

BY AMITAI ETZIONI

A LESS PERFECT UNION

The United States needs to find a better balance between security and civil liberties before a nuclear terrorist attack irreparably damages the country.

SEVERAL LEADING SCHOLARS have identified nuclear terrorism as the greatest threat the United States and its allies face, and have concluded that such an attack is very much within the realm of possibility.

Others strongly believe that the dangers the United States is facing are limited—or believe that such a sense is useful for other matters they are concerned about (such as civil liberties)—and typically make statements of the kind that follow. John Mueller, a professor of political science at Ohio State University, argues in *Foreign Affairs*: “A fully credible explanation for the fact that the United States has suffered no terrorist attacks since 9/11 is that the threat posed by homegrown or imported terrorists—like that presented by Japanese Americans during World War II or by American Communists after it—has been massively exaggerated. Is it possible that the haystack is essentially free of needles?” Likewise, Lawrence Korb, a former assistant secretary of defense (and a *Bulletin* board member), says, “The [7/7 terrorist] bombing in London was terrible, but it wasn’t like the Blitz,” adding, “terrorists can make life unpleasant, but bin Laden isn’t going to end up running Great Britain, while Hitler very well might have.”

These authors equate existence with the survival of a nation, and the survival of the nation with the survival of a fair number of its citizens, its infrastructure, and other assets such as select factories and residential buildings. But a nation is more than the aggregate of X million in-

dividuals. Nations have communitarian dimensions. Their citizens have a sense of purpose that is in part composed of their identification with the nation as a whole, with its well-being. Hence, when their national soccer team loses, they will feel a loss. When the president



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is assassinated, they will feel personally aggrieved, threatened, and diminished. If large segments of the population are killed and much of the nation is laid to waste, the remaining citizens will be severely traumatized, say in the ways Germans were at the end of World War I.

Citizens also rely on the national state for their security. If the security of any major part of the nation is violated, citizens of other parts will lose their sense of security and their trust

in their leaders and political institutions. Often they then seek safety by supporting strong-armed leaders and nondemocratic forms of government.

Furthermore, nations have communal assets that do not belong to any one citizen, but, if destroyed, many will be affected. Some of these assets are symbolic; for instance, if the Statue of Liberty or the Washington Monument were destroyed, Americans would survive but feel abused. Other communal

assets are "objective"; thus, if the water reservoirs of a city are deliberately contaminated, its citizens will feel endangered even if no one was killed or lost any private property.

It follows that even if a nuclear attack "only" laid to waste a major U.S. city (such as Chicago), let alone one of special symbolic importance (such as Washington, D.C.) or several cities (whether all at the same time or in rapid succession), the nation would continue to exist—but it would not be the same nation. The analogue is to a person whose eyes have been gouged out, eardrums pierced, and right leg severed. His name and social security number will remain the same but perhaps little else will. A nation so attacked will be much less liberal, less respectful of individual rights, less tolerant of foreigners, and much more belligerent in its dealings with other nations, as well as with "non-state actors" overseas. We have seen such developments in Britain following the relatively small number of IRA terrorist attacks (most attacks occurred in Northern Ireland). They led to significant diminution of individual rights (as embodied by the 1973 Northern Ireland Emergency Provisions Act), as well as to the introduction of many tens of thousands of cameras in public spaces, and the City of London's security and surveillance cordon, the so-called Ring of Steel.

There is often a strong correlation between those who are concerned that the fear of terrorism will lead U.S. society to tolerate major reductions in civil liberties, that we will "do the work of terrorists for them" by destroying America as we have known and loved it—and those who minimize threats by terrorists. They view the fear of an attack—which they argue has been drummed up and exaggerated by right-wing forces or those in power—as much more damaging than the effects of such attacks. Some of these threat-minimizers carry their position to the next step when they argue that terrorists, whose casualties number in the thousands, should not be treated any differently than other criminals.

DULY noted

PEACE ON THE CHEAP | "It is far cheaper for the United States and other nations to share the costs and burdens of international security than it is to go it alone. Most U.S. taxpayer dollars spent through the United Nations and other major multilateral institutions are leveraged three-fold or more. So when the U.S. puts 25 cents towards a U.N. project, the rest of the world generally adds in 75 cents . . . the [Government Accountability Office] found that U.N. peacekeeping was at least eight times less expensive than fielding American forces. So using U.N. peacekeeping costs eight times less—and keeps American soldiers out of harms way. Similar multipliers are found in refugee assistance, global health, food assistance, and disaster relief. Cooperation with the United Nations is a bargain." —**Timothy E. Wirth, president of the United Nations Foundation, testifying before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, February 13, 2007.**

KEEPING A HABIT | "The paradox of today's quest for energy independence is that pursuing it actually increases energy insecurity. However much politicians who call for energy independence might prefer it otherwise, the market has chosen oil as a staple energy source. So governments should ignore neither the valid interests of oil exporters, on whom consumers in their countries depend, nor exporters' reaction to the rhetoric of energy independence or to steps taken to achieve it. Isolationist politicians may not care about other countries, but they should think twice lest they harm their own.

