

On Terrorism as Human Sacrifice

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**The Terrorist in Search of Humanity:
Militant Islam and Global Politics**

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Sacred Violence: Torture, Terror, and Sovereignty

Paul W. Kahn

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In the weeks after the attacks of September 11, 2001, it has become easy to forget, large parts of the world were grappling sympathetically with the victims of the spectacular destruction of the World Trade Center and other devastation of that day. A spontaneous outpouring of compassion and empathy was palpable during those early days, both within the United States and outside its borders. “We are all Americans,” the French and Italian dailies famously declared. Before such good will was tragically squandered by unilateral American actions, the arresting images of 9/11, instantaneously transmitted around the globe, created a simultaneously experienced world event and invited international reflection on its meaning to us, whoever “we” were as the century opened.

One week after September 11, the German author and poet Hans Magnus Enzensberger published an opinion piece in his country’s leading newspaper. Aiming for measure, he placed 9/11 squarely within the frame of globalization. Terrorism, like so many other modern facts, had “gone global.” Whereas terror had previously been tied mainly to fanaticism and totalitarianism, September 11 showed it to be “a pathological copy of the organism it attacks.” The attacks required the interconnected and networked world reality they were intended to undermine. Like television, cars, and currency, terrorism was an inescapable fact of globalization. Enzensberger amplified this prosaic observation by noting the utter irrelevance of ideology to the terrorists’ aims and effects. They shared with many other extremists and murderers a tendency toward paranoia and a penchant for self-destruction. These were the real dangers behind fanaticism, totalitarianism, terrorism, and nihilism; the links, as it were, among skinheads, Rwanda, 9/11, and Columbine. Enzensberger worried that the West’s naive insistence on the human capacity for “self-preservation” blinded it to a strangely seductive “craving for self-mutilation [and] suicide.” Those who seek victory in death,

who immunize themselves from responsibility, vulnerability, or punishment by killing themselves as they kill others, are incomprehensible to “[t]hose of us who prefer to carry on living.” Enzensberger soberly warned of the “hundreds of thousands of such living time-bombs walking” the earth and concluded that “one of the most ancient rituals of our species, human sacrifice, has also succumbed to globalization.” The title of Enzensberger’s translated commentary was “The Resurgence of Human Sacrifice.”¹

The last phrase is jarring and somewhat peculiar. It made obvious sense to speak of the globalization of terrorism and of the cult of paranoia and suicidal self-destruction, for which ideology was incidental. But the notion of human sacrifice seemed to gesture in an entirely different direction. Enzensberger’s argument itself combined two rather different images. On one hand, he considered globalization as a found fact of tremendous complexity, an immanent reality that operated according to its own logics without any particular ideology, state, or group at its helm. All human beings necessarily breathe its air. It requires little imagination to note that the terrorist attacks of 2001 stand as a shorthand for contemporary terrorism in the era of globalization. On the other hand, however, reflecting on the hijackers’ characteristics, Enzensberger gestured toward the more sweeping claim that human beings had rejoined a species-old conflict between death and life. Paranoid self-destruction was set against the preference to carry on living; both were permanent features of human experience. The idea of human sacrifice—conjuring images of premodern cults and bloodied rituals—suggested that globalization was merely an incidental occasion for the reemergence of primal forces and deep struggles that were unchanging and ahistorical. Indeed it was true that, in shredding the fabric of normalcy, apart from their actual destruction the attacks of 9/11 revealed foundational dilemmas of violence and collective experience. Could a nation-state keep its citizens safe? What was the symbolic significance of the destruction of the Twin Towers? How did these extremist acts differ from criminal ones? Was this a recognizable form of warfare? What meaning did the deaths of the victims, first responders, and hijackers have? None of these questions automatically evoked globalization. Rather, they pointed toward the issue of how, like sacrifice, the transcendent bases for collective experience perhaps unavoidably engage the question of violence. The sacred was invoked everywhere on and after 9/11, by the perpetrators as well as by the victims’ memorialists and avengers. Yet, in what ways could terrorism be considered a form of sacrificial violence? Were the terrorists of September 11 engaged in human sacrifice? Were their victims sacrificial ones?

Virtually every region on the planet has known the practice of human sacrifice at some time, usually deep in its premodern past. One thinks, for example, of the Aztecs’ mass ritual killings intended to stave off the periodic threat of the world’s end, the Celts’ wicker men (large wooden statues filled with people and then burned), the Hindu practice of Sati in which a widow immolates herself on her husband’s funeral pyre, and the honorific slaughter of slaves and prisoners upon the death of West African kings. Generally, human sacrifice entails propitiatory ritual killing: murder intended to please or appease the gods. It has been related to warfare, funerals and belief in an afterlife, the consecration of spaces and places, and divination through the examination of human remains. Human sacrifice can involve the attempt to literally

embody a founding myth, or it can be a purely symbolic act in which no one is actually killed. It can serve to restore, stabilize, or conserve a society's equilibrium, or it can mark the destabilization or disintegration of a social order. The three monotheistic religions all banned human sacrifice while including it in the self-understanding of their own development. Christianity, for instance, placed a singular, human-divine self-sacrifice at the heart of its own identity, the later anti-Semitic charge of blood libel reflecting in part a perverse inversion and displacement of the Christian paschal sacrifice. The relative rarity of human sacrifice in the contemporary world explains the scandal it invites. Today both critics of capital punishment and animal rights activists seek to extend the prohibition on human sacrifice to the death penalty and animal life respectively.

Human sacrifice is one form of the more general practice whereby the profane and the sacred are put in communication. The profane is either renounced, transformed by the sacred, destroyed for the sake of the sacred, or sacralized itself. Gods are appeased and pleased by the surrender, offering, and oblation of objects or persons. Kathryn McClymond's recent examination of Vedic and Judaic practices shows that sacrifice need not necessarily be linked to violence at all.² However, such an exception bends the rule of the past century's view of sacrifice, which often accepted as commonplace its association with violence first articulated by Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss in their classic *Sacrifice: Its Nature and Functions* (1898). Hubert and Mauss envisaged a three-part drama whereby a "sacrificer" such as a priest enters a scene, destroys a sacrificial object such as an animal, which gives him certain benefits and powers, and then leaves the sacrificial scene.³ Three-quarters of a century later, René Girard famously challenged this flatly descriptive depiction by investigating the purpose of sacrifice. The sacrificial victim or object, he argued, was a scapegoat that bore the brunt of a community's own self-destructive violence, thereby displacing its threat. Sacrifice thus served the purpose of social integration, channeling inevitable discord that might otherwise damage a community. Girard placed sacrifice on a continuum between vengeance and law; the former had no need for symbolic purging while the latter attempted to limit violence altogether.⁴ Modern law represents the rejection of a premodern worldview in which human sacrifice was a conceivable means of social and political integration.

