

American Institute for Contemporary German Studies
The Johns Hopkins University

SPEECH ON TERRORISM
NOVEMBER 29, 2001

James Woolsey
Former Director of the CIA

Part of the series, “German and American Perspectives on the New Transatlantic
Landscape: Sustaining the Coalition against International Terrorism”

© 2002 by the American Institute for Contemporary German Studies

The views expressed in this publication are those of the author/speaker alone. They do not necessarily reflect views of the American Institute for Contemporary German Studies.

American Institute for Contemporary German Studies, 1400 16th Street, NW, Suite 420, Washington, D.C.
20036-2217. Telephone 202/332-9312, Fax 202/265-9531, E-mail: info@aicgs.org, Web:
<http://www.aicgs.org>

SPEECH ON TERRORISM GIVEN ON NOVEMBER 29, 2001

James Woolsey

A little over forty years ago, when I was still a teenager, I spent the summer of 1960 working in a Red Cross refugee camp in West Berlin, right across from the old Anhalter Bahnhof. The sector line ran right in front of my refugee camp. And I still remember at age eighteen sitting there in my room watching the Vopos arrest people as they crossed the street. I thought then, and I think now, that the partnership between Germany and the United States is really right at the heart of peace, not only in Europe but in the rest of the world as well. And we've done pretty well over the course of the last half-century.

I think one reason things are hopeful with Russia is because Russia could not divide Germany and the rest of Europe from the United States. They could not split NATO. There are other reasons as well, more benevolent ones, but we have done a lot together over the years, and we continue to do so. I think most Americans are extremely cognizant of and appreciative of the Chancellor's stand, the offering of military forces, the vote of confidence, everything that has happened since September 11.

I want to discuss five points: Why are we at war? With whom are we at war? How should we fight it at home? How should we fight it abroad? And what should our ultimate objective be?

First of all, why are we at war, why were we attacked? We were not attacked principally because of poverty in the mid-East, or any of the other underlying reasons for social disruption and concern about economic circumstances in the world. That is, to some extent I think, an underlying reason for the pathological behavior that we are seeing, but it is certainly not sufficient. Nor are we really under attack because of past errors or things that we have done that deserve censure.

The day after former president Clinton gave a speech at Georgetown University¹—in which he implied, although did not exactly state, that one cause of the attack on the United States was a payback, in a sense, for slavery and the mistreatment of the American Indians—I was in a taxi in Washington. Rather than reading about opinion polls, I talk to cab drivers in Washington. My favorite subset of cab drivers in Washington is the elderly, African-American, long-term resident of the District, and I had one of those. As I got into the car, he said,

“Did you see that speech President Clinton gave yesterday?”

I said, “I saw the press reports on it this morning.”

He asked, “What did you think?”

I said, “Well, parts of it were okay, I guess.” But I said, “I'm not real sure this is all about slavery and the Indians.”

And he said, “Yeah, these people don't hate us for what we've done that's wrong. They hate us for what we do that's right.”

¹ Former President Clinton spoke at the Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University on November 7, 2001 on the impact of the terrorism of September 11th on globalization. A transcript of the speech is available at:

http://www.georgetown.edu/admin/publicaffairs/protocol_events/events/clinton_glf110701.htm

This is in fact the heart of the matter. It is because women are free. It's because of freedom of speech, freedom of religion, all the things that make Germany and the United States attractive, civilized places. This is what has attracted the enmity of the people who have attacked us.

But the triggering incident, I think, has been a long time in coming. It goes back really over twenty years. In 1979, with the Iranian revolution, our embassy employees are taken hostage. It takes us more than a year, and we have a failed effort to rescue them. In 1983 our Marine barracks are blown up in Lebanon. A number of Marines are killed and we leave. In 1991, after a marvelous assembly of a coalition to fight the Gulf War, we halt the war at least a day or two short of destroying Iraq's Republican Guard, stand down, and we do not support the Kurds and the Shi'a, even though they have, at our urging, taken over fourteen of the eighteen provinces of Iraq. We stand aside and watch the rebels in the north and south be massacred by Saddam's regime. In 1993 we have nineteen rangers killed in Somalia, and we leave. We see Saddam demonstrably try—forensic evidence from both the CIA and the FBI confirmed this—with a bomb made by Iraqi Intelligence, to assassinate former President Bush while he is in Kuwait. President Clinton shoots a few cruise missiles in the middle of the night into an empty building in Baghdad, thereby demonstrating a retaliatory capability against Iraqi cleaning women and night watchmen.

