US Policies, Ensuring Terrorism and Anti-Americanism

POLICY PERSPECTIVES

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US POLICIES, ENSURING TERRORISM AND ANTI-AMERICANISM

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Abstract

[The dawn of 21st Century was hailed by the people around the world with the hopes that it would be a millennium of global peace, justice and human development, but the tragic events of September 11, 2001, and disastrous US response to them set it off with terror, insecurity, injustice and economic collapse. The discourse on terrorism has generally been guided by the power-elite responsible for escalating violence. There is a need to provide appropriate space to alternate voices to counter the 'intellectual terrorism', to examine the causes of growing anti-Americanism, and to understand the relationship between US policies and terrorism. While the disapproval of US policies by the people worldwide began after the World War II, its intensity has increased manifold in response to the US policies framed in the post 9/11 scenario. While recent surveys show that ideology does play an important role in people's public and private lives, not only in the Muslim World but in the US as well, it would be naïve to attribute anti-American sentiments to a particular religion, or followers of a particular religion. The US administration and policymakers need to go beyond the superficial analyses and understand the causes of terrorism and anti-Americanism. – Eds].

The advent of the 21st century, heralding a new millennium, was welcomed by a large number of the people world over. It was hoped that the humanity would learn from the disasters it had to wade through in the last century and make a fresh start to have its coveted rendezvous with global peace and justice. Unfortunately, these hopes have been dashed to pieces particularly as a result of the tragic events of 9/11, and the disastrous response of the United States to them. The war on terror, which was unleashed to counter terrorism, has made the world much more terror-ridden, insecure, unjust, and verging on economic collapse. The first decade of the 21st century would go down in history as a lost decade primarily because of the flawed strategies of the only super power, the United States of America.

The US has failed to critically review its policies vis-à-vis the rest of the world resulting in an unending series of failures and their catastrophic consequences. Almost all major surveys of public opinion conducted during the last decade reflect increasing the grass roots disappointment about the US policies and performance in different parts of the world, particularly in relation to the

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Palestine problem and the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and their fall out in different parts of the world. Yet there is no evidence of any major change in the direction of key US policies. It seems that the hold of the Neo-conservatives and the Military-Industrial Complex, about which then US President Eisenhower had warned in his farewell address, remains unshaken. American leadership, despite change of faces, remains caught in the quagmire of policies that could not deliver.

"Terrorism" and "anti-Americanism" have become buzzwords in contemporary political discourse. The need to critically examine the causes of phenomenal rise in terrorism has become an existential imperative. It is undeniable that terrorism that was confined to a few flashpoints in the world has now expanded far and void, becoming a global phenomenon. Humanity today is beset with terrorisms of many hues and colors perpetrated by individuals, groups, and states.

While the book market has been inundated with literature on terrorism, it is a sad fact that much of it represents the viewpoint of the power-elite responsible for the escalation of terrorism. Partisan perspectives dominate. Viewpoint of the aggrieved do not get appropriate space in this discourse which is becoming more and more a monologue. Propaganda is getting an upper hand at the cost of truthful description and objective analysis. A new breed of terrorism is being promoted through print and electronic media: intellectual terrorism. However, some voices of dissent against the conventional thinking are now being raised and alternate perspectives are beginning to get space in political discourse. Contributions based on independent research and critical analysis of policies and strategies represent a silver lining on the intellectual horizon.

Two U.K. based scholars Dr. Usama Butt and Prof. Julian Schofield are engaged in research on "The US-Pakistan and Pakistan's Foreign Relations: Geo-Politics and Strategy in the War of Terror".[1] They invited me to respond to questions regarding some of the key issues namely terrorism, anti-Americanism and the responses of the Islamic forces in Pakistan. Following piece is based on this email-interview.

'Islamic domestic reaction' to Pak-US relations: sentiments of 'Anti-Americanism'?

Pakistani people are extremely unhappy, even angry, over the US policies at all the three levels—Global; relating to the Middle East, particularly the Palestinian issue; and the South Asian Region with particular reference to the Kashmir Issue, Afghanistan and Indian hegemonic role in the

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1.   The book is expected to be published in 2011.

region. The strategic Indo-American relationship, as it has developed during the Bush-Obama regimes, has very serious implications for the whole region particularly for Pakistan, China and Iran.