Does contemporary Islamist terrorism really reflect the reemergence of archaic sacrificial violence? Certain Islamist and war-on-terror rhetoric often converge in seeming to answer in the affirmative. Terrorist acts, counterterrorist measures, and the memorialization of victims are indeed regularly explained within the rhetoric and logic of sacrifice. For instance, the 329 foreign nationals who died on September 11 are usually counted as "Americans"; their deaths are assimilated to a national narrative through which their arbitrary murder is equated to the self-sacrifice of soldiers in wartime. However, the limits of approaching terrorism through the lens of sacrifice are also immediately evident. Hubert and Mauss might help illuminate the sacral place of Ground Zero, but suicidal hijackers accrue no priestly benefits from their self-sacrifice (though in a perverse way Osama bin Laden's aura increased through the self-sacrifice of his acolytes). And 9/11 cannot be fully grasped according to Girard's view of sacrifice as intragroup purgation; terrorists might have targeted the United States

as a scapegoat for the ills of Muslim societies, but events on that day and since seem guided more by the spirit and dynamics of cyclical vengeance than by ritualistic extirpation and closure. If sacrifice is not an easily applicable theme, nevertheless it cannot be easily dismissed. Terrorism and counterterrorism do indeed lead to foundational dilemmas. The fact that they do not seem to fit smoothly into established modern paradigms of either law or war may explain why they evoke the philosophical anthropology of premodern human sacrifice. Of course, the temptation to turn to the premodern in order to grapple with crises of modernity is not new. In many ways, references to the archaic and appeals to the primeval are archetypal modern gestures. Matters are complicated further by the fact that globalization itself has no foundation, in the sense of a singular foundational event or cause. On the contrary, globalization has had multiple and incongruous foundations; it embodies the inherited accumulative weight of exploration, colonialism, imperialism, war, diplomacy, trade, travel, contracts, and communication. In short, no one is in charge of the global. Enzensberger's commentary itself, no less than Osama bin Laden's, demonstrates the magnitude of desires for interpretation and intelligibility in an era of world history when complex interactions are hard to avoid and satisfactory explanations are hard to find.⁵ But in the context of foundationless globalization, what sense does human sacrifice have? Which gods shall our oblations please?

Paul Kahn places sacrifice at the heart of political existence. Backing away from classic concepts of modern secular political thought, such as contractualism, law, and representation, he asserts the foundational priority of sovereign violence in political life. The sovereign's essence is expressed in the capacity to call on the subject or citizen to sacrifice himself, to test his commitment in the prospect of killing or being killed, and thus to risk life and death. Furthermore, the sovereign is the agent capable of compelling the violent sacrifice of its enemies, of destroying those who would destroy it. Politics, then, comes down to inflicting "degradation and humiliation" on an enemy's body (Kahn, 6). For Kahn, the "reciprocal phenomena" of terror and torture both reflect this foundational politics of sacrifice, violence, and survival (11). The sovereign is sacred and beyond law. I prove my dedication to my god by forcing you to test your commitment to yours and ultimately to relent or to die a martyr's death. To understand political violence, we need consider only the fact that we are willing to sacrifice and ultimately risk life and death for those we love. We always love particular human beings, Kahn observes, never humanity in general.

Kahn's *Sacred Violence* continues his critical reassessment of the liberal tradition and international law underway in his earlier *Putting Liberalism in Its Place*.⁶ He offers a blistering critique of the commitment to law and rights as the highest rationale of politics and of those who see modern history as tending toward the realization of that commitment. Explicitly indebted to Carl Schmitt's approach to political theology, Kahn evokes a kind of Christian incarnationism to model his vision of sacrifice, violence, and nonlegal sovereignty. We may wish for the rule of law and prefer the disappearance of torture and terror, but, according to his sacral realism, we ought not be surprised by the eternal return of humans' violent sacrifice for their gods. This maximalist view of displacing and perhaps abandoning international law and the prohibition of torture, however, seems an unfortunately undemocratic consequence

of the premise that sovereignty precedes law. More specifically, Kahn's otherwise provocative and richly imaginative account of how terror and torture do in fact return us to foundational dilemmas underestimates the tremendously original and significant fact that democracy is a form of sovereignty unlike all others.

The theory of sovereign sacred violence is rooted in a historical narrative. Christian kings in the West developed the archetype of sovereignty. Their power as sanctified rulers mediating the divine and human was expressed in their ability to punish their subjects. Torture and terror were linked in the violent practice of forcing a subject who had disobeyed the king's will to submit to his authority. The victim either had to confess his wrong and swear obedience to the king's sacred power or die as a martyr to his own god. In the modern era, popular sovereignty has replaced the king, but for Kahn, this new form is no less sacred. The battlefield has succeeded the scaffold as the site where sovereign power is tested; citizen-soldiers prove their filial devotion to the state, which embodies and represents sovereignty, when they take on the risk of sacrificing themselves, of killing and being killed, in war. Moreover, since the era of total war began, all members of a nation can be considered agents of self-sacrifice as well as sacrificeable targets. The sovereign survives and perdures through the sacrifice of its enemies and the willing self-sacrifice of those who live under its care. On this score, there is no real difference between torture and war.

However, Kahn's long-term historical narrative minimizes the great novelty of democratic sovereignty. There is a great divide separating the kingly and democratic models, for in the latter the space between the sovereign and the people is compressed because the people themselves are sovereign. The distance separating the people from the state, due to the requirements of representation and administration, is formal and practical rather than substantive. In short, in a democracy we ask ourselves to sacrifice for ourselves. While moments of war, crisis, insecurity, revolution, and terrorism do return a democratic polity to its constitutive dilemmas, each citizen, as a member of the sovereign, retains and can never fully abdicate a measure of decision-making power. This is why in a democracy citizens are more than subjects and cannot be enemies without losing their citizenship (hence the importance of the case of José Padilla as a test of democratic practice). Citizens can be conscientious objectors and soldiers can neither be compelled to carry out illegal or immoral orders nor be excused for "just following" them. In contrast, Kahn suggests that if the state asks me to torture in order to diffuse a "ticking time bomb," because the survival of the polity is at stake, I must comply.

