AT: Orientalism

[AT: Orientalism 1](#_Toc267943293)

[Inevitable 2](#_Toc267943294)

[West is the Best 3](#_Toc267943295)

[Permutation Solves 4](#_Toc267943296)

[Permutation Solves 5](#_Toc267943297)

[Permutation solves 6](#_Toc267943298)

[AT: West is Violent 7](#_Toc267943299)

[AT: Nuke Predictions Bad 8](#_Toc267943300)

[AT: Reps Shape Reality 9](#_Toc267943301)

[AT: Alt Solves 10](#_Toc267943302)

[AT: K Reps Good 11](#_Toc267943303)

[AT: Predictions Bad 12](#_Toc267943304)

Inevitable

**Orientalism Inevitable – too deeply imbedded in western thought**

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Intercultural Communication, ISSN 1404-1634, **2000**, November, issue 4. Orientalism and Cultural Conflict <http://www.immi.se/intercultural/nr4/rosen.htm>

This paper argues that so-called Orientalism is a way of life, and not just an out-dated way of knowing from the colonial past; it is an integral part of modern consciousness. Ethnocentrism is the imposition of one's own culturally mediated system of understandings onto others. It is the interpretation and evaluation of others through this epistemological screen, with the implicit assumption that one's own mode of understanding is superior because it is invariantly true. (Erchak 1992:90) In psychological terms we can say that ethnocentrism is a kind of cognitive orientation which understands the world in terms of rigid schemata; Orientalism is a particular historical manifestation of this ethnocentric orientation. It is based on a Western consciousness which "includes a battery of desires, repressions, investments and projections." ( Said 1993:90)

West is the Best

**The kritik collapses on itself –Only western thought has the notion of rational beings and universalism**

David **Pryce-Jones** is a senior editor at National Review January **2008** Enough Said A review of Defending the West: A Critique of Edward Said's Orientalism by Ibn Warraq On Defending the West: A Critique of Edward Said's Orientalism by Ibn Warraq. http://www.newcriterion.com/articles.cfm/enough-said-3743

As common sense suggests and Ibn Warraq substantiates, the interest of Westerners in the East from classical antiquity onwards was motivated by intellectual curiosity; they wanted to find out about the other human beings with whom they were sharing the world. To seek knowledge for its own sake is the special and wholly beneficial contribution the West has made to mankind. “Only the West” in one of Ibn Warraq’s lapidary judgments, “seems to have developed the notion that the natural world is a rational and ordered universe, that man is a rational creature who is able to understand, without the aid of revelation, or spiritual agencies, and able to describe that universe and grasp the laws that govern it.” Rationalism, universalism, and self-inspection are Western traits which expand civilization. Said’s cultural relativism leads only to a dead-end.

**West has been focused on the restoration not destruction of culture**

David **Pryce-Jones** is a senior editor at National Review January **2008** Enough Said A review of Defending the West: A Critique of Edward Said's Orientalism by Ibn Warraq On Defending the West: A Critique of Edward Said's Orientalism by Ibn Warraq. http://www.newcriterion.com/articles.cfm/enough-said-3743

More than that, intellectual curiosity on the part of only a handful of Western scholars were the indispensable prelude to the rescue and revival of cultures—Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist among them—that were on the edge of extinction. Henry Rawlinson in Persia, Austen Layard in Mesopotamia, Sir William Jones and Henry Colebrooke in India, and Max Müller the great Sanskrit philologist restored to the local peoples the pasts that had once been theirs, giving them pride in their ancestors, and the self-respect without which there could have been no nationalism. Nationalist historians now concur, and even the more extreme among them are able to praise a figure like Lord Curzon for salvaging the monuments of India in his years as viceroy.