We see terrorist incidents take place against us through the 1990s. We do not look for state sponsorship. We handle each one as a matter of law enforcement, more or less, purely and simply. And by the time this terrorist act was beginning to be planned, several years ago, as far as I'm concerned, it is quite understandable that we would be held in contempt by people in the Middle East who share the mentality of al Qaeda or Saddam's regime.

They had absolutely no idea that we would fight. They thought about us exactly the way the Japanese thought about us when they attacked Pearl Harbor. We had spent two decades ignoring our military, stopping our code breaking, drilling the army with wooden rifles in Louisiana, refusing to fortify Wake and Guam. The Japanese had no idea that we would do what we did after Pearl Harbor. And our enemies in the Middle East today—at least as of September 11—thought exactly the same thing of us: that we were a paper tiger. They had some reason to believe that. We have behaved like one in a number of circumstances in the Middle East over the course of the last twenty-plus years.

Second, with whom are we at war? This is not like the cold war. We are not at war, cold or hot, with a bureaucratic and stodgy power like the Soviet Union that can be contained and someday will collapse under its own weight. We are at war with some combination of Torquemadas and Hitlers. Some of those who are motivated are like the Dominicans surrounding Torquemada, who kept their positions of power in medieval Spain by torturing and killing Jews and Muslims and stealing their property as part of the Spanish Inquisition. Some have more of a Hitler-like mentality. The combination is one which leaves us absolutely no opportunity or likelihood for negotiation, containment or anything else. This is all-out war against those who have attacked us.

Now who are these? Certainly it's al Qaeda and their immediate sponsor and protector, the Taliban in Afghanistan. Certainly it is the terrorists who are present and operating in some sixty countries, and in a number of those countries certainly without the permission and indeed against the will of the governments themselves, such as the Philippines. Increasingly perhaps there are some countries that have been friendly to terrorism in the past and are now realizing that not only are B-52's a pretty good tool for women's liberation in Afghanistan, they also are having a remarkably quieting effect on the Arab street, which has not been conducting demonstrations for

some several weeks now because they are beginning to realize that perhaps they might be on the losing side.

Certainly, efforts are going to have to take place in other countries – Somalia, the Philippines. And certainly our allies, including Germany in particular, can be of great assistance in a number of these countries, because what is needed is training and expertise, economic support, weapons support and the like, in order to deal with terrorism. But the interesting and important question is, is there another government, other than the Taliban, involved in terrorist acts against us?

We focus on Iraq because that is the one that is really on everyone's mind. Certainly Iran has been involved in substantial terrorist acts over the course of the last twenty years. There's a reasonably good chance, according to the FBI, that Iran was behind the Khobar Towers bombings against us in Saudi Arabia. Read Bill Safire's column in the Times.² There have been elections of reformers—three-quarters of the Iranian electorate votes for reformers in elections—and there are a number of brave newspaper editors and students and even mullahs in Iran who are opposed to the Velayat-e-Faqih, the rule of the jurisprudential, the mullahs who handle and control the power instruments of the state.

Nonetheless, the mullahs are in control of raw power in Iran. They are, however, somewhat shaken by such events as the demonstrations in Tehran over the course of the last month, including one huge one following a soccer game, in which hundreds of thousands of young demonstrators were burning portraits of Khomeini and Khamenei, and chanting, "U.S.A." with smiles on their faces. And my favorite chant that I just learned about yesterday is "Death to the Taliban in Kabul and in Tehran."

So whatever we do with Iran, by way of some quiet cooperation, intelligence trading and alike, we do not want to get ourselves into the posture of looking friendly toward the murderous mullahs that now run that country's power structure. Because the reason we are increasingly popular in the streets of Tehran is precisely because we are so thoroughly hated by the mullahs.

