Islamists’s belief in a just struggle against the West and the unbelievers. The Prophet Mohammed understood that the tribes of the Arabian Peninsula could not be won over easily by the visions of a stranger from Mecca. So Mohammad implemented a strategy that enabled Islam to epode upon the world stage – he wed his religious teachings to the aggressive predisposition of the desert tribes. Warfare of any form was justified if it furthered the mandate of Islam. Unlike

¹³¹ Hunter, *The Future of Islam and the West*, p. 114.

¹³² *Ibid*, pp. 69-115.

¹³³ See Esposito, *The Islamic Threat*, p. 31: “The mission of the Islamic community is to spread rule or abode of Islam globally much as Muhammad and his followers expanded Islamic rule through preaching, diplomacy, and warfare, and to ‘defend’ it. Islamic law stipulates that it is a Muslim’s duty to wage war against polytheists, apostates, and People of the Book who refuse Muslim rule, and those who attack Muslim territory.”

¹³⁴ *Ibid*.

Christianity, which developed peacefully among the communication routes of the Roman Empire, Islam spread almost exclusively through use of the sword.¹³⁵

Another central tenet of Islam related to *jihad* is the concept of martyrdom. According to the Koran, those who die for Allah in this life will receive the highest reward in paradise. In one act, a terrorist who loses his life while executing a mission against the unbelievers has fulfilled two of Islam's greatest mandates – *jihad* and martyrdom.

To a certain degree, it is understandable that Moslems regard their culture and political order as threatened by the Western influence, by the Western power politics. Although the greatly disdained West has not caused the political demise of Islamic states and the collapse of Islamic culture, but made use of and purposefully exacerbated the crisis it found in its own favor, Moslem critics therefore accuse the West and in particular the leading Western power, the USA, of using their military and economic strength to force many peoples in the world to adopt a social system which only brings progress to a few people in the upper and middle classes and makes many others poorer than they were before. They say that this enforced system deviates considerably from the conditions of a Western welfare state and is only intended to keep foreign peoples dependent upon the rich West.¹³⁶

They claim that the problem is exacerbated by above all the USA partly being connected with very corrupt regimes in the Islamic countries and thus preventing urgently required social reforms:

The underlying but largely unspoken and unacknowledged cause of the dichotomy between Islam and the West is the question of power and the consequences of its exercise – that is influence at the regional and global levels. This balance of power, which is heavily weighted in the West's favor, gives the West a tremendous influence over the fate of the Muslim states and peoples. The Western countries exercise through a variety of financial and military means a good deal of influence on the internal politics of Muslim countries, including support for regimes and

¹³⁵ Lewis, *The Crisis of Islam*, pp. 29-46.

¹³⁶ See Barry R. Posen, *The Struggle Against Terrorism*, *International Security*, Vol. 26 (2001/02), no. 3, pp. 39-55, p. 39: "In bin Laden's view, the united States helps to keep Muslim people in poverty and imposes upon them a Western culture deeply offensive to traditional Islam."

governments that are less than reasonably supported by the majority of their own people.¹³⁷

In addition, Americans and Europeans sometimes aggressively demonstrate the alleged superiority of their culture over all others, which is very humiliating for the Moslems. The more powerless the socially deprived and the culturally unnerved feel, the greater the sympathy for terror acts in self-defense becomes. They argue that terror is the only remaining and thus legitimate weapon of the weak. In their basic statements, such arguments match the analyses of self-critical Western scientists who see terrorism of suicide bombers as less of a fanatical attitude than the expression of a futility.

After the invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union in 1979, fundamentalists, Islamists and moderated Moslems formed an alliance against the “unbelieving” enemy. They called themselves the “mujaheddin” (warriors of belief). With the help of the USA, who wished to stop the progress of the Soviet Union in the central Asian area, the mujaheddin were able to force the Soviet troops to move out in 1988 and able to overthrow the pro-Soviet satellite regime in Kabul in 1991.¹³⁸ The Afghan war played a significant role in the rise of Islamism. The victory of the Muslim Afghan mujaheddin over the Soviet army seemed to point to the importance of Islam as a weapon of resistance and victory. If the Arab defeat by Israel in 1967 was the sign of God’s wrath toward the Muslim because they have left the path of Islam, then the Soviet defeat must have been the sign of God’s renewed mercy because Muslim has rediscovered the straight path of Islam.

With this triumph, the unity of the differing fighting communities collapsed and traditional confessional and ethnic differences between Sunnites and Shiites, Pashtunes, Usbeks and Tajiks came to light again.¹³⁹ Although most of the groupings agreed in the objective of setting up an “Islamic” state with Iran as the role model, they could not agree about the tribe and the confession which were to exercise power in this new state. In this situation determined by civil war, a new movement with foreign support and rapidly increasing popularity arose: the Taliban.

¹³⁷ See Hunter, *The Future of Islam and the West*, p. 18-19.

¹³⁸ See Nasreen Ghufuran, *The Taliban and the Civil War Entanglement in Afghanistan*, *Asian Survey*, Vol. 41 (2001), no. 3, pp. 462-487, p. 466.

¹³⁹ See *ibid*, p. 466.

The Arabic word *talib* (seeker of knowledge) means pupil or student, in the figurative sense “Koran scholar”.¹⁴⁰ The plural formed in Persian is *taliban*. Their movement was formed from a tribe of the Pashtunes, who make up about 60 per cent of the Afghans with their population. Amongst the Islamistic groupings, the Taliban represent a particularly radical form of Sunnite orthodoxy. Their intolerance is not only aimed at those who believe differently, but above all against Shiites, but also against moderated Sunnites.¹⁴¹ The Taliban were not happy with what went on in the country during rule by the mujaheddin. They felt that their sacrifices were going to waste as power wrangling corruption continued. Thus, the Taliban saw their major mission in bringing peace and order and in implementing the true rule of the *sharia* (Islamic law). According to Mullah Omar, one of their key leader, the Taliban

took up arms to achieve the aims of the afghan jihad and save our people from further suffering at the hands of the so-called mujaheddin. We had complete faith in God almighty. We never forgot that. He can bless us with victory or plunge us into defeat.¹⁴²

In the short period from 1994 to 1996, the Taliban succeeded in getting almost four-fifths of Afghanistan under their control and deciding the civil war in their favor to a great extent.¹⁴³ This quick victory was out of the ordinary, as only a few tribal leaders or kings had success in governing over the traditionally rivaling groupings of the country for a number of centuries.¹⁴⁴ In fact, the Taliban rule remained unstable from the outset, primarily limiting itself to the towns and villages in terrain which was easy to control, and even there, the new rulers were only able to stay in power with intimidation and

¹⁴⁰ See Kamal Matinuddin, *The Taliban Phenomenon: Afghanistan 1994-1997*, Oxford 1999, p. 12. Matinuddin remarks, “the word *taliban* generally denotes students studying in *deeni madaris* (religious institutions)” (p. 12).

¹⁴¹ See Esposito, *The Islamic Threat*, p. 265.

¹⁴² Quoted after Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban. Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia*, New Haven and London 2001, p. 23.

¹⁴³ See Adam Garfinkle, *Afghanistanding*, *Orbis*, Vol. 43 (1999), no. 3, pp. 405-419, p. 405.

¹⁴⁴ Nasreen Ghufuran argues that the quickly success of the Taliban was possible because “the Taliban achieved most of their victories without waging a fight” for local commanders were eager to avoid further bloodshed and considered the Taliban “to be a neutral, even a benign, force.” Ghufuran, *The Taliban and the Civil War Entanglement in Afghanistan*, p. 468.

violence.¹⁴⁵ The Taliban's objective was to return Afghanistan to the “original Islam” and thus to a pre-industrial, pre-modern form of life. They built their vision of an ideal Islamic society upon an Islamic Utopia that they claim existed during the brief period of the prophet Muhammad’s rule in Medina and the early Caliphate of Khulfa-I Rashidin (632-662), the four “rightly guided” caliphs who succeeded the Prophet Muhammad. The Taliban were committed to establishing an exemplary Islamic rule for the world and especially for the Muslim states, and they were impervious to the possibility that their Islamic paradigm produced negative stereotypes of Islam.

The scale was the strictest interpretation of the *sharia* ever in the Moslem world.¹⁴⁶ With their resistance, even to any superficial modernization according to a Western model, the Taliban regime is an extreme, even amongst Islamistic movements. The Taliban closed almost all the schools and the University of the capital Kabul, film and television, music and pictures were forbidden. But even playing football, keeping pigeons, flying kites and all kinds of toys showing man or animals were forbidden as being “unislamic.” All men had to have a beard and women were deprived of all human rights. The Taliban totally rejected “the Western-bestowed rights of women.”¹⁴⁷ They were not allowed to attend a school or do any work and were only allowed to leave their houses completely veiled together with their husband or a male relative.¹⁴⁸

For the Taliban, this triumph had only been possible because neighboring Pakistan and, initially, the USA had generously provided them with modern weapons and money. In this help, both states had been guided by the strategic interest that they would finally create an assertive power of order in Afghanistan with the strictly organized Taliban and thus also a stable and foreseeable situation. With the support of such a regime, they wanted to create the preconditions for obtaining the natural resources in Central Asia, above all the greatest amount of natural oil in the world yet to be developed. The concrete plan was to lay a pipeline from the oil fields in Kazakhstan

¹⁴⁵ See Garfinkle, *Afghanistanding*, p. 406.

¹⁴⁶ For the supremacy of the *sharia* see Hunter, *The Future of Islam and the West*, p. 35-36.

¹⁴⁷ Hafeez Malik, *The Taliban’s Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan: Its Impact on Eurasia*, *The Brown Journal of World Affairs*, Vol. 6 (1999), no. 1, pp.135-146, p. 139.

¹⁴⁸ See Rashid, *Taliban*, p. 2 and pp. 105-115.

through Afghanistan and Pakistan to the Indian Ocean.¹⁴⁹ Both Pakistan and, to start with, the USA accepted the Islamistic, intolerant character of the Taliban and the fundamentalist regime of religion and suppression which they set up and can basically only be compared with Pol Pot's murdering stone-age communism in Cambodia in the 1970's.¹⁵⁰ It was only when the Taliban granted the al-Qaeda terror organization refuge in 1996 that the USA and later, as a result of their pressure, Pakistan withdrew their support for the Taliban regime. Unlike the global intentions of al-Qaeda, to whom they offered a "safe haven", the Taliban never showed real interest in developments outside their sphere of rule.¹⁵¹

More than 100,000 Moslems from 43 countries of the Islamic world went to the military camps in Peshawar in Pakistan and in Afghanistan in the period from 1980 to 1992. Unnoticed by Western observers to start with, a fundamental change took place with them. For the first time in their lives, many radicals from North Africa to Bangla Desh had the opportunity to look further than their own regional limitations and to get ideas from other Islamistic movements whose operations had been too far away up to then. The leaders of various groupings made ideologically and logistic connections amongst one another, thus creating the prerequisites for an international network of radically Islamic organizations for the first time in the rough, mountainous border area of Pakistan and Afghanistan.¹⁵² Afghanistan served as a ground for military training and Islamic indoctrination for large numbers of youth from the Arab and Muslim world, who then disseminated what they had learned among their own peoples. Hence, under Taliban

¹⁴⁹ See *ibid*, pp. 157-169.

¹⁵⁰ For the cruel nature of the Taliban regime see Mark A. Drumbl, The Taliban's "Other" Crimes, *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 23 (2002), no. 6, pp. 1121-1131. For the comparison to the Khmer Rouge see also Buruma/Margalit, *Occidentalism*, p. 42-44.

¹⁵¹ See Julie Sirrs, Lifting the Veil on Afghanistan, *The National Interest* (2001), no. 65, pp. 43-48, p. 46: "From that point forward [establishing contact with Bin Laden] the Taliban became increasingly less interested in southern Pashtun domination of Afghanistan and more oriented toward extremist international Islam."

¹⁵² Note the special terrain conditions that made Afghanistan a perfect base for al-Qaeda. See Posen, *The Struggle Against Terrorism*, p. 41: "Afghanistan is a large country, with rugged terrain and long and lawless borders, far from any Western base; it is hard to monitor, let alone attack – in other words, a perfect hideout."

regime, Afghanistan became “a breeding ground for extremists and terrorist groups.”¹⁵³ The wake of so-called globalization had now also caught up with Islamism.