"The biggest threats to the world's energy security are not terrorist attacks or embargoes by oil-producing countries—short-term events that can be dealt with quickly and effectively through various measures, including reliance on strategic petroleum reserves, increases in production, and diversion of oil shipments. Instead, the main threat to the long-term sustainability of energy supplies is the mismatch between investment in additional capacity and energy infrastructure, on one hand, and growth in demand for energy on the other." —**A. F. Alhajji, an economist at Ohio Northern University, and Gavin Longmuir, a petroleum engineer, in a February 26, 2007 Korea Herald editorial, "Perilous Fantasy of Energy Independence."**

ZONE COVERAGE | "By establishing the world's first nuclear-weapon-free zone (NWZ) in a densely populated area, the Treaty of Tlatelolco set an important precedent in devaluing the role of nuclear weapons in its zone of application—thereby contributing to regional peace and security by ensuring that Latin America and the Caribbean remained free of nuclear weapons. Moreover, the treaty has been an inspiration and model for the four other NWZ treaties in Africa, Central Asia, Southeast Asia, and the South Pacific. Today, these five NWZ treaties cover between them nearly two thirds of the countries of the world and virtually the entirety of the Southern Hemisphere. In effect, NWZs constitute important first steps to achieve a nuclear-weapon-free world." —**Statement of Mohamed ElBaradei, director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency, commemorating the fortieth anniversary of the Treaty of Tlatelolco on February 14, 2007.**

After all, the number of people killed in the United States every year by garden-variety criminals greatly exceeds those killed by terrorists over the last 100 years. Also, by treating terrorists the same way as criminals, civil libertarians hold, the rights of those suspected of being terrorists will be maintained, and with that our liberal democratic regime. This position raises two issues. One of the basic assumptions of the criminal system is that there is no room for state action unless a crime has already been committed. Evidence is then collected to prosecute the suspects. Deterrence of future crimes is based on the success of such post-crime prosecution. However, in the case of massive terrorism, especially nuclear terrorism, the goal must be to prevent an attack before it occurs. Moreover, deterrence cannot be expected to be the result of post-attack prosecution of terrorists, as many of them have shown their willingness to commit suicide in their attack. Furthermore, punishing the villages or countries from which the terrorists hail will not deter the terrorists; indeed it is welcome from their viewpoint, as it tends to increase their ranks and local support for their activities.

Second, the criminal justice system allows those accused to face their accusers and have access to all the relevant evidence. With terrorism, such disclosures would cause grievous damage to the public interest by discouraging sources and compromising important means of finding information about terrorism.

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Neither of these factors suggests that terrorists should be denied basic human rights, or that the way to confront them is by declaring a 100-year war. Ways and means must and can be found that are specially tailored to their status, which is fundamentally different

from both criminals and soldiers. I can offer here merely a few illustrations of an approach that balances the interests of upholding individual rights and ensuring security. For instance, lawyers should be given access to classified information—but terrorists may be limited in their choice of lawyers to those who have security clearance. The courts may hold their sessions in secret, as long as the courts' independence is secured. These two brief examples may not be the best way to proceed, but they illustrate that a third way can be found between the global-war-on-terror rubric favored by the Bush administration and the criminal-justice approach favored by threat-minimizers.

There are those who take a longer view, a very long one. The American philosopher and author Francis Fukuyama, for instance, argues that the threat of radical Islamist groups is not existential, because in the longer run the Western march of history toward democratization will win. He also holds that recent setbacks to democratization in Muslim nations are a sort of childhood disease nations may go through but will outgrow on their own and will have no lasting effects on history.

Predicting the future is a treacherous business. Past historical experience suggests that the record of those who see history marching in one clear direction is not exactly sterling. There is also plenty of evidence that the human costs of the traumas of the kind Afghanistan suffered under the Taliban are very

high indeed. If these are "childhood diseases" or "labor pains" of a new democratic order, we should go a long way to help people avoid them.

Only fatalists would sit back and rely on the march of history to do their bidding. ✱

BY JAMES R. HOLMES

WHEN INTERESTS COLLIDE

In China and India, support for non-proliferation efforts ultimately hinges on national interests.

EVERY GOVERNMENT OPPOSES the spread of unconventional weapons, but governments have interests aside from nonproliferation—economic prosperity and geopolitical advantage, for example. Such immediate, tangible interests can override efforts to counter seemingly remote, abstract perils. Hence many governments' tepid response to what Americans see as commonsense efforts to quash weapons proliferation and mass-casualty terrorism. Prospective partners won't necessarily back U.S.-led ventures, even if they back the principles and purposes guiding these ventures.

Exhibit A: the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI). Founded in 2003 as a "coalition of the willing" to interdict weapons-related cargoes at sea, ashore, or aloft, the initiative now commands support from 80 governments. It might form the basis for what scholars call a "global prohibition regime" against nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons, but certain pivotal nations—China and India, to name two—have withheld support. They have demurred because, on balance, their other interests prevail over

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