But Iran is a country in ferment. Iran is a country with a constitution and some possibility of change. And because of the Sunni-Shi'ite split, because of the hatred between the Taliban and the Iranians, especially over the killing of the Iranian intelligence officers in Herat; because of Iranian support for the Hazara and the Tajiks in the Northern Alliance against the Taliban, cooperation, in recent years, between the Iranians and al Qaeda I think is unlikely. Not impossible, but unlikely.

There are several indicia that in the terrorist incidents against us over the course of the last few years, including September 11 and the anthrax, there may well be a state and a state's intelligence service involved. Let's stick to just the last couple of years. We know for a fact that Mohammed Atta, the lead bomber, traveled three times to Prague, twice got into the country, at least once met with al-Ani, a senior Iraqi intelligence officer. These were short trips, twenty-four-hour turnarounds, one from Hamburg, one from the United States. They were unlikely to have been tourist trips to take in the lovely medieval architecture of Prague.

We know that there have been senior-level contacts between al Qaeda and Iraqi intelligence officers, both in Iraq and Afghanistan. We know that there are five eyewitnesses – three Iraqi defectors, two American inspectors for UNSCOM – who have witnessed various parts and aspects of training just south of Baghdad at Salman Pak, the site of a training camp run by Saddam's son for terrorists, in which non-Iraqis were being trained separately from Iraqis in hijacking a old Boeing 707 aircraft. You can see it on commercially available satellite

² William Safire, "Enemy Of My Enemy," *The New York Times*, November 29, 2001.

photography of Salman Pak. We know that this training continued on over a substantial period of time, and that it involved prominently training of hijacking with knives and muscle, not with guns. Now perhaps Saddam has a grudge against Icelandic Air, and he's just continuing to work the problem and he has not moved yet. But it would seem that there might be a more likely explanation.

Then, finally, the anthrax. There has been abroad here the idea that there is some lone, crazed American mailing anthrax around, completely without any relationship to whoever was behind or involved with September 11. I suppose it is not absolutely impossible that some crazed, American, Ph.D. microbiologist in a very well-equipped laboratory in a cavern somewhere under Trenton, New Jersey, was sitting there, ready on September 11 with his anthrax, to start mailing out letters when something happened. But if you take into account that the first anthrax letters with the cutaneous anthrax were mailed one week after September 11, and that the letters that contained the highly sophisticated and weaponized anthrax – ground to one to three microns, processed with drying chemicals and the rest – were mailed out twenty-eight days after September 11, you would have to believe in quite a coincidence that that crazed independently acting American was sitting there ready to move. The only other way he could be independent of September 11 was if he had gotten the idea after September 11 and started then to assemble his anthrax and his laboratory facilities and chemicals. This is also somewhat unlikely.

The more likely explanation is that there is some link – we don't know what – between the anthrax and those who perpetrated September 11. Now there were three programs in the world that developed highly sophisticated, weaponized anthrax: first, ours, which we closed down in 1969; second, the Soviet program, which continued until very recent times. Ken Alibek's book makes clear that there were Soviet scientists who had access to the technology of highly weaponized anthrax, and it is not absolutely impossible that some people with that technical expertise, for money, working through Russian organized crime, somehow managed to get in league with those who launched the attacks on the United States on September 11.

But the Russians in their own way – most all of the Russian scientists I have known over the years – are quite patriotic. They would have gone through in the 1980s a period of strong hostility toward Afghanistan and toward the Muslims to their south; they are in the midst of a war in Chechnya, which is in part, certainly not entirely, the work of Muslim terrorists. And furthermore, Russia has historically for hundreds of years regarded itself as the misunderstood kingdom at the edge of Europe that has protected Europe from Islam, from the Tartars on. It is its great sense of national mission.

So although it is not impossible that some dissident Soviet scientists are supplying al Qaeda and its supporters with anthrax, it is only less likely that a dissident Israeli scientist would be supplying Palestinian terrorists with anthrax. It's not impossible. It's just not highly likely. That leaves one country that industrially produced a very sophisticated militarized anthrax and still has it: Iraq.

