Terror and Just Response

by Noam Chomsky
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September 11 will surely go down in the annals of terrorism as a defining moment. Throughout the world, the atrocities were condemned as grave crimes against humanity, with near-universal agreement that all states must act to "rid the world of evildoers," that "the evil scourge of terrorism" -- particularly state-backed international terrorism -- is a plague spread by "depraved opponents of civilization itself" in a "return to barbarism" that cannot be tolerated. But beyond the strong support for the words of the US political leadership -- respectively, George W. Bush, Ronald Reagan, and his Secretary of State George Shultz [1] -- interpretations varied: on the narrow question of the proper response to terrorist crimes, and on the broader problem of determining their nature.

On the latter, an official US definition takes "terrorism" to be "the calculated use of violence or threat of violence to attain goals that are political, religious, or ideological in nature...through intimidation, coercion, or instilling fear."[2] That formulation leaves many question open, among them, the legitimacy of actions to realize "the right to self-determination, freedom, and independence, as derived from the Charter of the United Nations, of people forcibly deprived of that right..., particularly peoples under colonial and racist regimes and foreign occupation..." In its most forceful denunciation of the crime of terrorism, the UN General Assembly endorsed such actions, 153-2.[3]

Explaining their negative votes, the US and Israel referred to the wording just cited. It was understood to justify resistance against the South African regime, a US ally that was responsible for over 1.5 million dead and $60 billion in damage in neighboring countries in 1980-88 alone, putting aside its practices within. And the resistance was led by Nelson Mandela's African National Congress, one of the "more notorious terrorist groups" according to a 1988 Pentagon report, in contrast to pro-South African RENAMO, which the same report describes as merely an "indigenous insurgent group" while observing that it might have killed 100,000 civilians in Mozambique in the preceding two years.[4] The same wording was taken to justify resistance to Israel's military occupation, then in its 20th year, continuing its integration of the occupied territories and harsh practices with decisive US aid and diplomatic support, the latter to block the longstanding international consensus on a peaceful settlement.[5]

Despite such fundamental disagreements, the official US definition seems to me adequate for the purposes at hand,[6] though the disagreements shed some light on the nature of terrorism, as perceived from various perspectives.

Let us turn to the question of proper response. Some argue that the evil of terrorism is "absolute" and merits a "reciprocally absolute doctrine" in response.[7] That would appear to mean ferocious military assault in accord with the Bush doctrine, cited with apparent approval in the same academic collection on the "age of terror": "_If you harbor terrorists, you're a terrorist; if you aid and abet terrorists, you're a terrorist -- and you will be treated like one_." The volume reflects articulate opinion in the West in taking the US-UK response to be appropriate and properly "calibrated," but the scope of that consensus appears to be limited, judging by the evidence available, to which we return.

More generally, it would be hard to find anyone who accepts the doctrine that massive bombing is the appropriate response to terrorist crimes -- whether those of Sept. 11, or even worse ones, which are, unfortunately, not hard to find. That follows if we adopt the principle of universality: if an action is right (or wrong) for others, it is right (or wrong) for us. Those who do not rise to the

minimal moral level of applying to themselves the standards they apply to others -- more stringent ones, in fact -- plainly cannot be taken seriously when they speak of appropriateness of response; or of right and wrong, good and evil.

To illustrate what is at stake, consider a case that is far from the most extreme but is uncontroversial; at least, among those with some respect for international law and treaty obligations. No one would have supported Nicaraguan bombings in Washington when the US rejected the order of the World Court to terminate its "unlawful use of force" and pay substantial reparations, choosing instead to escalate the international terrorist crimes and to extend them, officially, to attacks on undefended civilian targets, also vetoing a Security Council resolution calling on all states to observe international law and voting alone at the General Assembly (with one or two client states) against similar resolutions. The US dismissed the ICJ on the grounds that other nations do not agree with us, so we must "reserve to ourselves the power to determine whether the Court has jurisdiction over us in a particular case" and what lies "essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of the United States" -- in this case, terrorist attacks against Nicaragua.[8]

Meanwhile Washington continued to undermine regional efforts to reach a political settlement, following the doctrine formulated by the Administration moderate, George Shultz: the US must "cut [the Nicaraguan cancer] out," by force. Shultz dismissed with contempt those who advocate "utopian, legalistic means like outside mediation, the United Nations, and the World Court, while ignoring the power element of the equation";"Negotiations are a euphemism for capitulation if the shadow of power is not cast across the bargaining table," he declared. Washington continued to adhere to the Shultz doctrine when the Central American Presidents agreed on a peace plan in 1987 over strong US objections: the Esquipulas Accords, which required that all countries of the region move towards democracy and human rights under international supervision, stressing that the "indispensable element" was the termination of the US attack against Nicaragua. Washington responded by sharply expanding the attack, tripling CIA supply flights for the terrorist forces. Having exempted itself from the Accords, thus effectively undermining them, Washington proceeded to do the same for its client regimes, using the substance -- not the shadow -- of power to dismantle the International Verification Commission (CIVS) because its conclusions were unacceptable, and demanding, successfully, that the Accords be revised to free US client states to continue their terrorist atrocities. These far surpassed even the devastating US war against Nicaragua that left tens of thousands dead and the country ruined perhaps beyond recovery. Still upholding the Shultz doctrine, the US compelled the government of Nicaragua, under severe threat, to drop the claim for reparations established by the ICJ.[9]

