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Constructing crises and articulating affect after 9/11

Jack Holland

The events of September 11th 2001 are some of the most recorded, reported, and revisited moments in world history. And, yet, it is possible to recall the utter confusion experienced by many viewers across the world, and especially in the United States, as they watched the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center collapse and the Pentagon smoulder. It is this temporary moment of *confusion* that the chapter revisits, contrasting it with the *certainty* that subsequently characterised the speeches of foreign policy elites. This contrast is explored by bringing together two literatures.

The first literature explores the discursive construction of crises. Here, I argue that crises are not objective phenomenon, but rather result from decisive (discursive) interventions, most frequently on the part of elected state representatives. This intervention constructs crises, in part, through the writing of temporal rupture, as politicians identify both the underlying morbid conditions in place and present the necessary solution to remedy them. Taking this insight on the constructed-ness of crises, the chapter considers how affect fits into this process. The second literature therefore explores the relationship of affect, discourse and resonance. Here, again, the role of discourse and its (re)production by strategic agents is crucial. Two arguments are drawn out of these literatures. First, that affect is articulated within discourse, often as emotion (Holland and Solomon, forthcoming). And, second, in moments of crisis, this articulation is usually conducted by representatives of the state. Bringing these two arguments together helps us to begin to think about the powerful role played by the state in efforts to articulate and incorporate nebulous affective experiences of events into resonant crisis narratives.

To make this argument the chapter is structured in four sections. First, the work of Colin Hay, Stuart Croft, and Jenny Edkins is introduced to establish a conceptualisation of crises as socially constructed. Second, studies of affect are

introduced. Here, in particular, the chapter develops Solomon's Lacanian claim that affect is articulated within discourse as emotion (Solomon 2012; also, Holland and Solomon forthcoming). Like crises, therefore, the chapter outlines the importance of discursive construction in the articulation of affect. Third, the chapter outlines the conditioning role played by culture. And, fourth, the chapter considers the case study of 9/11,ⁱ analysing: the experience of the events of September 11th, 2001, for ordinary Americans;ⁱⁱ the framing of 9/11 pursued by the George W. Bush Administration; and the relationship between the initial (popular) experience and subsequent (elite) construction of the day. Constructivist work in International Relations analysing 9/11 has tended to focus primarily on elite-level constructions of events, rather than the experience of ordinary American citizens.ⁱⁱⁱ The chapter therefore makes a theoretical and empirical contribution; using insights on affect, discourse and resonance to make sense of the substantive case study of 9/11.

The chapter concludes by reflecting on three overarching arguments. First, September 11th was experienced in particular ways, which can usefully be thought of as affective responses – biological in nature but conditioned by culture. Second, the Bush Administration tapped into, articulated, and incorporated these affective responses. Third, this interweaving of affect and strategic framing can help us to understand the resonance of dominant official discourses after 9/11. The broader implications of this argument include that, while individual citizen's experiences matter, during moments of perceived national crisis, the state retains an ability to articulate affect in ways that serve particular political and policy agendas.

Constructing crises

Crises are not objective accumulations of contradictions, nor the sudden and unforeseen eruption of destabilising events. Crises are socially constructed. They are usually constituted through the language of elected officials (e.g. Jackson 2005; Holland 2009, 2013a). They may well incorporate and rework traumatic events and political contexts, but they rely upon the decisive agency of state representatives to articulate a shift of political eras. Usually, the state is

portrayed as residing at the very heart of this transition. In this sense, crises reflect what Jenny Edkins (1999, see also 2002, 2004) has termed the shift from ‘the political’ to ‘Politics’-as-normal. ‘The political’, for Edkins, ‘has to do with the establishment of that very social order which sets out a particular, historically specific account of what counts as politics and defines other areas of social life as *not* politics’ (Edkins 1999: 2). And ‘Politics’ marks the arena of ‘elections, political parties, the doings of governments and parliaments, the state apparatus, and in the case of international politics, treaties, international agreements, diplomacy, wars, institutions of which states are members and the actions of statesmen and women’ (Ibid.). Within this understanding, crises are those ‘situations of *the political* that suspended, though temporarily, the stable arena of *politics*’ (Peker 2006: 4). Using Edkins’ terminology, then, crises such as 9/11 are ‘political moments’; they have a founding, open and contingent quality to them moment, in which the political order and community are (re-)constituted (Holland 2013a: 87; see also Lundborg 2012). It is in the construction of crisis that this (re-)constitution takes place and which the construction of crisis is itself reliant upon.