Before turning to the current debate on torture and its symmetrical relationship to terrorism, Kahn offers an absorbing reading of twentieth-century international law, arguing that the modern liberal imagination has sought unsuccessfully to surpass the template of sovereign sacrificial violence. The Charter of the United Nations claimed to limit war to legitimate self-defense, and in the late twentieth century humanitarianism endowed individuals with standing and alleged protection even against the actions of their own governments. Both the UN and humanitarianism embodied efforts to install a new paradigm that superseded nation-states by limiting sovereign violence: war and torture were to be adjudicated by an international legal regime that, while itself not emanating from a sovereign power, placed sovereign national powers

under its jurisdiction. In other words, to use Kahn's terminology in a way he does not, international law expresses a sacred above the sovereign. Nevertheless, Kahn rightly underscores the fact that signatories to international accords have never abdicated their decision-making power, adhering to the ultimately nonbinding promissory principle of *pacta sunt servanda* (agreements must be kept). Lacking compliance and enforcement mechanisms, the "liberal counter-religion" of international law and humanitarianism had by the end of the Cold War drifted toward empty formalism (52). The dream of a supranational and postsovereign international order without war, for which force was a matter of "law enforcement" and which guaranteed human rights, proved to be short-lived, oblivious to historical experience, and unrealistic (59). Although to some extent a familiar argument—Kant lacks teeth—Kahn concludes his feisty assault on international law and humanitarianism with the observation that the impulse to subsume sovereign violence, war, and torture under the rule of law likely stems from the antiquated European and elitist formula of the duel, in which reciprocal honor framed violence. But as the horrific violence of the twentieth century showed, from the multiplication and totalization of conflict and the development of weapons of mass destruction to the brutal wars of decolonization and the emergence of contemporary terrorism, the asymmetrical reality of violence more often than not bypasses rules and reciprocity. States, like terrorists, do what they do.

For Kahn, September 11 awoke us from our legal-humanitarian dogmatic slumber. The scenario of the "ticking time bomb," in which cruel and unusual violence is inflicted on an enemy body in order to yield life-saving information in the nick of time, serves as a limit case that demonstrates the stakes of sacrificial violence. The situation is supposed to illustrate the challenge of terrorism in the era of weapons of mass destruction, when as never before the sovereign requires protection from the acts of individual extremists. Indeed were it not for such weapons, terrorism, like many other threats and unpredictable causes of death, might be factored into the general risk calculus of advanced, highly complex societies. The existence of WMDs, however, shows the pertinence of Kahn's troubling thought experiment, even where one disagrees with some of the lessons he draws from it. The ticking time bomb foregrounds the failure of law to create safety and order, for it suggests that following the liberal-legal prohibition on torture risks the polity as a whole. For its own security, then, the sovereign may ask its citizen-soldier to torture; the torturer complies, sacrificing the rightsless enemy body and also, although Kahn does not dwell on the fact, the torturer's own individual will and morality. The argument is indebted to Schmitt, whose state of exception involves the suspension of law by the sovereign as an expression of emergency power. Voluntaristic decision-making power exemplifies the sovereign who, like certain depictions of God, makes laws but is not limited by them. For Kahn, we will be willing to torture and to make detainees disappear into black sites and legal limbos because we want to protect our community, our people, our sovereign. Moral universalism falls before an "ethos of care" that is tested in the difficult sacrifices we are willing to make for those whom we love (78).

There are a number of problems with this line of thinking. One problem is that the war on terror has demonstrated that while Americans seem willing to debate torture and the sacrifice of enemies for national security, they seem less willing to

make considerable sacrifices themselves. While George W. Bush's directive for Americans to continue shopping after the 9/11 attacks has become a cheap punch line, more serious challenges to the idea of citizen sacrifice for the sovereign are found in the all-voluntary military and more significantly in the outsourcing and privatization of war, in which contractors fight for paychecks and only indirectly for the state, some soldiers and many support personnel not even being American citizens. One can reasonably ask, What is the nature of a sovereign that does not have the power or will to compel its citizens to sacrifice for its own security? A further problem is that the object lesson of the ticking time bomb is almost entirely counterfactual and fantastical, less real than sensational (one thinks of the television show *24*, in which torture is miserably normalized).⁷ Outside combat there is a striking dearth of evidence that actionable intelligence has been acquired through the threat and use of violence on a disarmed adversary in custody. We ought to take that lack of evidence seriously. The thought experiment has more to do with aggressive fantasies of revenge than actual counterterrorism practices. Kahn seems to endorse this view by describing it. "We are asked to juxtapose the picture of the collapse of the World Trade Center to that of the use of torture against a captured terrorist," he writes. "By sacrificing themselves on United Flight 93 over the fields of Pennsylvania, the passengers symbolically licensed a practice of torture to discover ticking time bombs in the war on terror that followed" (74, 96). We do not know the thoughts of the passengers on Flight 93, but it is just as likely that they were trying to save as sacrifice themselves. Kahn's gloss is revealing. Though the nondisclosable nature of many intelligence practices leaves open the possibility of effective torture, much public debate on terrorism and torture rests entirely on hypotheticals and not facts. There is accordingly a strict parallel between the black box of the torture debate and the CIA's black sites. It seems likely, however, that both terrorism and torture are expressive forms of violence that are ultimately not very effective in accomplishing their declared aims.

Difficulties arise, Kahn insists, when democracies go to war and particularly when they confront the possible use of weapons of mass destruction. Violence is indeed a problem for democracies. They are not based on it; they use it discriminately in rule-bound ways and prefer that it not be routine. We are the sovereign we are trying to defend, and however imperfect, law is a nonnegotiable mechanism for expressing the popular sovereign. Democratic sovereign power is indissociable from law as well as from consent, freedom, rights, and equality. Even if we concede a non- or supralegal zone of sovereignty, thereby acknowledging that violence may be illegitimate in the eyes of the law but perhaps justified in defense of the sovereign, we are still caught in inescapable quandaries of democratic sovereignty. Unlike the sovereignty of kings, authoritarians, fascists, and so forth, democracy is premised on a way of life, and not just a legal regime, that ipso facto has great difficulty conceptualizing the justification of torture. There is something bizarre about a justification of sovereign violence that can never be made explicit; in other words, why cannot the United States simply say, Yes, we torture and are happy to suspend democratic values and law in matters of national security?⁸ Sometimes the most obvious answer is the most accurate: there are some things a democracy will not do and others that it should not do. Democracies do not torture. That is what makes them democracies.