Under these framework conditions, Osama bin Laden was able to found his organization al-Qaeda (“The Basis”) in 1989, which was to develop into an umbrella organization of groupings with separate operations in the course of the years.¹⁵⁴ In 1992, bin Laden moved to Sudan, where he turned Al-Qaeda into a tightly organized terror organization. In 1996, he had to leave the country again because Saudi Arabia and also the USA put the Sudanese government under pressure.¹⁵⁵ He returned via Pakistan to Afghanistan, where the Taliban had already set up their Islamic reign of terror in the meantime.¹⁵⁶

Ideologically, the fanatical Wahabit felt very related to the Islamism of the Taliban.¹⁵⁷ As Julie Sirrs points out, the Taliban were “sheltering bin Laden first and foremost because of a shared worldview.”¹⁵⁸ Both the Saudi Arabian and also the Afghan Islamists vigorously ward off all intellectual influences from the West – the only innovations which are welcome to them are highly developed weapons and similar engineering. Bin Laden started bringing Arabic “warriors of belief” into the country again. Quickly, his forces and his monetary support became a pillar of the Taliban’s power. According to a British document of 2001,

Bin Laden has provided the Taliban regime with troops, arms and money to fight the Northern Alliance. He has representatives in the Taliban military command structure. He has also given infrastructure assistance and humanitarian aid.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵³ Thomas H. Henriksen, The Rise and Decline of Rogue States, *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 54 (2001), no. 2, pp. 349-373, p. 366.

¹⁵⁴ See Jason Burke, *Al-Qaeda. Casting a Shadow of Terror*, London and New York 2003, p. 7: “Al-Qaeda comes from the Arabic root *qafayn-dal*. It can mean a base, as in a camp or a home, or a foundation, such as what is under a house. It can mean a pedestal that supports a column. It can also mean a precept, rule, principle, maxim, formula, method, model or pattern.”

¹⁵⁵ See Robin Wright, *Sacred Rage. The Wrath of Militant Islam*, New York 2001, p. 254.

¹⁵⁶ See *ibid*, p. 264.

¹⁵⁷ See Esposito, *The Islamic Threat*, p. 265: “The Taliban subscribe to a very conservative (puritanical) interpretation of Islam. Their Wahhabi-like doctrines are close to those of Saudi Arabia’s religious establishment.”

¹⁵⁸ Sirrs, *Lifting the Veil on Afghanistan*, p. 47.

¹⁵⁹ Quoted after Wright, *Sacred Rage*, New York 2001, p. 266.

These vassals decidedly helped to stabilize the Taliban rule against all uprisings of hostile tribes and to extend practically all over Afghanistan.¹⁶⁰ This was the origin of an alliance between al-Qaeda and the Taliban, which soon felt strong enough to challenge the West. Consequently, on November 9, 1998 the Taliban warned the American government that “the United States indictment of bin Laden would endanger Americans in the Muslim world and spark a storm of anger against the United States.”¹⁶¹

Well hidden in the inaccessible mountain valleys, bin Laden was able to expand his organization even further and also to intensify the contacts to Islamic movements in other countries, which had already been established. Now, an international network, which was in a better position than any before to exercise terror attacks on a large scale against the “Great Satan America” and its Western and Islamic “minions”, had completely formed.

B. THE THREAT OF THE HOUSE OF UNBELIEF

As we have seen, the Boxer Uprising can basically be explained by the colonial development of China and its consequences for the population and can thus be limited historically to a very short period, whereas the rivalry between the occident and the orient is much older and much more complex due to a long joint history. Originally, it came about with the question whether the whole world should be Christianized or Islamized in the sign of the only correct religion.¹⁶² In this context, cross or crescent moon was the glaring alternative. However, the modern Western industrial societies no longer know the central creed binding for all or a corresponding politically/secularly standardized form of

¹⁶⁰ See Rashid, *Taliban*, p. 139: “Bin Laden endeared himself further to the leadership [of the Taliban] by sending several hundred Arab-Afghans to participate in the 1997 and 1998 Taliban offensives in the north. [...] Increasingly, Bin Laden’s world view appeared to dominate the thinking of senior Taliban leaders. All-night conversations between Bin Laden and the Taliban leaders paid off. Until his arrival the Taliban leadership had not been particularly antagonistic to the USA or the West but demanded recognition for their new government. However, after the Africa bombings the Taliban became increasingly vociferous against the Americans, the UN, the Saudis and Muslim regimes around the World. Their statements increasingly reflected the language of defiance Bin Laden had adopted and which was not an original Taliban trait.”

¹⁶¹ Garfinkle, *Afghanistanding*, p. 416.

¹⁶² See Esposito, *The Islamic Threat*, p. 23: “Both Islam and Christianity possessed a sense of universal message which in retrospect were destined to lead to confrontation rather than mutual cooperation.”

life, but a variety of ideologies, from religious to atheistic.¹⁶³ Missioning other peoples became a concern of a religious minority, as many Christians, at least in Western Europe, would like a “dialogue” with those who believe differently rather than having conversion as their target. The hatred of Christian missionaries and their activities, which motivated the Boxer Movement in China to a decisive extent, does not play any role in the confrontation with Islamistic terror. The objective of the aggressive Christian mission has been replaced by a secular impulse to a mission of civilization in the West. In 1989, Francis Fukuyama stated in his famous article *The End of History?*:

The Triumph of the West, of the Western idea, is evident first of all in the total exhaustion of viable systematic alternatives to Western liberalism. [...] What we may be witnessing is [...] the end of history as such: that is, the end point of mankind’s ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government.¹⁶⁴

If the Cold War had been a confrontation between communism and liberal-democratic capitalism, and if communism had collapsed, Fukujama supposed that liberalism, democracy, and capitalism must have been the victor and Western-style liberal democratic institutions provided the norm for states everywhere.¹⁶⁵ If the entire world was not yet Western-type liberal, democratic, and capitalist, it would become so.

Islamists, like the Boxers before, feel this domination by Western civilization as humiliating. Cultural resistance therefore appears for many Muslims as a quest for self-respect. It is crucial to understand, that anti-Western rage among Muslims is not the result of a lack of knowledge about the Western culture. The problem is that they just not like what they see, because from the Islamist’s perspective, Western values reflect not a progress but a degeneration of culture. Due to the political, economic, technical, military and media superiority of the West, the Western model of civilization appears so

¹⁶³ See Hunter, *The Future of Islam and the West*, p. 18 “The modern Western liberal state in matters of religion is [...] agnostic if not atheist.”

¹⁶⁴ Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History?*, *The National Interest* (1989), pp.3-18.

¹⁶⁵ John Gray rightfully draws attention to the fact that Soviet Marxism was a Western-type civilization as well and that thus “there is a hint of absurdity in describing the Cold War as a conflict between East and West”. When the Soviet State collapsed, her argues, one of the most ambitious experiments in Westernization suffered a major setback: “The Soviet collapse was not a victory for ‘the Western idea’. It was a defeat for a prototypically *Western* project of modernization.” John Gray, *Global Utopias and Clashing Civilizations: Misunderstanding the Present*, *International Affairs*, Vol. 74 (1998), no.1, pp. 149-164.

overpowering that it is sensed as a threat.¹⁶⁶ In particular in the Moslem world, it overtaxes the ability to transformation of other cultures, especially as their own inferiority is sensed as being humiliating.

Although a secular, worldly impulse to mission has replaced the religious one in the West, the conflict between the occident and the orient has by no means lost any of its sharpness. Whereas we can hardly speak of the “Christian Occident” any more, the term “Islamic Orient” has not lost its justification. In this cultural area, the people actually do still mainly live in a society with a religious/political structuring.¹⁶⁷ Secularization has hardly taken place in the Islamic world, if at all then only in approaches.¹⁶⁸ And it is precisely this difference – either religion as an obligating middle and scale of the society or as a private matter of each individual – which now means the main difference between Orient and Occident for many Moslems.¹⁶⁹ For them, the question of the extent to which they are to sense a “westernization” of their cultural sphere as an enrichment or as a threat has gained central importance.¹⁷⁰

What all Islamic movements have in common is that they do not put the demise of the individual Islamic states down to the structural crises in their own society – but to the

¹⁶⁶ See Hunter, *The Future of Islam and the West*, p. 12-13: “Muslims are [...] concerned about the dilution and possibly the disappearance of their civilization under the influence [...] of Western civilization. Thus the thinkers and theoreticians of the recent Islamist movements have [...] talked of a civilizational conflict between Islam and the West.”

¹⁶⁷ See Akhavi, *Islam and the West in World History*, p. 545-546: “Muslims [...] must materialize God’s commands as members of a living community. The interest of this community must be fostered, promoted and defended. Failing in this risks the lapse of the religious injunctions.”

¹⁶⁸ See Hunter, who argues, “the slower pace of secularization in Muslim countries cannot be attributed to Islam’s specificity. [...] If the Muslim world in general is less secularized than the west, it is not because of the peculiar quality of its creed but because its social and economic development is less advanced”. Hunter, *The Future of Islam and the West*, p. 165-166.

¹⁶⁹ See *ibid*, p. 34-35: “Religion in Islam is not only a matter of private conscience but also of social duty. The Muslim has a religious duty to enjoin the good and to warn against evil. [...] From the concept of the sovereignty of God, in Islam it follows that the principal goal and, indeed, the *raison d’être* of the community is to create conditions in which Muslims can worship and serve God and prepare for the afterlife.”

¹⁷⁰ See Sir Michael Howard, *9/11 and After*, *Naval War College Review*, Vo. 55 (2002), no. 4, pp. 11-21, p. 18: “The trouble is that this very goal – that of a prosperous materialist society with religion as an optional extra – appals Islamic fundamentalists, as well as many Muslims who are not fundamentalists. They regard Western society not as a model to be imitated but as an awful warning, a Sodom and Gomorrah, an example of how mankind should *not* live.”

expansion of the West and the “westernization” of Moslem societies.¹⁷¹ The Moslems, and this is the message of the Islamists, have allowed themselves to be tempted into taking on elements on Western philosophy and society. The Islamist Leaders, so Mark Juergensmeyer, “regard as especially pernicious the fact that the cultural colonialism of Western ideas erodes confidence in traditional values. For that matter, it also undermines traditional religious constructs of society and the state.”¹⁷²

Although the Islamists want to take on the technical achievements of the West, by no means do they want ideas from philosophy and state organization. Here, the reaction patterns of the Islamic world have a striking similarity with those of the Chinese a century before. The fact that both the Chinese boxers and also the Moslems nowadays sense frustration about the insufficient performance of their own governments is inconsiderable. Although many problems are/were homemade and self-caused, Boxers/Islamists always made/make the West responsible for their own plight. The pitiful situation of Chinese society of the last Empire was portrayed as a result of Western intrigues, just as this is done in the modern Moslem world. It is always the West's fault, be it defeats, missionaries, droughts and famine or also decadence, exploitation, the fate of the Palestinians, drugs, poverty or Aids.¹⁷³ The “intellectual aggression” of the West, the new “crusader mentality”, with which it tries to assert its values from liberal market economy down to women's emancipation, deprives the Moslems of their values, the Islamists say, and make them compliant imitators of non-Islamic forms of thinking and living. Bernard Lewis writes on the hatreds of the Muslim world against “the West”:

At times this hatred goes beyond hostility to specific interests or actions or policies or even countries and becomes a rejection of Western civilization as such, not only what it does but what it is, and the principles and values

¹⁷¹ See Esposito, *The Islamic Threat*, p. 217: “Many in the Arab and Muslim world see the history of Islam and the Muslim’s world dealings with the West as one of victimization and oppression at the hands of an expansive imperial power. They counter that ‘militant Christianity’ and ‘militant Judaism’ are the root causes of failed Muslim societies and instability.”

¹⁷² Juergensmeyer, *The New Cold War?*, p. 20.

¹⁷³ Perhaps nowhere was this process of blaming the West more prevalent than in Iran during the early stages of the revolution. “All the problems of Iran”, Khomeini elaborated, are “the work of America”. Ayatollah Sayyed Ruhollah Mousavi Khomeini, *Collection of Speeches, Position Statements, 1977*, edited by Joint Publications Research Service, Arlington 1979, p. 3.

that it practices and professes. These are indeed seen as innately evil, and those who promote or accept them as the “enemies of God.”¹⁷⁴

Just as little as the Chinese Boxers were, Taliban and al-Qaeda are not primarily the organizational manifestation of political ideas or the avant-garde of social powers. Instead, they embody an anti-American and anti-West feeling of life highly propagated in the Islamic cultural sphere. Whereas the Boxer Uprising was the result of Western colonialism and its pressure of modernizing society, Islamistic terror is above all an expression of the rejection of globalization and its negative consequences for the position of the Islamic civilization in the world. As Bassam Tibi summarizes:

The globalization process unfolding in the course of European expansion proved Western civilization to be more competitive, and severely challenged Islam. Contemporary Muslims feel that the West has deprived Islam of its core function, that is, to lead humanity.¹⁷⁵

Globalization leads to the Western world coming closer and closer to the Moslems without the majority profiting from its benefits. More than the previous generation, young well-educated Moslems nowadays recognize the enormous difference between prosperity in the West and their own poverty.¹⁷⁶ Therefore, globalization is not regarded as a chance, but a threat in large parts of the Islamic world, as a new attempt by the West to exercise power and to patronize the Moslems. Terror is based on inequalities, sensed by those affected as being unjust, for which purpose we need no al-Qaeda. The attempt to portray the Taliban and al-Qaeda as widely branched organizations with their boss Osama bin Laden is therefore the helpless and desperate attempt by the West to give terror a face. It is the helpless attempt to stand an idea up against the wall and to shoot it by order of court martial.

