

## Douglas Block

### Solutions to the Terrorism Crisis

It is unfortunate that the 'solutions' section, on the 'Philosophy in Wartime' website, did not include any articles that call for a specifically *just* solution to our current Terrorism crisis. Perhaps some of the opinions expressed in "Is This Really a 'Just War'?" would have done well to be included in the 'solutions' category, and not just the 'Philosophy, Terrorism and War' category. Fareed Zakaria made valid arguments in his article, "How to Save the Arab World", yet most of the articles under the 'solutions' category were overly sympathetic to American military solutions. In this sense, most of the articles were un-philosophical in nature. Our guest lecturer from the Wall Street Journal said that it isn't possible for an American journalist to be objective when reporting on the terrorism crisis; he could be fair, but not objective. This may be true, and that is why we have another type of journalist in this world, the philosopher. The philosopher's goal is *precisely* to be objective in most circumstances, and that is why philosophy is so crucial at a time like this. While newspaper and magazine reporters sympathize with government aims, bolster propaganda, and present 'fair' journalism, it is the duty of the philosopher to be objective. The philosopher's role has always been to stand apart from the world, as if in a spaceship looking down upon it, and critique its movement. This critique does not limit itself to the West either. Although I haven't been able to view the Mid-East media first hand, I understand they have their own share of 'fair' reporting that is highly anti-American. Zakaria says, "In Egypt, we must ask President Mubarak to insist that the state-owned press drop its anti-American and anti-Semitic rants, end the glorification of suicide bombers and begin opening itself up to other voices in the country"(Zakaria, pg.6). We can see from this example that the philosopher's job is to sift through propaganda on *both* sides of the debate, so as to arrive at an objective solution that incorporates truth and justice.

In my paper, I will defend seven major actions that will aid in defeating terrorism. There are several other actions that can, should, and are currently being employed. Actions such as homeland security, the call for solidarity against terrorism (both domestically and worldwide), and sanctions for countries who support terrorist activities are all necessary actions that need to be undertaken. I am choosing to focus on solutions that have received little or no attention in the 'solutions' category. Fighting poverty and oppression, finding a creative solution to our current occupation of Saudi Arabia, employing intelligence and communications to the highest degrees, establishing universal jurisdiction with U.N. tribunals, giving equal support to both sides in the Israeli/Palestinian conflict, *discriminate* military attacks, and combating ignorance, will be my focus. A philosopher's job is to stand back from a situation, observe, and critique. The philosopher is far from the 'opinioned' and 'impassioned' patriot, and this is where I will stand, as if in a spaceship looking down upon the world.

Fighting poverty and oppression in the Middle East is necessary for several reasons. Pope John Paul II says,

“International cooperation in the fight against terrorist activities must also include a courageous and resolute political, diplomatic, and economic commitment to relieving situations of oppression and marginalization which facilitate the designs of terrorists. The recruitment of terrorists in fact is easier in situations where rights are trampled upon and injustices tolerated over a long period of time”(Paul, pg.3).

It is no surprise that someone who lives in a country being run by an illegitimate or tyrannical leader, where there is little economic infrastructure, and little or no protection of human rights, will turn toward fanatical alternatives; I think we will all agree that desperation sometimes makes for bad choices. Yet, for the terrorist recruiter, these are ideal situations; where could be better? To combat this poverty and oppression can be a long-term blow to terrorism and a long-term success for human rights, economic stability, and eventually, hopefully, democracy in the Mid-East. Fareed Zakaria has a suggestion that might make for a possibility in Middle-Eastern countries. He says,

“Those countries that have made the transition from dictatorship to democracy with greatest success-Spain, Portugal, Chile, Taiwan, South Korea, Mexico-all traveled along a similar road. The regimes first liberalized the economy, not out of any desire to expand freedom but rather because they wanted to get rich. But this expansion of economic liberty had steady spillover effects. Economic reform meant the beginnings of a genuine rule of law-capitalism needs contracts-openness to the world, access to information and, perhaps most important, the development of a business class”(Zakaria, pg.6-7).