**Saids critique is just factually incorrect- totalizing claims that essentialize the west turn back on themselves**

A.J. **Caschetta** lecturer in the English department at the Rochester Institute of Technology Middle East Quarterly Winter **2009**, pp. 77-79 Defending the West A Critique of Edward Said's Orientalism http://www.meforum.org/2069/defending-the-west

It is now five years after the death of Edward Said, the man who made it cool to hate the West, and the reevaluation of his thought and work is thankfully well underway. Said forged a career out of revisiting the past, "deconstructing" what he found and writing it anew. *Defending the West: A Critique of Edward Said's* Orientalism by Ibn Warraq, founder of the Institute for the Secularisation of Islamic Society, reveals just how massive a fabrication Said's version of history is. The book spells out in great detail Said's deeply flawed writings and his legacy: the modern academic fetish for examining microscopically the flaws and failings (real and imagined) of the West while simultaneously portraying an ever-peaceful East perpetually victimized by the technologically superior but, of course, morally benighted West. This is the fashionable narrative in the humanities departments of virtually every college and university in America, if not in all of Western academia. Those who perpetuate it Ibn Warraq calls "Saidists." Among them, Said has achieved cult-like status as a prophet who (in the tired cliché of the Left) "spoke truth to power." They see it as their mission to reveal cracks in the deception foisted on the world by an older generation of historians whose work attempts to disguise an aggressive, dominating West. A corollary, more covert mission is to erect their own wall to insulate the East from the kinds of attacks they themselves make on the West. And the Saidists have been so successful that many people now see colonialism and empire as creations of the West and symptoms of a Western moral inferiority that (especially for Western scholars) must be atoned for in many ways. Saidism, one might say, is a way to atone. Ibn Warraq's ambitious book brings together three projects, each worthy of a full-length study: first, a critique of Said's thought and work focusing on the insidious effects of his magnum opus, *Orientalism*;[[1]](http://www.meforum.org/2069/defending-the-west" \l "_ftn1) second, a defense of the West against the academic assaults that have become commonplace since Said's book was published; and third, a welcome reappraisal of the eighteenth- through twentieth-century linguists, historians, artists, and writers who studied the East and who are known today as Orientalists, a term Said made pejorative. Ibn Warraq masterfully weaves the three projects together in 556 pages. The author lays bare Said's methods of obfuscation, which often use nonsensical and impenetrable prose, insinuation, and outright falsification. Said's ad hominem attacks against those who criticized his work are recounted, demonstrating that Said was both a metaphorical as well as a literal stone-thrower. And the growing list of Said's "historical howlers" (obvious inaccuracies and misstatements of fact) unmasks an amateur historian who was either extremely sloppy or just plain dishonest. Ibn Warraq's defense of the West centers around what he calls the "Three Tutelary Guiding Lights" (rationalism, universalism, and self-criticism), which he portrays as the cement of Western civilization. From ancient Greece to Victorian England, Ibn Warraq takes his readers on a ride through history, repairing the damage wrought by Edward Said and his Saidists, arguing that the three "golden threads" are always present. By contrast, some of Ibn Warraq's defense of the West is accomplished by a comparison to the East in which the flaws of the latter are examined. This brave and decidedly un-PC tack tells the story of Eastern imperialism (which Said largely ignored) and exposes a litany of human rights abuses in Eastern, often Islamic, nations in what will be an eye-opening experience for some readers. In reappraising the Orientalists, Ibn Warraq defends their works as labors of love rather than exploitative endeavors. Those readers unfamiliar with these Orientalists will find themselves seeking out their work where, Ibn Warraq tells us, can be found "no disdain, but rather sympathy, patience, attentive curiosity, and the surprise of discovery." Ibn Warraq argues that rather than the conniving and condescending bogeymen Saidists portray, "Orientalists of the late nineteenth century were drawing upon a humane tradition established 250 years earlier." In adducing evidence for his arguments, the author proves versatile, equally at home summarizing the latest academic arcana, describing the pleasures of Orientalist paintings, and quoting comments left by a tourist in the guest book of a museum exhibiting Orientalist art work. Passages range from the erudite to the commonsensical. On the erudite side, Said's claim that the Orientalists "essentialized" the Orient is itself exposed as an argument dependent on an "essentialized" portrayal of the West.