Now is it necessary for there to have been Iraqi involvement in the anthrax attacks against us for Iraq to have done everything? To have supplied material, training, et cetera? No, not necessarily. Terrorism is not something that requires sole-source contracting. One can have joint ventures. There can be minor assistance: assistance with technology, assistance with training, assistance with this, assistance with that. But I must say that of all of the explanations of a link between the events of September 11 and the anthrax on the one hand, and a state on the other, the one state that keeps heaving into view – no, not convicted beyond a reasonable doubt,

not with a smoking gun seen in its hand, but nonetheless there is one state that comes up most on my screen as I have looked at these issues – the Ba’athist regime in Iraq.

How should we fight this war at home? I think that both Germany and the United States are concerned about and highly protective of the civil liberties of its citizens and its foreign guests and visitors. I think the changes in statutes in the United States and even the introduction of the military courts that President Bush has set up are reasonable proposals under the circumstances. It is wartime, and there are things that one has to do. We have a history in this country of cutting back on civil liberties in wartime. The most dramatic incident was Abraham Lincoln’s suspension of *habeus corpus* in the Civil War. But after the Civil War, we got *habeus corpus* back, and I believe that after we win this war, these relatively minor steps that the president has taken will be turned around here.

The more salient issue on the home front, to my mind, is the fact that this is a nation of very sophisticated technological networks, dozens, hundreds of them: the Internet, financial funds transfers, oil and gas pipelines, the electricity grid. Those networks were put together in order to be resilient against random failures and against natural disasters, but without a single thought being given to making them resilient against terrorism. And these are very different things. If altitude control fails on a satellite, as it did a few years ago, in geo-synchronous orbit, the satellite may turn a different direction and cause 80 percent of the pagers in the country to go down. Well, it takes a day or so, but the pagers get rerouted to another satellite and they come back up. A hurricane hits Florida and the FAA routes aircraft around it and normally they don’t crash. The system is reasonably resilient against natural disasters and random failures.

But Einstein used to say “*Raffiniert ist der Herr Gott, aber boshaft ist er nicht,*” which, translated, means something like “God may be sophisticated, but he’s not plain mean.” And what I think Einstein meant was that—since he thought of God and nature as pretty much the same thing—when you’re playing against nature, trying to discover a principle of physics, let’s say, you’re not playing against a conscious opponent who’s trying to make it harder. It may be sophisticated. It may be difficult. But nobody is trying to defeat you.

War is different. Dealing with terrorists is different. You have to think differently about putting networks together if you want them to not be turned against you, such as the civil aircraft transportation network and the mail delivery network have now been turned against us in this country to kill people. You have to think like a terrorist. You have to think, what are the vulnerable points that someone consciously would go after? And we have a lot of work to do in this country to begin to decentralize and restructure a lot of these networks to protect them. This is a huge subject in and of itself, but I would simply say that I would hope that as of the afternoon of September 11—whether it’s driving large cars, not conserving oil, or not moving toward bio-based fuels—all of the reasons why Americans before September 11 were relaxed about relying increasingly on the Middle East for our oil supplies would have been reconsidered. And I would hope that we would by now realize that in terms of fuel conservation, in terms of bio-based fuels, replacements for oil, all of this, we are as foolish as countries and individuals can possibly be to continue to increasingly to rely on this part of the world—where outside Israel and Turkey, the governments consist entirely of vulnerable autocracies and pathological predators—to be the source of our transportation fuel. The mixture of vulnerable autocracies and pathological predators is not a happy one. Because even if the autocracies, as in Bahrain and in Jordan, begin to lighten up and to become very decent autocracies, perhaps evolving toward a posture of becoming constitutional monarchies, those autocracies are quite likely, at some early point, to be gobbled up by a pathological predator.

How should we fight this war abroad? No more Mr. Nice Guy. Reread Machiavelli. Notice that in the Arab street, as I said, it is now quiet. Why is it quiet? It is quiet out of fear. We have forgotten that particularly in this part of the world, either we will be held in contempt, as we were until September 11, or, when this is over, we will still be held in contempt, or we'll both be feared and respected, and there is nothing in between. There is no state of reality, which consists of being more or less admired and tolerated for sort of being nice guys. Hopefully that reality has now dawned.

And if you read one thing about this country and its foreign policy relevant to this current situation, I would suggest either the article two years ago in the National Interest by Walter Russell Mead called "The Jacksonian Tradition" or Mead's new, marvelous book "The Special Providence." Mead's book title is an ironic one, taken from a statement of Bismarck's that the Lord God has special providence for fools, drunkards and the United States of America.