This liberalization of economy would give poverty-stricken countries in the Middle East the opportunity for economic stability, while at the same time bringing them into world affairs.

With this ushering in of capitalism, one cannot take an overly optimistic approach. You still have to be careful and have provisions. Exploitation of labor should not be a prime motivator. We’ve seen the sweatshop syndrome before. Countries invite laissez-faire capitalism into their homeland, only to be plagued by child labor and unsafe factories. Set up detailed law before capitalism comes in because it’s harder to teach an old dog new tricks than it is to teach a young dog, so to speak. If Middle-Eastern governments cannot attract business with world-class standards, they should come as close as they can to these standards. Suffice to say, they probably cannot get great unions that pay their workers twenty dollars an hour, but they should strive for safe factories that are mindful of human rights. This will just be another problem down the road if it’s not taken care of initially.

The preservation of the country’s culture is another issue at hand. A country does not need to lose its identity in order to become slightly westernized. The best example I can use for this comes from my own experience in Ghana, West Africa. I witnessed Catholic Masses celebrated with African drumming and costumes. Western style universities had flourishing, traditional, African markets in the heart of campus, and two of the biggest departments were African Dance/Music and African Studies. My favorite African tradition was something that balanced out Western time keeping, called ‘Ghanaian time.’ In order to combat the robotic-rigged ness of the Western clock, Ghanaians developed ‘Ghanaian time;’ it simply meant that whatever time something was scheduled for, there was a half-hour leeway. Ah, those easy-going African days. In this sense, the *West* has a great deal to learn from traditions like ‘Ghanaian time’ and also the ‘Mexican siesta’: they can learn to *slow down*. CEO’s might not look upon these

traditions favorably, but it will make for a happier country in general, and that is more important.

Finally, aside from the negative influences of television, including the promotion of slothfulness and moral relativism, it does have its benefits. If the television were introduced to middle-eastern countries, at least its citizens could get a first hand look at democracy in action with stations like CNN, CNBC, and Court TV. This is a touchy area, but access to worldwide media could create a more informed group of citizens, as long as they don't focus their viewing time on degrading shows.

The U.S needs to find an intelligent solution to its current occupation in Saudi Arabia. Robert Merrill says,

"..the number-one driving force behind bin Laden is the US occupation and corruption of Saudi Arabia. On this point bin Laden is correct, and Falk is wrong in saying that his 'persisting threat [is] well outside any framework of potential reconciliation or even negotiation.' The United States has only to agree to leave Saudi Arabia and bin Laden would give up his war on the United States. That's a negotiable proposition, except for the fact that the United States would never consider giving up its occupation of Saudi Arabia"("Is this really a 'Just War'?", pg.6).

Don't we need to try and find a creative solution to the occupation of Saudi Arabia? Even if bin Laden were dead, wouldn't his followers and even Muslim-moderates still want us out of Saudi Arabia? The U.S needs to secure its interests without putting it's foot down on Islamic Holy Land. My solution is to counter our dependence on oil in general. This will save us so many problems in the long run. Edward Djerejian from the Baker Institute says,

"U.S forces are in Saudi Arabia because we have strategic interests in the Persian Gulf area. This is—the U.S force presence has been there since the latter 1940's. We've had a fleet presence there to protect the sea lanes, keep them open for the free flow of oil to the industrialized democracies, therefore, our basic interests in economic, commercial, and energy terms are high..."("Why are we there?", pg.2).

Obviously we are there for one main reason, oil.

Waning our dependence on oil would be a huge benefit. Even if it isn't bin Laden's *main* interest for us to be out of Saudi Arabia, waning our dependence on oil is good in general because it's going to run out eventually anyway. The ironic thing is that we already have quality electric automobiles; we just don't want to stop making gas-guzzlers because this production makes many people money. At the very least, we could start manufacturing engines that go 200 miles with one gallon of gasoline. These are the engines that the auto industry refuses to make for monetary purposes. They'll lose too much money. The best thing we can do is start putting government restrictions on engines, making them more fuel-efficient. Then we can gradually, but continually, ease off our dependence on oil, and move to electric and other alternatives for energy. It has to happen eventually, so why not save our troops from the possibility of more attacks in Saudi Arabia, and promote a United States that's more of a republic than it is an empire. Also, we cannot forget the decreased possibility of future terrorist attacks if we move out of Saudi Arabia.

