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# New World Disorder

**The questions must be asked: Does Infinite Justice for some mean Infinite Injustice for others?**

*The following is condensed from an essay by prize-winning Indian novelist Arundhati Roy. Her writings on Sept. 11 and its aftermath have appeared widely in publications around the world. However, as of Nov. 3, no major U.S. newspaper or magazine had agreed to publish her recent essays, according to a report in the New York Times.*

BY ARUNDHATI ROY

**N**EW DELHI — Nothing can excuse or justify an act of terrorism, whether it is committed by religious fundamentalists, private militia, people's resistance movements — or whether it's dressed up as a war of retribution by a recognized government.

The bombing of Afghanistan is not revenge for New York and Washington. It is yet another act of terror against the people of the world. Each innocent person that is killed must be added to, not set off against, the grisly toll of civilians who died in New York and Washington.

When he announced the air strikes, President George W. Bush said, "We're a peaceful nation." America's favorite ambassador, Tony Blair (who also holds the portfolio of British prime minister), echoed him: "We're a peaceful people." So now we know. Pigs are horses. Girls are boys. War is peace.

Here is a partial list of the countries that America has been at war with — overtly and covertly — since World War II: China, Korea, Guatemala, Indonesia, Cuba, the Belgian Congo, Peru, Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, Grenada, Libya, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Panama, Iraq, Sudan, Yugoslavia. And now Afghanistan.

Certainly it does not tire — this, the most free nation in the world. What freedoms does it uphold? Within its borders, the freedoms of speech, religion, thought, of artistic expression, food habits, sexual preferences (well, to some extent), and many other exemplary, wonderful things. Outside its borders, the freedom to dominate, humiliate and subjugate—usually in the service of America's real religion, the "free market." So when the U.S. government christens a war "Operation Infinite Justice," or "Operation Enduring Freedom," we in the Third World feel more than a tremor of fear. Because we know that Infinite Justice for some means Infinite Injustice for others. And Enduring Freedom for some means Enduring Subjugation for others.

The International Coalition Against Terror is largely a cabal of the richest countries in the world. Between them, they manufacture and sell almost all of the world's weapons, and they possess the largest stockpile of weapons of mass destruction — chemical, biological, and nuclear. They have fought the most wars, account for most of the genocide, subjection, ethnic cleansing, and human rights violations in modern history, and have sponsored, armed, and financed untold numbers of dictators and despots. Between them, they have worshiped, almost deified, the cult of violence and war. For all its appalling sins, the Taliban just isn't in the same league.

The Taliban was compounded in the crumbling crucible of rubble, heroin and land mines in the backwash of the Cold War. Its oldest leaders are in their early forties. Many of them are disfigured and handicapped, missing an eye, an arm or a leg. They grew up in a society scarred and

devastated by war. Between the Soviet Union and America, over 20 years, about \$40 billion worth of arms and ammunition was poured into Afghanistan. The latest weaponry was the only shard of modernity to intrude upon a thoroughly medieval society.

More than a million Afghan people lost their lives in the 20 years of conflict that preceded this new war. Afghanistan was reduced to rubble, and now, the rubble is being pounded into finer dust.

Put your ear to the ground in this part of the world, and you can hear the thrumming, the deadly drumbeat of burgeoning anger. Please. Please, stop the war now. Enough people have died. The smart missiles are just not smart enough. They're blowing up whole warehouses of suppressed fury. ■

*Arundhati Roy is the author of **The God of Small Things**, for which she received the Booker Prize, and **The Cost of Living**. Her latest book of essays, **Power Politics**, has just been published by South End Press.*

*This article originally appeared in The Guardian newspaper in Britain on Oct. 23. A complete copy of the text is available at [www.guardian.co.uk/Archive/Article/0,4273,4283081,00.html](http://www.guardian.co.uk/Archive/Article/0,4273,4283081,00.html). Reprinted with permission.*

## Teaching Ideas

Arundhati Roy suggests that the U.S. bombing of Afghanistan is an act of terrorism. What is the definition of terrorism that Roy appears to be using? Is this your definition? How might this definition differ from that of George W. Bush?

Roy's language is richly metaphorical. For example, she writes, "Put your ear to the ground in this part of the world, and you can hear the thrumming, the deadly drumbeat of burgeoning anger," and, "The smart missiles are just not smart enough. They're blowing up whole warehouses of suppressed fury." Ask students to brainstorm metaphors that capture their understandings of the aftermath of Sept. 11. Students can make metaphorical drawings or use the metaphors as the basis for poems.