So what, then, *is* a ‘crisis’? Or, rather, perhaps the question can be rethought as: how does a crisis come to be? The term ‘crisis’ suffers from the distinct lack of clarity that relative ubiquity brings. Its rhetorical richness and attention grabbing qualities mean that it has considerable reach in academic, policy and public realms, despite (or perhaps precisely because of) its imprecision (Hay 1999: 318). For Colin Hay (e.g. 1996a: 2-3), it is necessary to trace the etymology of the term to understand the role of diagnosis, prescription, and promised healing at its heart. A crisis relies upon the act of diagnosis – the articulation of the causes of malady – *and* the prescription of a remedy – the formulation of policy solutions to be enacted – which, it is promised, will lead to the revived health of the body politic. There is, then, a crucial *double* articulation in the construction of crises: the identification of both problem *and* solution. As Hay suggests, crises are moments of both dusk and dawn (Hay 1996b: 255); they are constructed to mark a change of political eras. 9/11, for example, was constructed as the day that night fell on a different world (e.g. Holland and Jarvis 2014). The notion that 9/11 was a moment of crisis required more than ‘just’ the

events of September 11th 2001 themselves. This is because, like facts, events never speak for themselves. Rather, articulating transition to a new era – from post Cold War peace to post 9/11 war on terror – required a decisive intervention on the part of the Bush Administration (Holland 2013a: 88; see also Croft 2006; Jackson 2005).

As Stuart Croft (2006: 5) succinctly notes:

A crisis is ... itself constructed in and through social interaction. It is given meaning through social processes, through a decisive intervention which gives meaning to the situation and which also provide a route for future policy. That is, there are no objective ontological criteria that a crisis must fulfil to be a crisis: a crisis is one when it permeates discourse, and creates new understandings and, thereby, new policy programmes.

A crisis such as 9/11, therefore, is ‘brought into existence through narrative and discourse’ (Hay 1996a: 225). The success of a crisis discourse, such as that centred on 9/11, relies, in part, upon its ‘ability to provide a simplified account sufficiently flexible to ‘narrate’ a great variety of morbid symptoms whilst unambiguously attributing causality and responsibility’ (Hay 199b: 335). Following 9/11, various ‘morbid symptoms’ were accounted for within the crisis discourse, including previous and ongoing ‘terror attacks’, white powder scares and anthrax incidents. However, crisis narratives must do more than account for a variety of morbid symptoms; they must do so plausibly and persuasively. Crucially, crisis narratives must resonate with a significant proportion (and ideally a majority) of the electorate (Holland 2013b; see also Holland 2010, 2012). It is this key requirement – the need to craft a *resonant* crisis discourse – to which this chapter adds a crucial insight: one particularly effective way of achieving resonance is to pursue the affective investment of an audience within a crisis discourse.^{iv} And it is this insight that brings together literature on the social construction of crises, with a useful counterpart on the relation of affect and discourse.

Articulating affect

Affect has received considerable attention in International Relations, with some going so far as to suggest that there has been a recent 'affective turn' afoot (see e.g. Crawford 2000; Bleiker and Hutchison 2008; Ross 2006). Less 'coherent' than "feelings' such as vengeance or anger', 'affective energies' (Ross 2006: 212) can be thought of as 'inner disposition[s]' more akin to a 'mood' than a 'state of mind' (Hutchison 2010: 84). For Shouse (2005), for example (and see also Massumi 2007), affect is a pre-personal phenomenon that lacks a (sense of) biographical understanding. While later reflection upon these energies and inner dispositions, as an individual considers their feelings, might help to achieve a greater coherency of (self-)understanding, affect is notable for being pre-contemplative; affect occurs before and outside of conscious attempts to rationalise, categorise and account for it.

One useful way of thinking about 'affect' is to contrast it with 'emotion'. Although affect is a constitutive component of emotion, the latter are socially produced (Shouse 2005).^v Political discourse is central within this relationship: emotions 'result when ... affect is translated into recognizable emotional signifiers within discourse' (Solomon 2012: 908).