To put things in correct perspective, it may be recalled that feelings of disenchantment, disapproval and alienation from the US began to explode worldwide after the World War II. The character of the "Ugly American", as it flashed out in literature in the 1960's, was not a figment of imagination. It represented an emerging reality. Fiction only gave a name and a character to a feeling widely held.

It is claimed that it was in 1985, sixteen years before the tragic events of 9/11, that two political scientists from the University of Pennsylvania Alvin Z Rubinstein and Donald B. Smith published a collection of writings on the topic of "anti-Americanism in the Third World."[2] They focused on a "growing antipathy and willingness to think the worst of America" in many Third World countries, an attitude they called "anti-Americanism". Sigrid Faath has also referred to the work of a British social scientist Stephen Haseler (1986) and of a former US Ambassador Richard B. Parker (1988) both focusing on "anti-American rhetoric and acts of violence against US institutions, symbols and representations" as a reaction to "the growing US role in world politics."[3] All these and many other analysts have described the rise of "anti-Americanism" the world over as an "unavoidable consequence" of the feelings of disappointment of these countries with the US foreign policies and economic activities.

This is the context in which the current phenomenon of opposition to the US role in the world deserves to be considered and not in the smoke-screen of "they hate our values", or that "they are against human rights and democracy", or that something is "congenitically wrong with the Muslims/Islam," that has promoted "a culture of extremism, violence and terrorism."

Nevertheless, the "generous", rather indiscriminate, use of the term "anti-Americanism" is not appropriate, as "anti-Americanism" is a complex global phenomenon and not a typical current Pakistani or Muslim obsession. It also has many shades and dimensions. To group together a number of factors and forces less than one rubric deserves to be reconsidered.

In this context, it would be incorrect to assume the existence of a widespread feeling of enmity against the US and the American people as such among the Pakistani people. The positives about

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2.   Rubinstem and Smith (ed.), Anti-Americanism in the Third World.
3.   Faath, Anti-Americanism in the Islamic world.

the US society and culture have never been denied or denigrated. All opinion polls, which bring into sharp focus widespread disapproval of US policies and activities, also record appreciation for certain positive contributions of the American people and civilization. Interestingly enough, according to a Gallup survey made in 2007, while 69% of the respondents had 'very bad' or 'bad' opinion about the United States, the same respondents when asked about the 'people' of the US, only 50% described the American people as such. Those who rated US people as very good or good jumped to 49%.[4] This aspect of the ground situation may not be ignored.

Having said so, the fundamental issue that plagues Pakistan's relationship with the US, particularly at the level of Pakistani people, relates to persistent US policies and practices directed towards Pakistan, Arab/ Muslim world, and now towards Islam as a religion and the Islamic movements, as expressions of contemporary Islamic resurgence.

This brings the discussion to the presence of a number of concerns and conflicts of strategic significance underscoring clash between the national interests of Pakistan and the Muslim Ummah on the one hand, and on the other, the policies pursued, even imposed by the American leaderships resorting to "soft" and "hard" powers. There is also a widely held perception that while some of these policies may be in the pursuit of genuine US global interests, yet there are quite a few that can be traced to the disproportionate influence of the Military-Industrial establishment so candidly referred to by President Dwight Eisenhower in his Farewell Address. Similarly, the perennial influence of Zionist lobby and of the emerging Indian lobby is a cause for serious concern. In brief, feelings against America are largely in reaction to:

   a) American hegemonistic foreign, and security policies;

   b) systematic efforts towards economic and cultural domination; and

   c) To the arrogance, hypocrisy and double standards persistently displayed by respective American leaderships and media.

The people of Pakistan, by and large, firmly hold that American policies vis-à-vis Pakistan and the Muslim world are seriously flawed. Without denying a certain area of 'convergence of interests', it has to be acknowledged that there also exist vast 'areas of divergence', characterized by some serious conflicts between the national interests and strategic objectives of the US and Pakistan.