There could hardly be a clearer example of international terrorism as defined officially, or in scholarship: operations aimed at "demonstrating through apparently indiscriminate violence that the existing regime cannot protect the people nominally under its authority," thus causing not only "anxiety, but withdrawal from the relationships making up the established order of society."[10] State terror elsewhere in Central America in those years also counts as international terrorism, in the light of the decisive US role, and the goals, sometimes frankly articulated; for example, by the Army's School of the Americas, which trains Latin American military officers and takes pride in the fact that "Liberation Theology...was defeated with the assistance of the U.S. Army."[11]

It would seem to follow, clearly enough, that only those who support bombing of Washington in response to these international terrorist crimes -- that is, no one -- can accept the "reciprocally absolute doctrine" on response to terrorist atrocities or consider massive bombardment to be an appropriate and properly "calibrated" response to them.

Consider some of the legal arguments that have been presented to justify the US-UK bombing of Afghanistan; I am not concerned here with their soundness, but their implications, if the principle of uniform standards is maintained. Christopher Greenwood argues that the US has the right of "self-defense" against "those who caused or threatened...death and destruction," appealing to the

ICJ ruling in the Nicaragua case. The paragraph he cites applies far more clearly to the US war against Nicaragua than to the Taliban or al-Qaeda, so if it is taken to justify intensive US bombardment and ground attack in Afghanistan, then Nicaragua should have been entitled to carry out much more severe attacks against the US. Another distinguished professor of international law, Thomas Franck, supports the US-UK war on grounds that "a state is responsible for the consequences of permitting its territory to be used to injure another state"; fair enough, and surely applicable to the US in the case of Nicaragua, Cuba, and many other examples, including some of extreme severity.[12]

Needless to say, in none of these cases would violence in "self-defense" against continuing acts of "death and destruction" be considered remotely tolerable; acts, not merely "threats."

The same holds of more nuanced proposals about an appropriate response to terrorist atrocities. Military historian Michael Howard proposes "a police operation conducted under the auspices of the United Nations...against a criminal conspiracy whose members should be hunted down and brought before an international court, where they would receive a fair trial and, if found guilty, be awarded an appropriate sentence." Reasonable enough, though the idea that the proposal should be applied universally is unthinkable. The director of the Center for the Politics of Human Rights at Harvard argues that "The only responsible response to acts of terror is honest police work and judicial prosecution in courts of law, linked to determinate, focused and unrelenting use of military power against those who cannot or will not be brought to justice."[13] That too seems sensible, if we add Howard's qualification about international supervision, and if the resort to force is undertaken after legal means have been exhausted. The recommendation therefore does not apply to 9-11 (the US refused to provide evidence and rebuffed tentative proposals about transfer of the suspects), but it does apply very clearly to Nicaragua.

It applies to other cases as well. Take Haiti, which has provided ample evidence in its repeated calls for extradition of Emmanuel Constant, who directed the forces responsible for thousands of deaths under the military junta that the US was tacitly supporting (not to speak of earlier history); these requests the US ignores, presumably because of concerns about what Constant would reveal if tried. The most recent request was on 30 September 2001, while the US was demanding that the Taliban hand over Bin Laden.[14] The coincidence was also ignored, in accord with the convention that minimal moral standards must be vigorously rejected.

Turning to the "responsible response," a call for implementation of it where it is clearly applicable would elicit only fury and contempt.

Some have formulated more general principles to justify the US war in Afghanistan. Two Oxford scholars propose a principle of "proportionality": "The magnitude of response will be determined by the magnitude with which the aggression interfered with key values in the society attacked"; in the US case, "freedom to pursue self-betterment in a plural society through market economics," viciously attacked on 9-11 by "aggressors...with a moral orthodoxy divergent from the West." Since "Afghanistan constitutes a state that sided with the aggressor," and refused US demands to turn over suspects, "the United States and its allies, according to the principle of magnitude of interference, could justifiably and morally resort to force against the Taliban government."[15]

On the assumption of universality, it follows that Haiti and Nicaragua can "justifiably and morally resort to" far greater force against the US government. The conclusion extends far beyond these two cases, including much more serious ones and even such minor escapades of Western state terror as Clinton's bombing of the al-Shifa pharmaceutical plant in Sudan in 1998, leading to "several tens of thousands" of deaths according to the German Ambassador and other reputable sources, whose conclusions are consistent with the immediate assessments of knowledgeable observers.[16] The principle of proportionality therefore entails that Sudan had every right to carry out massive terror in retaliation, a conclusion that is strengthened if we go on to adopt the view that this act of "the empire" had "appalling consequences for the economy and society" of Sudan

so that the atrocity was much worse than the crimes of 9-11, which were appalling enough, but did not have such consequences.[17]

Most commentary on the Sudan bombing keeps to the question of whether the plant was believed to produce chemical weapons; true or false, that has no bearing on "the magnitude with which the aggression interfered with key values in the society attacked," such as survival. Others point out that the killings were unintended, as are many of the atrocities we rightly denounce. In this case, we can hardly doubt that the likely human consequences were understood by US planners. The acts can be excused, then, only on the Hegelian assumption that Africans are "mere things," whose lives have "no value," an attitude that accords with practice in ways that are not overlooked among the victims, who may draw their own conclusions about the "moral orthodoxy of the West."