Concluding, Ambassador Djerejian says,

“The United States now imports over 50 percent of its oil needs, obviously, from overseas. 20 percent of that comes from Saudi Arabia alone. We have become heavily dependent on foreign sources of energy”(“Why are we there?,” pg.3).

Let’s save ourselves from future foreign affairs problems, let’s save the Alaskan frontier from future oil drilling, and let’s wane our dependence on oil.

Thirdly, employing intelligence and communication to the highest degree is a vital step in defeating terrorism. Even our own defense secretary acknowledges this.

“During his stay in Cairo, Mr. Rumsfeld emphasized that the chances of any military action affecting any single terrorist would be modest. Instead of cruise missiles and bombs, he said, ‘it was more likely a scrap of intelligence information will be the thing that will help roll up these terrorist networks’”(LaMotte, pg.1).

When one thinks about the methods used by the terrorists in 9/11, it is clear that military strikes can only do so much in the war on terrorism. It will be the implementation of: intercepting communications, releasing spies in strategic areas, and making estimates on when, where, and how terrorists will strike (and maybe Hollywood could help here) that will be most effective in defending ourselves against the terrorists. Technology intelligence will be of extreme importance. Ely Karmon, an ICT Senior Researcher, says,

“The Internet will increasingly become the place where much of the virtual clandestine activity takes place. For instance a radical right wing group, the Thule Netz in Germany, uses sophisticated ciphering and has many levels of encoding before reaching the highest echelons of their network. The Islamist groups use the net for funding, recruiting, as well as passing operational information and orders”(Karmon, pg.8).

It is our technological wizards who will do their best to create the technology and encrypt the codes that need to be dealt with on this front. We need to recruit our own students for these purposes, and I’m sure there will be no shortage of potential recruits in this computer-run information age.

On the issue of weapons of mass destruction, Karmon says,

“The challenge in this case is two-fold: on the one hand the necessity of penetrating and monitoring the activities of the various groups and organizations in their attempts to acquire or use these weapons. On the other hand, there is a need to identify, monitor and neutralize the providers of raw materials, technology and know-how used in the preparation of such weapons. This mission is linked to the overall task of preventing the proliferation of WMD to rogue states, but in many senses is more intricate”(Karmon, pg.8).

Even if Rogue States do not acquire WMD, terrorists still can. Therefore, although it seems a near impossible task to monitor such activities, we still must make a concentrated effort to prevent WMD, and anything involved in their production, from getting into the hands of terrorists.

We have seen the outcome of Anthrax attacks, and although the production of the substance is nearly impossible in any way to monitor, there are more deadly biological and chemical weapons, which are easier to keep a watch on. The technology for the production of these weapons is still top secret, so never has there been a better time to keep it that way. This mission will require the aid of the entire international community, presumably with help from the United Nations. Strict regulations and monitoring must

be applied to any business that deals in chemical and biological warfare, and/or technology. Our government and the world must recognize the changing face of warfare in this day and age and address it accordingly. One of the most humiliating financial decisions is to have too much of your government's money being spent on out of date military defense while terrorists devise brilliant new forms of terror and warfare. We need to think like the terrorists in order to figure out where and how they will strike next. To sum it all up, Karmon says,

"...the work of intelligence against terrorism in the 21<sup>st</sup> century will be an arduous task, which will require a close look at new social and technological developments, an objective analysis of new trends and threats, as well as much vision"(Karmon, pg.10).

Let us not underestimate the role of our own imagination when brainstorming potential terrorist threats. Hollywood has been used before to aid in war efforts; we could surely use their creative minds again.