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4.   Gilani, The Voice of the People: Public Opinion in Pakistan 2007-2009.

That is the reason why a large majority of the people and not merely the Islamic groups, (who definitely are in the vanguard) is opposed to the US policies and presence in the country in overt and covert forms, as also to the collaborative role of their own political leaderships, including the military establishment, with the US and other foreign players. It deserves to be noted that all public opinion surveys conducted by Gallup or other US/Western organizations have consistently reported popular opposition to the US policies by an overwhelming number of people of Pakistan, ranging from 70 to 80 percent.[5]

It may be noted that a rare public opinion survey conducted recently by the New American Foundation in Pakistan's worst affected Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) reports that 75% of the people whom the US, NATO and Pakistani forces are protecting from the "terrorists" are "opposed to US drone attack on Pakistan side" and that 48% of those who responded, claimed that "only innocent civilians are being killed in these attacks" while another "33 percent thought that both terrorists and civilians are being killed. Most eye-opening has been the response of 6 out of 10 of those who are opposed to terrorism and yet they say that "suicide attacks are justified against US military", even 10 percent justify such attacks against the Pakistan Army.[6]

Although Pakistan is the main focus of the question in the context of the US war on terror in Afghanistan, but the repugnance towards US policies and activities at the popular level is an almost universal phenomenon as far as the Muslim and Third world countries are concerned. Perhaps the only exceptions are Israel and to an extent India.[7] Even in a number of European and South American countries similar trends are noticeable[8]. It deserves to be noted that even all those Muslim countries where leaderships are politically on the same page with the US there exists popular disapproval of the US and its policies. Countries like Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Indonesia and Turkey deserve special mention.

If this is the grass roots feeling, would it not be a saner policy to address 'what lies behind this explosion' of "anti-Americanism" by probing the causes and factors that have generated this universal reaction and not be obsessed with certain pre-conceived notions about religion-centeredness of certain reactions or be lost in a maze of political clichés and rhetoric so brazenly presented as "thought" and "analysis"?

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5.   See, Gilani, *The Vices of the People*, op.cit; *IRI Index : Pakistan Public Opinion Survey*; *PEW Global Attitudes Project*: Spring 2007 Survey.
6.   New America Foundation, "Public Opinion in Pakistan's Tribal Regions."
7.   See *PEW Global Survey op cit*.
8.   See PEW Global survey *op cit.*

Domestic reaction: 'Islamic' or widespread?

A deeper, objective analysis of the domestic reaction to the US policies and its engagement in the region can lead to some clues to the understanding of political and civilizational predicament of the present day. There is no denying the fact that there is an "Islamic dimension" in relation to the Pakistani people's reaction and response to the US policies. Ideology, whether Islamic, liberal, capitalist, socialist or whatever that may be, along with national interests and external and domestic imperatives, always plays an important role in the making of domestic and external policies. In view of the above recognition, the Islamic aspirations of the Pakistani people have a definite part in the shaping of their perceptions and responses to the US policies, as also to its political and cultural adventures, globally and more specifically in Pakistan and the Muslim world. Yet this is not the whole story.

The US relationship with Pakistan has a distinct flavor because of the cold war context in which it began and the part the US has always played in influencing, even "manipulating", domestic forces, both military and civil, to pursue its own agenda and interests. As such, it would be incorrect to assume that it is the ideological dimension 'only' that has shaped the reaction of the Pakistani people. Moreover, the US role in promoting even is imposing on the rest of the world, a global, economic and political system, which is inherently flawed and unjust, has been a factor of critical importance. Similarly the blind US support for Israel and its collaborative relationships with India have influenced Pakistani peoples' perception of American objectives and role. There are serious apprehensions in Pakistan about the US tilt towards a pro-Indian strategy in the region. People feel that in a number of areas the USA, India and Israel are very much on the same page. Pakistan's strategic relationship with China is also a factor of great relevance. The US and Indian policies towards China and their collaboration to contain and encircle China also represent very important dimensions. The US lack of adequate concern for Pakistan's vital interests in the region, and particularly with regard to the Kashmir and Water issues, has also made the US a non-dependable ally in the eyes of the people of Pakistan. The cultural influences of the US and its inroads into the civil society, media, education etc. are also factors which cannot be neglected. These and a host of other issues have played their role in shaping Pakistani people's perception of the US role and its agenda in the region.