¹⁷⁴ Lewis, *The Roots of Muslim Rage*, p. 48.

¹⁷⁵ Tibi, *The Challenge of Fundamentalism*, p. 15.

¹⁷⁶ Robbert Woltering, *The Roots of Islamist Popularity*, *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 23, no. 6, pp.1133-1143, p. 1139: “These [Muslim] societies have become increasingly aware of the material and immaterial niceties of Western civilization, which continued to be present in one way or another after the de-colonisation. Especially in and around the oil-rich countries, people are well aware of the discrepancies between the wealth of the Western countries and the poverty of their own.”

C. RELIGIOUS ORIGINS

It has been seen that the Boxer Uprising had a religious motivation and legitimization to a considerable extent. The Christian missionaries and their converts formed an important target for hatred. In the case of Islamism, religious reservations form the core of resistance against the West even more strongly. Basically, the Moslems ought to have been able to encounter the spiritually related religion all the more impartially, the more the churches lost their political influence in the West. However, the opposite is the case. In the case of militant Islamism and terror in the name of Allah, the situation is more complicated.

Islam not only offers moral scales of value for all areas of private, religious and public life, it also provides concrete instructions for actions in everyday life.¹⁷⁷ The Koran and the *sunna* of the prophet Mohammed form the guideline for every part of life. The Islamists believe in the universality of their religion, i.e. they would like the *sharia*, the Islamist order of law and values, to apply all over the world. Islamism is not the traditional practice of the religion, but its modern distortion for ideological purposes. As Robbert Woltering points out in his contribution *The roots of Islamic popularity*, all Islamist groups have in common the desire to “Islamize” society and “to change the very basic of the social fabric.” It is the belief of Islamists, so Woltering, that there was today no society in the world that lives according to the principles of Islam, and that this was a bad thing:

As to the political aspect of their desire, all Islamists have in common the conviction that sooner or later the realm of politics will have to be altered fundamentally. Islamisation may start at the bottom, or it may be implemented from above, but it is clear that any Islamisation of society cannot be complete until the existing political system of the country in question is replaced with a usually undefined – Islamic one.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁷ See Hunter, *The Future of Islam and the West*, p. 34: “Islam [...] is a collective and communal religion, in the sense, that it enjoins the members of the community to behave in prescribed ways not only individually and in relation to their God but also toward one another. In this sense a degree of overlap exists between the domains of public life and private life.”

¹⁷⁸ Woltering, *The Roots of Islamist Popularity*, p. 1133.

Even if there are differences of opinion amongst Islamists about whether violence (or also terror) is permitted for the assertion of their own religious objectives under certain circumstances, and also at which point in time, the totalitarian core of Islamism is obvious: it permits neither democracy nor pluralism, neither rights of defense of the people against the state nor separation of powers, neither freedom of the press nor a state-free private sphere. On the contrary, each person is to be covered by the universal validity of the religion. An individual can neither leave nor criticize the *umma*, the association of the believers, without being declared an outlaw and a betrayer by a *fatwa*, a religious legal analysis.¹⁷⁹

As stated above, the West has stopped its missionary efforts to a great extent. We can no longer speak of efforts by the West to Christianize the Moslem world. But it is precisely the frequent absence of religion in the globalized culture of the West in which the Islamists see an even greater and more perfidious threat for the Islamic world.¹⁸⁰ A civilization like the Moslem one, which does not recognize a separation of state and church and in which religiousness is not a private matter for each single individual, must feel challenged in his deepest core by a culture which provides exactly this alternative.¹⁸¹ Therefore, the Islamists are not accusing the West of efforts to convert them to Christianity, but instead the precise opposite, i.e. its assumedly "godless" nature. According to Osama bin Laden, the West is "*the modern world's symbol of paganism, America and its allies.*"¹⁸²

¹⁷⁹ See Akhavi, *Islam and the West in World History*, p. 555: "Efforts to establish liberalism in the Muslim world have been resisted because it conflicts with the central idea of salvation in Islam, according to which God has placed the human being on earth as His trustee, whose full potential can be realised only by membership in a community of believers, a community whose existence and welfare is warrant for the religious injunctions. The individual's moral worth is shaped by the contributions of the community of believers, even as that community is itself shaped by what that individual has to offer it."

¹⁸⁰ See Buruma/Margalit, *Occidentalism*, p. 113-114: "It may or may not be true that secularization, or at least a retreat of religion from the political sphere, is a necessary condition for modernization and economic growth. The fact is that enough reformers in non-Western countries believed it, and they were prepared to enforce it with sufficient brutality, to make religious people feel seriously threatened. The radical reaction to these secular threats was to see the Occident not as free from religion – literally as the godless West – but as something much worse than that. The West, to the religious radicals, appeared to be in thrall to the false and thoroughly corrupting god of materialism."

¹⁸¹ Hunter, *The Future of Islam and the West*, p. 18: "A democratic system of government that operates on ethical rules rooted in religious beliefs is clearly more compatible with Islam [...] than is the present Western system in which ethical issues in the main are considered to be in the private domain."

¹⁸² Bruce Lincoln, *Holy Terrors*, p. 103.

Mark Juergensmeyer quotes, an Interview he has done with Mahmud Abouhalima, who was complained to have been the “mastermind“ of the World Trade Center bombing in 1993:

Abouhalima made it clear that America’s involvement in religious politics – the support for the state of Israel and for ‘enemies of Islam’ such as Egypt’s Mubarak – is not the result of Christianity. Rather, it was due to America’s ideology of secularism, which Abouhalima regards not as neutrality but as hostility toward religion, especially Islam. [...] I asked him if the United states would be better off if it had a Christian government. ‘Yes,’ Abouhalima replied, ‘at least it would have morals’.¹⁸³

The most extreme form of this way of thinking is satanization. The process of satanization indicates that the secular West is still seen as a religious entity, albeit a sinister one. The Muslim world would suffer under the wheeling and dealing of a conspiratorial Western network, which vastness and power could be explained only by its supernatural force. During the early days of the first Gulf War, the Palestinian Islamic movement, *Hamas*, issued as communiqué stating that the U.S. “commands all the forces hostile to Islam and the Muslims.” It singled out George Bush, who, it claimed, was not only “the leader of the forces of evil” but also “the chief of the false gods.”¹⁸⁴

A central demand repeatedly made in the West is that of a democratization of Islam. For Islamists and also for many convinced followers of Islam, this apparently simple demand is not possible. Unlike the West, where politics and religion were two different spheres in their origin, partly being united in the middle Ages and separated again in modern times, the Islamic view of the world was aimed from the outset at state and religion not being separated from one another. Amongst the founders of religion, Mohammed has a special position in that he was also a soldier and a statesman alongside his function as the highest religious authority. In the Islamic view, there are thus no two spheres which one could separate today. In Western thinking, man forms the centerpiece of the world. As a creation and simultaneously a partner of God, he has inviolable rights. On the other hand, only God is at the center according to oriental thinking. A separation

¹⁸³ Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God. The Global Rise of Religious Violence*, Berkeley 2003, p. 69.

¹⁸⁴ Hamas communiqué, January 22, 1991, quoted after Jean-Francois Legrain, *A Defining Moment: Palestinian Islamic Fundamentalism*, in James P. Piscatori (ed.), *Islamic Fundamentalism and the Gulf Crisis*, Chicago 1991, p. 76.

between the secular and the religious sphere of life is therefore not possible, the attempt alone is blasphemy.¹⁸⁵

The fact that the suicide attackers of September 11 were above all religiously indoctrinated and motivated is proven by the “Final Instructions” found in their baggage. In which it is said:

All of their equipment and gates and technology will not prevent, nor harm, except by God’s will. The believers do not fear such things. The only ones that fear it are the allies of Satan, who are the brothers of the devil. They have become their allies... Remember that his is a battle for the sake of God. As the prophet, peace be upon him, said, ‘An action for the sake of God is better than all of what is in the world’. [...] Do not seek revenge for yourself. Strike for God’s sake.¹⁸⁶

Such a document refutes the opinion that the terrible attack on the USA had nothing to do with religion and nothing to do with Islam. Well-meaning politicians and intellectuals in Western states have attempted a strict separation of religion and terrorism, in order to protect Islam against its declared opponents.¹⁸⁷ A number of liberal Moslems endeavored to assure Western media that these terrorists did not believe in God, the messages of the prophets, the Koran, that they were not real Moslems. But the authors of the “Final Instructions” are as religious as the authors of Christian crusading propaganda once were: in both cases, the calls for genocide on the non-believers, martyrdom as a particular virtue, in both cases crimes which are expressly to be committed by divine order. In both cases, we are dealing with a perversion, not with a negation of the religious. Subjectively, precisely such fantasists understand themselves as particularly devout believers, highly superior to the others as regards religious steadfastness and willingness to sacrifice.

¹⁸⁵ See Robert Jervis, An Interim Assessment of September 11: What has Changed and What Has Not, *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 117 (2002), no. 1, pp. 37-55, p. 42: “It can be argued that one of the main barriers to democracy in Islamic countries is the lack of a separation between church and state and an acceptance of the idea that even in a religiously homogeneous society the direct political influence of theological leaders should be limited. It is hard to see what outsiders could do to effect such a separation, however.”

¹⁸⁶ Final Instructions to the Hijackers of September 11, Found in the Luggage of Mohamed Atta and Two other Copies, cited after Lincoln, *Holy Terrors*, p. 95-97.

¹⁸⁷ See Hunter, *The Future of Islam and the West*, p. 14-16.

D. PUBLIC SUPPORT AND SOCIAL COMPOSITION

If one quite generally formulates the concern of the Islamists as the realization of an “Islamic” order, which is to create unity, strength and justice in a situation of apparent weakness, one can more easily understand why people from all levels of society feel attracted by Islamism and its foremost position against the West. Shireen Hunter quotes in this context the Muslim professor Eddin Ibrahim who pointed out that Islamism has become “an idiom for expressing profound worldly grievances and the quest for the good life here on earth.”¹⁸⁸

In Moslem societies, a new turn towards Islam has taken place with tremendous dynamism. In this context, Samuel Huntington has spoken of an “Islamic resurgence”. To start with, it has very little to nothing to do with an export of revolution or with violence and terror. Instead, the Islamic resurgence is a broad intellectual, cultural, social and political reflection which has taken hold of almost all the Islamic world. Without doubt, it is an attempt to cope with modernization and the Western pressure on civilization.¹⁸⁹ The causes of the renaissance of the religion are urbanization, social mobilization, increased communication and media consumption as well as the increase in interaction with Western and other cultures.

This Islamic arousal, which can be seen all over the world, can be seen in the increased attention to religious rites, the propagation of religious publications, cassettes and TV programs, the strong emphasis on Islamic clothing and an increase of Islamic education in Koran schools, but also the Islamization of regular schools, also in the increase in efforts to replace Western law by Islamic law and to use religious language and symbols more often. Islam is no longer just a religion, but becomes an extensive form of life. Then, it is only one further step until the state institutions completely subscribe to Islam and thus the total presence of the religion in all areas becomes a reality.

However, it does not become clear from the start where the difference between Islamists and “normal” Moslems is, who also regard the Koran and the *sunna* as the

¹⁸⁸ Hunter, *The Future of Islam and the West*, p. 99.

¹⁸⁹ See Eliot A. Cohen, *A Strange War*, *The National Interest*, no. 65 (2001), pp. 11-22, p. 15.

foundation of their own belief and generally also endeavor to align their conduct to Islamic values. In fact, the border is not easy to draw, which also explains the support of the Islamists by large parts of the population and the at least partial identity of their respective objectives. The relationship to politics and law does however give indications of the existence of specifically Islamistic convictions, “Islamists” regarding religion, law and politics as an inseparable unit and wanting private and public life to be exclusively based on Islamic standards and values. The brief formula for this is “Application of the *sharia*”, which means implementation of the order of law and values derived from the Koran and the *sunna*. It entails not only statutory regulations concerned with domestic, inheritance or criminal law, but also quite everyday matters ranging from hygiene to clothing. Whereas the majority of the Moslems do not question the validity of “Islamic values”, they do not want the provisions of the Islamic law to be applied to the present without further ado and scholars of law and religion and the leaders of Islamistic movements to decide on the social and political order of their country. Most of them wish for a society founded on Islamic values, but not an “Islamic state” along the lines of Iran, Saudi Arabia or even Afghanistan – up to the winter of 2001.