'Affect is understood here as amorphous potential ... which is difficult to articulate but nevertheless has effects within discourse. Emotion, on the other hand, can be viewed as the 'feeling' that signifiers 'represent' once names are attached to affect, thereby conferring on them discursive reality' (Solomon 2012: 908).^{vi}

Affect, then, is a number of things, and distinct from although constitutive of emotion. First, it occurs outside of and prior to language. Second, it is bodily, in the sense that it occurs prior to its consideration, reflection and re-constituting on the basis of intentional contemplation. In this sense, although we must not underplay the interaction of 'thinking' and affect (Connolly 2002),^{vii} here, we can think of affect as occurring just prior to cognitive awareness; it is pre-contemplative. Third, affect is a necessary human response to a stimulus; it is the first building block of experience.

It is usually through discourse that nebulous, dispersed, and often contradictory affective energies and dispositions are comprehended, communicated and brought into line with those of others. Emotions such as 'anger' and 'sorrow', for example, were recurrent, and persistent features of post-9/11 US foreign policy discourse (e.g. Holland 2013a; Jackson, 2005). They represent named, socially agreed upon, signifiers used to label and order particular affective experiences of the events, which were frequently far more elusive at the time of their experiencing. Many Americans can now, for instance, look back and recall a sense of shock, confusion, and even horror, but, at the time, silence and a sense of disbelief, or even an emptiness and lack, tended to characterise the affective experience of 9/11. Affect then can be incorporated within discourse, to serve as a building block and site of audience investment, through processes of accounting for nebulous experiences or the explicit naming of affect as emotion.

Conditioning culture

Affect then is, in part, a biological response, which can be articulated or incorporated within discourse for political effect. Affect, however, is not purely biological; rather, as I have noted, affective dispositions are culturally conditioned. Culture, as 'the context within which people give meanings to their actions and experiences and make sense of their lives' (Weldes et al 1999: 1), becomes interwoven with the biological in the production of affective dispositions. For example, we can think of American 'security culture' as a particular pattern of thought and argumentation that establishes 'pervasive and durable security preferences by formulating concepts of the role, legitimacy and efficacy of particular approaches to protecting values' (Williams 2007: 279; see also Katzenstein 1996). These concepts help to shape broadly accepted understandings through a process of socialisation. American security culture therefore helps to shape popular (and elite) expectations of what is likely to become a security issue (as well as how it should be dealt with). This expectation is cultural and biological. Culture seeps into the biological, helping to shape expectations of the everyday and condition affective responses to events. To borrow Connolly's (2002: 16-17) metaphor, the two – biology and culture – are

layered. This layering means that whether or not (biological) shock will follow exposure to on-screen violence, for example, will depend upon a person's cultural background as much as their biological make up.

In the context of the post-Cold War United States, we can see that a particular security culture, proffered by political elites, media commentary, and Hollywood storylines, helped to condition Americans in specific ways that ultimately helped to inspire a particular and relatively prevalent affective response to the events of 9/11. American security culture, during the 1990s, located the dangers of the world far beyond the shores of the United States (e.g. Campbell 1998). Conditioned to expect to witness violence abroad only, the events of September 11th fell correspondingly beyond the comprehension of many watching Americans.

Three pillars comprised American security culture in the 1990s. First, the enduring myth of American exceptionalism continued to shape expectations of the everyday. This myth suggests that the United States is unique and superior (e.g. McCrisken 2003). It serves as the foundation of a particular cultural identity (Katzenstein 1996) and affective predisposition (Holland and Solomon forthcoming). Second, building upon notions of uniqueness and superiority, the geographical isolation afforded by two vast oceans enabled Americans to perceive the end of the Cold War as a return to isolated invulnerability (Gaddis 2004). And, third, most US citizens had never witnessed external violence manifest on American soil. Since at least Pearl Harbor, or perhaps even the War of 1812, the Homeland was perceived to be free from foreign threat.

This was the cultural context that helped to condition the prevalent American experience of the events of September 11th 2001. Piecing together evidence from the Library of Congress's Witness and Response collection enables us to reconstruct these initial affective responses, prior to their realignment with the increasingly hegemonic official discourses that followed in the days and weeks after the events.