One participant in the Yale volume (Charles Hill) recognized that 11 September opened the _second_ "war on terror." The first was declared by the Reagan administration as it came to office 20 years earlier, with the rhetorical accompaniment already illustrated; and "we won," Hill reports triumphantly, though the terrorist monster was only wounded, not slain.[18] The first "age of terror" proved to be a major issue in international affairs through the decade, particularly in Central America, but also in the Middle East, where terrorism was selected by editors as the lead story of the year in 1985 and ranked high in other years.

We can learn a good deal about the current war on terror by inquiring into the first phase, and how it is now portrayed. One leading academic specialist describes the 1980s as the decade of "state terrorism," of "persistent state involvement, or `sponsorship,' of terrorism, especially by Libya and Iran." The US merely responded, by adopting "a `proactive' stance toward terrorism." Others recommend the methods by which "we won": the operations for which the US was condemned by the World Court and Security Council (absent the veto) are a model for "Nicaragua-like support for the Taliban's adversaries (especially the Northern Alliance)." A prominent historian of the subject finds deep roots for the terrorism of Osama Bin Laden: in South Vietnam, where "the effectiveness of Vietcong terror against the American Goliath armed with modern technology kindled hopes that the Western heartland was vulnerable too."[19]

Keeping to convention, these analyses portray the US as a benign victim, defending itself from the terror of others: the Vietnamese (in South Vietnam), the Nicaraguans (in Nicaragua), Libyans and Iranians (if they had ever suffered a slight at US hands, it passes unnoticed), and other anti-American forces worldwide.

Not everyone sees the world quite that way. The most obvious place to look is Latin America, which has had considerable experience with international terrorism. The crimes of 9-11 were harshly condemned, but commonly with recollection of their own experiences. One might describe the 9-11 atrocities as "Armageddon," the research journal of the Jesuit university in Managua observed, but Nicaragua has "lived its own Armageddon in excruciating slow motion" under US assault "and is now submerged in its dismal aftermath," and others fared far worse under the vast plague of state terror that swept through the continent from the early 1960s, much of it traceable to Washington. A Panamanian journalist joined in the general condemnation of the 9-11 crimes, but recalled the death of perhaps thousands of poor people (Western crimes, therefore unexamined) when the President's father bombed the barrio Chorillo in December 1989 in Operation Just Cause, undertaken to kidnap a disobedient thug who was sentenced to life imprisonment in Florida for crimes mostly committed while he was on the CIA payroll. Uruguayan writer Eduardo Galeano observed that the US claims to oppose terrorism, but actually supports it worldwide, including "in Indonesia, in Cambodia, in Iran, in South Africa,...and in the Latin American countries that lived through the dirty war of the Condor Plan," instituted by South American military dictators who conducted a reign of terror with US backing.[20]

The observations carry over to the second focus of the first "war on terror": West Asia. The worst single atrocity was the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, which left some 20,000 people dead and much of the country in ruins, including Beirut. Like the murderous and destructive Rabin-Peres invasions of 1993 and 1996, the 1982 attack had little pretense of self-defense. Chief of Staff Rafael ("Raful") Eitan merely articulated common understanding when he announced that the goal was to "destroy the PLO as a candidate for negotiations with us about the Land of Israel,"[21] a textbook illustration of terror as officially defined. The goal "was to install a friendly regime and destroy Mr. Arafat's Palestinian Liberation Organization," Middle East correspondent James Bennet writes: "That, the theory went, would help persuade Palestinians to accept Israeli rule in the West Bank and Gaza Strip."[22] This may be the first recognition in the mainstream of facts widely reported in Israel at once, previously accessible only in dissident literature in the US.

These operations were carried out with the crucial military and diplomatic support of the Reagan and Clinton administrations, and therefore constitute international terrorism. The US was also directly involved in other acts of terror in the region in the 1980s, including the most extreme terrorist atrocities of the peak year of 1985: the CIA car-bombing in Beirut that killed 80 people and wounded 250; Shimon Peres's bombing of Tunis that killed 75 people, expedited by the US and praised by Secretary of State Shultz, unanimously condemned by the UN Security Council as an "act of armed aggression" (US abstaining); and Peres's "Iron Fist" operations directed against "terrorist villagers" in Lebanon, reaching new depths of "calculated brutality and arbitrary murder," in the words of a Western diplomat familiar with the area, amply supported by direct coverage.[23] Again, all international terrorism, if not the more severe war crime of aggression.