Permutation Solves

Embracing realism as the alternate creates a pragmatic, reasoned opinion on foreign policy avoids the concepts of Orientalism by putting things in an unbiased perspective

Desch, Michael C Professor and Robert M. Gates Chair in Intelligence and National Security Decision-Making and Director of the Scowcroft Institute of International Affairs at the Bush School of Government and Public Service at Texas A&M University.2008 “America's Liberal Illiberalism: The Ideological Origins of Overreaction in U.S. Foreign Policy” International Security 32.3. http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/international\_security/v032/32.3desch.html

Changing America's Liberal domestic political culture is likely to be extremely difficult. In a Hartzian vein, I suggest instead that the United States needs a foreign policy based on realism, a decidedly non-Liberal way of looking at the world, to provide a check on some of its excesses abroad and at home as it wages the war on terrorism. To begin, realists take seriously the threat from international terrorism, but they also put it in perspective. Fewer people have been killed since the 1993 World Trade Center bombing in the war against al-Qaida as a percentage of the population (0.0009), than in the American Civil War (1.78), World War II (0.29), or even Vietnam (0.03). Indeed, terrorism ranks very low as a cause of death among Americans in the period from 1995 to 2005 (3,147), well behind car accidents (254,419), workplace injuries (59,730), influenza (19,415), and even complications from hernias (16,742).170 Realists are also skeptical of the Bush administration's claim that the United States faces a more dangerous adversary in al-Qaida than it did from the Soviet Union during the Cold War. After all, the Soviets had a huge nuclear arsenal capable of ending life on the planet as we know it, while the most reasonable worst-case scenarios today are that al-Qaida might acquire one or two crude radiological "dirty bombs." The United States is fighting World War IV, as some neoconservatives aver, only in the very limited sense that al-Qaida is based in a number of different countries.171 In other words, realism counsels prudent caution—not panic—in the U.S. approach to the global war on terror.172 Realists also have a more balanced perspective on al-Qaida's motives than do Liberals. Rather than seeing Osama bin Laden and his allies as mindless religious fanatics bent on destroying the American way of life, realists understand that he and his followers are pursuing a limited political agenda to end the U.S. military presence in the Middle East.173 And realists understand that al-Qaida's tactics—particularly suicide terrorism—make strategic sense for a [End Page 40] weak nonstate actor that has no other choice than to wage asymmetric warfare.174 To be sure, realists recognize that important U.S. interests are at stake in the war on terrorism that must be defended, but they are less inclined than Liberals to regard al-Qaida as implacable and invincible. Unlike Liberals, realists also understand that radicalism is not always a destabilizing force. Despite hair-raising rhetoric about the possibility of winning a nuclear war during the 1950s, even Mao Zedong's China behaved rationally once it developed nuclear weapons a decade later.175 Today, realists understand that nationalist movements, though often radical, can help to make the international system more benign. This is because nationalism is the impetus for balancing behavior among states, which helps maintain the balance of power.176 In other words, realists do not harbor as great a fear of radicalism as do Liberals.

Permutation Solves

Realists do not create right/wrong dichotomies, and understand the middle option of the United States as a world power, under realism the problem of the United States overpowering hegemony is solved

Desch, Michael C Professor and Robert M. Gates Chair in Intelligence and National Security Decision-Making and Director of the Scowcroft Institute of International Affairs at the Bush School of Government and Public Service at Texas A&M University.2008 “America's Liberal Illiberalism: The Ideological Origins of Overreaction in U.S. Foreign Policy” International Security 32.3. http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/international\_security/v032/32.3desch.html