Another problem is that it may not be so easy to link self-sacrifice with the sacrifice of other human beings. Suicide bombers have less trouble with such an equation than the democratic imagination. For Kahn, self-sacrifice is epitomized by the image of a soldier throwing his body on a hand grenade to save his comrades. Derived from Kahn's implicitly Christian presuppositions, the generation of meaning through sacrifice fits rather easily with the principle of self-abnegation, but it is much more difficult to square with the notion of sacrificing other human beings. Transforming the victims and courageous first responders of 9/11 into sacrificial heroes has indeed served as a *cri de guerre*; they killed us, so we will kill them; they attacked our faith so we will place them on the rack to break theirs. Vengeance and sadism are integrally bound. The problem for those who want to embrace the sentiments of Sabine Baring-Gould's "Onward, Christian Soldiers"—a move made by a significant number of Americans—is that, on one reading, the Gospels are fairly clear about the violent sacrifice of other human beings, and their vision comes remarkably close to the spirit of international law and humanitarianism previously discussed.

A final complication arises with respect to the supposed parallel between terrorism and torture. In general, terrorists are not state actors, and although Islamist violence certainly invokes the sacred, such outlier asymmetrical acts do not necessarily express sovereignty. Some reflect flailing impotence. Others may attempt to achieve or build sovereignty, but they do not have sovereign power behind them. Unlike a group such as Hamas, for instance, Al Qaeda notoriously lacks a social vision or program beyond vague invocations of the caliphate and Sharia. Further distinctions could be made among terrorism, state-sponsored terror, in which sovereign power can be said to be delegated or outsourced, and state terror proper, which emerges when sovereign violence is exercised with impunity, limited neither by a division of powers, bureaucratic process, law, or the citizenry. If Kahn denies sovereignty to supranational forces such as international law and humanitarianism, then by the same token, it seems he must deny it to subnational terrorist groups and agents. Not being soldiers, terrorists will never ascribe to the rules of war, a tradition that points back to a history that includes Westphalia, Vienna, The Hague, Geneva, and many other twentieth-century Conventions. In this sense, Kahn is right that all armed conflict is essentially asymmetrical because victory does require the defeat of one's foe. But if terrorists never "play by the rules," democracies can never be entirely defined by their adversaries.

Kahn asks the appropriately disturbing and vexing question, "If we kill, why not torture?" (89). Although the extraordinary zone of war is in fact unlike the normal space of the democratic way of life, a terrorist in custody does not have the same status as an armed combatant on the battlefield. The ticking time bomb scenario is intended to bring the heat of the battlefield into the prison cell and onto the disarmed and vulnerable body of the captive combatant. One could call torture a form of overkill except that the intention is not to kill but to make suffer, to disarm the spirit of the disarmed body, or, as Kahn puts it, to make the detainee give up his faith. This is the essence of torture as human sacrifice. However, the aims of torture in the ticking time bomb scenario are much less lofty than Kahn would prefer; they are based entirely on the mundane, utilitarian goal of acquiring useful information in order to save lives—a usually unverified formula. Torture has simply not succeeded in the sacral function it

is supposed to fulfill. On the contrary, sacred violence has deeply divided Americans, the “we” in whose name it is deployed.

Camp X-Ray at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, as well as the black site prisons operated by the CIA in the years following 9/11, do reflect, as Kahn suggests, the ambiguity and breakdown of the “acoustic separation” between law and sovereign violence (152ff.). “The disappeared” fell into a “limbo” of sovereignty beyond law (144ff., 176). We should not, though, consider the particular policies pursued in the Bush era as a metaphysical inevitability. They have much to do with decades-long trend in the United States toward a concentration and magnification of executive power resistant to congressional oversight and judicial review. September 11 might have yielded other responses than those that actually emerged. Commitments that were temporarily abandoned might instead have been redoubled. In other words, the lesson of September 11 might have been to renew and expand multilateral relationships, bolster international institutions, further economic development, invest in modernizing and moderating forces in Muslim countries, and reaffirm our dedication to law. This judgment reflects the tone of Obama’s term in office as much as Kahn’s mirrors the terrain of Bush’s. Although the legal and regulatory framework of interstate war may not easily apply to the war on terrorism, democratic states are not warranted in abandoning their established and inherited commitments to law, consent, freedom, rights, and equality. Democratic sacrality is always incomplete and projective, which is no kind of excuse. The highest form of sovereign power may be that of restraint: grace for the kingly sovereign, magnanimity for the modern state. Hysteria and overreaction are signs of weakness, and security in fact may depend on *not* using violence. A clearer notion of the sacred ought to inform the sacrifices we might be willing or required to make for it.⁹

Simply blowing the trumpet of democracy, however, does not change the fact that the distinctive violence of terrorism indeed leads to constitutive and foundational dilemmas. Terrorism and counterterrorism express in part a fight over worldviews and horizons of ultimate significance. Unlike politics, terrorism speaks primarily the language of violence and expresses the basic contrast between chaos and order. Yet unlike war, its force is basically psychological and symbolic, its perpetrators, victims, and witnesses interpreting the meaning of the act, its effectiveness measured in the responses it generates. Kahn is correct about a number of pertinent elements: that violence plays a role in the “production of meaning” (though perhaps not the final role he wants) (92); that, experientially, love for the particular typically outweighs moral universalism; that communities are created and sustained through transcendent meanings; and that pledges, contests, memorialization, scapegoats, and indeed sacrifice are occasions in which a particular individual comes to terms with transcendent meaning. In the end, sacrifice serves for Kahn as a relay between law and sovereignty, giving up the former to serve and glorify the latter. His notion of sacrifice—“giving up oneself to be acted on”—remains thoroughly Christian (108). Although it has broader application, as demonstrated by his suggestive readings of Socrates, who owes his life to the state that requires him to sacrifice it, and of Abraham Lincoln, the “archetypal sacrificial figure,” there is an echo here of the Christian self-understanding of superseding so-called Judaic law to which it is hostile (126). To be sure, Kahn refers

to the Hebraic tradition that distinguishes between God's sovereign will and his law. Such a distinction can be read, for instance, into the contrast between the constituting power of the Declaration of Independence and the constituted power of the U.S. Constitution, or between, à la Schmitt, the "doctrine of derogation" or plenary power, on one hand, and legal statutes, on the other (127, 142). The "border" between law and sovereignty is crossed in revolution and war. Terrorism poses a similar challenge (131ff.). If sovereign power realizes itself when it fights for its own survival, for a twenty-first-century democracy, this would mean affirming certain principles as the most decisive response to threatening violence: minimally, the adherence to "[international] standards that govern the use of force," multilateralism, and "honor[ing] . . . the very ideals we fight to defend by upholding them not when it's not easy, but when it's hard." For although "peace entails sacrifice," to abandon and destroy what is holy is sacrilege.¹⁰