In order for us to have worldwide backing in our fight against terrorism, it would be wise for the United States to rely on universal jurisdiction with UN tribunals for trying war criminals. The enormous death toll of 9/11, and the shock and realization of the vulnerability of our homeland, is enough to send any government on a mission of absolute justice, especially the world's only superpower. A goal of absolute justice is a worthwhile mission, but let's not let that become a mission of absolute revenge. Being the only superpower left in the world, it is now more important than ever to lead by example. One of the noblest actions the US could approve during these trying times is universal jurisdiction, most sensibly through UN tribunals, for war criminals. Not only would worldwide support grow and increase for the war against terrorism, but also the US could change its persona of often taking matters into its own hands, so to speak. This is a prime opportunity for our country to display its humility, trust, patience, and justness. Since we are entering this new century as the world's only superpower, let's make a good first impression. Anne-Marie Slaughter says,

"The best argument for such a court comes from Mr. Bush himself. In his address to the American people a week after the September 11 attacks, the US president called for a global coalition against terrorism, to make this not America's fight but the world's fight. But if the attacks were an assault on the world, and the world's investigators, intelligence operatives, bankers, police officers and soldiers are helping bring the perpetrators to justice, so too should the world's most respected judges"(Slaughter, pg.1).

It will only further anti-Americanism for the future and display selfishness on our part if we unnecessarily exert our power by having war criminals tried in US courts.

One action already taken by the U.S that showed we are still a country that likes to do things independently of the United Nations and like organizations is our refusal to apply for Security Council authorization. Noam Chomsky says,

"So the US probably could have gotten Security Council authorization but it didn't want it. And it didn't want it because it follows a long-standing principle which is not George Bush, it was explicit in the Clinton administration, articulated and goes back much further and that is that we have the right to act unilaterally. We don't want international authorization because we act unilaterally. We don't care about negotiation. We don't care about treaties. We are the strongest guy around; the toughest thug on the block. We do what we want"(Chomsky, pg.19).

Although this is not always the case, when it comes down to it, and the U.S has wanted to do something, it could have cared less about universal authorization. History has proven this; it's just that the average American citizen probably doesn't know about it. If it's not too late, we need to let our government know that we are behind universal jurisdiction, the only sensible way to do justice, not to mention the decrease in anti-Americanism that will result from it. Even if this decrease is only minimal, it is still a step towards showing the world community that we want to change our label of 'big bully.' Chomsky agrees with UN tribunals when he says,

"A sensible proposal which is kind of on the verge of being considered, but it has been sensible all along, and it is being raised, called for by expatriate Afghans and allegedly tribal leaders internally, is for a UN initiative, which would keep the Russians and Americans out of it, totally. These are the 2 countries that have practically wiped the country out in the last 20 years. They should be out of it. They should provide massive reparations. But that's their only role. A UN initiative to bring together elements within Afghanistan that would try to construct something from the wreckage. It's conceivable that that could work, with plenty of support and no interference. If the U.S insists on running it, we might as well quit. We have a historical record on that one"(Chomsky, pg.20-21).

Let's make a change for this century and show that although we are powerful, we can still be a country of nobleness and righteousness by acting in wisdom and prudence. One step toward this is beginning to participate fully in a world community that serves the common good of everyone on this planet.

After 35 years of favoring Israel in the Israeli/Palestinian conflict, it is time to balance our diplomatic support. Pope John Paul II says it best when he says, "The rights and demands of each party can be taken into proper account and balanced in an equitable way, if and when there is a will to let justice and reconciliation prevail"(Paul, pg.5). Can there ever be peace in the Middle East when the world's only super power, who is, if anything, suppose to be furthering the peace process, has a deliberate tilt in the process? I say no. This is just one more reason for the Arab world to retain its anti-Americanism and hold fast to the idea that America is against them. If we truly want to do justice and win the war on terrorism *in the long run*, then we need to balance our support in this bloody conflict. Even if our support of Israel is not a *direct* reason for the terrorist attacks, it is certainly a *huge* contributing factor. Fortunately this tide seems to be, if not changing, at least considering change. Richard Falk says

"It is clear that the roots of terrorism are intermingled with unjust policies, and that these should be abandoned as early as possible for both pragmatic and intrinsic reasons. Pushing for a viable Palestinian state is now finally surfacing on the Western agenda in an explicit manner"("Is this really a 'Just War?'" , pg.11).