It is also not surprising that it has been the conservative realists in the U.S. military, not liberal civilian politicians, who have been most consistently committed to upholding the Geneva Conventions and maintaining the norm against torture. True, the basis of this commitment has been pragmatic (military professionals support the Geneva Conventions because they understand that they benefit U.S. troops) rather than principled.177 Regardless of their rationale, realists are less likely than Liberals to place their enemies beyond the pale of civilization. Realists have also been far less enthusiastic about U.S. efforts to achieve hegemony than either liberals or the Bush administration. While some nonrealists have made principled arguments about why the world would be better off under U.S. domination, it has been realists, arguing largely on pragmatic grounds, who have most consistently urged restraint and caution.178 They fear that as the United States grasps for the mantle of world domination, it will generate opposition around the world, resulting in greater international tension and conflict.179 As Reinhold Niebuhr observed in a somewhat different [End Page 41] context, realism "ought to persuade us that political controversies are always conflicts between sinners and not between righteous men and sinners. It ought to mitigate the self-righteousness which is an inevitable concomitant of all human conflict."180 Realists understand that the rest of the world does not see the United States as a benign hegemon despite its good intentions.181 "One reads about the world's desire for American leadership only in the United States," observed an anonymous British diplomat, but "everywhere else one reads about American arrogance and unilateralism."182 Finally, Liberalism vacillates between isolationism when it cannot change the world and messianism when it can. The common impulse linking these two otherwise different foreign policies, according to Hartz, is that Liberalism leads the United States "either to withdraw from 'alien' things or transform them: it cannot live in comfort constantly by their side."183 Realism, in contrast, provides the United States with the basis for a consistent and sustained policy of engagement with the rest of the world based on the principle that it can pursue its national interests without having either to remake the rest of the world in its image or retreat from the international system entirely.

Permutation solves

Critical realism solves both worlds of the Aff and the K by opposing previous doctrines through gaining understanding of the specify of the current situation

Steinmetz, George, Cambridge University Press, 1.1998. “Critical Realism and Historical Sociology” Comparitive Studies in Society and History Vol. 40, No. 1 pp. 170-186http://www.jstor.org/stable/179393

Positivism, theoretical realism, and conventionalist idealism are not related to one another linearly along a single dimension. They differ in terms of their emphasis on ontology versus epistemology, their acceptance of unobserved theoretical entities, and their stance on judgmental relativism. But all three positions would agree that what most historical social scientists are actually doing is methodologically flawed-either they are too scientific or not scientific enough, too wedded to the notion of explanation or to an indefensible form of explanation. The confusion felt by many social scientists around these issues can be seen in the search for a general theory such as rational choice and in the acceptance of arguments against a multicausal, contingency-based approach to historical explanation **(**see Kiser and Hechter 1991).Yet**,** as we will see below, multicausal, contingency-based approaches are the most appropriate ones for capturing the ontological specificity of social reality. Critical realism offers a defense and a clarification of the practices of "actually existing historical sociologists." Critical realism provides a powerful rebuttal to the positivist doctrine of uniform covering laws and also provides arguments against judgmental relativism (Bhaskar 1979:73, 1986:64). And while Bhaskar has presented his system primarily as an alternative to positivism and conventionalism, it also provides an incisive critique of theoretical realism." Theoretical realism disparages explanations which invoke unique, nonrepeatable constellations of causal mechanisms in accounting for specific historical conjunctures. In sharp contrast, critical realism suggests that explanations of this sort are not inferior but in fact more adequate to the "open" and ontologically stratified structure of reality (both natural and social) outside of the experimental laboratory.

AT: West is Violent

**Depictions of a violent west ignore the fact that the East is as well**

**Warraq**  (Ibn, Founder of the Institute for the Secularisation of Islamic Study and senior research fellow at the Center for Inquiry, **2007** “Defending the West: A Critique of Edward Said’s *Orientalism*” pg. 260-261)

