

FLORIDA ATLANTIC UNIVERSITY

LIBRARY EXERCISE

AN ASSIGNMENT SUBMITTED TO

DR. GANSON

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

BY

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## Source:

Melani McAlister, "A Cultural History of the War Without End," *Journal of American History* 89, no. 2 (September 2002) : 439-55.

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Melani McAlister, in her article, "A Cultural History of the War without End" brings to our attention that the September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon were not the first acts of terrorism that Americans have been exposed to. She reminds us of other events that have been labeled as terrorism, such as in September 1972, at the Olympic Summer Games in Munich when Palestinians took eleven people, including two Israeli Olympians hostage and killed them when negotiators failed to secure their release and a failed rescue attempt turned sour. These were innocent people, attending the Olympics, looking to have a good time and had their lives cut short by other people who had a psychotic sense to their personality and sought to create misery and punishment of others in an attempt to send a political message.

The author also reminds us of the Iran Hostage Crisis in 1979 where Iranians took hostage fifty-two Americans who resided in the American Embassy in Iran. These terrorists took the group hostage in an effort to send a political message to America that they are not welcome in their country. However, on television in the United States, it was portrayed as anything but political. The families of the victims were shown on television, trying to show us that the people who were taken captive were just ordinary people who were just trying to make a living. It was also when America tried to come to the rescue of these captives using helicopters, that they were found malfunctioning, so no

rescue could be made before take off in the States, much to the embarrassment of the our country. However, thankfully due to diplomacy, the hostages were released.

McAlister tries to get the public to understand that the not so “new” war on terrorism should not be handled through military intervention and bombing as it has been, but that it should be handled through diplomatic, economic, and political channels. When we use military intervention, we wind up hurting innocent people from other societies. She believes that the idea of retaliation in handling terrorist activities is not the answer, as she believes the media and the movies encourage. She believes that we should keep an open line of communication with those who have problems with us. However, the problem with that is that we still are not sure as to who exactly is behind the September 2001 attacks. We are dealing with that unknown element, and it is that unknown element that has further created fear and paranoia in Americans more than any other terrorist act has in previous times. McAlister, in her optimistic views for a peaceful resolution to terrorism fails to realize that as President Bush said, this is a “new and different” War against Terrorism that cannot be compared to the past because with a faceless enemy, economic, diplomatic, and political resolutions are just impossible. She had a well-researched article, using old newscasts, magazines, and books to give credence to her arguments but I still respectfully disagree with her, because there is no history or precedence for how we should handle this “new” war on terror.