In journalism and scholarship on terrorism, 1985 is recognized to be the peak year of Middle East terrorism, but not because of these events: rather, because of two terrorist atrocities in which a single person was murdered, in each case an American.[24] But the victims do not so easily forget.

This very recent history takes on added significance because leading figures in the re-declared "war on terror" played a prominent part in its precursor. The diplomatic component of the current phase is led by John Negroponte, who was Reagan's Ambassador to Honduras, the base for the terrorist atrocities for which his government was condemned by the World Court and for US-backed state terror elsewhere in Central America, activities that "made the Reagan years the worse decade for Central America since the Spanish conquest," mostly on Negroponte's watch.[25] The military component of the new phase is led by Donald Rumsfeld, Reagan's special envoy to the Middle East during the years of the worst terrorist atrocities there, initiated or supported by his government.

No less instructive is the fact that such atrocities did not abate in subsequent years. Specifically, Washington's contribution to "enhancing terror" in the Israel-Arab confrontation continues. The term is President Bush's, intended, according to convention, to apply to the terrorism of others. Departing from convention, we find, again, some rather significant examples. One simple way to enhance terror is to participate in it, for example, by sending helicopters to be used to attack civilian complexes and carry out assassinations, as the US regularly does in full awareness of the consequences. Another is to bar the dispatch of international monitors to reduce violence. The US has insisted on this course, once again vetoing a UN Security Council resolution to this effect on 14 December 2001. Describing Arafat's fall from grace to a position barely above Bin Laden and Saddam Hussein, the press reports that President Bush was "greatly angered [by] a last-minute hardening of a Palestinian position...for international monitors in Palestinian areas under a UN Security Council resolution"; that is, by Arafat's joining the rest of the world in calling for means to reduce terror.[26]

Ten days before the veto of monitors, the US boycotted -- thus undermined -- an international conference in Geneva that reaffirmed the applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention to the occupied territories, so that most US-Israeli actions there are war crimes -- and when "grave

breaches," as many are, serious war crimes. These include US-funded Israeli settlements and the practice of "wilful killing, torture, unlawful deportation, wilful depriving of the rights of fair and regular trial, extensive destruction and appropriation of property...carried out unlawfully and wantonly."[27]

The Convention, instituted to criminalize formally the crimes of the Nazis in occupied Europe, is a core principle of international humanitarian law. Its applicability to the Israeli-occupied territories has repeatedly been affirmed, among other occasions, by UN Ambassador George Bush (September 1971) and by Security Council resolutions: 465 (1980), adopted unanimously, which condemned US-backed Israeli practices as "flagrant violations" of the Convention; 1322 (Oct. 2000), 14-0, US abstaining, which called on Israel "to abide scrupulously by its responsibilities under the Fourth Geneva Convention," which it was again violating flagrantly at that moment. As High Contracting Parties, the US and the European powers are obligated by solemn treaty to apprehend and prosecute those responsible for such crimes, including their own leadership when they are parties to them. By continuing to reject that duty, they are enhancing terror directly and significantly.

Inquiry into the US-Israel-Arab conflicts would carry us too far afield. Let's turn further north, to another region where "state terror" is being practiced on a massive scale; I borrow the term from the Turkish State Minister for Human Rights, referring to the vast atrocities of 1994; and sociologist Ismail Besikci, returned to prison after publishing his book _State Terror in the Near East_, having already served 15 years for recording Turkish repression of Kurds.[28] I had a chance to see some of the consequences first-hand when visiting the unofficial Kurdish capital of Diyarbakir several months after 9-11. As elsewhere, the crimes of September 11 were harshly condemned, but not without memory of the savage assault the population had suffered at the hands of those who appoint themselves to "rid the world of evildoers," and their local agents. By 1994, the Turkish State Minister and others estimated that 2 million had been driven out of the devastated countryside, many more later, often with barbaric torture and terror described in excruciating detail in international human rights reports, but kept from the eyes of those paying the bills. Tens of thousands were killed. The remnants -- whose courage is indescribable -- live in a dungeon where radio stations are closed and journalists imprisoned for playing Kurdish music, students are arrested and tortured for submitting requests to take elective courses in their own language, there can be severe penalties if children are found wearing Kurdish national colors by the omnipresent security forces, the respected lawyer who heads the human rights organization was indicted shortly after I was there for using the Kurdish rather than the virtually identical Turkish spelling for the New Year's celebration; and on, and on.

These acts fall under the category of state-sponsored international terrorism. The US provided 80% of the arms, peaking in 1997, when arms transfers exceeded the entire Cold War period combined before the "counter-terror" campaign began in 1984. Turkey became the leading recipient of US arms worldwide, a position it retained until 1999 when the torch was passed to Colombia, the leading practitioner of state terror in the Western hemisphere.[29]

State terror is also "enhanced" by silence and evasion. The achievement was particularly notable against the background of an unprecedented chorus of self-congratulation as US foreign policy entered a "noble phase" with a "saintly glow," under the guidance of leaders who for the first time in history were dedicated to "principles and values" rather than narrow interests.[30] The proof of the new saintliness was their unwillingness to tolerate crimes near the borders of NATO -- only within its borders, where even worse crimes, not in reaction to NATO bombs, were not only tolerable but required enthusiastic participation, without comment.

