Warping the Judgement of Dissenting Opinion
towards a general framework for comparing distortion in rules of evidence

Introduction

This study arose from a search for a comparative overview of the different ways that evidence may be distorted. The purpose is to find a means of positioning the evidence used in current efforts by western countries to justify curtailing civil liberties and due process in response to terrorism. The three approaches to comparing evidence envisaged here are:

- kinds of evidence that may be distorted and the fallacies to which this may give rise
- examples from different historical and socio-political contexts as case studies, and notably by extending the coverage to include legal, scientific and other concerns with evidence

The conclusion was initially foreseen in the form of a table of case studies from a variety of sectors and times with an indication of the incidence of particular forms of distortion in the face of dissent. Such a table would help to give a sense of the diversity of forms of evidence to which appeal is made.

Following inability to locate such a comparative table via the web, the intention has been reframed to indicate the possible content of such a table and what might be learnt from it, through indicating many links to possibly relevant sources. A special concern is clarifying the nature of ‘chains of evidence’ under a variety of circumstances -- especially where major significance is attached to contrasting value perspectives. The intention was to go beyond the focus of Amnesty International on the standards of fair trial and also look at judgements regarding dissenting opinion in extra-legal contexts (including science, medicine, insurance, religion, etc).

More generally however the concern here is with competing efforts to occupy the moral high ground and to misrepresent dissenting views in such a way as to preclude any form of dialogue -- notably through use of terms such as 'rejectionist'. Dissidence may take religious form but may also be evident in political dissent -- possibly to be considered as dangerously associated with 'terrorists'. R Scott Appleby has extended the connotations to jihad warriors as 'uncompromising rejectionists who oppose all peace accords, negotiated settlements and power-sharing agreements' [more]. Use of the term has been queried in the case of Northern Ireland: 'It seems that those who oppose the continuation of British Rule or the legitimacy of the British to impose any foreign partitionist document on the People of Ireland are now "rejectionists" or "republican rejectionists"' [more; more]. The term is being used against both sides of the Oslo peace process [more] and against opponents of any form of military intervention [more]. It is noteworthy that such an authority as John Ruggie (formerly Dean of School of International and Public Affairs, Columbia University), in his capacity of UN Assistant Secretary-General, has introduced the term into United Nations parlance in order to frame civil society bodies opposing both globalization and the
reframed UN relations with the business community [more; more]. This recalls the emergence in centuries past of 'Protestant' and 'nonconformist', and the condemnation of 'unbelievers' and 'infidels' by various religions as a prelude to religious wars [more; more; more; more].

The emerging international approach to dissent is especially regrettable in that many civil society bodies endeavour to articulate views distinct from dominant policies -- as part of their complementary role in democratic society. It would also be regrettable if 'nongovernmental organizations' -- so labelled by the United Nations -- were to be reframed as 'anti-governmental organizations' if they fail to indicate their unquestioning allegiance to government programmes such as the military action in Afghanistan, and that proposed for other countries. Failure to handle dissenting views appropriately is seen here as dangerous to social processes and especially ironic on the occasion of the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations (2001).

A very general framework is required to show how rules of evidence may differ under various circumstances. In support of such an initiative, the creation of an International Agency for Standards of Evidence is proposed (below). As a simple illustration of the challenge, 'evidence' is misleadingly translated by the same word in French -- where 'évidence' signifies that which is obvious.

Influence of values and ideologies

In the light of current events, one intention here was to compare evidence in purely legal proceedings with that in proceedings strongly influenced by religious sensitivity to 'evil', especially in the light of a perception in the Islamic world of the 'satanic' actions of the USA and Israel, and widespread references by Christian fundamentalists -- highly influential in the Bush administration -- to the influence of 'Satan' behind the evil of the attacks. For example, James Merritt, President of the Southern Baptist Convention (the largest Protestant body in the USA) declared: "The world has witnessed firsthand today the terrible effects of sin and Satan's handiwork in the brutal killing of many innocent people".