Affect, articulation, and September 11th 2001

Affect

The Witness and Response collection contains an excellent set of interviews conducted with the general public after 9/11. Here, I focus on the first five weeks after the events of September 11th. Amateur folklorists, social scientists and anthropologists conducted the interviews across the United States, occasionally with interviewees who had been in Manhattan on 11 September 2001, but usually with people who had simply witnessed events on television. The model for the project was the 'Man on the Street' interviews conducted after Pearl Harbor, which were designed to gather a cross section of popular views on the events and the US response to them. A good cross section of ages, cultures and ethnicities is represented in the collection, with the vast majority of interviewees chosen at random. Interviewers wrote and asked their own questions. However, a broadly comparable pattern of topics was replicated across interviews. For our purposes, it is interesting to note two things in particular. First, the comparable evolution of popular 'feeling' that emerges as time since September 11th 2001 elapses. And, second, the relative lack of homogeneity in expressed 'feelings' during the event's initial aftermath, in comparison to the following weeks and months.

As Holland (2009) and Nabers (2009) have shown, in the days after 9/11, the popular response to events was fragmented due, in large part, to the failure of language to regulate meaning production, as events seemed to fall beyond existing (cultural and linguistic) templates for understanding. Interviewees were initially far more likely to invoke comparisons and analogies from popular culture, such as film, television, music and the bible. As time went by, interviewees were increasingly likely to speak about 9/11 in the 'official' terms used by the Bush Administration. In the analysis below, the initial response to the events of September 11th is revisited, in order to consider the role of affect for Americans. Despite some diverse attempts to explain their experiences of 9/11 (e.g. claims 9/11 'was like War of the Worlds' in contrast to quotations of Psalm 23), interviewees frequently begin from a number of similar (shared) experiences of September 11th, due to the prevalence of a conditioning American security culture. Three themes in particular – important to US security culture

and understandings of American national identity – continually resurface as interviewees report their experiences of the day. These three themes centre on: space, time, and normality. In each instance, these prevalent affective themes were articulated and incorporated within the official response of the Bush Administration, helping to craft a resonant crisis narrative.

First, one prevalent theme of affective responses to 9/11, which would later be accounted for in official discourse, was spatial distancing: the perception that the events of the day did not belong: they were somehow foreign. The ‘foreignness’ of the events was affectively experienced and ‘felt’ before it was accounted for in the emerging official discourse of the US response. This ‘foreignness’ – the sense that the events did not belong and that they sat uneasily with the familiarity of the Manhattan skyline – tied in with a more general sense of disbelief, incomprehension, and denial. Conditioned to expect to witness violence such as this *elsewhere*, outside of the United States, Americans frequently reported dismissing coverage as likely ‘news from some other country’ (Castello 2001). The fact that events were unfolding *in America* was what citizens noted was making comprehension so difficult. One interviewee noted, ‘I can’t believe it ... it’s happening *here, in the US*. You see these things out there, but *not here* in your own country’ (Senor 2001, emphasis added). Elaborating, one interviewee explained their shock as being a direct result of the fact they did not ‘believe this could happen *on American soil*’ (Farley 2001). While claims that 9/11 was shocking because the events occurred in the United States may seem obvious, the point to be made here is that the events were affectively experienced as shocking precisely because of particular and widely understood cultural norms, which located ‘foreign dangers’ well beyond the United States border.

Second, and related to the above, 9/11 was also affectively experienced as a moment of temporal rupture, prior to its articulation in such terms. Set off against the prevalent American security culture of the 1990s, the events of September 11th were affectively experienced as ending an era of peace within the American Homeland, before the Bush Administration set about assembling this narrative (Holland and Jarvis 2014). Consider, for example, the words of one

interviewee, who expresses a new sense of vulnerability and speaks of a previous sense of security in the past tense and as naïve:

I did not really believe it because we live in the United States and basically the whole concept of living in the United States is freedom, living in a very sheltered world where you just never would think of a war, or attack ... I have always felt safe in America ... [now] I don't know if I could necessarily say if I am safe ... a lot of people in America were feeling so secure, they were feeling like the US is invincible ... we are not invincible ... we need to get out of our bubble and realize that we are just in the same ballpark as everyone else (Bauch 2001).