US-sponsored Turkish state terror does not pass entirely unnoticed. The State Department's annual report on Washington's "efforts to combat terrorism" singled out Turkey for its "positive experiences" in combating terror, along with Algeria and Spain, worthy colleagues. This was reported without comment in a front-page story in the _New York Times_ by its specialist on

terrorism. In a leading journal of international affairs, Ambassador Robert Pearson reports that the US "could have no better friend and ally than Turkey" in its efforts "to eliminate terrorism" worldwide, thanks to the "capabilities of its armed forces" demonstrated in its "anti-terror campaign" in the Kurdish southeast. It thus "came as no surprise" that Turkey eagerly joined the "war on terror" declared by George Bush, expressing its thanks to the US for being the only country willing to lend the needed support for the atrocities of the Clinton years -- still continuing, though on a lesser scale now that "we won." As a reward for its achievements, the US is now funding Turkey to provide the ground forces for fighting "the war on terror" in Kabul, though not beyond.[31]

Atrocious state-sponsored international terrorism is thus not overlooked: it is lauded. That also "comes as no surprise." After all, in 1995 the Clinton administration welcomed Indonesia's General Suharto, one of the worst killers and torturers of the late 20th century, as "our kind of guy." When he came to power 30 years earlier, the "staggering mass slaughter" of hundreds of thousands of people, mostly landless peasants, was reported fairly accurately and acclaimed with unconstrained euphoria. When Nicaraguans finally succumbed to US terror and voted the right way, the US was "United in Joy" at this "Victory for US Fair Play," headlines proclaimed. It is easy enough to multiply examples. The current episode breaks no new ground in the record of international terrorism and the response it elicits among the perpetrators.

Let's return to the question of the proper response to acts of terror, specifically 9-11.

It is commonly alleged that the US-UK reaction was undertaken with wide international support. That is tenable, however, only if one keeps to elite opinion. An international Gallup poll found only minority support for military attack rather than diplomatic means.[32] In Europe, figures ranged from 8% in Greece to 29% in France. In Latin America, support was even lower: from 2% in Mexico to 16% in Panama. Support for strikes that included civilian targets was very slight. Even in the two countries polled that strongly supported the use of military force, India and Israel (where the reasons were parochial), considerable majorities opposed such attacks. There was, then, overwhelming opposition to the actual policies, which turned major urban concentrations into "ghost towns" from the first moment, the press reported.

Omitted from the poll, as from most commentary, was the anticipated effect of US policy on Afghans, millions of whom were on the brink of starvation even before 9-11. Unasked, for example, is whether a proper response to 9-11 was to demand that Pakistan eliminate "truck convoys that provide much of the food and other supplies to Afghanistan's civilian population," and to cause the withdrawal of aid workers and a severe reduction in food supplies that left "millions of Afghans...at grave risk of starvation," eliciting sharp protests from aid organizations and warnings of severe humanitarian crisis, judgments reiterated at the war's end.[33]

It is, of course, the assumptions of planning that are relevant to evaluating the actions taken; that too should be transparent. The actual outcome, a separate matter, is unlikely to be known, even roughly; crimes of others are carefully investigated, but not one's own. Some indication is perhaps suggested by the occasional reports on numbers needing food aid: 5 million before 9-11, 7.5 million at the end of September under the threat of bombing, 9 million six months later, not because of lack of food, which was readily available throughout, but because of distribution problems as the country reverted to warlordism.[34]

There are no reliable studies of Afghan opinion, but information is not entirely lacking. At the outset, President Bush warned Afghans that they would be bombed until they handed over people the US suspected of terrorism. Three weeks later, war aims shifted to overthrow of the regime: the bombing would continue, Admiral Sir Michael Boyce announced, "until the people of the country themselves recognize that this is going to go on until they get the leadership changed."[35] Note that the question whether overthrow of the miserable Taliban regime justifies the bombing does not arise, because that did not become a war aim until well after the fact. We

can, however, ask about the opinions of Afghans within reach of Western observers about these choices -- which, in both cases, clearly fall within the official definition of international terrorism.

As war aims shifted to regime replacement in late October, 1000 Afghan leaders gathered in Peshawar, some exiles, some coming from within Afghanistan, all committed to overthrowing the Taliban regime. It was "a rare display of unity among tribal elders, Islamic scholars, fractious politicians, and former guerrilla commanders," the press reported. They unanimously "urged the US to stop the air raids," appealed to the international media to call for an end to the "bombing of innocent people," and "demanded an end to the US bombing of Afghanistan." They urged that other means be adopted to overthrow the hated Taliban regime, a goal they believed could be achieved without death and destruction.[36]