At a time when great emphasis is placed on a 'propaganda war' and 'winning hearts and minds', the highly contradictory information circulated through the media and on the web is not contributing to the balanced judgement associated with unambiguous rules of evidence. For example, an authentic Associated Press photograph of the attack was circulated worldwide with the claim that Satan could be seen in the smoke. According to a commentary by American Atheists: 'The imagery of Satan emerging from the World Trade Center may have peculiar symbolic meaning in light of the nature of the attacks themselves, seen by some as a religious confrontation between Islam and Christianity'. Similarly, a web page, seemingly from CNN, posted on 27 September 2001 carries (at the date of writing) the title Satan, millionaire with a dangerous grudge (although it would appear that 'Bin Laden' may have been replaced by 'Satan' and al-Qaida by 'Evil' through hacker intervention). The text starts: 'Satan, the man U.S. intelligence officials say is the prime suspect behind the September 11 hijacking attacks, is the head of a shadowy organization that is believed to have been targeting the United States and its allies since the early 1990s.'

In a period when re-introduction of faith-based policies is being actively considered both in the USA and in the UK, the extraordinary post-attack polarization debate into 'good' versus 'evil' is also partly reinforced by the imminent 'end times' scenarios of Christian fundamentalists -- the final battle between 'Good' and 'Evil' [more; more; more]. Such framings notably call for re-examination of the legalistic procedures originally introduced by the Catholic Inquisition to root out evil in the population in centuries past. The current relevance is established by Doug Linder in Searching for Evil: an examination of the nature of evil and its persistence in the American legal system. What is to be understood when any presiding judge applies the label 'evil' to a person convicted in a trial during the final summation and sentencing? Is it appropriate to express concern at the possible re-emergence of some form of 'faith-based justice' -- as would seem to be the case at this time.

It is noteworthy in what follows that commentators on rules of evidence, under quite different circumstances, readily apply terms such as 'witchhunt', 'inquisition' or 'McCarthyism' as descriptors -- suggesting that there is a degree of commonality that needs to be distinguished from the use of these terms as purely a rhetorical device.

See: Source Materials

Propaganda, credibility and 'smear-and-fear'

Successfully sustaining the 'war against terrorism' has required that leading western governments engage in a major 'propaganda war' for the 'hearts and minds' of the population [more; more; more; more]. This is effectively an extension of what what is known as Project Mockingbird, conceived in the late 1940s, when the CIA began a systematic infiltration of the corporate media, a process that often included direct takeover of major news outlets [more]. This has involved the full deployment of news management and spin techniques, in addition to strong encouragement to the media to engage in self-censorship as a demonstration of loyalty (more). This strategy creates a major problem for anyone endeavouring to interpret what constitutes genuine factual evidence behind such a media screen. Who could determine the degree of involvement of CIA-inspired script writers in major movie productions? Any declaration that sustains the coherence of the war strategy has now become legitimate, by definition -- including every form of disinformation and withholding of information.

As stated by Hermann Goering at the Nurembrug Trials: "people can always be brought to do the bidding of the leaders...All you have to do is tell them they are being attacked, and denounce (opponents) pacifists for lack of patriotism." Richard Gephardt made a related, and much-cited, point in speaking against the impeachment of Bill Clinton (19 December 1998): "We are now rapidly descending into a politics where lie imitates farce. Fratricide dominates our public debate and America is held hostage with tactics of smear and fear" [more]. Echoed in commentary on Canadian politics: 'Don't be blinded by spin doctors who have railroaded the real issues in this hot federal race through a smear-and-fear campaign that smacks of dirty American-style politics' [more]. The approach is recognized in Ireland: "Theological differences, he said, "are exaggerated, fear is built up, people are dehumanised, boundaries are made absolute, the
threat of violence is entertained”; this ‘mad dog’, was fed on a diet of misunderstanding, smear and fear: ‘It puts bombs outside primary schools; it burns little boys in their homes, and blows up grannies” [more]. Echoed again by Scottish nationalists: ‘It highlights the widespread disgust with London Labour’s negative smear and fear approach to this campaign and exposes the preposterous and infantile economics behind Labour’s attacks on Scotland and the SNP” [more]

Use of such techniques to intimidate dissenters has long astonished commentators on the apparent ‘cowardice’ of citizens in fascist and communist regimes. In the western response to ‘terrorists’, they now have the opportunity to experience it personally and to understand the different pressures on Jews and their neighbours during the Nazi period. The pressures on academics are similarly reminiscent of the same period:

Professors instinctively know that if they do not parrot the imposed belief systems they will not be invited to lecture, will not be invited to advise local and state governments, and will stand no chance of being appointed to a position in the federal government. Not only will they not receive those coveted honors of academia, they will be totally ostracized socially, academically, and by those who have those coveted positions. This is how we ended up with so much neo-classical economic philosophy with no connection to reality. (J W Smith. The Grand Strategy of Western Security Councils)