Nevertheless, the Islamistic terror attacks on Western targets enjoyed an undeniable sympathy and wide support in large parts of the Moslem world. The support of the Boxer Movement in China and the support of the Islamists had a lot to do with the defense against foreign, i.e. Western powers and ideas and even more with the defense against Western dominance. Islamism is generally considered a protest movement within the Moslem societies aiming for orientation, sense and self-respect against social injustice, cultural alienation and collective powerlessness, which in the end are put down to the effects of powers hostile to Islam.¹⁹⁰ The aim of maintenance or regaining an independent, Islamically determined identity played and plays a bearing role in the context during the periods of the anti-colonial battle for liberation. From an Islamic view, the threat comes from the outside, an estimation shared by most Moslems: the intellectual aggression of the West, the new “crusader mentality,” with which the West tries to assert

¹⁹⁰ See Hunter, *The Future of Islam and the West*, p. 20: “The Islamists are only the latest in along line; earlier secular groups also resented and challenged with varying degrees of intensity and vehemence Western supremacy and its controlling influence in international life. The anti-Western views and sentiments of certain segments of Muslim populations are more the consequence of these internal and external disequilibria and structural inequalities than of civilizational incompatibilities.”

its values from liberal market economy down to women's emancipation, deprives the Moslems of their traditional values, some of which have an archaic touch, and makes them compliant imitators of non-Islamic forms of thinking and living.¹⁹¹

It has been shown that the Boxers, like most Chinese secret alliances, pursued decidedly anti-dynastic objectives at the start of their movement. This attitude hostile to the authorities also applies to the Islamists. Similar to the Boxers, they regard their governments as corrupted by the West and as incapable of defying the cultural threat of Western globalization. The criticism of the Islamists is also simultaneously directed against their own elites, which came to power after achievement of independence in the Islamic countries. Their accusation is that they have failed right down the line. Whereas the Boxers saw evidence for the fact that their “Mandate of Heaven” has expired in the permanent military defeats of the Manchu and their increasing compromises towards the “foreign devils”, the Islamists explain the current state of weakness of the Moslem world with the betrayal of Islam and its doctrines and as a result of the “westernization” of the ruling elites.¹⁹² For them, Western supremacy and the decline of the Muslim world appeared as the divine punishment for straying from the path of Islam. Western domination was explained as a result of alienation of the Islamic world from Islam. Buruma/Margalit thus argue that the fault lines of the worldwide clash of civilizations “do not coincide with national, ethnic, or religious borders” and that “the fiercest battles” would be fought inside the Muslim world.¹⁹³ To illustrate the view of foreign domination “as a sign of the wrath of God” Henry Munson quotes a statement “by a marginally literate peddler from Tangier”:

Why did God allow the Christians to rule over the house of Islam? Why did God allow the Jews to take Palestine and holy Jerusalem? Why does God allow the Christians to live like sultans in our land while we are like

¹⁹¹ Woltering, *The Roots of Islamist Popularity*, p. 1134-1135: “Islamist organizations bestow a high level of dignity and value on the moral standards of society, which are equated with the Islamic heritage. They claim ‘authenticity’ of conduct on all accounts: social, economic, religious and political. This authenticity is juxtaposed with elements which have entered society from abroad and retain a ‘foreign’ identity. Most of these elements are, as a product of past colonisation and current world domination originally Western elements. The elements protested against by means of the claim on ‘authenticity’ can range from secularism and democracy, to playing with Barbie dolls and the wearing of a tie.”

¹⁹² Hunter, *The Future of Islam and the West*, p. 77.

¹⁹³ Buruma/Margalit, *Occidentalism*, p. 147.

slaves in their land? This is God's punishment and this is God's test. Muslims have left the path of Islam.¹⁹⁴

“Islam is the solution” is therefore the motto of the Islamists, with which they mobilize against critics and opponents.¹⁹⁵ In order to bring about the intellectual/moral turn-around to lead out of the general plight, Islam must firstly be urged of the falsifications and “inadmissible” innovations which have deformed and unshaped it in the course of the centuries. Reformed Islam will cause the spirit of the early times to arise in the community of the Moslems, in which it was strong, unified and irresistible strengthened by belief, and will retain its leading position in the world which it had for centuries. It is this combination of moral and political appeal, the promise of individual fulfillment, collective liberation and setting up of past historical greatness again which makes Islamism so attractive for many people, especially amongst the scholars.

Bernard Lewis pertinently described this uncertainty within the Moslem world, with a view to the West appearing to be overpowering, as the “crisis of Islam.”¹⁹⁶ Within the Moslem societies, it is above all the youths who are feeling the force of this crisis of Islam with all its sharpness. For example, the population of Algeria has trebled in three decades: from 9 million in the year of 1963 to about 28 million 30 years later. The growth in the Egyptian population is almost 2.1 per cent per year according to information from the German World Population Foundation (DSW).¹⁹⁷ In just short of four decades, the number of Egyptians rose from 24.9 million (1965) to 74.7 million (2003).¹⁹⁸ No national economy is so dynamic that it could adapt its potentials to such a growth in citizens, all of whom demand work, a place to live and the other commodities of daily life. The real per capita income in the Arabic world fell by 2 per cent per year in the last decade for this very reason – the greatest loss of income of all developing regions. More than 40 per cent of the under-24's in Algeria are out of work, even more than 80 per cent in Egypt. The

¹⁹⁴ Henry Munson, Morocco in Shireen T. Hunter (ed.), *Politics of Islamic Revivalism*, Bloomington 1988, pp. 133-147, p. 140.

¹⁹⁵ Woltering, *The Roots of Islamist Popularity*, p. 1134: “In short, Islamist groups state a religious goal of Islamisation, and have the political conviction that only an overthrow of the existing political system in favour of ‘something Islamic’ will be able to bring this Islamisation to completion.”

¹⁹⁶ Lewis, *The Crisis of Islam*.

¹⁹⁷ http://www.dsw-online.de/infothek_db.html, last visited May 1, 2004.

¹⁹⁸ Heinsohn, *Söhne und Weltmacht*, p. 25.

Arab Human Development Report 2002 written by an Arabic team of scientists by order of the United Nations establishes that 51 per cent of juveniles in Moslem countries “wish to emigrate to other, preferably Western countries and thus clearly express their dissatisfaction with the current conditions and their chances for the future.”¹⁹⁹ A trouble spot already in existence such as the large and growing number of well educated juveniles in the Islamic world without prospects can be mobilized easily – especially with simple explanations of this problem, like the Islamist offer.²⁰⁰ This mobilization is particularly easy if it can be well combined with factual and also subjectively felt offenses. The Islamic social systems do not appear to be flexible enough to integrate even a part of the angry young men and to demonstrate prospects for their lives to them.

Thus, some scholars have sought to link poverty with Islamic terror. Poverty, they argue fosters terror because it creates a sense of hopelessness, restricts educational opportunity, and produces frustration over inequality.²⁰¹ In fact, it is not poverty but the lack of possibilities of going up which rejects a reasonable status for the ambitious young generation. Therefore, the members of the so-called “youth bulge” are particularly dangerous, as they wish to come to terms with neither the option of an emigration into the West nor the opinion of a life in poverty. Daniel Pips concludes in his contribution *God and Mammon: Does poverty cause Militant Islam?*: “Like fascism and Marxism-Leninism in their heydays, militant Islam attracts highly competent, motivated and ambitious individuals. Far from being the laggards of society, they are its leaders.” Unlike des Boxer, who recruited their masses from impoverished peasants in the countryside, the suicide attackers of September 11 were not young men from slums or refugee camps, out of work or socially uprooted, but well trained engineers and

¹⁹⁹ Arab Human Development Report 2002, <http://www.undp.org/rbas/ahdr/english.html>, last visited May 1, 2004.

²⁰⁰ Hunter, *The Future of Islam and the West*, p. 99: “Increasing numbers of young and unemployed [feel] alienated from governments and political systems that no longer respond to their needs. This alienated and unemployed youth provided the fertile recruiting ground for Islamists in many Muslim countries.”

²⁰¹ For a summary of these views, see Martha Crenshaw, *The Causes of Terrorism*, in Charles W. Kegley (ed.), *International Terrorism: Characteristics, Causes, Controls*, New York 1990. For recent examples, see Samuel P. Huntington, *The Age of Muslim Wars*, *Newsweek*, December 17, 2001, pp. 42-48; and James D. Wolfensohn, *Making the World a Better and Safer Place: The Time for Action is Now*, *Politics*, Vol. 22, no. 2 (2002), pp. 118-123.

students.²⁰² At least four to six of the total of 19 terrorists involved belonged to these educated levels.²⁰³ These men, who formed the inner circle of the terror actions, had obtained university graduations in the USA or Germany and had never been conspicuous there via radically Islamistic comments.²⁰⁴ They came from a saturated bourgeois middle and upper class, their fathers were attorneys, businessmen, who supported their sons in the studies abroad.²⁰⁵ Thus, Michael Radu concludes:

Nothing in the background of the Western-born or based Muslim terrorists supports the widespread fantasy that Islamic terrorism can somehow be explained by injustice, poverty, or discrimination. On the contrary, terrorism on the scale of the September 11 attacks requires elaborate coordination by multilingual, adaptable, and highly educated people. No impoverished, ignorant victims of Imperialism need apply.²⁰⁶

Obviously, the conventional wisdom that “poverty does generate militant Islam“ is not true.²⁰⁷ The German sociologist Gunnar Heinsohn makes the following succinct formulation in his book *Söhne und Weltmacht*: “*The terrorists do not come out of poverty and nutritional deficiencies. They don’t beg for bread. They kill for status and power*”.²⁰⁸

E. GOVERNMENTAL SUPPORT

“The Islamic world may be unified around certain political attitudes, i.e. its resentment and anger at the West, but it is not unified around any political power, i.e. a

²⁰² See Daniel Pips, God And Mammon: Does Poverty Causes Militant Islam?, *The National Interest*, Vol. (2001/02), no. 66, pp. 14-21, p. 16.

²⁰³ See Radu, *Terrorism After the Cold war*, p. 286.

²⁰⁴ See Buruma/Margalit, *Occidentalism*, p. 15.

²⁰⁵ See Esposito, *The Islamic Threat*, p. 211: “The Majority of so-called fundamentalist organizations functioned effectively within the political system because they are urban based, led by well-educated leaders who attract students and educated followers, are well placed in the professions (engineering, science, medicine, law, education, the military), and organizations provide social and medical service.”

²⁰⁶ Radu, *Terrorism After the Cold War*, p. 286.

²⁰⁷ See the convincing argument in Pips, *God And Mammon*, p. 14-18.

²⁰⁸ Gunnar Heinsohn, *Söhne und Weltmacht. Terror im Aufstieg und Fall der Nationen*, Zürich 2003, p. 18. (Translation by the author).

set of strong and effective states,” James Kurth emphasizes.²⁰⁹ Thus, the Islamic world is lacking a leading power which could transform the popular Islamist’s movement into an inter-state war, as the Manchu did with the Boxer movement. However, both the Boxer movement and also the militant Islamists enjoyed (and still obviously enjoy) state support.

The inexperienced Arabic Mujaheddin and the Afghan fighters who fought against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan were schooled by the Saudi Arabian government with money, by the US government with weapons and by the Pakistani and American secret services in dealing with the modern weapons. While the U.S. government was committed to contain Soviet expansionism, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia supported the Taliban’s “aim to propagate militant Sunni Islam northward into Central Asia and the Russian Caucasus.”²¹⁰ None of the governments and secret services had any idea at that time of the development which they were promoting with their activities. Although the strategists knew that their money, weapons and technical know-how were mainly supporting radically Islamic groupings who formed permanent trouble spots in their countries of origin, both the Pakistanis and also the Americans and Saudis believed that they could keep the ideologically and regionally highly different groupings under control and also play them off against one another tactically if need be.²¹¹

The Ch’ing had also attempted to instrumentalize the popular mass movement of the Boxers for their own political objectives. But whereas it was a question of the actual displacement of the “foreign devils” from China for the Manchu, the Americans wanted to stop the expansion of the Soviet power territory. For Pakistan, it was a question of influence in the neighboring country, for the Saudis religious and political influence in the region. But unlike the Manchu, even the Islamists who called for the “holy war” against “the West” did not wish to dispel all Christians and Jews from the Moslem states. Above all, the objective of the Islamists is to push the political/civilization influence of the West, the “modern crusader mentality” away vigorously. These differing ideas of

²⁰⁹ Kurth, *The War and the West*, p. 327.

²¹⁰ Henriksen, *The Rise and Decline of Rogue States*, p. 366.

