

## The Indirect Terrorist Threat

To the extent that our defenses against attacks and efforts to vanquish the terrorists cause us to disregard the values of Western Civilization, the terrorists indirectly advance their objectives.

Reasonable and sympathetic behavior are core moral values of our civilization and lead to the conclusion that individuals are not to be treated as means to the ends of others and/or society. When behavior is not measured in terms of its reasonableness and its impact on people, when will (justification in terms of want) and power are substituted for reason and sympathy, the soul of Western Civilization is diluted, and terrorists have cause for celebration. Will and power are functional in human behavior, so our moral values do not call for us to do without them but only to refrain from their pursuit to the extent that it causes us fail to proceed on the basis of reason and sympathy.

Are there indications that our response to terrorism is undermining reason and sympathy?  
Consider:

- Going to war on the basis of flimsy evidence
- The initial lack of consideration for the views of allies
- A strategy that makes no effort to engage the enemy with respect to their grievances
- A tax reduction that benefits the powerful, causes reduced social services, and increases the deficit
- The Patriot Act's impact on individuals
- Our behavior toward prisoners of war
- The view that democracy can be imposed
- "Group think" on the part of our intelligence community.

This is not to suggest that most Americans have diminished capacity for reason and sympathy. The post 9/11 world is immensely complicated, and even the identification of "least worse" alternatives is very difficult. It is to suggest, however, that the indirect threat of terrorism is powerful and that we must struggle to hew to our values.

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