As far as the disappointment and anger of the Pakistani people against America is concerned, there should be no reservation in re-affirming that it is almost universal, across the board, and not confined to people of a particular ideological orientation. Over 80% of the people of Pakistan regard American role as negative, offensive, glaringly in conflict with some of Pakistan's strategic interests, and a threat to its vital assets.

A survey conducted by the World Public Opinion Organization (January 2008) reveals that only 6% of the Pakistani people think that Pak-US cooperation has been to the benefit of Pakistan, 44%

deem it "only in the interests of the US". 29% go to the extent of saying that "they have hurt the interests of Pakistan" and 72% regard "US military presence in Asia as a major threat to Pakistan" while another 12% perceive it as "a threat, although not a major one." It would not be an exaggeration to suggest that they do not look towards the US as a real friend, a friend in need, whatever be the 'elopements' of the rulers and the vested interests from within Pakistan.

There had been widespread disaffection even before the devastating event of 9/11: it has increased after that. One cannot forget the shock the people of Pakistan had in 1965 when after Indian attack on Pakistan; the so-called "best friend" stopped all its supplies of military spares critically important for the very security of Pakistan. All economic assistance was also instantly stopped. Then came the outrageous intimidations and sanctions to deny Pakistan its nuclear research and development. Finally, the US took a U-turn after the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan with all its devastating consequences for Afghanistan and serious after-shocks for Pakistan. The height of this turn-about came in the form of stringent sanctions against Pakistan, followed by an unending media crusade and think-tank onslaughts to project Pakistan as a "Pariah" and a "Failed/Failing State." Even the dates of its expected demise were not in short supply.

The situation has been aggravated by the US War on Muslim lands in the wake of 9/11. There is a tsunami of Islamophobia and Pakistan-bashing those have further imperiled these relationships.

The US war on terror had always been looked upon by the people of Pakistan with suspicion—as a war with ulterior motives imposed upon Pakistan by bullying the then Pakistani leadership under threats of throwing Pakistan back to the Stone Age. The ever-increasing stream of anti-Islam outbursts flowing from the US and Europe has further accentuated peoples' sentiments against the US and Western powers. That is why an overwhelming majority of Pakistanis disapproves of US policies and performance, both globally and in the region. They are extremely critical of the way the US continues to pressurize Pakistani establishment, civil and military, to serve the US interests and pursues with arrogance and impunity activities that violate Pakistan's sovereignty, independence, and honor. These soft and hard strokes threaten its stability and constitute an existential challenge.

 The latest revelations about the real thinking of the US leadership and policymakers about Pakistan and its civil and military leaderships, as portrayed in Bob Woodward's latest book 'Obama's Wars'[9] are shocking to say the least. It seems that in the heart of its heart, the top leadership in America does not look upon Pakistan as a friend and an ally. Instead, it sees Pakistan as a suspect, nay even as a 'cancer', "an epicenter of terrorism" and a "matter of greater concern than even Afghanistan." If this is so, then Pakistan is considered a problem, and not a partner in working out a solution to the problem.

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9.   Woodward, Obama's Wars: the inside Story.

These outbursts have hurt the people of Pakistan deeply and eroded whatever was left of any faith in and respect of the US. It would be a misnomer to call this relationship as friendly, based on trust and mutuality of interests, and leading to a "strategic partnership". There is huge trust-deficit between the US government and the government of Pakistan, its civil and military establishments, and also the people of Pakistan who feel humiliated and let down. This is bound to generate further resentment, distrust and distance. It may be given whatever name one may like— "anti-Americanism" or something else.

Pakistan's 'Islamic ideology' and 'Islamic relationship'

Islamic identity is the basis of Pakistan and about 97 percent of the population is Muslim. It is committed to shape its lives on the basis of Islam which provides guidance for all walks of life, individual and collective. Islam does not divide life into secular and sacred, private and public, state and religion. This ideological dimension has a very important role in the making of all domestic and international policies and relationships. This is natural.