The racism of the Chinese, Japanese, and Indians of the subcontinent is not frequently discussed, but is amply documented historically and is extant. The visit of US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to China in April 2005 led to some repugnant racist attacks on her, as a courageous article by Martin Jacques in the Guardian, pointed out.63 The introduction alone to a pioneering work edited by Frank Dikotter makes for eye-opening reading.64 This is a necessary corrective to the politically correct posture that deliberately ignores the "racialised identities in East Asia" that have led to discrimination there.65 Kang Youwei, the celebrated Chinese philosopher of the late nineteenth century, wrote of black Africans who, "with their iron faces, silver teeth, slanting jaws like a pig, front view like an ox, full breasts and long hair, their hands and feet dark black, stupid like sheep and swine," should be whitened by intermarriage—provided, of course, one could persuade a white girl to marry such "a monstrously ugly black." These views have prevailed to this day. As Dikotter writes, "[Official policies endorsing racial discrimination and leading to abuses of human rights can be found in most East Asian states. Myths of origins, ideologies of blood and theories of biological descent have formed a central part in the cultural construction of identity in China and Japan since the nationalist movements of the late nineteenth century. Naturalised as a pure and homogeneous 'Yamato race' in Japan, or as a biological descent group from the 'Yellow Emperor' in China, political territories have been conflated with imaginary biological entities by nationalist writers."66 Both Japan and China created "the Other," defined in terms of "civilization" and "barbarism," racialized into binary oppositions between "advanced" and "backward" groups of people. For the Japanese, the Chinese were a different race, while they themselves were culturally and biologically unique. In the context of Japanese colonial expansion to Korea and China, "it was assumed that the differences in economic and political capacities of the peoples of East Asia were the result of natural or biological laws: colonial populations were regularly contrasted with Japanese modernity. 'Spiritual and physical purity' were said to be the attributes which marked the Japanese as the 'leading race' in their divine mission in Asia. In war-time Japan, a sense of unique purity—both moral and genetic—was central to the notion of racial separateness in which other population groups were dehumanised as beasts and ultimately as demons. In both China and Japan, other population groups were also ranked according to their presumed attributes."67 The state disseminated these racial theories by means of school textbooks, anthropology exhibitions, and travel literature, and certainly found a popular audience receptive to them. As Dikotter emphasizes, the pseudoscientific theories helped self-definition but also produced the racially excluded Others, notably "Blacks" and "Jews," even though these groups were not heavily represented in China and Japan. Nonetheless, they are central in the racial taxonomies drafted in China and Japan in the twentieth century.68 Writing in the late 1990s, Dikotter felt that in East Asia, in contrast to other regions, "there is no clear sign that the hierarchies of power maintained through racial discourse are being questioned." Talk of Japanese biological uniqueness and purity seems to dominate discussions. Blacks and blackness have become symbols of the savage Other, and are reflected in such essays as "We Cannot Marry Negroes" by Taisuke Fujishima. An influx of foreign workers has led to fears of racial contamination, and the Japanese government refused to ratify the International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. A similar situation prevails in China, where African students on university campuses are periodically attacked since they are imagined as belonging to an inferior species.69 Theories of racial purity are used to legitimize discrimination against social groups, such as the Tibetans and Uighurs. Dikotter concludes on a somber note: "In an era of economic globalisation and political depolarisation, racial identities and racial discrimination have increased in East Asia, affecting both the human rights of marginalised groups and collective perceptions of the world order. Official policies endorsing racial discrimination and leading to abuses of human rights can be found in most East Asian states

AT: Nuke Predictions Bad

**Invisible threshold for nuclear war means you vote to prevent the bomb from dropping- We may not be able to map out the world post-usage but knowing what they can do and the amount that will be used means we should avoid even limited nuclear exchange**

**Nissani**, M. 19**92** [Lives in the Balance: the Cold War and American Politics, 1945-1991. Ph.D., Genetics, University of Pittsburgh, 1975. B.A., philosophy, psychology, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1972. 1987-2008: Faculty, Department of Interdisciplinary Studies / Department of Biological Sciences, Wayne State University. <http://www.is.wayne.edu/mnissani/PAGEPUB/CH2.html>]

The effects of limited wars need not be described here. Limited wars always carry the grave risk of escalation, so a description of a full-scale war should suffice to convince sane people that a limited nuclear war has not been a viable strategic option. Besides, a limited war occupies an intermediate position between a single explosion and a full-scale war; its consequences can be assessed by extrapolating upwards the effects of a single explosion, given above, or by extrapolating downwards the effects of a full-scale war, given below. Consequences of Nuclear War Novel and complex events like nuclear wars are notoriously unpredictable, suggesting that contemporary scientific research can only portray a highly uncertain picture of a post-nuclear world. This incertitude is strikingly confirmed by the historical record. Thus, scientists in this century have repeatedly underestimated the health hazards of ionizing radiation. They became aware of serious electromagnetic pulse (EMP) effects around 1960, of nuclear risks to the ozone layer in the early 1970s, and of the potential for nuclear winter in the early 1980s (see below). Thus, the picture portrayed here is either too grave, or, more likely, not grave enough. A depiction of war between two or more nuclear-weapon states can be conveniently divided into two parts. First, knowing what one bomb can do, we can make reasonable assumptions about the number of bombs that will be used in war and about their yields and likely targets. The rest is an exercise in extrapolation. If, for example, one average explosion over one typical city kills 100,000 people and contaminates 50 square miles, then 100 explosions over 100 cities would kill 10 million and contaminate some 5000 square miles.