In a context in which governance is increasingly dependent on a high degree of news management, how do those using such spin techniques expect to maintain their credibility? How will they ever be able to prove that they are telling the truth when there is so much evidence of disinformation and cover-up -- to which governments frankly admit 'for reasons of national security'? To what extent are intergovernmental initiatives systematically undermined by the creation of bodies like the secret 'Brussels group' of governments (Belgium, Germany, Italy, UK, USA) in 1971, with the objective of limiting the effectiveness of the UN environment conference that created UNEP (New Scientist, 5 January 2002) (more)? Will such revelations only reinforce the position of those protesting 'globalization'? Will future crises become victim to the lessons of the nursery story of the little boy who cried 'wolf' -- once too often?

To what extent does such manipulation of evidence constitute shameful intellectual dishonesty -- and who cares? To what extent has western society become a Potemkin Society? [more]. Is it not curious that the military resources allocated to the 'war against terrorism' have only been matched by the vaguest of promises of humanitarian resources to address the impoverishment and injustice which breeds such terrorism? Whereas extensive new investments have been made to repress terrorism, can it be said that any commensurate new investments have been made to identify its roots and encourage the new thinking and action to compensate for decades of neglect? Or is the 'war against terrorism' to be considered merely an investment in maintaining the status quo? What initiatives have been proposed or funded to develop more viable ways to dialogue with those holding radically opposing perspectives? Has the intelligence community in any way contributed its intelligence to enabling such initiatives?

In a world economy threatened by recession, is the American economy now significantly dependent on the threat of terrorism to maintain itself on a lucrative war footing for years to come -- as variously suggested [more], notably in the Jugano Report [more; more] and the Iron Mountain Report [more; more; more; more]? As part of this support for the American economy, will coalition countries now be obliged to recompense the USA for its military actions, over the foreseeable future, as has been the case with the Gulf War? Are we really seeing the emergence of a Great Leviathan [more], as recommended by Yehezkel Dror (The Capacity to Govern: A Report to the Club of Rome, 2001), as part of the overriding necessity to radically upgrade governmental and global capacity to engage in "weaving of the future" to prevent atrocious barbarism with mass killing weapons and, perhaps, for assuring the very survival of humanity?

**Definitional game-playing**

It is significant that the whole approach to evidence associated with the response to the 11th September attacks has been fraught with problems. Most fundamental has been the problems of denial associated with distinguishing 'terrorists' from 'freedom fighters', especially where either may be state supported. Everyone is opposed to 'terrorism', but those capable of defining it do so primarily to legitimate highly questionable approaches to civil liberties. Especially problematic is the failure of the USA to acknowledge any degree of truth in the evidence for its official support for 'terrorism', notably in Nicaragua, or its complicity in 'terrorism' through past policies of hiring terrorists (until the CIA 'scrub order' of 1995 [more]) -- openly discussed in relation to the intelligence agency failure to predict the WTC attack.

The conceptual problem, vital to balanced treatment of evidence, continues to be avoided -- presumably for reasons of prudence. However the problem is not about to disappear. The associated definitional game-playing -- reminiscent of the traditional carnival game of 'find the lady' -- is used to manipulate related debates touching on the nature and scope of 'civil society', especially since the Al-Qaeda network is presumably to be considered a feature of it. This is notably evident in the case of the definition of 'sects' -- and the embarrassing question to the establishment of whether Freemasonry and Opus Dei fall under proposed definitions. But it is most blatant in the case of efforts by the United Nations to define 'civil society' in relation to 'NGOs', notably with respect to its Global Compact initiative [more; more; more].

In an effort to clarify some of these distinctions, the following crude fourfold pattern may be considered. A more elaborate fivefold diagram is provided by Jens van Schepenbergen (Combating the Terrorist-Criminal Nexus, 2001).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4-fold Pattern of definitional game-playing with regard to &quot;terrorism&quot;</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>disruptive focus on socio-political change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'terrorists' (violence for selfish ends)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ensuring stability of our community to facilitate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'change agents' 'freedom-fighters'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'self-satisfied good-guys'</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
The above fourfold pattern of distinctions becomes more useful when elaborated into a finer eightfold pattern:

