

*Terror, Religion, and Liberal Thought* (Columbia University Press, 2010) is an exercise of liberal social criticism that draws on democratic and moral theory to address the injustice of the attack on the United States on 9/11. I ground my argument in a liberal understanding of human dignity and the rights to life, security, and religious toleration. Such rights provide a deep moral structure to the democratic beliefs and practices that violent religious zealots mock. Drawing sustenance from that structure, I contend, citizens can speak with clarity and confidence about their moral indignation as they consider the stakes involved in defense of themselves and their democratic institutions.

Yet *Terror, Religion, and Liberal Thought* is about more than 9/11. In addition to examining the injustice of that event, I ask: How are we to think about the aspirations and claims of political religions whose beliefs chafe against liberal norms and practices? On what terms, and to what extent, can liberals tolerate the intolerant? Can liberal social critics speak normatively in ways that are sensitive to cultural and religious differences? Underlying these questions is a host of others regarding what it means to respect human rights, questions raised by the liberal democratic commitment to toleration and by broader concerns regarding respect and recognition in multicultural politics. With these concerns in mind, I sharpen my understanding of liberal rights in dialogue with discussions of multiculturalism and Islamic political theology. I then draw out implications of my argument for thinking about how basic moral norms should constrain the pursuit of religiously inspired commitments and ideals. I conclude by offering one of the few sustained assessments of U.S. policy in the wake of 9/11, focusing on the war in Afghanistan as seen through the lens of the just-war tradition.