AT: Reps Shape Reality

**Representations and views of the world are always shaped by institutional actions. If we can prove that we change institutions at the policy level, we gain a better internal link to the solving the question.**

Claire **Colebrook**, Professor of English Lit University of Edinburgh, **2000** Questioning Representation, SubStance Vol. 29 No. 2 Issue 92, , p47-67 JStor

Perhaps the strongest version of this form of representationalism is the challenge to the very project of philosophy and theory, a challenge undertaken not only by Rorty's pragmatism but also in the work of sociologists of philosophy such as Pierre Bourdieu. According to Bourdieu, the project of philosophy depends upon certain procedures of justification and the institutionalization of forms of argument (Bourdieu 991, 89). Any appeal to a general truth claim, for example, has to rest upon a particular cultural form. In the case of Heidegger, for example, Bourdieu argues that Heidegger 's emphasis on the primacy of the metaphysical question depends upon, and is conditioned by, social and political interests, a cultural capital granted to philosophical discourse, the metaphorization of certain practices, and the elevation of intellectuals as a distinct social power (73). What Bourdieu's phrase "political ontology" suggests, of course, is that there is no validity to ontology in general, and that whatever is said to be or exist depends upon the symbolic relations of any given culture

AT: Alt Solves

**Kritik links back to itself – the alternative relies on essentializing constructions of the West**

Graham **Huggan** Research in African Literatures 36.3 **2005** Leeds University (Not) Reading Orientalismhttp://muse.jhu.edu.proxy.uchicago.edu/journals/research\_in\_african\_literatures/v036/36.3huggan.html

A second pattern of response to Orientalism emerges here that we might call the "re-Orientalization" of Orientalism (the book). Within this pattern, Orientalism's exclusionary and immobilizing strategies are either inadvertently reproduced by those who seek to uncover alternative examples of its workings ("anti-Orientalist Orientalism") or are consciously deployed by those who, constructing themselves as the West's victims, turn against their adversaries in uncompromising gestures of collective pride and righteous anti-imperialist revenge ("Occidentalism"). The phenomenon of "anti-Orientalist Orientalism," in particular, begs the question as to the self-replicating tendencies of Orientalism, neatly captured in James Clifford's almost apologetic suggestion that Said's book, for all the power of its criticism, "sometimes appears to mimic the essentializing discourse it attacks" (262). I will come back to this suggestion in detail later, via Aijaz Ahmad's caustic reading of Orientalism. For the moment, suffice to point out a third category of response to Said's text that draws attention, explicitly or implicitly, to the unreflected Orientalism of Orientalism itself. This largely hostile view of Orientalism (the book) is founded on a series of apparently embarrassing paradoxes: that it reproduces the enumerative, patiently cumulative, and paternalistic methods of the "master" Orientalists; that it reinstates broad transhistorical and cultural generalization in the service of magisterial expertise; that its seemingly counterintuitive insistence on the internal consistency of Orientalism is inconsistent with Said's own Foucault-inspired discursive methods (but remains uncannily consistent with the self-authorizing maneuvers of classical Orientalism itself); that it assembles a textualized Orient with a view to establishing intellectual authority over it, even if this "textual, contemplative" Orient is never allowed, like its nineteenth-century historical counterpart, to facilitate the control of the geographical Orient as an "economic, administrative and even military space" (Orientalism 210).