**8-fold Pattern of definitional game-playing with regard to “terrorism”**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>'selfish cause'</th>
<th>well-being of our people irrespective of consequences for others (eg capitalist initiatives for shareholders)</th>
<th>offering token aid to the underprivileged to ensure the stability of their lifestyle</th>
<th>larger cause'</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>inhibiting focus on socio-political stasis</td>
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The eightfold pattern provides a tentative guide to some extremely problematic issues relating to distinguishing 'terrorists' from other social phenomena. The major concern is the manner in which the boundaries between the neighbouring categories are perceived and distorted in support of different ends. Naturally bodies associated with any one category perceive themselves in a very favourable light, if not as occupying the moral high ground relative to others. Categories opposite each other in the diagram tend to perceive each other as extremely problematic with respect to the viability of the social system as a whole. The four groups of two contiguous categories usefully hold the distinction between ‘for-profit’, ‘non-profit’, ‘realpolitik’, and ‘crime’. One diagonal usefully distinguishes ‘covert/illegal’ from the ‘physically non-violent’, whereas the second distinguishes ‘personal risk’ from ‘personal gain’. The first diagonal usefully holds what may be understood as the categoric Bush/Blair distinction of those who are ‘with us’ as opposed to those who are ‘against us’.

The eightfold pattern is most useful in drawing attention to the conceptual problem at the junction of contiguous categories, because the separation between categories is distinctly porous. In fact it might be much more useful to view the sequence of categories as forming a circular spectrum -- with the rainbow of colours blending into one another. Given that categories cannot be considered in this way at present, the problems at the boundaries must be separately considered:

1-2: Here there is the issue of the distinction been pro-active NGOs (such as Friends of the Earth) and ‘change agents’, many of which may also be 'NGOs' (as in the case of Greenpeace). Many humanitarian NGOs (such as Amnesty International or Médecins sans Frontières) would wish to perceive themselves as change agents. Many sects might prefer to see themselves not so much as change agents but as offering an alternative, non-disruptive, perspective through the belief system they advocate.

2-3: Here there is the nature of the distinction between fundamental commitment to social reform and a more modest (even token) engagement in it -- favouring the status quo. The interface is at the intersection between ‘personal risk’ and ‘personal gain’, especially given that many NGOs have ‘for-profit’ operations to ensure their financial survival, whilst many for-profit bodies have ‘non profit’ community programmes that they support to ensure the goodwill of the community in which they operate.

3-4: Although the ‘for-profit’ concern is emphasized here, there is the problematic contrast between business ‘with a social conscience’ (‘corporate social responsibility’) and that ensuring ‘maximum profitability for shareholders’ -- even though the latter may be presented as ‘responsible capitalism’. Tax avoidance by major corporations and exhorbitant salaries for CEOs exemplify the challenge of identifying socially responsible corporations.

4-5: This is the extremely problematic interface between legal business and those forms and practices (including serious fraud, ‘white collar crime’, bribery, money laundering) that are subject to indictment -- possibly including collusion with various forms of organized crime (notably through payoffs). Similarly there is the issue of providing legal fronts for organized crime. One issue here is the extent to which seemingly respectable businesses engage in intimidation, legal harassment, corruption, physical violence and ‘dirty tricks’ -- or simply in illegal practices of price fixing and cartel operation. Other issues concern the implication of unethical practices, price gouging, and the use of mercenaries.
5-6: This interface is the complex interaction between agents of organized crime and those who engage in criminal activity as an opportunity for gratuitous violence.

6-7: At this interface there is the question of the hiring of 'thugs' by state agencies in support of government agendas, and other forms of extraterritorial interference through violence and harassment by state agencies. In question is also the motivation of those engaged in covert operations, and the extent to which their mandate allows them to indulge in gratuitous intimidation -- as in many dramatizations of state interrogators. A related issue is the support of illegal activities, including drug-running.

7-8: This interface is the grey world of relationships between revolutionaries and counter-revolutionaries in which distinctions are notoriously difficult to establish, especially in the case of double agents of secret services. The relationship of the USA to the Taliban provides a good example: early efforts to negotiate pipeline concessions, bribery to encourage the natural Afghan tendency to switch sides during conflict, and the challenge of determining whether the Taliban prisoners were 'prisoners of war' or 'unlawful combatants'.

8-1: This interface raises the many questions about the distinction between violent and non-violent change agents, notably the question of demonstrators and activists and the extent to which their 'non-violent' initiatives are perceived as unacceptably violent despite their frustration with a 'due process' rigged against them. There is also the question of agents provocateurs planted by other bodies (such as governments or corporations) to ensure violence and condemnation of the change agents -- ensure the criminalization of dissent. Also of interest is how this framework might hold the Klu Klux Klan and associated bodies.