We can only hope for, pray for, and actively support any effort by our government to balance negotiations between these two states.

For all the Wall Street Journal editors' talk about journalists only being able to be fair and not objective, soon after 9/11, Chomsky says the Wall Street Journal "...right away began to run, within a couple of days, serious reports, searching serious reports, on the reasons why the people of the region, even though they hate bin Laden and despise everything he is doing, nevertheless support him in many ways and even regard him as the conscience of Islam..."(Chomsky, pg.16).

Now, even though the report was conducted among the Journals *friends*, and not necessarily the *average* Arab citizen, it nevertheless provided a great insight into the mind of the Arab world. Concerning the United States support for Israel, Chomsky reveals that the Journals report reiterated the Arab worlds disdain for this imbalance when he says,

“And of course their [U.S] support for the Israeli military occupation which is harsh and brutal. It is now in its 35<sup>th</sup> year. The US has been providing the overwhelmingly economic, military, and diplomatic support for it, and still does. And they know that and they don’t like it”(Chomsky, pg.16).

When the Wall Street Journal, certainly a pro-American/capitalist paper, has the courage to release a survey of this depth and insight, then it is certainly time for our government to go forward with its balancing support in the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. On a final note, General Powell’s visit seemed to be a step forward since he publicly criticized Israel’s recent invasions; hopefully this will be the start of a new balanced role that America will play.

One of the most imprudent decisions that the U.S has made since September 11<sup>th</sup> is its indiscriminate bombing of Afghanistan. The list of problems that have arisen from this military operation is long and sad. The most disappointing being that “the United Nations is predicting the death of 100,000 children”(“Is This Really a “Just War””, pg.5) says Michael Ratner and Jules Lobel from the Center for Constitutional Rights. This statistic is even more saddening when one realizes that the blow to terrorism that this bombing has accomplished is very small in comparison to the outcome of peaceful and fruitful decisions that could have been made with no deaths at all. The major reasons, according to bin Laden, that 9/11 happened are still problems that have yet to be addressed despite our macho military campaign. We still occupy Saudi Arabia, we still have a tilt in the Israeli/Palestinian conflict, and we still support dictatorships who rule over oppressive and poverty stricken countries in the Arab world: all these are reasons stated by both bin Laden and the mid-east Arab community for the terrorist attacks. Even worse, the war in Afghanistan only proved to inflame anti-Americanism even more, and therefore increase our risk of future terrorist attacks. Falk says,

“With each passing day, my assessment shifts to reach the conclusion that the United States is waging an unjust war in Afghanistan, and it is doing so in a manner that is likely to have severe blowback consequences. I was misled by the language of George W. Bush, Colin Powell and others, which seemed at the time to exhibit an understanding that this was a drastically different kind of war that required a core reliance on nonmilitary approaches”(“Is This Really a ‘Just War’?”, pg.9).

It is still unclear to me what the government attempts to accomplish with its current bombing campaign in Afghanistan. I only hope that they see more benefits than I do.

I cannot help but label the attacks, at least in part, as an irrational thirst for military revenge. The carelessness of several *accidents* only proves to strengthen this argument. Howard Zinn points out this carelessness when he notes, “the Red Cross warehouses bombed, the use of deadly cluster bombs, a small mountain village bombed and entire families wiped out”(“Is This Really a ‘Just War’?”, pg.2). How on earth does our government expect to gain any kind of support for their military campaign with 'accidents' like this? Michael W. Foley expresses the resentment in Pakistan and the unlikelihood of a successful new government when he says,

“Pakistanis are reportedly crossing the border to join the Taliban, while support for the U.S effort melts away among moderates in that country. Each new instance of “collateral damage” feeds the fires. But, more profoundly, the improbability of achieving anything like a consensual government in Kabul in the wake of the U.S adventure insures that Afghanistan will continue to be the festering sore nurturing the pathology we are combating.” (“Is This Really a ‘Just War?’”, pg.3).