Religion has always played a very important role in the public domain. This is not exclusive to the Muslim people. Despite all claims about separation of state and religion in the Western world, USA included, religion remains a powerful force even in the Political/Public spheres. Sammuel Huntington's last book 'Who Are We: The challenges to America's National Identity' focuses on certain aspects of American life that are ignored under the smoke-screen of modernity. Huntington insists that America is a Christian country and the "principal theme of this book is the continuing centrality of Anglo-Protestant culture to American national identity."[10]

There is no reason to regard Pakistan's situation as something exceptional. Several US opinion surveys throw light on the role played by religion in respect of different issues in American public life. The recent furor about the so-called "Ground Zero Mosque"—in fact a Cultural Centre and an Inter-Faith Project with a Prayer Hall, two blocks (some 200 meters) away from the site of the destroyed Trade Centre, the venue of terrorist attack in which some 3000 persons belonging to 40 nationalities, including at least 60 Muslims, were killed—is one more example of the religious discrimination in the most advanced and powerful democracy of the world. A PEW Survey (June 2008), giving America's religious profile, "confirms the strong links that exist between Americans' religious affiliation, their beliefs and practices, and their basic social and political attitudes. Religion may, in fact, be playing a more powerful, albeit indirect, role in shaping people's thinking than many Americans recognize." The survey is based on interviews with over 36,000 people. Its results show that "Not only does religious affiliation influence Americans' attitudes on important social

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10.   Huntington, *Who Are We: The challenges to America's National Identity,* 30. See also Phillips, *American Theocracy: The Peril and Politics of Radical Religion.*

and cultural questions; it is also closely related to Americans' basic political orientation."[11] It may be worthwhile to recall that a Gallup USA Poll of February 2006 shows that 45% of the American people say that the Bible should be "a source" and 9% believe that it should be "the only source" of law in the US. According to this survey, 42% of Americans want religious leaders to have "direct role in writing a constitution."[12]

The Gallup surveys about the Muslim world show that about 9 out of 10 Muslims in Pakistan and most of the Muslim countries want Shariah to be 'the' source or at least 'one' source of law in their respective countries. Despite serious differences in the quantitative as well as qualitative ingredients of the religious, political and cultural landscapes of America and the Muslim world, some of the similarities and to a certain degree, commonality of key problems cannot be ignored. As far as the current trends towards extremism and terrorism are concerned it is worthwhile to recall what Esposito and Mogahed have to say in their conclusion: "The real differences between those who condone terrorist acts and all others is about politics not piety".[13]

Pre and Post Afghan Jihad and post 9/11 'Islamic Domestic Reactions'

There is a tendency of linking the post-Afghan Jihad 'reaction' with the terrorist events of 9/11 and there is a need to address the assumptions on the basis of which such a connection is established before trying to differentiate the pre- and post-Afghan Jihad and post 9/11 'Islamic reactions'.

The terrorist attack of 9/11 was a crime against humanity. But the way the US responded to 9/11 is no less a crime, a blunder and a global catastrophe. The heinous attacks on Twin Towers were not treated as 'a criminal act', to be handled within the framework of criminal justice system and due process of law, as was done even by the US itself in the cases of the earlier New York Trade Centre attack of 1993, the Oklahoma terrorist attack in which 168 Americans were killed and the attack on the naval ship US Cole in Yemen waters (October, 2000). Instead a legal fiction of "War on America" was concocted, and the world thrown into the fires of global confrontation, leading to invasions of Afghanistan, Iraq and even parts of Pakistan. None of the 19 terrorists supposed to be involved in the 9/11 episode were Afghans, Iraqis or Pakistanis; yet in the name of "counter terrorism" and "elimination of safe havens" Afghanistan and Iraq were invaded resulting in merciless killing of hundreds of thousands of people, destruction of huge populations and properties on a horrendous scale, and creation of new legions of terrorists, making the world a much more insecure place for all.