This theme of innocence lost and the use of the past tense to indicate a change of eras was replicated by numerous interviewees, who, for example, noted: 'I feel ... that *I've been* a spoilt American ... [living in] an untouched, unspoiled culture' (Grayson 2001, emphasis added). Building upon this, interviewees spoke directly to the theme of American Exceptionalism: 'We no longer appear to be chosen people. We are just as susceptible to mass devastation as any other part of the world' (Anderson, 2001). And several pointed out the perceived return of history to America (see also Croft 2006): '[I] thought it was something in history' (Waters 2001); 'This has made everyone open their eyes ... we are not invincible' (Moe 2001). If the 1990s were a 'holiday from history', Americans experienced its end, even before they had been told what would come next. Spatial distancing was accompanied by an affective experience of temporal distancing; the events of September 11th were perceived as not belonging in the here *and* now. Again, this experience pre-dated its articulation in the official discourse of the United States government

Third, interviewees repeatedly expressed an affective experience of the events as beyond understanding (which related to their spatial and temporal distancing), because the events fell so far beyond expectations of normality. One interviewee, for instance, noted that they 'felt nothing' *because* they 'couldn't understand' (Sato 2001). Repeated themes expressed by interviewees centred on notions of shock and disbelief, as well as denial. Interviewees frequently noted that they could not believe and could not understand what they were

witnessing; the events, at the time of their first witnessing, were impossible to make sense of. Others went further still in denying the reality of what they were seeing, insisting that it simply could not be happening. And a large number of interviewees noted that they were waiting for reality to be re-established and the whole thing to be revealed as fiction, for instance through a director shouting 'Cut!'. Here, in particular, we see the unusually explicit invocation of popular cultural sources of meaning-making, as interviewees could often only find parallels and analogies in books and films, prior to the emergence of an official 'War on Terror' discourse.

The affective landscape that the events of September 11th carved out comprised (in part) of three 'senses': of foreign-ness, or the events not belonging; of rupture, focused upon the ending of an era of peace; and of incomprehension and associated disbelief. Many Americans shared these three important features in their affective experience of 9/11. This prevalence is evidenced in the Witness and Response Collection. First, it is possible to account for this prevalence by restating that affect is biocultural i.e. whilst biological, affect is also cultural. In this instance a particular American security culture, which was widely accepted as it reached its zenith during the 1990s, conditioned citizens to expect the everyday. Questions of normality and exceptionality found answers through American security culture. 9/11, set against the conditioning context of US security culture was affectively experienced as clearly exceptional by a majority of Americans. Second, these features comprised some of the building blocks for the formulation of an American response and construction of a resonant crisis narrative, within which citizens would be affectively invested.

Articulation

To ensure the affective investment of Americans within emergent narratives of War on Terror, the Bush Administration articulated and incorporated the prevalent American experience of 9/11, including the three central themes laid out above. Accounting for the affective experience of 9/11 as 'foreign', the Bush Administration confirmed that the perpetrators and their motivations were wholly external to the United States. Naming Osama bin Laden, Al Qaeda, their

Taliban hosts, and the state of Afghanistan, the Bush Administration played down domestic links in the construction of a wholly external and foreign enemy. This is an argument that Dan Bulley (2007) has made persuasively following 7/7 and the construction of 'foreign' terrorism in the United Kingdom. In the US, after 9/11, it is a construction that built upon and accounted for 'feelings' of foreignness. It was reinforced by the search for motivations and the asking of questions such as 'why do they *hate* us'? Such questions contained their own answer: they hated Americans because they were, by their very nature, so hateful and so filled with hate. They hated 'us' simply because of who 'we' were, certainly not what 'we' had done. As Bush repeatedly urged Americans to unite in *love* for family, friends and country – think, for instance, of calls to 'hug your children' – he juxtaposed American love and compassion, with an external and entirely foreign hatred, which helped to account for American affect as well as affectively invest Americans within in a War on Terror discourse (see also Diken and Lausten 2006). Americans were told that the events felt foreign because in two senses they were: foreigners perpetrated them; and they were motivated by intense emotions that were foreign to Americans. 'Binaries of love and hate, inside and outside, America and Afghanistan, good and evil, us and them, were central to the official construction of '9/11' and built upon the affective experience of September 11th as a foreign, external and wholly 'Other' event' (Holland and Solomon forthcoming). The tensions and unease of spatial distancing were explained and resolved through the language of the Bush Administration, which enabled the affective experience of 9/11 as foreign to be folded into the emerging discourse of the war on terror. A resonant crisis narrative was achieved, in part, through the affective investment of the American audience.

