

Terrorism and the 'War on Terror'

■ **What is terrorism?**

It is the use of terror as a *psychological* device to achieve political ends

■ **Is terrorism something new?**

No, it is as old as human history

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■ Who uses terror?

Groups large and small:

- **Powerful** groups (e.g. governments) out to consolidate their rule
- **Weak** organisations that want to overthrow or undermine a government or power structure

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■ Why the stress on *Islamic* terrorism?

Because:

- The West generally, and US in particular, believe that this **terror** is aimed directly against their interests
- The US, especially Bush administration, believes there is much mileage to be gained from portraying **Islamic** opposition to US interests as
 - Irrational
 - fanatical
 - evil

= Politics of guilt by association

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- Why is the US so concerned about *militant Islam*?

Because:

- Islamic militancy threatens the survival of compliant governments in the Muslim world
- The Muslim world accounts for the bulk of oil that is available for export on the world market
- A number of Muslim countries are regarded as politically or strategically significant to US interests
- To identify the **enemy** as **militant or fanatical Islam** was thought to be a useful way of dividing the world between the forces of good and evil