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11. Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, *U.S.Religious Landscape Survey - Religious Beliefs and Practices: Diverse and Politically Relevant.*

12. Esposito and Mogahed, *Who Speaks for Islam?*

13. Ibid, 74.

The demonization of Islam and Muslims in general and of Arabs and Pakistanis in particular, is another terrible product of this multidimensional Neo-Crusade.

It is hard to find a direct link between the pre-Afghan Jihad and post-Afghan Jihad, as also their alleged nexus with any 'Islamic domestic reaction'. The so-called link between 9/11 and 'post-Afghan Jihad' reaction is a hypothesis and a surmise. The phenomenon is much more complex, having multiple dimensions and a much longer history than 9/11. Simplistic generalizations and politically motivated formulations cannot help in understanding the real situation. The issue is primarily political and strategic, even though there may be a lot of religious gloss and rhetoric. The 9/11 remains a mystery and the US leadership has failed to hold an independent inquiry to let the world, and for that matter its own people, understand the whole truth, highlighting the real factors and forces behind that outrageous crime against humanity. It has also failed to identify all forces responsible for its perpetration, as well as those whose failure made it possible including the seventeen odd US intelligence agencies, its immigration and civil aviation authorities and its military and security establishment. There are standing instructions to the US air force to immediately intercept any plane that deviate from its clearly laid out traffic path. There is no record of any interception even though the tragic drama took some two hours to unfold.

The world is, therefore, intrigued why the US leadership has not faced squarely the real questions and issues of responsibility, domestic and international. Even the 9/11 Commission regrets that all the information they asked for was not shared with them. No heads have rolled because of the failures of the U.S establishment. The awe-inspiring questions being raised about the attack on Pentagon and the inexplicable collapse of a third unattached building, WTC7, have been conveniently ignored.[14]

Afghanistan and Iraq have been devastated and the entire Muslim world and the US and global economy have suffered because of the post 9/11 policies of the United States and its allies.[15] There is an urgent need to find out the truth behind 9/11 in all its dimensions, and the consequences of the US policies allegedly in response to that dreadful event. It is a big question whether the world has suffered more by 9/11 tragedy or by the US response to 9/11. Both have evidently been catastrophic.

Muslim and Third world intellectuals are not alone in their yearnings for truth. Powerful voices have also been raised from within the USA and Europe. Over a hundred intellectuals, scientists, engineers and researchers are engaged in chasing some of the unanswered questions and over a dozen websites are galore with explorative excursions into the truth behind 9/11. Yet it remains,

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14.   See Griffin, *9/11 Contradictions*; Shell*, 9.11: The New Evidences* Robinson; Meyssan, *9/11: The Big Lie,* Carnot; Griffin, *The New Pearl Harbor.*
15.   Stiglitz and Bilmas, *The Three Trillion Dollar War: The True Cost of the Iraq Conflict.*

borrowing the famous phrase of Winston Churchill, "a riddle, wrapped in mystery, inside an enigma."

Sir Nanina Stephen, former High Court Judge and Governor General of Australia, has raised some pertinent questions in a contribution relating to 9/11. He says: "The enormity of the attacks on New York and Washington no doubt account for the term war, but to dignify them as acts of war is to give them more than their due. They are simply terrorism and should be dealt with as international crimes rather than as matters of warfare".[16] A panel of jurists working on behalf of the International Commission of Jurists, Geneva, has also challenged the indiscriminate use of the war paradigm for the so-called 'War on Terror'.

Serious questions about the US response and its results are being raised and cannot be ignored for long. it seems pertinent to concluded the discussion with the words of Prof. John Mueller, Professor of Political Science, University of Ohio, USA who poses the relevant question:

"Which is the greater threat: Terrorism, or our reaction against it? A threat that is real but likely to prove to be of limited scope has been massively, perhaps even forcefully, inflated to produce widespread and unjustified anxiety. This process has then led to wasteful, even self-periodic expenditures and policy overreactions, ones that not only very often do more harm and cost more money than anything the terrorists have accomplished, but play into their hand."[17]

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16.   Stephen, *Terrorism and Justice: Moral Arguments in a Threatened World.*
17.   Mueller, *Overblown.*

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