Likewise, after 9/11, the Bush administration set about constructing September 11th 2001 as a moment and marker of historical discontinuity and crisis. September 11th became the day 'night fell on a different world' (2001). Temporal rupture was constructed in abrupt and dramatic terms: 'September 11th marked a dividing line in the life of our nation' and a new time of war (Bush 2002a). Bush argued that 9/11 'cut a deep dividing line in our history – a change of eras as sharp and deep as Pearl Harbour' (Bush 2002b; see also Holland and Jarvis 2014; Jackson 2005; Jarvis 2008; Silberstein 2002; Weber 2002). For those who

wondered if the now-ended era of peace might ever fully return, Bush insisted that 'it never will' (Bush 2002b). Speaking directly to the security culture that conditioned Americans' affective experiences of temporal rupture, Bush argued, 'After September the 11th, the world changed ... we're no longer protected by two big oceans ... It used to be oceans could protect us from conflict and from threats'. As Jackson (2005), Silberstein (2002), and others have shown, the Bush Administration constructed a vision of the new era as replete with omnipresent and existential threats; the dividing line of 9/11 symbolised the shift from peace to war. And within this war, America was now a battlefield. In constructing 9/11 as a moment of crisis, the Bush Administration were clear in outlining the morbid underlying conditions that were said to manifest that day. They were also clear in outlining the solution to those morbid underlying conditions: fight and kill terrorists. Americans were affectively invested in this discourse and its associated policies, by virtue of the crisis narrative accounting for and confirming the prevalent experience rupture. Now, however, 9/11 was both dusk and dawn: the ending of an era of peace and the start of an era of war.

Emotional signifiers were, of course, important within these articulations. Just as a sense of the events as 'foreign' was confirmed and accounted for through the naming of 'love' and 'hate', so too temporal rupture was explained with recourse to the emotion 'fear'. Freedom and fear, Americans were told, were at war. It was necessary to remain vigilant but not afraid, despite the attack from the 'evil-doers'. And despite repeated reminders of omnipresent threat. The American response to the spread of fear, the Bush Administration suggested, was the heroism of individual acts of bravery (such as those on US Flight 93) and collective resolve. Significant investment in narratives of American Exceptionalism followed. Consider the emotive eulogy to first-responders, police officers, and fire-fighters, as well as 'ordinary citizens' who embodied American spirit when displaying feats of heroism. Todd Beamer and the passengers of Flight 93 were amongst those spoken of as the embodiment of bravery and American resolve (e.g. Jackson 2005; see also, Weber 2008). Such discourses were designed to encourage Americans to feel brave in the face of an attack designed to spread fear, just as they were told to love each in the face of an attack motivated by pure hatred. In each instance, the Bush Administration, first,

accounted for affect by rendering difficult and nebulous ‘feelings’ as appropriate and logical. And, second, the Bush Administration, at times, named the emotions that Americans should be feeling in order to incorporate affective experiences of the day and affectively invest citizens within the discourse of the response.

A third and final example of the relationship between affect, discourse and resonance, in the American response to 9/11, is the incorporation of affective *incomprehensibility* into a constructed *inexplicability*. Shock, disbelief and incomprehension were some of the most frequently expressed affective experiences of 9/11 for American citizens. The Bush Administration reworked these expressions of confusion and accounted for them within the emerging War on Terror discourse. ‘Culturally informed incomprehension was replaced with a politically efficacious inexplicability, which transformed September 11th from a series of events beyond understanding into ‘9/11’: a series of events that cannot be justified or explained’ (Holland and Solomon, forthcoming; see also Lundborg 2012). The story that Americans were told was that they could not make sense of the events precisely because it was not possible to find logic in them. The events were constructed as so abhorrent that they were beyond moral reasoning and motivated by a degree of hatred that was entirely antithetical to American thinking and emotions. In this framing, 9/11 was a pure form of evil, entirely incompatible with the American way of life. Of course, such a construction had important policy ramifications, helping to render particular policy responses (such as diplomacy) off limits, whilst naturalising others (such as military intervention). But, for our purposes, it is most important to note that by accounting for affect, the Bush Administration was able to affectively invest Americans within the emerging War on Terror discourse. This investment was central to the crafting of a resonant and ultimately hegemonic discourse, which would help to shape the contours of political possibility during the coming decade and beyond.