²¹¹ In an article of 1998, Adam Garfinkle stated that there was “a pro-Taliban camp” within the United States which argument was that since the Taliban were “objectively anti-Iranian and anti-Russian” the United States should not fight them. Garfinkle, *Afghanistanding*, p. 415.

objectives can be explained with the past of the two civilizations and their historical experience with the West. Whereas the Chinese had hardly any or only vague knowledge of the West for centuries and would most have preferred to reinstate this happy original situation before the “Fall of Man”, contact with the West, such a solution in the relationship of the Moslem and Western world is ruled out due to the geographical proximity alone and also due to a longer and more intensive joint past. The Islamists are prepared to accept Christians and Jews as “wards”, strictly hierarchically subordinated to the Islamic supremacy.

After the Soviets had withdrawn their troops from Afghanistan in 1988 and thus the enemy from the outside was missing, the individual Afghan tribes returned to their former rivalry and started to combat one another again. The same also applied for the various Islamist groupings. In addition, the “warriors of belief” from other Islamic countries with different languages and cultures were no longer regarded as allies, but rather as competitors and troublemakers by the Afghans. Disappointed, thousands of them withdrew back to their home countries. When they arrived there, many of them saw that they had again been isolated socially and did not find sufficient understanding with their fanaticism of a "holy war", either with their governments or with the mass of the population. So those returning from Afghanistan increasingly aimed their annoyance against the upper class of their home country, whose politicians and social elite they regarded as being only “half”-Moslems or even as “non-believers” on account of their economical and cultural connections to Western states.

Osama bin Laden also got into a conflict with the Saudi government in this way and became the enemy of his former sponsors. He sharply criticized their government, which asked the USA for support after the occupation of Kuwait by Iraqi troops and fetched more than 50,000 American soldiers into the country, of whom around 20,000 also remained in Saudi Arabia after the victory of Saddam Hussein.²¹² Bin Laden reminded them of the saying of the prophet Mohammed that “non-believers” were never to have a permanent right to stay on the Arabic Peninsula, the origin of Islam. Thus, he appeared as a radical attorney of Wahabitic Islam, to whom the Wahabism of his government appeared too diluted, too full of compromises, even as a “betrayal of the real

²¹² Tim Judah, *The Taliban Papers*, Survival, Vol 44 (2002), no. 1, pp. 73.

Islam”. For the Saudi royal family, the uncomfortable critic became so dangerous that they expelled him from the country and even withdrew his Saudi nationality in 1994. In 1992, bin Laden moved to Sudan, where he worked together with the Islamist government there. Back in Afghanistan, his organization continued to enjoy the support of parts of the Pakistani secret service.²¹³ Tim Judah stressed that the support by Pakistan played “a key role” in creating the Taliban, “which then became its very own Frankenstein’s monster.”²¹⁴ Many members of the Saudi royal family, it is presumed, continued to support al-Qaeda with money and contributions in kind until the year of 2001.²¹⁵

Finally, the Taliban regime provided al-Qaeda with a safe haven for training camps, logistics and resting. In fact, the Taliban-al-Qaeda cooperation was a perfect and almost unique symbiosis. While the terror organization needed the shelter of the Taliban, they themselves were weak enough to be depended on Osama bin Laden for their financial and military survival. Michael Radu saw in this very special cooperation “probably the only case where a terrorist organization took de facto control of most of a country.”²¹⁶

F. THE BEGINNING OF THE WAR AGAINST (ISLAMIC) TERROR

For many months before the Uprising started and Boxers began to kill Chinese Converts and Western missionaries, Western diplomats had known about the seriousness of the threat posed by angry Chinese peasants and an overall hostile Chinese population. Likewise, the threat of Islamic terrorism against the United States and other Western countries has been worrying policy-makers for years, and there have been numerous panels, reports, task forces, and committees that have sounded an alarm. But in the

²¹³ See *ibid*, p. 412: “Not only is there a government-to-government connection between Pakistan and the Taliban, but it bears note that the Taliban, which grew to maturity at madressas in Pakistan, is still very much connected to religious and social movements there.”

²¹⁴ Tim Judah, *The Taliban Papers*, *Survival*, Vol. 44 (2002), no. 1, pp. 69-80, p. 69.

²¹⁵ See Posen, *The Struggle Against Terrorism*, p. 41: “Persistent reports suggest that wealthy individuals in several Gulf states have contributed to the organization, with the knowledge not the active cooperation of their governments. Saudi Arabia is often mentioned by name.”

²¹⁶ Radu, *Terrorism After the Cold War*, p. 281.

context of foreign- and defense-policy priorities, terrorism was seen by the Western governments a one of several important competing priorities. In the domestic context, tracking down potential terrorists continued to be balanced very carefully and properly against the presumption against unwarranted invasion of privacy and imposition on civil liberties. There was a cost to making the West safer from terrorist acts – a cost that would have required considerable political capital.

As shown, the first attacks of the Boxers were aimed above all against symbols of the Western civilization and against the Chinese converts who were regarded as the “fifth column” of Western imperialism. The targets of the attacks by al-Qaeda on September 11, 2001 were selected purposefully due to their symbolic significance. Whereas the Boxers in China attacked telegraph lines, railway lines and Christian churches as testimonies of the foreign influence in the country, al-Qaeda chose the symbols of the political, economic and military power of the West's leading nation as their targets with the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Not only was the “holy war” carried into the center of the sole remaining superpower and the West's leading nation, but with the World Trade Center a landmark of the American capitalism and “imperialism”, an outstanding symbol of modern globalization was hit. Finally, with the Pentagon, the military command center of the “Great Satan America” was directly attacked. The fourth passenger jet which was kidnapped was apparently to hit a symbol of the political culture of America, the U.S. Congress. In this way, al-Qaeda – this was to be the signal effect – has proven, visible for all “suppressed believers”, that the most powerful state in the world and with it the West as an entity were vulnerable. The American scholar and sociologist Mark Juergensmeyer therefore rightly analyzes these terror acts as

forms of public performance rather than aspects of political strategy. These are symbolic statements aimed at providing a sense of empowerment to desperate communities. The collapse of the twin towers of the World Trade Center must have created a heady illusion of power to those who conspired to bring them down.²¹⁷

Bruce Lincoln goes a step further with his interpretation. He regards the objective of the terrorists “to demonstrate that [...] they possessed a power infinitely superior to

²¹⁷ Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, p. xi

their adversaries and of an entirely different order.” Lincoln deduces that people subjected to such an attack “were presumably meant first to surrender and thereafter to refashion their culture after that of the victors.”²¹⁸

So to start with, Boxers and Islamists looked for low-risk targets with high symbolic power for their militant and terrorist challenge of the West. The self-assurance of the West, its trust in its own strength and moral superiority were to be hit.²¹⁹ The actual instruments of power of the West were only to be attacked directly after such “victories.”²²⁰

G. THE WEST’S RESPONSE

In the months after the attacks of September 11, the USA started their “War on Terror”, initially being able to count on the extensive support of their allies in Europe. The first objective within this war was to depose the regime of terror of the Taliban in Afghanistan and the terror organization al-Qaeda protected by them, which was made responsible for the terror attacks.

On October 7, the President of the USA, George W. Bush, declared in his “Address to the Nation” that the United States had started with military attacks on “al-Qaeda terrorist camps and military installations of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan.”²²¹ The President made clear that the USA were being supported in this by other Western states, which also provided troops and equipment. He named Canada, Australia, Germany, France and above all Great Britain. Bush emphasized that this was not a attack against the Afghan people or against Islam. Instead, the USA was combating “those who aid terrorists”, and those “barbaric criminals who profane a great religion by committing

²¹⁸ Bruce Lincoln, *Holy Terrors*, p. 17-18.

²¹⁹ Cohen, *A Strange War*, p. 12.

²²⁰ See Bevin Alexander, *How Wars Are Won: The 13 Rules of War From Ancient Greece to the War on Terror*, New York 2002, p. 2: “The specific ancient rule the terrorists followed was to avoid the enemy’s strength and strike at weakness.”

²²¹ George W. Bush, *Address to the Nation*, October 7, 2001, cited after Lincoln, *Holy Terrors*, p. 99.

murder in its name.”²²² Accordingly to the U.S. President, the offensive targeted against the Taliban regime in Afghanistan was “a part of our campaign against terrorism, another front in a war that has already been joined through diplomacy, intelligence, the freezing of financial assets and the arrests of known terrorists b law enforcement agents in 38 countries.”²²³

Even if the USA are bearing the main load of the fight against the Islamist, this statement makes clear that, like the quashing of the Boxers, the war against Islamic terror is regarded by the West as being a joint task, as the threat is not limited to individual Western countries. This view of things was confirmed by the fact that the NATO - above all an alliance of occidental states, despite Turkey's membership - declared the occurrence of an alliance incident pursuant to Art. 5 of the NATO treaty and assured the USA (above all political) support in the fight against the Islamists. Even if the USA was given help by non-Western countries in the months after the attacks on September 11, it is unmistakable that the majority of these states interpreted the acts of terror of the Islamists as primarily being a fight against the West, which only affected them conditionally, despite the efforts of the USA, as Paul Rogers states:

Beyond the initial support fort he United States from European states after 11 September, there was a degree of support from many other countries, but it has to be said that opinion in the ‘majority world’, away from the countries of the Atlantic community, was always far less supportive of the United States.²²⁴

In the crusade against the Taliban in Afghanistan, three factors can be seen which were decisive for its outcome and the current situation²²⁵:

- To start with, it must be seen that the USA were able to make use of the opposition, the so-called “Northern Alliance”, who were already in a civil war with the Taliban, in the fight against the latter and the al-Qaeda fighters.²²⁶

²²² Ibid, pp. 99-100.

²²³ Ibid, p. 100.

²²⁴ Paul Rogers, The “War on Terror”: Winning or Losing?, Oxford Research Group, September 2003, p. 8.

²²⁵ For the following see Paul Rogers, The “War on Terror”.

²²⁶ For the history of the Northern Alliance see Ghufuran, The Taliban and the Civil War Entanglement in Afghanistan, p. 466-68.

Taliban and al-Qaeda were hopelessly inferior to the combined air power of the USA, which carried out bombardments and used cluster ammunition on a large scale, and the ground troops of the Northern Alliance. According to a report by the Pentagon, American military aircraft flew a total of 21,500 deployments by March 2002, throwing about 17,400 bombs. Over and above this, the USA generously equipped the troops of the Northern Alliance with war material and goods in the weeks leading up to October 7. These weapons are now in the hands of the warlords and mean a serious problem for the central government which has been installed in the meantime.

- Before the start of its crusade in Afghanistan, the U.S. government presupposed that al-Qaeda was using its camps in Afghanistan predominately to train terrorists for use in Western and Islamic countries. In fact, however, most of the camps were used to train militiamen for the Afghan civil war on the side of the Taliban. It was seen that Afghanistan was much less important as an operation and training base or as a logistic center for al-Qaeda than had been assumed.
- The third and most significant factor was the circumstance that both the Taliban and also the al-Qaeda militia withdrew from any direct and open confrontation with the American armed forces and also avoided fighting the Northern Alliance to a great extent. Instead, they regularly withdrew with a view to superior forces and went underground in towns and villages, taking their weapons and supplies with them. This strategy became particularly clear to the public in the nighttime evacuation of Kabul by the Taliban on November 13, 2001.

The war against the Taliban was formally ended on December 23 with the installation of the interim government under Hamid Karsai. In negotiations between various tribal leaders of the "Northern Alliance" and Afghan exile groups in Bonn, a schedule for the return to a stable situation without the participation of Islamists was passed. The most important integral part of the plan was the appointment of a special *Loya Jirga*, a kind of meeting of all tribal princes in order to form a final government and

to resolve a constitution for the country. But as early as January 2002, fights flared up again between rivaling tribes and warlords.²²⁷ Two days before, the UN Security Council had resolved the dispatch of a defense troop to Afghanistan. In the course of the operation “Enduring Freedom”, around 5,000 UN soldiers from a total of 18 nations were to ensure peace in Afghanistan.

Despite the presence of the ISAF, the name of the UN forces in Kabul, and despite massive military presence on the part of the USA and Great Britain, it was not possible to prevent a gradual consolidation of the Taliban in the South and East of the country.²²⁸ It was also not possible to capture Osama bin Laden and high-ranking leaders of al-Qaeda, whose abode is still presumed in Afghanistan and the border area to Pakistan. The actual objective of the war, destruction of the al-Qaeda network, was therefore only conditionally achieved. The war on terror is continuing undiminished, reaching a new peak with the occupation of Iraq by the USA and Great Britain in 2003.