At each of these interfaces there are problems of:

- projection of negative attributes by one side onto the other
- denial of its own negative attributes by one side to the other
- efforts by each side to use propaganda to project a positive image, and to vigorously deny justification for any negative image
- propaganda exercises in accusing and blaming the other side, whilst endeavouring to preserve the moral high ground
- with reinforcing the identity and coherence of one side, and avoiding any confusing association with the other

These natural psycho-social dynamics are exacerbated by spin doctors concerned to portray their own policies positively and any others side negatively. They are further exacerbated by those seeking to exploit the opportunity to marginalize opponents by associating them with categories that are being successfully reframed negatively. It is unfortunate that an unbiased framework had not been elaborated before the polarized response to the attacks was launched. The above eightfold pattern is consequently biased by the predominance given to the current issues, whereas a more detached perspective might draw attention to the positive social functions of each category as well as the structural and other forms of non-physical violence associated with all of them -- 'intellectual terrorism' is also a feature of society. For example, Timothy Wilken makes use of Edward Haskell's *Moral Force of Unified Science, 1972*) to provide a more systemic pattern of relationships between combinations of two actors effectively characterized by each category in the diagram above. But the challenges of the ambiguity of the distinctions he addresses in that statement: 'The truth is in the eye of the beholder. The effect can be partial. There may be relationships that are partially synergetic, and/or partially neutral, and/or partially adversarial.' [more].

The Bush/Blair efforts at 'binary' distinctions between 'Us and Them' are easiest to plead in the case of the 'for-profit' group alone. Inclusion of the 'non-profit' group of categories is already challenged by the interface between 'change agents' claiming to be non-violent and the 'freedom fighters' who justify their use of force (as with Christian fundamentalist, pro-life assassins of abortionists). It becomes especially ironic from a historical perspective in that modern states have come into being through the action of 'insurgents' and 'freedom fighters' -- including the USA (through the action of the Continental Congress), and Israel (through the action of Irgun).

The denial of evidence for the relationship of one of the Founding Fathers of the USA with his own slave girl may have established an ironic pattern of official denial in American society that continues to this day (see closing quote). The imprinting of this pattern may derive from the earlier historically important attack of Rogers' Rangers on the Abenaki Indians at St Francois de Luc on 5 October 1759 [more]. The US Special forces, operating in Afghanistan, the Army Ranger Regiment, and Delta Force Command, for example, proudly trace their lineage to Rogers' Rangers of that French and Indian War [more; more; more; more]. But there are strange historical echoes to the present preoccupation with terrorism in that the original raid was in revenge for Indian attacks in New England (French state-supported 'terrorists'?). Evil too had its place to the Indians, Rogers was known as "Wabo Madahondo -- the white devil" [more] for his bloodlust and infamy -- the Indians' equivalent of Osama bin Laden. The modern military commissions are perhaps echoed in Rogers' statement: 'I have no mercy for patriots, no courts, no trials, but only a noose' [more]. And, as with manipulated modern battle estimates (for the Gulf War, Kosovo and Afghanistan), one set of evidence from, Rogers himself, had it that 200 Indians were killed, although local French observers claimed only 30 dead, including 20 women and children [more] -- and despite specific orders to that effect:

> Remember the barbarities committed by the enemy's Indian scoundrels on every occasion, where they have had opportunities of showing their famous cruelties towards His Majesty's subjects. Take your revenge; but remember that although the villains have promiscuously murdered women and children of all ages, it is my order that no women or children should be hurt. (Orders from General Jeff Anherst, Camp at Crown Point, 13 Sept 1759 to Major Rogers) [more]