Conclusion

As a growing body of literature has identified, affect plays an important role in (international) politics and (international) security. Here, however, I have set out

an important rejoinder, highlighting the continued importance of the state, its elected representatives and their strategic narratives of security. Far from affect potentially wresting power away from practitioners of security, as a potential locus of resistance, in times of crisis at least, the state retains an ability to articulate 'affect', in the service of a particular political agenda. To make this argument, the chapter has briefly revisited and reconnected the (popular) experience and official (elite) framing of 9/11. Three principal arguments have been put forward.

First, September 11th was experienced in particular ways, which can usefully be thought of as affective responses – biological in nature but conditioned by culture. In the case of 9/11, the layering of a particular American security culture, which had reached its apogee just previously, within biological predispositions, helped to generate the conditions for an affective experience of the events that was broadly and widely shared by many watching US citizens. Second, the Bush Administration tapped into, articulated, and incorporated these affective responses, within the emerging discourse of the war on terror. Three themes in particular – space, time, and normality – organised the prevalent American affective experience of 9/11 and (later) came to be central components of the war on terror discourse. Third, this interweaving of affect and strategic framing can help us to understand the resonance of dominant official discourses after 9/11. By accounting for, explaining and legitimising affective experiences of September 11th, the Bush Administration invested their audience in the emerging crisis narrative and its associated policies of the war on terror. The broader implications of this argument include that, while individual citizen's experiences matter, during moments of crisis, the state retains an ability to articulate affect in ways that serve particular political and policy agendas. Very often, in times of crisis, 'affect is what states make of it' (Holland and Solomon forthcoming).

At these moments, very often, affect is what states make of it for two reasons. First, because crises often follow moments of (what Edkins has explored as) trauma; when language, culture, and Politics are temporarily suspended. And second, because crises concentrate agency in the hands of those with the

requisite institutional power to have their words heard and accepted. And these words are central to establishing future solutions and the trajectory of the nation. The articulation of affect therefore tends to take place through the state, as the principal source of emergent dominant discourses (Hay 1999; Holland 2009). After the events of September 11th, invalidation (“This has made everyone open their eyes”), ending (“We no longer appear to be chosen people”), and incomprehension (“I couldn’t understand what was happening”) characterised the affective experience of September 11th for many ordinary Americans. It was only later that policy-makers and practitioners retrospectively accounted for affect, and built on experience, in their formulation of resonant foreign policy discourse, which gave voice and reality to emotions such as ‘fear’ and ‘anger’. Empirically, then, this chapter has begun to show how the Bush Administration accounted for three components of the prevalent affective American experience of 9/11 – ‘senses’ of foreignness, temporal rupture, and incomprehension – which helped to affectively invest citizens in the emerging War on Terror discourse. This investment was vital to the resonance of official account of 9/11 and the construction of the day as a moment and marker of crisis, which would underpin subsequent policy and legislative responses.

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Abstract (for ebook)

This chapter begins to explore the role of the state in articulating affect during crisis situations such as 9/11. To this end, two literatures are brought together: on the discursive construction of crises; and the relationship of affect, discourse and resonance. The chapter argues that the role of the state in articulating affect is an important part of the construction of a resonant crisis narrative.

New bio

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ⁱ The chapter broadly adheres to the practice of using the term 'September 11th' to refer to the events of the day and '9/11' to denote a framed and constructed interpretation of those events.

ⁱⁱ The chapter draws on data collected in 2008 from the Witness and Response Collection of the Library of Congress, which records the thoughts of ordinary Americans in the days, weeks and months after 9/11. A network of amateur folklorists conducted the interviews, across the United States, in which members of the public reflect on how they think and feel about the events of 11 September 2001.

ⁱⁱⁱ Exceptions, of course, exist. For example, Feminist work in IR has long argued that the personal is political (Enloe 2000).

^{iv} Accounts considering gendered narratives (e.g. Shepherd 2006) have explored narratives of 'saving women' which were seen to appeal to key audiences. They did more than this, however; such discourses were useful in silencing potential oppositional voices (Holland 2013a, b).

^v Whereas the former, as we shall see, are socially conditioned.

^{vi} Of course, as Solomon acknowledges, affect is not asocial; rather, affective dispositions are always already conditioned by previous encounters. As I go on to argue, affective dispositions are culturally (as well as biologically) produced.

^{vii} As Connolly, amongst others, has noted, affect is biological and cultural. The layering of culture and biology in the establishment of neurological expectations is fascinating and important. This feedback loop features in the later empirical analysis of 9/11.