In the course of this paper, it has been seen that the West has again decided on joint action, as was also the case against the Boxers. As in China, the West was also able to assert itself militarily against the Islamists without difficulties. Although the government of the USA and its Western allies always emphasize that a successful strategy for combating terrorism also required diplomatic, economic and police means, the West is above all trusting in its military superiority, as in the quashing of the Boxer uprising. After short and extremely effective military victories which proved the supremacy of U.S. and Western military technology, The United States and the West are facing now long-term nation-building efforts which ultimate outcome remains unclear.²²⁹ A removal of the deeper causes of the “uprising against the West” was postponed to the time after a military success both in 1900 and also now in 2003.

²²⁷ See Ali A. Jalali, Afghanistan in 2002: The Struggle to Win the Peace, *Asian Survey*, Vol. 43 (2003), no. 1, pp. 174-185, p.176.

²²⁸ Ibid, p. 182.

²²⁹ See Eliot A. Cohen, *Supreme Command*, New York 2002, p. 228.

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V. CRISIS MANAGEMENT BY THE WEST

A. PUTTING DOWN THE REBELLION

1. The West's Objectives

The West's first reaction to reports of massacres amongst Christians and missionaries in China and the siege and alleged slaughter of the embassy personnel are purely not by chance similar to the dismay with which the Western world heard the news of the al-Qaeda terror attacks on the twin towers of the World Trade Center. In both cases, the disdain of man and the terrorist aspect of the deeds moved people. Both actions hit the heart of the West's cultural self-understanding and thus triggered considerable fears. In addition, the West felt challenged in its entirety and its core of civilization by both these attacks.

The outbreak of the Boxer uprising appeared to many Europeans, Americans and Japanese to be an outrageous breach of international law and further proof of the fact that the government and civil service in China were not serious about fulfilling the treaties. These arguments made a particular impression in Germany after Ambassador von Ketteler had been murdered in Peking by regular Chinese soldiers. Emperor Wilhelm II took up this incident in his infamous "Hun Speech."²³⁰ Making use of a cultural argument, he put the fact that the Chinese dared to "overthrow millennia of international law and to scorn the holiness of the ambassadors and the holiness of hospitality in such a despicable way" down to the fact that Chinese culture had not been built up on Christianity.²³¹ This conviction was closely connected with the rhetoric of the "Yellow Peril," which Wilhelm had started himself. People who knew China personally and sensed certain sympathies for the resistance of the Chinese towards imperialism, such as the former German military consultant in Nanjing, Robert Löbbecke, saw the Boxer Uprising as the "outbreak of long-subdued volcanic passions" and the "deeds of fanatical

²³⁰ For the circumstances and the text of the speech see Preston, *The Boxer Rebellion*, p. 208-209.

²³¹ Cited after Bernd Sösemann, *Die sogenannte Hunnenrede Wilhelms II. Textkritische und interpretatorische Bemerkungen zur Ansprache des Kaisers vom 27. Juli 1900 in Bremerhaven*, in *Historische Zeitschrift*, Vol 222 (1958), S. 342-358.

crowds over whom no-one can exercise control.”²³² The general comparison of Western culture on the one hand and Chinese barbarism on the other in the year 1900 finds a correspondence in the words used by the American President in his distinction between “good” and “evil” and between law and terrorism in 2001.²³³ In a speech two weeks after September 11, Italy's prime minister renewed the watchword already issued in the West during the Boxer uprising of the superior civilization of the West:

We should be conscious of the superiority of our civilization, which comprises a system of values which has given people broad prosperity in the countries [...] and which guarantees respect of human rights and religion. This respect doubtless does not exist in the Moslem countries. [...] The West will continue to westernize the world and conquer the peoples.²³⁴

In the case of the Boxers, the West was united to a great extent in two demands. Alongside retribution for the crimes committed by the Chinese, the Chinese people were to be taught a lesson which should keep it from similar crimes in the future. In the perception of most Europeans, the Chinese had descended into barbarism, not only due to their breach of international law, but also due to the fanaticism ascribed to the Boxers.²³⁵ This is precisely the point on which analogies to the fight against modern Islamic terrorism can be seen, as it is the religious fundamentalism that offends the secular and rational state culture of the West.

So from an international law point of view, the Boxer Uprising was an “intervention” on the part of the West, a selective interference in the so-called “internal matters” of a state with, as a rule, a limited objective and limited duration. The prerequisite for such an action, as in the international fight against al-Qaeda and the Taliban, is the existence of a considerable imbalance of power. Both in the punishing expedition of the eight powers against the Boxers and also in the international war against

²³² Bruns, Alfred (ed.), *Ein Westfale in China. Brief und Fotografien 1895-1900*. Der Nachlaß Robert Löbbecke, Iserlohn 1982, p. 58.

²³³ See George W. Bush, *Address to the Nation, October 7, 2001*, cited after Bruce Lincoln, *Holy Terrors. Thinking about Religion after September 11*, Chicago 2003, pp. 99-101.

²³⁴ *Der Standard*, September 28, 2002, p. 3.

²³⁵ Thoralf Klein, *Der Boxeraufstand als interkultureller Konflikt: Zur Relevanz eines Deutungsmusters*, in Susanne Kuß/Bernd Martin (ed.), *Das Deutsche Reich und der Boxeraufstand*, München 2002 (Erfurter Reihe zur Geschichte Asiens, Bd. 2), pp. 35-58, p. 51.

terror, a specific legitimization pattern was used, describing the action not in terms of a battle for power, but in those of creation of order. In this sense, the intervention against the Boxer Movement and its conclusion in the “Boxer Protocol” are a typical example for the pattern of action of collective intervention.²³⁶ In both cases, the difficulties of the victorious intervention powers in bringing their intervention to a conclusion are also interesting for a present analysis of the situation.

2. Military Suppression

The military intervention of the eight powers can be divided into three phases. Mid-June to August 1900, the foreigners captured in Tianjin and Peking were released. After this, until late autumn, the Province of Zhili – the Russian advance on Manchuria was an independent undertaking – was put under control by significantly so-called “punishment expeditions.” In the final phase between mid-December 1900 and April 1901, expeditions were carried out almost solely by German troops. After participating in the initial punishment expeditions in the environment of Peking, the Americans withdrew quite quickly from these undertakings.²³⁷ In all three phases, the intervention force suffered from slight to non-existent operative coordination among the countries involved. The only reason why this had no devastating effect was that the international troops proved to be so superior that it is easier to talk of massacres in a number of battles with the Boxers and with the regular Chinese troops.²³⁸ All told, the intervention was carried out by the international force with vigor and ruthlessness, the scope of which caused severe criticism among contemporaries and was not really compatible with the civilizing claims of the West. An American Soldier who already took part at the war on the Philippines wrote to his sister:

²³⁶ See Preston, *The Boxer Rebellion*, p. xiv: “*Yet the allied action against the Boxer rising also set an important precedent, one that prefigures the relief and policing activities of the United Nations and NATO.*”

²³⁷ See William J. Duiker, *Cultures in Collision. The Boxer Rebellion*, San Rafael 1978, p. 183-186, Chester C. Tan, *The Boxer Catastrophe*, New York 1971 [1955], p. 148-149.

²³⁸ Cord Eberspächer, *Ein Ohmstedter in China. Aus einem Bericht über den Boxeraufstand 1900/1901*, in *Oldenburger Jahrbuch* 98 (1998), p. 107-119.

There were hundreds [of Chinese] killed and wounded we gave no quarter nor asked for any so you see we took no prisoners we killed them all that fell into our hands.²³⁹

Despite the brutal procedures of the expedition troops against the Chinese, there was also Chinese collaboration which was not without importance for the warfare. Coolies were recruited on site in the province of Zhili, and Chinese servants accompanied the civilians accompanying the punitive expeditions. The British even deployed Chinese soldiers on their side.²⁴⁰ In this case too, parallels to the battle against al-Qaeda and the Taliban can be seen. In their intervention, the USA took the option of taking sides in the long-running Afghanistan civil war and secured the support of the Northern Alliance, “even though the human rights record was little better than that of the Taliban.”²⁴¹

Contemporaries had difficulties in classifying the suppression of the Boxer uprising. Whether the proceedings can be described simply as war is questionable, at least from a jurisprudence point of view. The European powers never formally declared war on China (like the USA on the Taliban later), and the Chinese “declaration of war” of June 21 was also not unambiguous. It did not represent a dispatch to the powers, but comprised a series of edicts in which the foreigners were given the blame for the outbreak of the animosities, without clear reference to an actual state of war. As early as 1913, Friedrich Kleine stated in a jurisprudence thesis that this had been a special case. He came to the conclusion that the suppression of the Boxer Uprising came very close to an “intervention turning into war” and that the collective action by the powers was consequently to be assessed as a “collective intervention.”²⁴² The Chinese crusade was certainly more than “a comparatively modern task of a police rather than a warlike nature”, the objective of which was to “bring order into a chaos of wild barbarism and anarchy”.²⁴³ The deployment of the allied Western powers started as gunboat politics, and when its means were no longer sufficient, they started a procedure, which was

²³⁹ Cited after Cohen, *History in Three Keys*, p. 191.

²⁴⁰ See Frederick A. Sharf/Peter Harrington (ed.), *China 1900: The Eyewitnesses Speak. The Boxer Rebellion as Described in Letters, Diaries and Photographs*, London/Mechanicsburg 2000, p. 115.

²⁴¹ Rogers, *A War on Terror*, p. 3.

²⁴² Friedrich Kleine, *Die Unterdrückung der Boxerunruhen in China 1900 nach ihrer völkerrechtlichen Bedeutung*, Berlin 1913, p. 22 and 34.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

comparable with the colonial wars of that era in many regards – also in the cruelty of the warfare. The term “small war” doubtless circumscribes this form of war best of all, although guerrilla warfare to be classified underneath a general war has no longer been understood by this term since the Napoleonic wars, but expeditions of disciplined Western troops against “savages” and semi-civilized nations. As in the Second Opium War, the Chinese were also considered “semi-civilized” in this commitment. Experts and conflict researchers today forecast that this form of warfare will no longer be the exception, but the rule on the periphery of the Western hemisphere and at the seams of the cultural blocks, as in the campaign against Islamists.

3. Cohesion and Problems of the Great Powers

It must be said that the intervention force of the eight powers in China was not only multinational, but actually also multicultural as regards its composition. Richard O’Connor called the international relief force “one of the most laggard and cumbersome operations [...] in modern history.”²⁴⁴ The British and French deployed a large number of colonial troops from India and Indochina. Some Western observers saw this as a unification of the races, from which the “Chinese hordes” were naturally excluded; others saw the “outside-race troops” with undisguised skepticism.²⁴⁵ So the intervention troops by no means appeared as the cultural unit for the defense of which they officially acted. Instead, the European colonial powers had deployed soldiers and ancillary troops from all the regions of their empires fight for the assumed superior civilization of the West.

The cooperation among the individual nations left a lot to be desired and was also exacerbated by political differences.²⁴⁶ There were disputes about alleged offences or the right to use railway tracks or warehouses; violent clashes often being the result. Actions by individual nations were not permitted out of mistrust; a single-handed effort by the French to reach Baoding was prevented, and instead a multinational force commissioned

²⁴⁴ Richard O’Connor, *The Spirit Soldiers. A Historical Narrative of the Boxer Rebellion*, New York 1973, p. 217.

²⁴⁵ See *ibid*, p. 127 and p. 145; Georg Wegener, *Zur Kriegszeit durch China 1900/1901*, Berlin 1902, p. 120.

²⁴⁶ O’Conner, *The Spirit Soldiers*, p. 217.

with capturing the town. The commander-in-chief of the allied troops, the German Field Marshal General Alfred Graf von Waldersee, wrote in his diary on November 20, 1900: “The interests of the European Powers are entirely different and co-operation between them on plain dealing lines is quite impossible.”²⁴⁷ Even if the co-operation among the Western nations in coping with conflicts has dramatically improved in the decades of the joint alliance of the NATO, a closer examination of the current multinational deployment in Afghanistan (ISAF and “Enduring Freedom”) shows that there are still similar coordination problems, mistrusting ogling and brushes between the nations involved. Diana Preston illustrates the problem as she writes: “More important, he [Admiral Sir Michael Seymour who led the first rescue attempt] knew that if he took command it would avoid British men having to serve under foreign command – as great a concern for Britain then as it is for the United States today.”²⁴⁸

In general, the conduct of other nations' troops in China was regarded reproachfully: the Germans criticized the allegedly “Asiatic” warfare of the Russians; American missionaries particularly disapproved the conduct of the Russians and Japanese; the Japanese for their part complained about the Russians and particularly the Germans.²⁴⁹ Criticism of the German troops was possibly due to the fact that they carried out most of the punitive expeditions. However, it was particularly the Japanese or the colonial troops whom the Germans made accused of excesses as “heathens” or “Mohammedans”.²⁵⁰

However, differences were not only according to the nationality, but also to differing professions. Soldiers not infrequently encountered missionaries with mistrust, because they had allegedly published exaggerated reports in European or American papers about the deployment of troops, but also vice versa, because they had unjustifiably accused Chinese civil servants of cooperation with the Boxers. In Tianjin, European

²⁴⁷ Preston, *The Boxer Rebellion*, p. 307.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 89-90.