A similar message was conveyed by Afghan opposition leader Abdul Haq, who was highly regarded in Washington. Just before he entered Afghanistan, apparently without US support, and was then captured and killed, he condemned the bombing and criticized the US for refusing to support efforts of his and of others "to create a revolt within the Taliban." The bombing was "a big setback for these efforts," he said. He reported contacts with second-level Taliban commanders and ex-Mujahiddin tribal elders, and discussed how such efforts could proceed, calling on the US to assist them with funding and other support instead of undermining them with bombs. But the US, he said, "is trying to show its muscle, score a victory and scare everyone in the world. They don't care about the suffering of the Afghans or how many people we will lose."[37]

The plight of Afghan women elicited some belated concern after 9-11. After the war, there was even some recognition of the courageous women who have been in the forefront of the struggle to defend women's rights for 25 years, RAWA (Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan). A week after the bombing began, RAWA issued a public statement (Oct. 11) that would have been front-page news wherever concern for Afghan women was real, not a matter of mere expediency. They condemned the resort to "the monster of a vast war and destruction" as the US "launched a vast aggression on our country," that will cause great harm to innocent Afghans. They called instead for "the eradication of the plague of Taliban and Al Qieda" by "an overall uprising" of the Afghan people themselves, which alone "can prevent the repetition and recurrence of the catastrophe that has befallen our country...."

All of this was ignored. It is, perhaps, less than obvious that those with the guns are entitled to ignore the judgment of Afghans who have been struggling for freedom and women's rights for many years, and to dismiss with apparent contempt their desire to overthrow the fragile and hated Taliban regime from within without the inevitable crimes of war.

In brief, review of global opinion, including what is known about Afghans, lends little support to the consensus among Western intellectuals on the justice of their cause.

One elite reaction, however, is certainly correct: it is necessary to inquire into the reasons for the crimes of 9-11. That much is beyond question, at least among those who hope to reduce the likelihood of further terrorist atrocities.

A narrow question is the motives of the perpetrators. On this matter, there is little disagreement. Serious analysts are in accord that after the US established permanent bases in Saudi Arabia, "Bin Laden became preoccupied with the need to expel U.S. forces from the sacred soil of Arabia" and to rid the Muslim world of the "liars and hypocrites" who do not accept his extremist version of Islam.[38]

There is also wide, and justified, agreement that "Unless the social, political, and economic conditions that spawned Al Qaeda and other associated groups are addressed, the United States and its allies in Western Europe and elsewhere will continue to be targeted by Islamist

terrorists."[39] These conditions are doubtless complex, but some factors have long been recognized. In 1958, a crucial year in postwar history, President Eisenhower advised his staff that in the Arab world, "the problem is that we have a campaign of hatred against us, not by the governments but by the people," who are "on Nasser's side," supporting independent secular nationalism. The reasons for the "campaign of hatred" had been outlined by the National Security Council a few months earlier: "In the eyes of the majority of Arabs the United States appears to be opposed to the realization of the goals of Arab nationalism. They believe that the United States is seeking to protect its interest in Near East oil by supporting the _status quo_ and opposing political or economic progress...." Furthermore, the perception is accurate: "our economic and cultural interests in the area have led not unnaturally to close U.S. relations with elements in the Arab world whose primary interest lies in the maintenance of relations with the West and the status quo in their countries...."[40]

The perceptions persist. Immediately after 9-11, the _Wall Street Journal_, later others, began to investigate opinions of "moneyed Muslims": bankers, professionals, managers of multinationals, and so on. They strongly support US policies in general, but are bitter about the US role in the region: about US support for corrupt and repressive regimes that undermine democracy and development, and about specific policies, particularly regarding Palestine and Iraq. Though they are not surveyed, attitudes in the slums and villages are probably similar, but harsher; unlike the "moneyed Muslims," the mass of the population have never agreed that the wealth of the region should be drained to the West and local collaborators, rather than serving domestic needs. The "moneyed Muslims" recognize, ruefully, that Bin Laden's angry rhetoric has considerable resonance, in their own circles as well, even though they hate and fear him, if only because they are among his primary targets.[41]

It is doubtless more comforting to believe that the answer to George Bush's plaintive query, "Why do they hate us?," lies in their resentment of our freedom and love of democracy, or their cultural failings tracing back many centuries, or their inability to take part in the form of "globalization" in which they happily participate. Comforting, perhaps, but not wise.

Though shocking, the atrocities of 9-11 could not have been entirely unexpected. Related organizations planned very serious terrorist acts through the 1990s, and in 1993 came perilously close to blowing up the World Trade Center, with much more ambitious plans. Their thinking was well understood, certainly by the US intelligence agencies that had helped to recruit, train, and arm them from 1980 and continued to work with them even as they were attacking the US. The Dutch government inquiry into the Srebrenica massacre revealed that while they were attempting to blow up the World Trade Center, radical Islamists from the CIA-formed networks were being flown by the US from Afghanistan to Bosnia, along with Iranian-backed Hizbollah fighters and a huge flow of arms, through Croatia, which took a substantial cut. They were being brought to support the US side in the Balkan wars, while Israel (along with Ukraine and Greece) was arming the Serbs (possibly with US-supplied arms), which explains why "unexploded mortar bombs landing in Sarajevo sometimes had Hebrew markings," British political scientist Richard Aldrich observes, reviewing the Dutch government report.[42]

More generally, the atrocities of 9-11 serve as a dramatic reminder of what has long been understood: with contemporary technology, the rich and powerful no longer are assured the near monopoly of violence that has largely prevailed throughout history. Though terrorism is rightly feared everywhere, and is indeed an intolerable "return to barbarism," it is not surprising that perceptions about its nature differ rather sharply in the light of sharply differing experiences, facts that will be ignored at their peril by those whom history has accustomed to immunity while they perpetrate terrible crimes.