The violence of the previous century and now that of our own does challenge the humanist, liberal-democratic, and progressive visions of history. But those visions have always been challenged. The problem is to explain the paradoxical and dialectical emergence of two realities: the tragic magnitude of unprecedented forms of violence that undermine the combatant/noncombatant distinction, and the global reach of models, movements, and experiences of peace, human rights, dignity, and nonviolence. The twentieth century gave us both Hitler and Gandhi. Thus Kahn's assertion—"History may be a story not of the realization of security and well-being but rather of increased risk and destruction"—remains only half true (9). Wickedness combined with technology, relativism, utopianism, bureaucracy, and other modern elements has wrought havoc on the world,¹¹ but it is also true that such devastation is measured by standards and expectations unavailable in the time of the Roman Empire, Genghis Khan, and the religious wars of the sixteenth century. That some moderns were mistaken in the belief that sacred violence had disappeared from the world means neither that that degradation is the essence of political meaning nor that the modern emancipatory project can be so easily jettisoned. The realism that subordinates law to sovereignty yields another kind of law: that of the jungle, for in itself violence cannot distinguish between the legitimate and illegitimate. While 9/11 did return national sovereignty to reflection, the notion of premodern Western religious sacrifice is too anachronistic and phenomenologically narrow a lens through which to grasp the contemporary. Still, Kahn's superbly skeptical query—If humanity is sacred, why do we seem unable to sacrifice much for it?—goes unanswered. The question has global implications.

Faisal Devji is very much concerned with the reality of globalization in the face of which premodern forms of life have vanished and modern ones are fading. Globalization consists of inescapable relationships around the world, including often instantaneously convergent ones facilitated by the media, that nevertheless to date lack adequate political institutionalization. Like Kahn, Devji is suspicious of liberalism and internationalism, but where Kahn seeks to reinvigorate the model of the sovereign state, Devji notes the unavoidable "breakdown" and fragmentation of earlier political forms (Devji, 159). He suggests that we are living in an intermediate era caught on a world scale between a collapsing liberal humanism and an as-yet-unrecognizable future

politics. Humanism, with its abstract conceptions of human beings, has failed to grasp the real condition of the world's peoples in their materiality and suffering. Devji provocatively suggests that, like the environmental, humanitarian, and alterglobalization movements, radical Islam and Islamist terrorism exemplify a broad "search for humanity"—a desire to make humanity an embodied and active subject. Today humanity as such does not yet exist positively; it exists negatively in the form of victims, a "reality bereft of reality" (35). In other words, genuine humanity emerges not in the assertion of blanket platitudes about the family of man but in the existential reality of common suffering in search of recognition and of exemplary sacrifices that bring that suffering to the world's attention. Deeply surprising, certainly controversial, and probably offensive is Devji's claim that Islamic terrorists can trace back the genealogy of their own model of sacrifice "in search of humanity" to the nonviolence of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi.¹²

Devji, too, situates his account historically, emphasizing two different threads. On one hand, he challenges the tendency to center the story of radical Islam on the Middle East by refocusing the analysis on the Indian subcontinent (21n28). This revision is valuable. Narratives of political Islam do tend to locate its historical emergence in the context of decolonization and the failure of secular pan-Arabism in the Middle East. An engaging chapter is dedicated to the travels of the "floating category" of the "Arab," appropriated, like the idea of the caliphate, by Indian authors since the nineteenth century. As we will see below, Gandhi is presented as having helped lay the foundations for political Islam. Reimagining Islamism as having roots elsewhere than the Middle East is helpful because it underscores its deep global origins and sheds light on the crisis zone between Kabul and Mumbai. Islam has always been global and decentered, more networked than hierarchical in ways that make it especially well suited to the landscapes of globalization. Devji's second historical story line is simple and stunning. Following Karl Jaspers, Hannah Arendt, Elizabeth Anscombe, and Maurice Blanchot, he argues that it first became possible to conceive of humanity negatively in the shadow of the atomic bomb and during the Cold War, when the specter of total global destruction gave many people an awareness of their common and linked fates. As Arendt wrote in 1954, "Modern warfare is about to transform the individual mortal man into a conscious member of the human race" (213).¹³ The contemporary negative experience of humanity as "statistical" victims has its origins here. In a related way, Islamists such as Bin Laden can be considered recent inheritors of a belief in "the equality of death" (43). But the nadir of human destruction is also the opening toward the possibility of genuinely realized humanity. In reference to Jaspers's reflection on nuclear war, Devji notes that "humanity now becomes manifest in sacrifice alone" (17). Once again, Gandhi is supposed to have played a crucial role because his courageous practice of nonviolence (*ahimsa*) began with a realistic encounter with the existential condition of global violence (*himsa*).

The central axis for Devji's claim about Islamist terrorists is the "alchemical precipitation," catalyzed by sacrifice, that turns injured victims into actors and recognized human beings (41). According to this view, radicalism is precipitated by shame over Muslim suffering and humiliation, and militant Islamic violence presents itself as a response to past Western violence against Muslims. While it would be easy to see

such reaction as a form of revenge, Devji explicitly rejects this interpretation, opting instead for the view that martyrdom and self-sacrifice are inspired by pity and the will to make others aware of Muslim pain (42). Muslim suffering is privileged for the way it exemplifies human suffering in general, and Muslims have taken the place of the proletariat as the “Sleeping Beauty” of history (9). Terrorism therefore has a pedagogical intention: we will make you in the West know what it is like to have innocent men, women, and children killed. Devji maintains that the end game of this tactic is to strive toward a new global experience of humanity: if you in the West know what we go through, then perhaps you will change your ways. Violence, in other words, is a language the West speaks and can understand. Islamic terrorism is a form of “supra-political” activism that, while refusing concrete programs of reform or amelioration, gestures toward a future politics that would be truly global in scope and fully human in expression because it would take actually existing humanity, and not merely humanistic idealization, as its *raison d’être*. Thus Devji associates militant Islam with a term that at first glance and maybe even in the end seems curious: “hospitality.”