²⁴⁹ Cohen, *History in Three Key*, p. 174, p. 184; Sabine Dabringhaus, *Der Boxeraufstand in China (1900/01): Die Militarisierung eines kulturellen Konflikts*, in Eva-maria Auch/stig Förster (ed.), ‘Barbaren’ und ‘Weiße Teufel’. *Kulturkonflikte und Imperialismus in Asien vom 18. bis zum 20. Jahrhundert*, Paderborn 1997, S. 123-144, S. 140.

²⁵⁰ Alfred Graf v. Waldersee, *Denkwürdigkeiten des Generalfeldmarschalls Alfred Graf von Waldersee*, edited by Heinrich Georg Meisner, Vol. 3, Stuttgart/Berlin 1923, p. 48.

merchants complained to the English consul about the bombardment of the town because they saw their assets in danger – but to the annoyance of the British marine officer Bayly, who regarded this as neglect for the acute danger and mere “dollar-grinding.”²⁵¹ According to the same source, the inhabitants of the international settlement of Tianjin saw traitors in their ranks during the siege, allegedly having relations with the enemy. As a rule, these were people who had excessively close contacts to the Chinese, e.g. merchants, and had an excessively good opinion of them from the view of their opponents.²⁵²

The materialization and the result of the Boxer Protocol, with which the intervention of the eight powers found its official end, reflect the unambiguously imperialistic character of the intervention and the lack of cohesion among the allies. For example, only solutions at the expense of the losers were asserted. There were no compromises between the claims of the allies, who jealously spied on one another.²⁵³ At the end of the intervention, there was the re-institution of all the European privileges attacked by the Boxers and a further weakening of China.

The case study of the Boxer Uprising shows the difficulties that intervention powers have in bringing a military victory to a political/juristic conclusion. The current examples of Afghanistan and Iraq show that these problems do not result exclusively in interventions of a purely imperialistic nature. The actual problems appear to arise only after the military victory. The possibility of putting military power to advantage says nothing about the leeway for organization to be achieved this way. Power, in particular the superior power of intervening major forces, seduces into overestimating one's leeway for organization and pursuing maximum objectives that cannot be operationalized. British ideas with regard to a financial reform in China in 1901 and the merely sluggish set-up of functioning state structures in Afghanistan, which are additionally to be of a democratic nature, show how limited the organizational leeway were and still are.

²⁵¹ Frederick A. Sharf/Peter Harrington (ed.), *China 1900: The Eyewitnesses Speak. The Boxer Rebellion as Described in Letters, Diaries and Photographs*, London/Mechanicsburg 2000, p. 108.

²⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 113.

²⁵³ Peterson, *Das Boxerprotokoll als Abschluß einer imperialistischen Intervention*, p. 243.

B. A “WAR ON TERROR”

1. The West’s Objectives

After the attacks of September 11, the American government avoided everything which could arouse the impression that they were waging war on the Moslem world as such or even “Islam” as a religion. Although Samuel Huntington has formulated the theoretical foundation for a dualistic leading position between the Christian-Jewish West on the one hand and the “Islamic civilizations” on the other with his “clash of civilization”, the governments and statesmen of the Western nations did not pay much attention to this.²⁵⁴ The Western world appears in its official statements to be conscious of the potential risks of such an interpretation of the Islamist threat. After the American President lapsed into speaking of a “crusade” to journalists in the first few weeks after the attacks (“This crusade, this war on terrorism, is going to take a while”²⁵⁵), the Press Spokesman of the White House, Ari Fleischer, was quick to withdraw this selection of words again and apologized on behalf of the President:

I think to the degree that that word has any connotations that would upset any of our partners or anybody else in the world, the president would regret if anything like that was conveyed. But the purpose of his conveying it is in the traditional English sense of the word. It’s a broad cause.²⁵⁶

Before this, Moslem and European critics had warned against stylizing the fight against Islamist terror into a religious war. Le Parisian daily *Le Monde* warned: “If this ‘war’ takes a form that affronts moderate Arab opinion, if it has the air of a clash of civilizations, there is a strong risk that it will contribute to Osama bin Laden’s goal: a

²⁵⁴ See Fawaz A. Gerges, *America and Political Islam. Clash of Cultures or Clash of Interests?*, Cambridge 1999, p. 3. “It is clear from the evidence that the sum of U.S. public pronouncement on political Islam points to a conscious attempt to accommodate and reach out to moderate Islamists. Far from depicting Islam as a threat to the West, the Bush and Clinton administration [...] lavishly praised Islamic religion and culture, recognizing the legitimacy of the renewed emphasis on traditional values in the Islamic world. Both administrations rejected, the clash-of-civilization hypothesis, viewing the present struggle as one that transcends civilization.”

²⁵⁵ Bush’s Rhetoric Fuels Violence, Critics Charge, <http://www.commondreams.org/headlines01/0919-03.htm>, last visited April 1, 2004.

²⁵⁶ President Bush’s “Crusade” Draws Fire Around Globe, http://www.thehollandsentinel.net/stories/093001/new_0930010029.shtml, last visited April 1, 2004.

conflict between the Arab-Muslim world and the West.”²⁵⁷ It is crucial to understand that for Muslims, the memory of the Crusades lives on as the clearest example of militant Christianity, an earlier harbinger of the aggression and imperialism of the Christian West, a vivid reminder of Christianity’s early hostility toward Islam. If many regard Islam as a religion of the sword, Muslims down through the ages have spoken of the West’s Crusader mentality and ambitions. Therefore for Muslim-Christian relations, it is less a case of what actually happened in the Crusades than how they are remembered.

In fact, it is above all the Islamists who are interested in portraying their terror as a part of a major conflict of two cultures as the defense of Islam and thus gaining the backing and the support of the Moslem masses. Thus, al-Qaeda endeavors to exaggerate its terrorist attacks as *jihad*, i.e. a religiously legitimized fight against the Western crusadership obligating all Moslems and as a defense of the assumedly attacked Islamic civilization.²⁵⁸ In his video message of October 7, 2001, Osama bin Laden repeated this interpretation immediately after the attacks of September 11 and spoke of the world being divided into two camps: “the camp of the faithful and the camp of the infidels. May God shield us and you from them”.²⁵⁹ In a further declaration after the death of three assumed terrorists in Pakistan, he appealed to all his brothers in belief all over the world in an undisguised allusion to Bush's use of the word “crusade”:

We hope that these three brothers are among the first martyrs in Islam’s battle in this era against the new Christian-Jewish crusade led by the big crusader Bush under the flag of the Cross; this battle is considered one of Islam’s battles. We incite our Muslim brothers in Pakistan to give everything they own and are capable of to push the American crusade forces invading Pakistan and Afghanistan.²⁶⁰

²⁵⁷ Crusade: A Freudian Slip?, http://www.crescentlife.com/heal%20the%20world/crusade_a_freudian_slip.htm, last visited April 1, 2004.

²⁵⁸ See Kurth, *The War and the West*, p. 321: “[President Bush] was careful not to identify the terrorists with the Islamic religion, for he intended to minimize the number of Muslims who would identify with them. The war was definitely not supposed to be seen as a ‘clash of civilizations’ between Islam and the West. Osama bin Laden, in contrast, repeatedly spoke of a war between ‘the Islamic nation’ and ‘the Jews and Crusaders’ (or Christians), for he intended to maximize the number of Muslims who would identify with the cause. For him, the war was indeed supposed to be seen as a clash of civilizations between Islam and the West.”

²⁵⁹ Cited after Bruce Lincoln, *Holy Terrors*, p. 103.

²⁶⁰ President Bush’s “Crusade” Draws Fire Around Globe, http://www.thehollandsentinel.net/stories/093001/new_0930010029.shtml, last visited April 1, 2004.

In order not to reinforce this strategy of the Islamists further, the American President and also most other Western statesmen endeavor to avoid any indication that this war on terror could be a religious war. Instead, they try to gain allies amongst the Moslems for their fight against Islamic terror. As Bruce Lincoln states in his study “Holy Terror”, American (and Western) interests are better served by a strategy which permits Moslem nations “to enlist – or at least stay neutral – in a moral, but not religious campaign: one that pits civilization per se against all that is uncivilized, that is ‘terrorism’, ‘fanatism’ and ‘evil’.”²⁶¹

However, it ought to be stated that with such a strategy the West is basically quoting itself because, as we have already seen, the quashing of the Boxer Uprising was primarily ennobled by the Western colonial powers as an act of civilization, as a fight against barbarism, terror and religious fanaticism and also as a reinstatement of international law. The West has now only modified its reaction to the extent that it waives a sharp front position and thinking in military camps to a great extent. The Moslem states have been invited and requested to join the fight being waged by the West against Islamist terror. The suppression of the Boxers and the fight against Islamists still have the common point that the West considers itself to be superior as regards the civilization, but its action can therefore be assessed as legitimate, i.e. as an obligation.

In militant Islamism, the West above all sees a powerful challenge to the existing order of the international system of secular nation states. As this institution is primarily of a Western origin, it is possible to refer to the Islamist terror against the Western formed international system of states as a “revolt against the West” with a certain justification, says Bassam Tibi in his work *The Challenge of Fundamentalism*.²⁶² In fact, this circumstance contains one of the main problems of the West. For the West, it must be a question of maintaining the system of sovereign states with rational actions which it has created, as it is completely matched to its model of civilization and states. But Boxers and Islamists only conditionally act within these “Western” parameters. Their real risk is developed by them acting outside the system and operating with other methods. In

²⁶¹ Bruce Lincoln, *Holy Terrors*, p. 27.

²⁶² Tibi, *The Challenge of Fundamentalism*, p. 89.

combating popular, non-state movements, however, the West cannot have recourse to the same methods as the terrorists without jeopardizing the system it has created.²⁶³

2. Military Suppression

In the months leading to the September 11 attacks, it seems clear that the West, in particular the U.S. government, understood the potential dangers posed by bin Laden and the al-Qaeda network. But they had little sense of how to deal with this brutal and ruthless version of militant Islamism. How could the nations of the West “meet and master” the new threat of Islamist terror? James Kurth and other Western scholars have suggested that the West should fight “on two different fronts” – a foreign front against al-Qaida and the Taliban in Afghanistan and a domestic front “within the United States itself.”²⁶⁴ Interestingly, Kurth expected the war on the foreign front to be fought in a manner, which he described as “the Western way of war.” This Western way of war was characterized, so Kurth, by

(1) systematic organization combined with individual initiative at the unit level; (2) intense concentration of killing power achieved through the high technology of the time; and (3) ruthless and relentless continuation of the war until the enemy, or at least the ‘center of gravity’, is annihilated.²⁶⁵

Field Marshall Graf von Waldersee would have agreed. Kurth precisely describes the kind of military strategy the West had chosen to suppress the Boxer rebellion. Obviously, the West has decided to wage the same type of war it has used then to counter today’s Islamist terror. Although other scholars like Barry R. Posen had predicted that in this war on terror “diplomacy will loom larger than military operations, and within military dimension, defensive activities will loom larger than offensive and punitive ones”, the U.S. strategy seems to emphasize the military dimension of this struggle.²⁶⁶

²⁶³ See Zehfuss, *Forget September 11*, p. 518: “At the same time as Western values are being ‘defended’, their very existence is being undermined. Thus our known identity as Western, as subscribing to certain values, is in danger not only from the terrorists, but from our own policies.”

²⁶⁴ Kurth, *The War and the West*, p. 323.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid*, p. 324.

²⁶⁶ Posen, *The Struggle Against Terrorism*, p. 42.

Despite the conventional wisdom, that this war cannot be won with military means alone, the United States fought within two years two major wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

War against the al-Qaeda terrorist network, however, was different than all other wars America and the West have ever fought before. It was a war against an amorphous, decentralized, privatized terrorism instead of a war primarily against formal states:

Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda is a non-state organization, even if it has had working relationships with Pakistani, Iraqi or other nation's intelligence services. As ghastly as their consequences were, the attacks reflected the work of a small band of operatives – fewer than a score directly, with a supporting infrastructure of a few hundred at the most. These were not the uniformed representatives of another country.²⁶⁷

Although it can be argued that the campaign against the Boxer movement too was no classic war against a state, this kind of a non-state enemy was new to the Western countries. Islamic terror posed an unprecedented threat, because the usual rules of deterrence had no evident application. In military defense it can ordinarily assumed that an adversary can be dissuaded by increasing the cost of his action. The stability of the nuclear era depended on deterrence – the notorious “mutual assured destructive capability” of two state adversaries who wished to have their people and polity survive. A non-state actor such as al-Qaeda has no population held in thrall, and its cult of martyrdom sees death as unimportant.²⁶⁸ Thus, the task of the West became to anticipate and intercept specific operations, aided by disruption of the terrorist network's infrastructure.