Footnotes:

[1] Bush cited by Rich Heffern, _National Catholic Reporter_, Jan. 11, 2002. Reagan, _New York Times_, Oct. 18, 1985. Shultz, U.S. Dept. of State, _Current Policy_ No. 589, June 24, 1984; No. 629, Oct. 25, 1984.

[2] _US Army Operational Concept for Terrorism Counteraction_, TRADOC Pamphlet No. 525-37, 1984.

[3] Res. 42/159, 7 Dec. 1987; Honduras abstaining.

[4] Joseba Zulaika and William Douglass, _Terror and Taboo_ (New York, London: Routledge, 1996), 12. 1980-88 record, see "Inter-Agency Task Force, Africa Recovery Program/Economic Commission, _South African Destabilization: the Economic Cost of Frontline Resistance to Apartheid_, NY, UN, 1989, 13, cited by Merle Bowen, _Fletcher Forum_, Winter 1991. On expansion of US trade with South Africa after Congress authorized sanctions in 1985 (overriding Reagan's veto), see Gay McDougall, Richard Knight, in Robert Edgar, ed., _Sanctioning Apartheid_ (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1990).

[5] For review of unilateral US rejectionism for 30 years, see my introduction to Roane Carey, ed., _The New Intifada_ (London, New York: Verso, 2000); see sources cited for more detail.

[6] It is, however, never used. On the reasons, see Alexander George, ed., _Western State Terrorism_ (Cambridge: Polity-Blackwell, 1991).

[7] Strobe Talbott and Nayan Chanda, introduction, _The Age of Terror: America and the World after September 11_ (New York: Basic Books and the Yale U. Center for the Study of Globalization, 2001).

[8] Abram Sofaer, "The United States and the World Court," U.S. Dept. of State, _Current Policy_, No. 769 (Dec. 1985). The vetoed Security Council resolution called for compliance with the ICJ orders, and, mentioning no one, called on all states "to refrain from carrying out, supporting or promoting political, economic or military actions of any kind against any state of the region." Elaine Sciolino, _NYT_, July 31, 1986.

[9] Shultz, "Moral Principles and Strategic Interests," April 14, 1986, U.S. Dept. of State, _Current Policy_ No. 820. Shultz Congressional testimony, see Jack Spence in Thomas Walker, ed., _Reagan versus the Sandinistas_ (Boulder, London: Westview, 1987). For review of the undermining of diplomacy and escalation of international state terror, see my _Culture of Terrorism_ (Boston: South End, 1988); _Necessary Illusions_ (Boston: South End, 1989); _Deterring Democracy_ (London, New York: Verso, 1991). On the aftermath, see Thomas Walker and Ariel Armony, eds., _Repression, Resistance, and Democratic Transition in Central America_ (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, 2000). On reparations, see Howard Meyer, _The World Court in Action_ (Lanham, MD, Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002), chap. 14.

[10] Edward Price, "The Strategy and Tactics of Revolutionary Terrorism," _Comparative Studies in Society and History 19:1_; cited by Chalmers Johnson, "American Militarism and Blowback," _New Political Science_ 24.1, 2002.

[11] SOA, 1999, cited by Adam Isacson and Joy Olson, _Just the Facts_ (Washington: Latin America Working Group and Center for International Policy, 1999), ix.

[12] Greenwood, "International law and the `war against terrorism'," _International Affairs_ 78.2 (2002), appealing to par. 195 of _Nicaragua v. USA_, which the Court did not use to justify its condemnation of US terrorism, but surely is more appropriate to that than to the case that

concerns Greenwood. Franck, "Terrorism and the Right of Self-Defense," _American J. of International Law_ 95.4 (Oct. 2001).

[13] Howard, _Foreign Affairs_, Jan/Feb 2002; talk of Oct. 30, 2001 (Tania Branigan, _Guardian_, Oct. 31). Ignatieff, _Index on Censorship_ 2, 2002.

[14] _NYT_, Oct. 1, 2001.

[15] Frank Schuller and Thomas Grant, _Current History_, April 2002.

[16] Werner Daum, "Universalism and the West," _Harvard International Review_, Summer 2001. On other assessments, and the warnings of Human Rights Watch, see my _9-11_ (New York: Seven Stories, 2001), 45ff.

[17] Christopher Hitchens, _Nation_, June 10, 2002.