One suspects that the argument is intended to throw the reader off guard, in the same way that refocusing Islamism on the Indian subcontinent does productively. Placing Bin Laden and Gandhi in similar company with only the slightest hint of irony will please no one. The attempt to rationally explain violence typically runs the risk of rationalizing and therefore justifying it. In truth, Devji’s search for Islamic agency in the era of globalization does end up sometimes sounding like an apology for Islamist violence; the end of global political subjectivity would justify the spasmodically terroristic means used to achieve it. It would be useful to hear from Devji on another occasion a more explicit reckoning with the moral and political costs of Islamist violence. Whatever its importance as a barometer of Muslim experience, such violence is, in the eyes of this reader at least, ultimately incompatible with and toxic to humanity. The prospects are dim that terrorism can contribute meaningfully to a future in which diverse peoples live in common on a tiny, crowded planet.

Notwithstanding these troubling defects, Devji’s argument does succeed in prompting the reader to think in fresh and usefully unsettling ways. It is true that Gandhi had pioneered the model of self-sacrifice as hospitality in the twentieth century. Nonviolent noncooperation with the British colonial status quo involved both renunciation and the impulse to transform the world, for confronting violence both expressed the dignity of the resister and appealed to the common humanity of all. Gandhian *ahimsa* or nonviolence thus sought to establish relations of “intimacy” between those willing to sacrifice themselves in nonpassive resistance and those for whom violence was normalized. Devji intends Gandhism to embody a form of witnessing, although he does not use that word. The shared Indo-European etymology of witness points back to both the Sanskrit *veda* (knowledge) and Latin *videre* (to see). Putting oneself on the line, exposing oneself to violence not returned in kind, giving oneself up for human possibility and the future—such exemplary acts of nonviolent sacrifice are irreducible to strictly political calculations and reasoning. They express the Gandhian precept of “calling humanity into being through sacrifice” (22). The discussion of Gandhi culminates in a fascinating description of the Mahatma’s own evolution from an instrumental use of nonviolence against British colonialism toward

concrete goals to end-in-themselves acts of “sovereign sacrifice” whose value only becomes fully apparent in the future. The latter position emerged as Gandhi considered Jewish resistance against Nazism and the use of atomic weapons on Japan; if nonviolence could not immediately halt these atrocities, dignified acts of nonviolent sacrifice would bear witness against the barbarism of the present in the name of humanity in and as the future (214–19).

Devji claims that in a perverse way militant Islam has inherited the Gandhian model of sacrifice, especially acts of self-sacrifice ostensibly dedicated to demonstrating the tribulations of Muslim-cum-human suffering and gesturing toward the possibility of common humanity. The considerable hurdles in making this move should be obvious. Occasional asides on the depravity of Islamist violence sit awkwardly with the overall attempt to identify the inner logic and positive historical vision of militant Islam. The passing assertion that Gandhi never completely renounced violence is very hard to square with the entire theory of *Satyagraha* (truth- or soul-force) on which nonviolent resistance is based. If the ideal of exemplary acts of sacrifice that make a claim on humanity may admit broad application, as already noted in the previous discussion of Kahn, all sacrifice is not equivalent, especially the key difference between self-sacrifice and murder. Provoking the blows of colonial authorities without fighting back is a far cry from suicide bombing. The direct links between Gandhi and Islamism are tenuous, though Devji makes his strongest case in pointing out Gandhi’s own engagement with Islam, including his thoughtful reflection on the caliphate as a noncolonial framework, and how some Muslims in the mid-twentieth-century took up *ahimsa* as *jihad*. There may have been more to say about the fact that both involve inner struggle and outward behavior. The book works hard to find the intersections between Gandhi’s engagement with the messy world and militant Islam’s performative gestures toward a future experience of humanity. For instance, considering the theme of gratuitous action, Devji focuses on Al Qaeda’s offer of a truce with the West. Although almost certainly disingenuous, such an “extraordinarily novel gesture” seems to point beyond the political logic of interests, as if to say, We all live in this world so we are going to have to find some way to achieve a *modus vivendi* (163). States, treaties, and international law will not be able to guarantee what only “assurances” might maintain (recall Kahn’s earlier reference to *pacta sunt servanda* (agreements must be kept)). Global politics may require forms of respect that account for irreconcilable differences on what is an essentially small planet. Indeed Gandhi had promoted such “politics as a trust” (133).

Devji makes a similar point in reference to worldwide Muslim protests against the 2005 publication in a Danish newspaper of cartoons insulting the Prophet Mohammed and controversial remarks by Pope Benedict XVI in 2006. Both occasions saw widespread anger at Western callous disregard for Muslim experience; global protests, though sometimes coordinated, were not primarily instigated or directed by any nation-state. “The suprapolitical element of Gandhian sacrifice,” Devji writes, “has been inherited in a perverse and barely recognizable form by Muslim protests over insults to their Prophet. These latter have indeed globalized the Mahatma’s sacrificial practices in the name of Islam” (167). He argues persuasively that such protests show globalization as an unavoidable social reality that lacks forums for genuine

political encounters. Fleeing back to the shelter of the nation-state will not make that reality go away. At present, the street is the one certain place where Muslim desires for recognition can be expressed. Violent or not, militant Islam may pursue a suprapolitical program through which “abstract rights [are] sacrificed to concrete feelings” (191). If one can find in Muslim protest signs of a “politics still to be born,” however, it is perhaps also possible that we are dealing with stillborn politics (163).

In addition to exploring the global terrain of militant Islam, Devji considers how the global war on terror is itself similarly implicated in the fragmentary and dispersive dynamics of globalization. “Liberal democracies today,” he writes, “are increasingly shot through with new global vectors” (174). Earlier distinctions between criminal and military justice, internal and external enemies, and civilian and war zones have become increasingly obsolete. Devji acknowledges that the Bush administration was right to recognize the “sheer novelty” of the post-9/11 situation, although it underestimated the breakdown of American institutions as they adapted to a new scene (158–59). Ambiguities have arisen as moral and legal questions have become confused, networks and hierarchies combined, and efforts made to “treat foreign enemies like but not as domestic criminals,” subjecting them to judicial proceedings while withholding rights and protections typically afforded suspects and defendants (151). Confusion is widespread because our circumstances are genuinely perplexing. According to Devji, some Islamists in custody have taken up a rhetoric of suprapolitical hospitality in order to directly address the hypocrisy of American actions. Surprisingly, such actions are sometimes judged according to the standards not of Islam but of the professed values of the United States. Such was the situation, for instance, with the Guantánamo Bay hearings of Feroz Ali Abbasi and Khalid Sheikh Mohammed. Both these captured militants spent considerable time pointing out the contradictions of their own circumstances with respect to American law and Western claims for human rights. The accused repeatedly attempted to engage in dialogue with the court while at the same time rejecting its legitimacy. Devji finds parallels between this strategy and Gandhi’s ironic and pedagogical undermining of British colonial justice. Whether through legal proceedings, videotapes and the media, or violent attacks, Islamist militants “test” their values as they testify to Muslim suffering and humiliation, which represents human suffering more globally. Humanity is a principle for which radicals are willing to live, die, and kill. “Rather than offering an alternative to the world as it exists,” Devji writes, “these militants would transform it by a kind of internal convulsion, bringing forth its latent humanity by their acts of sacrifice” (45). They hold a double-sided mirror in which Muslims can see themselves and that requires the West to look at itself.

