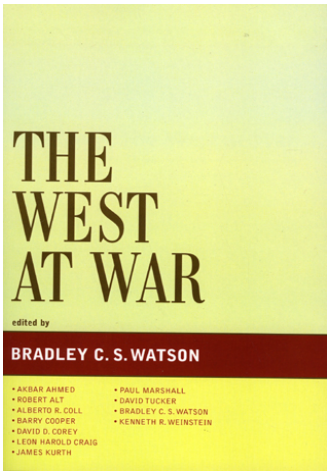

Title: The West at War

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The working assumption of this volume is that there is such a thing as "the West," and that Western civilization as a whole – not only the United States – is implicated in the ongoing conflicts. Implicit in the majority of contributions in this book is an endorsement of a thesis of clash of civilizations between the West and Islam.

Part 1 of the volume deals with the roots and remedies of such a clash. In chapter one, Akbar Ahmed discusses what he sees as Western failure of imagination and methodology in understanding terrorism. He argues that the current conflict is best understood not primarily in terms of the modes and means of terror, or even in terms of hatred of the West, but rather in terms of a society, culture, and tradition that have been illegitimately appropriated by those with dangerous designs against almost all cultures and civilizations. In his view, the United States since 9/11 has overemphasized "terrorism" when considering the Islamic world. This has happened at the expense of broader cultural understanding that will prove vital to Western efforts to engage the Islamic world in peaceful dialogue.

Paul Marshall's chapter emphasizes the religious dimensions of Islamist terrorism. Marshall suggests that "hope, shame, and anger," which motivate Muslims are understood by Islamists in openly religious terms. For Marshall, only a religious ideology, or religious fanaticism, can account for the actions of Islamists who use terrorism as a means to an end.

Barry Cooper also suggests an understanding of 9/11 in ideological terms. He is interested in limning a philosophical psychology of the terrorists. He points out what he sees as one key problem of evil, namely its attractiveness, something that can give meaning to lives otherwise perceived as meaningless. Along with this he stresses the human capacity to imagine a "second reality" that draws enough elements from commonsense reality – such as actual grievances – to make what is imagined plausible. In his analysis, this second reality might be a place where terrorists are seen as blessed martyrs, and murder as their road to martyrdom. Hence, in his own mind, the terrorist is a supreme moralist.

James Kurth's chapter argues that the West has undergone a series of transformations of identity, often linked to wars. In moving from a unified (roughly pre-1500) Catholic Christian identity through the Enlightenment, the West has avoided internecine religious strife, but it has also paved the way for a variety of failed, or failing, secular identities. In the nineteenth century, these included liberal, socialist, and nationalist identities, which were themselves radicalized by the great conflicts of the twentieth century into, respectively, democratic, communist, and fascist identities. Only the liberal ensemble has not been decisively discredited. In Kurth's opinion, liberalism has been a unifying ideology, although the atomism inherent in liberalism points to the possibility, and to some degree the reality, of further fragmentation. Concerned particularly with the European theater, Kurth thinks that the new dominant Western identity is inadequate for dealing with the new war that Europeans find themselves in. He contends that nothing short of a revivified Christian identity can save Europe.

Leon Craig also undertakes an examination of Western civilization. He argues that the expansion of democracy provides both a convenient occasion and a substantial context for considering some fundamental issues of political life. Craig insists that regimes are not ends in themselves, but only means to ends. And any regime that dedicates itself only to liberal goods – whether they be security, prosperity, liberty, procedural justice, equality – neglects to its peril vital goods such as the cultivation of virtue and piety. He fears that by omitting or actively forcing virtue and piety off the political table, liberal regimes are threatened not only by terrorism, but also by moral decay.

Part I of the volume concludes with Kenneth Weinstein's chapter which considers the spirit and practice of toleration. Hence, the centrality of the religious question. Examples of religious intolerance, he says, existed in the West prior to the Enlightenment. Weinstein explains the political liberalism of Hobbes as an attempt to contain religious extremism by promoting civil power. Modern sovereign power would be used judiciously to ensure that the prince, rather than the clergyman, was the ultimate source of authority in society.

Part two of the book concentrates on the ethical principles and limitations that confront the West. David Corey examines two alternatives of the Christian just war theory: Christian realism and Christian pacifism which have influenced the thinking of various Christian leaders after 9/11. Corey notes that the just war tradition as forged by Augustine was understood as a middle way, to help the church properly resist the temptations of pacifism and realism, either of which is laden with dangers both spiritual and temporal.

This theme is also taken up by Bradley C. S. Watson's chapter which deals with the ethical limits, and rhetorical possibilities, of liberal democracy – particularly American liberal democracy. Watson argues that the just war theory has recently been tethered to an essentially pacifist moral agenda, quite contrary to its actual purpose. In his view, this leads to political paralysis. Watson asserts that Christian just war theory offers a rich moral vocabulary for defending, rather than opposing, war; it suggests a duty to take up arms when circumstances call for them.

In the final chapter of part two, Alberto Coll argues that the West cannot win a war on terror by being ethically and constitutionally untrue to itself. For him, America is defined by its Constitution and the importance it places on the rule of law. He stresses that the very open-endedness of the "war on terror" suggests that decisions made to limit civil liberties or otherwise debase the rule of law, domestically and internationally, and this will have long-term consequences. Coll points to abuses that have already happened to give pause to those who think future abuses unlikely: overzealous domestic criminal investigations, indefinite overseas detentions, and torture as a political and military tool. The latter, in Coll's analysis, suggest a dangerous willingness to expand executive power in wartime beyond its constitutional limits.

Part 3 of the book consists of two chapters about the Western way of warfare and its possibilities and limitations in a relatively new kind of conflict. David Tucker's chapter notes that in the aftermath of 9/11, America's leaders pointed to the need not only for a new vocabulary to describe the war against terror, but also for new understandings of war making itself. Yet, the invasions of Iraq and even Afghanistan were undertaken

according to long-established understandings and procedures. The United States and its allies overwhelmed their enemies in the field by using massive fire against their foe while outmaneuvering the enemy on the ground, with the eventual goal of capturing his territory and capital. This, however, led not to decisive victory, but insurgency, something that conventional military tactics and strategy have not proved adept at dealing with.

In the final chapter of the volume, Robert Alt considers the "Media Bias in Iraq" and "The Battle for the Hearts and Minds of America." He is concerned that many Western journalists seem motivated against the West in general and the United States in particular, and have a passion to emphasise the negative. Indeed, he fears that victories in the battlefield, and even for the hearts and minds of many in the Islamic world, can be accompanied by the loss of the hearts and minds of Western citizens.

In the conclusion, editor Bradley C. S. Watson reiterates this volume's overarching theme that Western civilization as a whole grapples with the war on terror and that the solution to this problem will come from two related sources: American will and power prudently applied, and reform within the Muslim world. In his view, America must stay on the offensive, especially in military terms. While the United States needs to win the war in Iraq, this does not mean that Washington needs to create an Iraq in its own image and likeness. Watson states that creating an Iraq that is democratic to some tolerable degree will suffice to eliminate that country as a threat. Victory on these terms in Iraq has the potential to spread democratic sentiments elsewhere.