[18] Talbott and Chanda, _op. cit._

[19] Martha Crenshaw, Ivo Daalder and James Lindsay, David Rapoport, _Current History_, _America at War_, Dec. 2001. On interpretations of the first "war on terror" at the time, see George, _op. cit._

[20] _Env¡o_ (UCA Managua), Oct.; Ricardo Stevens (Panama), NACLA _Report on the Americas_, Nov/Dec; Galeano, _La Jornada_ (Mexico City), cited by Alain Frachon, _Le Monde_, Nov. 24, 2001.

[21] For many sources, see my _Fateful Triangle_ (Boston: South End, 1983; updated 1999 edition, on South Lebanon in the 1990s); _Pirates and Emperors_ (New York: Claremont, 1986; Pluto, London, forthcoming); _World Orders Old and New_.

[22] Bennet, _NYT_, Jan. 24, 2002

[23] For details, see my essay in George, _op. cit_.

[24] Crenshaw, _op. cit._

[25] Chalmers Johnson, _Nation_, Oct. 15, 2001.

[26] Ian Williams, _Middle East International_, 21 Dec. 2001, 11 Jan. 2002. John Donnelly, _Boston Globe_, April 25, 2002; the specific reference is to an earlier US veto.

[27] Conference of High Contracting Parties, _Report on Israeli Settlement_, Jan.-Feb. 2002 (Foundation for Middle East Peace, Washington). On these matters see Francis Boyle, "Law and Disorder in the Middle East," _The Link_ 35.1, Jan.-March 2002.

[28] For some details, see my _New Military Humanism_ (Monroe ME: Common Courage, 1999), chap. 3, and sources cited. On evasion of the facts in the State Department Human Rights Report, see Lawyers Committee for Human Rights, _Middle East and North Africa_ (New York, 1995), 255.

[29] Tamar Gabelnick, William Hartung, and Jennifer Washburn, _Arming Repression: U.S. Arms Sales to Turkey During the Clinton Administration_ (New York and Washington: World Policy

Institute and Federation of Atomic Scientists, October 1999). I exclude Israel-Egypt, a separate category. On state terror in Colombia, now largely farmed out to paramilitaries in standard fashion, see particularly Human Rights Watch, _The Sixth Division_ (Sept. 2001) and Colombia Human Rights Certification III, Feb. 2002. Also, among others, Me'dicos Sin Fronteras, _Desterrados_ (Bogota' 2001).

[30] For a sample, see _New Military Humanism_ and my _A New Generation Draws the Line_ (London, NY: Verso, 2000).

[31] Judith Miller, _NYT_, April 30, 2000. Pearson, _Fletcher Forum_ 26:1, Winter/Spring 2002.

[32] http://www.gallup.international.com/terrorismpoll-figures.htm; data from Sept. 14-17, 2001.

[33] John Burns, _NYT_, Sept. 16, 2001; Samina Amin, _International Security_ 26.3, Winter 2001-02). For some earlier warnings, see _9-11_. On the postwar evaluation of international agencies, see Imre Karacs, _Independent on Sunday_ (London), Dec. 9, 2001, reporting their warnings that over a million people are "beyond their reach and face death from starvation and disease." For some press reports, see my "Peering into the Abyss of the Future," Lakdawala Memorial Lecture, Institute of Social Sciences, New Delhi, Nov. 2001, updated Feb. 2002.

[34] _Ibid._, for early estimates. Barbara Crossette, _NYT_, March 26, and Ahmed Rashid, _WSJ_, June 6, 2002, reporting the assessment of the UN World Food Program and the failure of donors to provide pledged funds. The WFP reports that "wheat stocks are exhausted, and there is no funding" to replenish them (Rashid). The UN had warned of the threat of mass starvation at once because the bombing disrupted planting that provides 80% of the country's grain supplies (AFP, Sept. 28; Edith Lederer, AP, Oct. 18, 2001). Also Andrew Revkin, _NYT_, Dec. 16, 2001, citing U.S. Department of Agriculture, with no mention of bombing.

[35] Patrick Tyler and Elisabeth Bumiller, _NYT_, Oct. 12, quoting Bush; Michael Gordon, _NYT_, Oct. 28, 2001, quoting Boyce; both p. 1.

[36] Barry Bearak, _NYT_, Oct. 25; John Thornhill and Farhan Bokhari, _Financial Times_, Oct. 25, Oct. 26; John Burns, _NYT_, Oct. 26; Indira Laskhmanan, _BG_, Oct. 25, 26, 2001.

[37] Interview, Anatol Lieven, _Guardian_, Nov. 2, 2001.

[38] Ann Lesch, _Middle East Policy_ IX.2, June 2002. Also Michael Doran, _Foreign Affairs_, Jan.-Feb. 2002; and many others, including several contributors to _Current History_, Dec. 2001.

[39] Sumit Ganguly, _Ibid_.

[40] For sources and background discussion, see my _World Orders Old and New_, 79, 201f.

[41] Peter Waldman et al., _WSJ_, Sept. 14, 2001; also Waldman and Hugh Pope, _WSJ_, Sept. 21, 2001.

[42] Aldrich, _Guardian_, 22 April, 2002.