The brilliance of Devji’s book is not lessened by the stretch of his argument. Along the way he offers many stimulating insights on the iconography of jihadism; for instance, how the videotapes of suicide bombers simultaneously claim and disclaim responsibility because they are made before a murderous act and viewed only after it has occurred when the perpetrator is dead. He furthermore argues to great effect that we need to think more deeply about the changing nature of warfare, from the nuclear imagination to Carl Schmitt’s theory of the partisan to a robust theory of infrastructure as the effectual target of terrorism to how pacifism forecloses the possibility

of defining legitimate violence (since all violence is illegitimate). Devji rejoins Kahn on the issue of sovereignty. He dismisses Muslim liberals as less “creative” than militants (200). After considering the critique of Western political sovereignty in the name of Muslim pluralism by the Pakistani Abl Ala Mawdudi, he goes on to offer another theory of sovereignty based on Sharia that explains “sovereign acts of terror.” Where Western democracy is accused of being divisively divided by petty interests, Sharia offers the believer the possibility of a sovereignty that is universal and archaic, demanding obedience and therefore sacrifice. Against a Western mentality that values life at all costs and demonizes those who would rather die than accept the humiliation of Muslim suffering, militant Islam asserts the possibility of dying not for oneself or even for one’s faith, Devji maintains, but for humanity as a whole. Bin Laden and Gandhi are claimed to “value the kind of sacrifice that literally volatilizes the body to make its humanity manifest in fearlessness, a quality they value because of the dignity and self-respect it entails” (219). Such sacrifice requires the violation of *humanism*. But then again, champions of humanism themselves have never lacked the will to kill in its name. The critique is well placed, but in the search for the formula that will transmute victims into actors, we are left with the corruption of Gandhi’s legacy by inhuman violence.

The humanity envisioned by militant Islam remains disturbingly vague in Devji’s work. It is far from clear, for instance, whether militants can conceptualize a multipolar, multicultural, and multifaith world. Nor are Devji’s views, say, on conversion and religious tolerance apparent. In light of his dismissal of liberalism, one would like to know more. The main argument—militant Islam undertakes (inhuman) political violence in the name of humanity—has the slippery advantage of all radicalisms judged by future results. Present struggle and witnessing are wagers undertaken in the name of a future humanity whose political shape cannot yet be known. Such rationalizations can defer responsibility, but they, like the politics of blame, can only get us so far.

In spite of all their great differences, the three great monotheistic traditions all consider the story of Abraham’s sacrifice of his son Isaac (or according to some Islamic traditions, Ishmael).¹⁴ As a test of Abraham’s faith, God orders him to take his son to a mountain holy site and offer him as a sacrifice. When Isaac asks where the lamb is that will be killed and burned, Abraham’s dissimulating lie—God Himself will provide a lamb—turns out to be true. For as the knife is raised above Isaac bound on the altar, an angel appears. Having proved his faith in and fear of God, Abraham is relieved of his terrible burden and his son’s life is spared. A ram materializes and is sacrificed on the altar, and the angel tells Abraham that in reward for his devotion in his “seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.” In the Koran, Abraham conceives of the sacrifice in a vision or a dream and then tells his son about it. The son, who remains unnamed, agrees to his own sacrifice. But the willingness and preparation to sacrifice “already [fulfill] the vision” and are “rewarded.” The son is “ransomed” with the comment that “this was obviously a trial.”

On one hand, the binding of Isaac allegorizes the extremes to which a human being can go to prove his faith in and fear of the divine. Abraham is asked to sacrifice what he loves most in the world as proof of his devotion to God. Ordinary law and

earthbound morality are, as Søren Kierkegaard famously suggested in his reading of the biblical story, “suspended” in favor of a faith comprehensible only from the inside, only, as it were, in a secret dialogue between Abraham and God.¹⁵ Thus one might sacrifice the most basic human relationship—one’s own family—and even the world as a whole in order to prove devotion to the sacred. And yet qualifying this irrationalist and postethical reading of the binding of Isaac is the fact that God stays Abraham’s hand. Isaac is not killed. God does not want a human sacrifice. While a human being might be willing to sacrifice another human being to prove his faith in and fear of the divine, the point is that willingness is categorically distinct from execution or, if you will, rendition. At least in the major monotheistic traditions, human sacrifice is not pleasing to God. Christian soldiers and militant Islamists take note.

Both Kahn and Devji evoke the Abrahamic tale. For Kahn, Abraham’s willing act founds a nation. That act is also a self-sacrifice since Isaac is part of him. He is the “first citizen” (Christ is the “last”). Abraham “returned from the mountain to say that through death is life . . . with the knowledge that life is a gift from the sovereign” (98, 153, 160). The binding of Isaac, however, undercuts the argument that we sacrifice, not those we love, but ultimately *for* those we love. A nation is an abstraction compared to one’s son. Devji compares Muslim humiliation, defeat, and oppression to Abraham’s “trial”; they are “heaven-sent opportunities to make humanity manifest,” occasions for Islamist militants to test their faith and prove their devoutness. Abraham also plays a role in the controversy over Benedict XVI’s controversial 2006 speech at Regensburg. Devji wryly observes that the Pope’s call for nonviolence and interfaith dialogue overlooked the fact that “the kinship of the three monotheisms is based on Abraham’s violation and sacrifice of kinship itself. For if anything, the story of Abraham and Isaac tells us that there is no violence greater than that of kinship, and that violence is itself a form of kinship in the physical and emotional intimacy it makes possible between enemies. The task of interfaith dialogue . . . is not merely to recognize kinship but instead to deal with its violent consequences” (39, 189–90). Today, life within the intimate proximity of the globalized world and the threat of violence against life are at stake in the retelling of archaic stories about human sacrifice.