Mead suggests in his book that perhaps it hasn't just been special providence. Perhaps we have arrived at the point where we are because we have done some things right, not just that we have been lucky. And he examines four traditions in American foreign policy: the tradition of Jeffersonianism, which is make America as perfect a democracy as you can and do not interfere with anybody; the Hamiltonian tradition, which is heavily focused on commerce and business and advancing its interests; the tradition of Wilsonianism, which is heavily focused on international law, international agreements, and intervening on behalf of human rights abroad; but he says there is a fourth tradition, which does not come to the fore very often, but probably most Americans are part of it, and even the Jeffersonians and Wilsonians and Hamiltonians turn this way when something happens like Pearl Harbor. The fourth tradition is named after Andrew Jackson, and according to Mead, Andrew Jackson's central characteristic was—whether as a duelist, which was still something that was done in early nineteenth century America, or an Indian fighter, or as the victor in the battle of New Orleans against the British, or as the President in various foreign policy crises he confronted—once he was crossed, and once he decided to fight, he was absolutely ruthless. And this side of the American character has not been seen by most of our friends or opponents in the world since August of 1945. But it is still there, although it has been slumbering for some time. But I would suggest to you that if those who do not yet realize it still need some evidence, they will have some. Because I think out there in the country as a whole, there is something approaching 300 million people filled with cold fury. And the only criticism of this government so far has been why aren't you destroying our enemies faster? What is taking so long? Let's go. We are at war.

Now air power is not a panacea, in the Middle East, in the desert, in clear weather, with 60 to 70 percent of the ordinance being dropped in Afghanistan being smart weapons, with the linking of pods on F-16's to laser designators in the hands of special forces on the ground, with unmanned aerial vehicles being able to put video of targets right into the cockpits and in front of gunners in the AC-130 gunships, even scattered forces like the Taliban have been extraordinarily vulnerable to air power. And those, such as the New York Times editorial writers, who were saying before this air war started that this one is not going to be as easy as the Gulf War have proven to be wrong. And those who are now saying, such as the New York Times editorial writers, that if you turn against Iraq, even though Iraq, admittedly, is considerably weaker militarily than it was in 1991, and even though we are now dropping 60 to 70 percent smart weapons instead of ten percent, the way we were in 1991, still if you think about turning against Iraq, don't think it's going to be as easy as it was here in Afghanistan. The New York Times editorial writers have not kept up with technology.

Regarding allies, we appreciate them very much, and for political reasons having forces from other countries are useful. But let's be honest. We don't really need them, from the point of view of using air power to devastate targets like the Republican Guard. Certainly we need to arm and support Iraqis in the north and south, the Kurds and the Shi'ia and others. Certainly we would need a base of operations for land-based tactical air, and access to, especially, the north. But that could be provided by Turkey.

In answer to the question of what would you need from Turkey in order to bring this about, my answer is, basically, whatever Turkey wants. I believe that we would do well to have other allies. And we should be cordial. And we should go to our fellow members of NATO and to Russia and elsewhere and say we would very much like to have their support. But if we don't get that support, then we should essentially behave as if those who turn us down are like the townspeople in High Noon, when the marshal, played by Gary Cooper, went around to try to get up a posse against the gang coming in at high noon, and everybody in the town found one excuse or another why he couldn't do it. He eventually had one ally, his wife, played by Grace Kelly, a pacifist Quaker, who came back to him at the last minute and killed one of the bad guys by shooting him in the back. We do need one ally, like Gary Cooper, and I would say that that ally is Turkey.

I think that there is a great deal we will need to do after we win this war. There is a great deal of help that will be needed to begin to bring about a more civilized Middle East. We may find that unexpected things take place, that there is disruption, that there is uncertainty, that there is confusion, that there are all of those things that people who tend to populate foreign ministries and state departments are worried about. But we were here before, in 1991. We picked the devil we knew, rather than the devil we didn't. We made a terrible mistake and the Iraqi people have suffered for a decade because of it. This time we should ask ourselves, what would Andrew Jackson have done? Then we should proceed to destroy Saddam's regime—the way we destroyed the Taliban—and bring democracy to Iraq. There is more to do, but this would be a good start.