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Culture, Crisis and America's War on Terror

Since the infamous events of 9/11, the fear of terrorism and the determination to strike back against it has become a topic of enormous public debate. The 'war on terror' discourse has developed not only through American politics but via other channels including the media, the church, music, novels, films and television, and therefore permeates many aspects of American life. Stuart Croft suggests that the process of this production of knowledge has created a very particular form of common sense which shapes relationships, jokes and even forms of tattoos. Understanding how a social process of crisis can be mapped out and how that process creates assumptions allows policy-making in America's war on terror to be examined from new perspectives. Using international relations approaches together with insights from cultural studies, this book develops a dynamic model of crisis which seeks to understand the war on terror as a cultural phenomenon.

STUART CROFT is Professor of International Relations in the Department of Political Science and International Studies at the University of Birmingham. He is the author of *Security Studies Today* (with Terry Terriff, Lucy James and Patrick Morgan, 1999), *The Enlargement of Europe* (with John Redmond, G. Wyn Rees and Mark Webber, 1999) and *Strategies of Arms Control* (1996).

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Acknowledgements

For a number of years I have been trying to identify symbolic debates in the United States, to understand how the 'war on terror' had permeated so much of everyday life. I wanted to understand the impact of popular culture on America's international relations, and to theorise about the role of crises in generating new and powerful discourses. The result is this book. I travelled across America to conduct the research, covering over 5,000 miles by road, as well as flying to many locations, in fifteen different states, from the coasts to the Midwest. I should like to thank the countless number of 'ordinary' Americans who engaged so willingly in discussions, offering invaluable advice as to what I should look at and where, in novels, films, television programmes and on websites, from those in 'mainstream' book stores to people in evangelical churches. I also wanted to show how important the internet is in creating understandings in contemporary America, and so have spent a good deal of time finding web sources to footnote. I have benefited from discussions with, and been inspired by, a number of people in different disciplinary traditions working on the Economic and Social Research Council's *New Security Challenges* Programme, of which I am currently Director. A number of people have read drafts of the text. I am particularly grateful to Matt MacDonald, Paul Williams, Chris Browning, Anand Menon, Jo Van Every, Brian Rappert, Jane Usherwood, Richard Jackson, Theo Farrell, David Armstrong, Rita Taureck, Jack Holland and Wolf Roepke for their detailed comments and sometimes even encouragement, and to two anonymous reviewers for comments on parts of the text. I should also like to thank Terry Terriff for providing a variety of sources and suggestions while I have been working on this project.

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