For the most part, it is too late to undo the damage done in Afghanistan; we can only hope that our government has seen enough negative results so as not to launch a similar attack in another Arab country. Don’t they remember that even Donald Rumsfeld said that conventional military attacks would only produce ‘modest’ gains? This leads me to my last point on this topic, which is the use of discriminate military attacks.

Despite the atrocities from our bombing campaign, I cannot say that I am completely opposed to conventional military tactics. Pope John Paul II says,

“There exists therefore a right to defend oneself against terrorism, a right which, as always, must be exercised with respect for moral and legal limits in the choice of ends and means. The guilty must be correctly identified, since criminal culpability is always personal and cannot be extended to the nation, ethnic group or religion to which the terrorists may belong”(Paul, pg.3).

I don’t think anyone would agree that the 100,000 children, who will be dead by the end of this war, could be included among the guilty. Clearly we have not been discriminate, reasonable, or prudent with our bombing campaign in Afghanistan. Yet, if our military campaign had been carried out selectively, with more discrete targets by prudent means, we may have been able to disarm the Taliban with the backing of the rest of the world behind us. But that didn’t happen. Now the U.S will have to face the fact that they have lost much moderate Muslim support for their war on terrorism, not to mention gained Europe’s disgust with our operations in Afghanistan. The fact is that discriminate bombing would have yielded far better results. We surely could have been more careful and, if we did, the world would have respected us more. What does our government see from “collateral damage”? Does it think that they will scare the remaining terrorists? These are people willing to die for their cause; of course it’s not going to scare them. The only thing excessive violence seems to do is satisfy some kind of bloodthirsty revenge in the minds of Americans. If we truly want to win this war, we need to address the issues that created it in the first place. Bombing can only get us so far.

The last solution to the terrorism crisis that I would like to discuss is the need to combat ignorance. Everyone, including myself, needs to constantly be aware of their own ignorance when it comes to issues of religion, culture, and ethnicity. I would like to add a positive note when I say that our current modern day world is an excellent place to shed our walls of misunderstanding. We have access to knowledge like never before, especially with the dawning of the Internet. As long as cable television continues to balance its share of smut channels with educational channels, TV is another place to break down our own personal walls of pride and prejudice and learn something about another religion, culture, and/or ethnic group. Dialogue and communication is one of the oldest and still most beneficial ways of learning about each other. That’s why I am grateful to have taken part in this wonderful graduate seminar. The variety of speakers and student presentations gave a decent spectrum of opinion that everyone will benefit



from who took part in the class. We are all walking away at least a little more knowledgeable than the average American citizen who usually only has mainstream media to count on for their information. Because of a class like this, it is now our duty to let our voices concerning what we have learned be heard in public. We need to let our knowledge be contagious no matter what side of the political spectrum we fall on. Also, it is only when the general population can distinguish between propaganda and knowledge that the war on terrorism will begin to be won; otherwise we are forever in the shadows as a nation. It is disappointing when we learn that we often have to be weary of our own sources of knowledge, but this is reality. It is a constant battle to always be checking your facts, but it needs to be done. It seems like almost every journalist writer or even academic has an agenda these days. So, let us forever continue to break down the walls of ignorance, pride, and prejudice until, one day, we can all truly respect and understand each other, even if we live a half a world away.

In my paper, I have defended seven solutions to the war on terrorism. I believe *most* countries around the world would favor these practical and just solutions; one that might not is our own. The biggest problem in our country right now is informing the public of why 9/11 happened. The media does not do a good enough job. There are underlying causes that I have mentioned above, which, ironically enough, do not get through to American media. It's a shame when most of the world realizes these causes, but many in our own country do not. We have to stop presenting the false illusion that we are always the good guys. We may be the best, and certainly the most powerful, but we do not always make the best decisions concerning foreign affairs. The public needs to learn more about foreign affairs; they need to know what is actually going on, and not what the government would like to make them believe. Although we are often caretakers of the world, we also continue to make America an empire and that makes many other countries hate us. Let's inform our public of what we *really* do in other countries, so we can start to change our foreign policy and make it more and more a policy of care taking and not bullying. Then, when people around the world think of the United States foreign policy, the first thought that will enter their mind will be 'caretakers' and not 'big bullies.'

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