AT: K Reps Good

**The Kritiks totalizing claims cause misrepresentation –**

Graham **Huggan** Research in African Literatures 36.3 **2005** Leeds University (Not) Reading Orientalismhttp://muse.jhu.edu.proxy.uchicago.edu/journals/research\_in\_african\_literatures/v036/36.3huggan.html

Some of Ahmad's criticisms—and there are many—are as follows: that Said's attempt to write a counterhistory to the European literary tradition that might be posed against, say, Erich Auerbach's *Mimesis* (1946) falls into the same elitist humanism from which its inspiration is taken (163–64); that this ideal humanism contradicts Said's awareness of the complicity of European humanism in the history of European colonialism, and thus runs the risk of turning Orientalism not into a strategically counter historical, but a fundamentally *anti*historical work (167); that *Orientalism* is methodologically muddled, "denouc[ing] with Foucaultian vitriol what [it also] loves with Auerbachian passion," and "alternately debunking and praising to the skies and again debunking the same [canonical European] book[s], as if he had [somehow] been betrayed by the objects of his passion" (168); that it duplicates the tactics of Orientalism (the method) by refusing to take on board the numerous ways in which non-Western intellectuals have responded to, resisted, or refuted the dominant representations of the Orient in the West (172); that *Orientalism* (the book) remains confused as to whether Orientalism (the method) is a historical byproduct of colonialism or whether it is a constitutive element of "the European imagination," from the Greeks to the present day (181); that it is equally confused about whether Orientalism is an interlocking set of discursive representations or an accumulated record of misrepresentations in the narrowly realist sense (185–86); and that it goes so far as to make a virtue out of these and other conspicuous inconsistencies, raising contradiction to the level of a method, and providing the rationale for "saying entirely contrary things in the same text, appealing to different audiences simultaneously but with the effect that each main statement cancels out the other" (175).

AT: Predictions Bad

**Predictions good- credible analysis the only way to make valid objective decisions**

Michael **Fitzsimmons,** Washington DC defense analyst, **2007** The Problem of Uncertainty in Strategic Planning”, Survival, Winter 06-07, online

But handling even this weaker form of uncertainty is still quite challeng- ing. If not sufficiently bounded, a high degree of variability in planning factors can exact a significant price on planning. The complexity presented by great variability strains the cognitive abilities of even the most sophisticated decision- makers.15 And even a robust decision-making process sensitive to cognitive limitations necessarily sacrifices depth of analysis for breadth as variability and complexity grows. It should follow, then, that in planning under conditions of risk, variability in strategic calculation should be carefully tailored to available analytic and decision processes. Why is this important? What harm can an imbalance between complexity and cognitive or analytic capacity in strategic planning bring? Stated simply, where analysis is silent or inadequate, the personal beliefs of decision-makers fill the void. As political scientist Richard Betts found in a study of strategic sur- prise, in ‘an environment that lacks clarity, abounds with conflicting data, and allows no time for rigorous assessment of sources and validity, ambiguity allows intuition or wishfulness to drive interpretation ... The greater the ambiguity, the greater the impact of preconceptions.’16 The decision-making environment that Betts describes here is one of political-military crisis, not long-term strategic planning. But a strategist who sees uncertainty as the central fact of his environ- ment brings upon himself some of the pathologies of crisis decision-making. He invites ambiguity, takes conflicting data for granted and substitutes a priori scepticism about the validity of prediction for time pressure as a rationale for discounting the importance of analytic rigour. It is important not to exaggerate the extent to which data and ‘rigorous assessment’ can illuminate strategic choices. Ambiguity is a fact of life, and scepticism of analysis is necessary. Accordingly, the intuition and judgement of decision-makers will always be vital to strategy, and attempting to subordinate those factors to some formulaic, deterministic decision-making model would be both undesirable and unrealistic. All the same, there is danger in the opposite extreme as well. Without careful analysis of what is relatively likely and what is relatively unlikely, what will be the possible bases for strategic choices? A decision-maker with no faith in prediction is left with little more than a set of worst-case scenarios and his existing beliefs about the world to confront the choices before him. Those beliefs may be more or less well founded, but if they are not made explicit and subject to analysis and debate regarding their application to particular strategic contexts, they remain only beliefs and premises, rather than rational judgements. Even at their best, such decisions are likely to be poorly understood by the organisations charged with their implementation. At their worst, such decisions may be poorly understood by the decision-makers themselves.