Both non-state actors, Boxers and al-Qaeda, however, needed some kind of operational basis and governmental support in order to survive and to fight successfully their war against the West:

[al-Qaeda] needs a territorial base for training camps and safe planning headquarters, two requirements that are obviously essential when one considers the thousands of militants trained in Afghanistan and the sophistication demonstrated in the 2000 attack on the USS Cole and the September 11 attacks. Hence the importance of the Taliban in

²⁶⁷ Cohen, *A Strange War*, p. 11.

²⁶⁸ See Kurth, *The War and the West*, p. 326: „A transnational network can operate flexibly in many locales, not responsible for any one of them, hence without fixed interests at stake, making deterrence difficult.“

Afghanistan, [...], and access to Western European training, recruiting, and logistical opportunities.²⁶⁹

This made it easier for the U.S. government to wage war against the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and to explain it to their allies and the Western public. Hence, the Bush administration's first strategy was to disrupt al-Qaeda by military means, using air power and limited ground forces to attack the network's logistics and training centers in Afghanistan. Overthrowing the Taliban faction was also a signal to complicit Muslim regimes that might be tempted to shelter al-Qaeda.²⁷⁰ The response was approved by the United Nations Security Council²⁷¹ and NATO²⁷², as a campaign of self-defense against armed attack.

Thus four month after September 11, and after a series of vigorous campaigns, the al-Qaeda network had been weakened but not destroyed; few of its leaders had been captured; and bin Laden had evaded search teams. But the Taliban regime of Afghanistan that had protected and handsomely bought off by bin Laden had fallen. The question then became where the U.S. antiterrorist campaign would move next. Once the focus on Afghanistan had passed, once the targets had become less clearly, however, the public debate in North America and Europe increasingly caused dissensus.

3. Cohesion and Strategic Dissonances of the West

The attacks on the United States on 11 September have had a significant impact on U.S. foreign policy and military thinking. The United States already was becoming more unilateral in its approach to the rest of the world in the early post-Cold war era

²⁶⁹ Radu, *Terrorism After the Cold War*, p. 282.

²⁷⁰ See Kurth, *The War and the West*, p. 326-327: „However, as the case of Al Qaeda demonstrated, the transnational network still has to operate in some kind of territory. In most cases, this means it has to operate with the support of the state which rules over that territory [...] (as was the case with the Taliban in Afghanistan). The transnational terrorist network may not vulnerable to a deterrence from the United States, but the state that harbors it is. This is why President Bush was right to immediately link the terrorists of global reach with the state that harbor them. The U.S. military operation that destroyed the Taliban and replaced it with a coalition satisfactory to the United States has greatly enhanced the credibility of this U.S. deterrence threat aimed at other Muslim States.“

²⁷¹ United Nations S.C. Res. 1368, September 12, 2001; United Nations S.C. Res. 1373, September 28, 2001.

²⁷² Statement by the North Atlantic Council, September 12, 2001.

while Europeans were embarking on a new and vigorous effort to build a more comprehensive international legal system. The United States has contained its unilateral approach during the Kosovo campaign for a last time and was then willing to preserve transatlantic cohesion even at the cost of military effectiveness. According to Robert Kagan, America fought in the Balkans “ultimately to preserve ‘the West’.”²⁷³ Nevertheless, the Kosovo war, which was ironically fought to protect a Muslim minority, made visible to the Western countries the widening technology and military capability gap between the United States and the European nations. Leveling military effectiveness below cohesion within the Western camp was, however, only possible as long as vital interests of the United States were not threatened. For this reason, September 11 was a true watershed not only in the relationship between the Muslim world and the West but for the cohesion within the Western camp as well:

In fact the Kosovo war showed how difficult it was going to be for the United States and its European allies to fight any war together. What if they had to fight a war not primarily ‘humanitarian’ in nature? [...] What if Americans had suffered horrendous attacks on their own territory and feared more attacks were coming? [...] The answer to those questions came after September 11. With almost three thousand dead in New York City, and Osama bin Laden on the loose in Afghanistan, the U.S. military and the Bush administration had little interest in working through NATO.²⁷⁴

The situation reminds at the problems the Western countries faced during the suppression of the Boxer rebellion. Although the Western powers and Japan agreed that the Boxer movement posed a threat to their interests, they could not agree, however, how to fight the war and which means and tactics seemed appropriate. When bin Laden made clear overtures to Europeans, calling them “our neighbors north of the Mediterranean”, and publicly offering them a truce in April 2004, he tried to exploit the Western strategic dissonances and to drive a wedge between America and its European allies.²⁷⁵ However, the West knows that he is determined to preserve cohesion in order to fight terrorism on a

²⁷³ Robert Kagan, *Of Paradise and Power: American and Europe in the New World Order*, New York 2004, p. 50.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

²⁷⁵ “Bin Laden” Offers Europe Truce, http://new.bbc.co.uk/1/world/middle_east/3627775.stm.

global scale. Allies are essential for success in the war on terrorism, which helps to explain the determination of the Bush administration to build up a broad coalition and why the European states all rejected such a move.

The problems the West faces today in coming to grips for a common anti-terror strategy are rooted deeply in different defense cultures in America and Europe. While American grand strategy is unquestionable global in its orientation, this is not obviously true for Europe. Michael Radu emphasizes that

September 11 has demonstrated that anti-Western, especially anti-American, sentiments are far stronger than its ideological differences with Islamic fundamentalism. When not openly applauding the September 11 attacks, the European left ‘explained’ them by blaming the United States’ policies and opposing any U.S. counterattack, in the name of peace, innocent Afghan civilians, or the need to seek the “root causes” of Osama bin Laden’s Islamic fanaticism.²⁷⁶

Hence, there is a threat that the war on terror could be transformed into one involving the U.S. essentially alone. While in the short term this could be seductive for American politicians because it would allow them to fight wars without convincing their European partners of the necessity, this would lead to a situation in which the West as such would cease to exist. The bottom line is that the United States and Europe have a basic incentive to maintain cohesion and the broadest possible coalition within the West and beyond, to ensure the isolation and hasten the destruction of terrorism with a global reach.

²⁷⁶ Radu, *Terrorism After the Cold War*, p. 285.

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VI. SUMMARY

Both in the genesis of the Boxer Uprising and also in its suppression, intercultural perception patterns played an important role. William J. Duiker gave his study on the Boxer Uprising the logically correct title: “Cultures in Collision.”²⁷⁷ The Boxer groups developed against the background of a social situation rich in conflict potential, into which they were increasingly dragged themselves. In the course of the conflict, they increasingly perceived foreigners and Chinese Christians as the real cause of the ecological, economical and social plight under which the rural population of China had to suffer. This “bogeyman image” had a certain tradition in China, but appears to have been activated by the Boxers against the background of the concrete conflicts in question. Its creation can be described as an intercultural drawing of a border, in which all the Chinese who in some way, apparently or actually, had had anything to do with foreigners (above all, naturally, the Chinese Christians) were defined as agents of the foreigners and members of the opposing camp.

What was seen as a fight against foreigners in the eyes of the Boxers was, however, all too frequently only the continuation of existing inner-Chinese conflicts by other means. This particularly applies to conflicts between Boxers and civil servants and to the misogyny of the Boxers. To this extent, the Boxer Uprising was not a bilateral conflict between cultures clearly distinguished from one another from the outset, but an attempt to reduce the complexity of a diffuse cultural mixture by a radical drawing of a border and to reverse the consequences of the incipient Westernization of Chinese society by brutal application of violence. This war against Western modernity was for the most part neither conscious nor explicit and was directed against the whole process of change, just as it is today in the Islamic world. The Boxers located the ultimate source of the cataclysmic changes in the Chinese society in the West and attributed the disruption of their old way of life to the impact of Western domination, Western influence, and Western precept and example. Islamic fundamentalism works the same way. It

²⁷⁷ Duiker, *Cultures in Collision*.

has given an aim and form to the otherwise aimless and formless resentment and anger of the Muslim masses at the forces that have devalued their traditional values and loyalties and, in the final analysis, robbed them of their beliefs, their aspirations, their dignity, and to an increasing extent even their livelihood.²⁷⁸

On the other hand, the deployment of the intervention troops was based on a much more unambiguous cultural demarcation. In Europe and the USA, the Boxers' actions led to the activation of old bogeymen, used not only with regard to China, but also other non-European peoples. References to international law, which the Chinese were alleged to have breached, facilitated a pronounced drawing of a border between "civilized" Europe and "uncivilized" China.²⁷⁹ The unification of European "morality" and European hegemony carried out in this context was a matter of course for most contemporaries. Western civilization was regarded as being superior to all other civilizations, as the highest development phase of mankind and thus as globally valid. The civilizational pressure of the West thus did not originate solely from considerations of power, but it claimed a very deeply human ethos for itself. The propagation of its own culture and civilization simultaneously became the assignment for mankind for the West, the "white man's burden". Groups and forces, which opposed Western civilization despite the obvious superiority, were backward, stubborn and in the end barbarians who simply would not listen. Similar thinking patterns are articulated in the West even now with a view to the threat by Islamic terror. In his recent work "Civilization and its Enemies," Lee Harris writes:

The civilization that the United States is now called upon to defend is not America's or even the West's; it is the civilization created by all men and women, everywhere on the planet, who have worked to make the actual community around them less addicted to violence, more open, more tolerant, more trusting. [...] Those who are working for this purpose are all on the same side, and we all have a common enemy. It is an enemy whose origin goes back to the dawn of history, and indeed, the enemy that began the whole bloody and relentless cycle of violence and war, the eternal gang of ruthless men.²⁸⁰

²⁷⁸ Lewis, *The Roots of Muslim Rage*, p. 59.

²⁷⁹ See Klein, *Der Boxeraufstand als interkultureller Konflikt*, p. 58.

²⁸⁰ Harris, *Civilization and Its Enemies*, p. 216.

The brutal warfare of the allies in China had the objective of exercising retribution, but also of simultaneously teaching the Chinese a lesson to keep them from a repetition and to make them respect European standards. At least the anti-Chinese “bogeyman” was not shared by all, and both the deployments of the troops and also the role of the missionaries in China were the object of vehement public criticism. These intra-society conflicts were joined by the rivalry of the powers in China itself, which was also partly based on intercultural perception patterns.

The intervention of the eight powers, in particular the difficulty of bringing it to a successful political conclusion, is an early example of the current problems of the international fight against terror. An intervention selectively accentuates power and provides a remedy from a state of affairs sensed to be acute by the relevant public of the intervening state. Leeway for set-up and organization is only opened to a slight and generally also overestimated extent. However, it legitimates itself in a discourse emphasizing humanity and the creation of universal order. This grows into a tendency of setting unrealistic objectives for it – be it the upheaval of the trade relationships or the set-up of a democratic and prospering state. Both would be equivalent to a revolution in the social and political situation and would demand the permanent occupation of the country – which is contained in neither the term “intervention” nor the plans made before the intervention and the justifications brought forward.

To sum up, it may be stated that the West in no way sees itself confronted with a new challenge never encountered before September 11. Al-Qaeda and the Taliban are in the end an expression of the same forces of resistance that also led to the origination of the Boxers in 19th century China. The civilizational pressure that the West unavoidably developed by its imperialistic policy in the 19th and early 20th centuries was replaced by the penetration of the world with values, standards and symbols of the Western way of life and civilization in the course of globalization. The West ought to understand that the current terrorist threat is not “the next stage of history,” as Lee Harris erroneously puts it, but a known historical phenomenon in a new form, for which neither the West nor other cultures bear the blame. William J. Duiker impressively summarized these problems in 1978 in connection with the Boxer Uprising:

In the fundamental conflict between the West and the East, there can, of course, be no attempt to apportion blame. The causes of conflict were inherent in the wide divergence between two civilizations which had grown up separate and independent, but which, with the mechanical progress which was taking place in the West, could no longer remain isolated. The West was not at fault in following its natural tendency toward progress and expansion; nor can it legitimately criticize China for desiring to maintain those traditions which past experience had proven to be good. Not even the insistent aggression of the West, or the obstinacy with which China opposed all foreign innovations can be imputed to either party as evil-doing; the governments of China and of the West merely expressed, in their respective policies, the natural aspirations of two dissimilar worlds.²⁸¹

The West would be well advised to evaluate its historical experience critically in its approach to solving the terror problem.

²⁸¹ George Nye Steiger, *China and the Occident. The Origin and Development of the Boxer Movement*, New York 1966, p. 276.

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