Over six decades ago Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer offered a powerful meditation on how myth and Enlightenment, the archaic and the modern, were intimately connected: premodern myths contained elements of rationalization and modern rationality tended to degenerate into mythical forms of life. In their reflection on Homer’s epic *Odyssey*, Adorno and Horkheimer focused on Odysseus’s “cunning” in making shrewd gifts throughout his journey in order to make his way home. Such gifts were based in the logic of sacrifice, which they described this way: “sacrifice itself . . . appears as a human contrivance intended to control the gods, who are overthrown precisely by the system created to honor them . . . All sacrificial acts, deliberately planned by humans, deceive the god for whom they are performed: by imposing on him the primacy of human purposes they dissolve away his power.”¹⁶ Fraud, deception, and the calculation of interest are inherent in sacrifice. Self-preservation and the desire to come out ahead are the rationales of sacrifice, not veneration of the gods. This logic has outlasted the disappearance of explicit forms of archaic sacrifice.

However, self-aggrandizement comes at a certain price; the interest that banishes the gods reopens the door on myth. The opposition between the civilized self and nature especially gives new life to mythic thinking: the “denial of nature in the human being . . . the core of all civilizing rationality, is the germ cell of proliferating mythical irrationality.”¹⁷ Concerned as they were with the mythical thinking of their day that valorized sacrifice—namely, Nazism—in their own way Adorno and Horkheimer gestured toward the line of thinking Devji traces from Arendt’s atomic vision to contemporary Islamist suicide bombers: “The antireason of totalitarian capitalism . . . tends toward the extermination of humanity—this antireason appears prototypically in the hero who escapes the sacrifice by sacrificing himself. The history of civilization is the history of the introversion of sacrifice.”¹⁸

The two ends of Enzensberger’s analysis with which we began can be joined: the fact of globalization, which although irreducible to capitalism is unrecognizable without it, and the existence of archaic forms of human sacrifice in the form of terrorism. Kahn is right about the persistence of violence that invokes the sacred, although with Adorno and Horkheimer one might want to think more critically about the mutual imbrication of modernity and myth. And as Devji maintains, humanity altogether is indeed implicated in the reality of contemporary militant Islam, though one ought to be much less sanguine about that movement’s universally redemptive potential. We do find ourselves caught between those we love and humanity as a whole, with endlessly complex levels of mediation in-between. Not all human sacrifice begins or ends with suicide and murder. There are fleeting signs that the humanity to come, beyond nation and creed and worth sacrificing for, is upon us: from the eradication of smallpox to the banning of chemical weapons to sympathy for the victims of the 9/11 attacks to the bottleneck of airplanes filled with aid trying to land in Haiti and Chile in the first months of the second decade of the new century.

NOTES

1. Hans Magnus Enzensberger, “The Resurgence of Human Sacrifice,” *Society* (March–April 2002): 75–77; org. pub. *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, September 17, 2001. Enzensberger comes close to Albert Camus and more recently Paul Berman, who both insist on the proximity of nihilistic murder and suicide. Berman underscores the “wishful thinking” of liberals who seek rational motives where there may in fact be none. Camus, *The Rebel: An Essay on Man in Revolt* (1951; New York: Vintage, 1992); Berman, *Terror and Liberalism* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2003).

2. Kathryn McClymond, *Beyond Sacred Violence: A Comparative Study of Sacrifice* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008). McClymond summarizes the interpretations of sacrifice as dramatized myth, exchange, cuisine, structured, gendered, and death or violence (4–17).

3. Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss, *Sacrifice: Its Nature and Functions*, trans. W. D. Halls, foreword by E. E. Evans-Pritchard (1898; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 10, 13, 19–60. McClymond, *Beyond Sacred Violence*, 13–14.

4. René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, trans. Patrick Gregory (1972; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), chap. 1. McClymond, *Beyond Sacred Violence*, 15–16.

5. Osama bin Laden, “The Winds of Faith” (October 7, 2001), in *Messages to the World: The Statements of Osama bin Laden*, ed. Bruce Lawrence, trans. James Howarth (London: Verso, 2005), 103–5.

6. Kahn, *Putting Liberalism in Its Place* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005).
7. John McQuaid, "The Jack Bauer Decade," *Huffington Post*, December 31, 2009, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/john-mcquaid/the-jack-bauer-decade_b_408096.html (accessed January 1, 2010).
8. Some, such as Alan Dershowitz, who are willing to treat torture as a topic of rational debate acknowledge that transparency and accountability are requisite. "Dershowitz: Torture Could Be Justified," <http://edition.cnn.com/2003/LAW/03/03/cnna.Dershowitz> (accessed December 9, 2009).
9. Two pre-9/11 Hollywood films capture the complex and difficult relations between law and democratic values, on one hand, and "necessary" extralegal violence, on the other hand. See the parallels between Lt. Daniel Kaffee (Tom Cruise) and Col. Nathan R. Jessep (Jack Nicholson), in Rob Reiner (dir.), *A Few Good Men*, 138 min., Castle Rock Entertainment, Inc., 1992; and Anthony "Hub" Hubbard (Denzel Washington) and Major General William Devereaux (Bruce Willis), in Edward Zick (dir.), *The Siege*, 116 min., Bedford Falls Production, 1998. One cannot ignore the fact that aspects of the American cultural response to 9/11 preceded the event itself.
10. Barack Obama, Nobel Lecture, December 10, 2009.
11. See Jonathan Glover, *Humanity: A Moral History of the Twentieth Century* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2000).
12. Devji had earlier proposed the link in his *Landscapes of the Jihad: Militancy, Morality, Modernity* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2005), 132. For a contrary view, see James L. Rowell, *Gandhi and Bin Laden: Religion at the Extremes* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 2009).
13. Devji cites Hannah Arendt, "Europe and the Atom Bomb" (1954), in *Essays in Understanding: 1930–1945*, ed. Jerome Kohn (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1994), 418–22.
14. Genesis 22:1–24; Koran, 37:102–113.
15. Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, intro. and trans. Alastair Hannay (1843; London: Penguin, 1985).
16. Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*, ed. Gunzelin Schmid Noerr, trans. Edmund Jephcott (1944; Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2002), 40.
17. *Ibid.*, 42.
18. *Ibid.*, 43.