Official spin doctors are especially challenged by efforts to justify, or deny, the action of covert operations and to distinguish 'good covert' from 'bad covert' in the light of the ample documentation on their involvement in what is perceived by many as 'state-supported terrorism' whilst national security officials refuse any distinction between 'good terrorists' and 'bad terrorists'. This is particularly ironic when agents of the CIA openly express regret to the media that they are no longer empowered to hire terrorists (as a result of the 1995 'scrub order'), and the policy blocking political assassination is publicly reversed by George Bush whilst assassination is blatantly implemented by Ariel Sharon with token reproval from its principal ally.
The situation in the USA is also problematic given the documented incidents of collusion of government agents with organized crime, the drug trade and the farcical attempts to assassinate Fidel Castro (cf Deadly Secrets: The CIA-Mafia War Against Castro and the Assassination of J.F.K. by Warren Hinckle, et al) [more]. It is curious that Hollywood movies, presumably partly inspired by the CIA, have made extensive use of a subtler set of categories now denied by the simplistic official policies of the USA. Whilst Henry Kissinger may express preferences for the options of Realpolitik [more; more], the degree of denial on the part of the Bush administration concerning the collusion of 'Us' with 'Them', calls for open recognition of these subtler distinctions if any shred of intellectual honesty is to be preserved. Declaring 'Them' to be 'terrorists', or terrorist 'fellow-travellers' might otherwise result in a dangerous exercise in self-condemnation necessitating drastic action against the significant portion of the population that are not in favour of the policies of 'Us'.

**Conclusion**

This paper has been designed, through its many links to other sources, to enable the emergence of a framework through which the variety of forms of evidence might be identified and compared to further clarify the above distinctions. Such an initiative is important at a time when the USA and the UK, in particular, are introducing legislation to admit use of hearsay evidence [more] and secret evidence [more] in order to convict those they wish to suspect of terrorism [more; more; more; more] -- now extended, on the basis of unilaterally defined evidence, to 'tens of thousands of dangerous killers schooled in the methods of murder' still at large (according to President Bush's State of the Union message (30 January 2002). In contrast, under Islamic law in the absence of two witnesses, even circumstantial evidence is inadequate for conviction of murderers, because it can lead to miscarriage of justice [more].

Once such a framework exists it would permit more enlightened discussion of the many ways in which the rules of evidence can be manipulated or used in dysfunctional definitional game-playing between opposing perspectives -- especially through use of 'due process' to disguise intellectually dishonest arguments concerning chains of evidence in order to sustain false conclusions. Insights into the status of evidence in game-playing could be usefully derived from transaction analysis (for example the work based on Eric Berne's, Games People Play, 1964). Of course developing such a framework is merely an indulgent thought experiment in a period in which cultural insecurity is such that ideological differences can only be resolved through assassination and carpet bombing -- and their social and intellectual analogues.

Given the manner in which evidence for 'terrorism' is now being loosely advanced, many civil society bodies and forms of protest are vulnerable to being labelled 'terrorist' by those unable to defend their own agendas in response to embarrassing evidence about their unfortunate effects on civil society. Various forms of protest in democratic society, including political criticism, are effectively being suppressed for risk of such condemnation, if not by the courts then at least in the court of public opinion or the media. Striking examples are Greenpeace and Women In Black (nominated for Nobel Peace Prize, 2001), under investigation as possible terrorist organizations by the FBI [more; more]. In various countries, and for Europe as a whole, legitimate civil society bodies risk being placed, without recourse, on official lists of suspect terrorist organizations following a pattern condemned in totalitarian regimes.

In the ongoing democratic struggle between government and civil society, notably at the international level, there have been phases over recent decades in which criticism of civil society has focused primarily on their 'effectiveness', then on their 'representativity', and then on their 'democratic mandate' -- all without exploring reasons for their existence in the social ecosystem. Given their unchecked proliferation and increasing vociferousness, the focus would now seem to have switched to their 'allegiance' to the values of civilized society (with the burden of proof on those accused). Given the progressive erosion of the credibility of many mainstream arguments relating to globalization and other issues, framing any protest as potentially linked to terrorism has become a strategy of choice as a means of marginalizing dissent. For example, as indicated by Andy Beckett:

> Within days of the deaths in New York and Washington, anyone, it seemed, who had ever been publicly critical of America or globalisation suddenly found themselves accused of complicity with Osama bin Laden -- and worse. In the British press alone, they have been described as 'deafeningly' and 'unpatriotic', 'nihilist' and 'masochistic', and both 'Stalinist' and 'fascist'; as 'a Prada-Meinhof gang', 'the handmaiden of Osama' and 'an auxiliary to dictators'; as 'limp', 'lofty', 'wobbly', 'heartless and stupid', and 'worm-eaten by Soviet propaganda'; as full of 'loose talk', 'wilful self-delusion' and 'intellectual decadence'; as a collection of 'useful idiots', 'dead-eyed zombies', and 'people who hate people'. The sheer fury and contempt of these sentiments has seemed to go beyond the usual name-calling of British politics. (Guardian, 17 January 2002)

As indicated earlier, it is extremely unfortunate that John Ruggie, as Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations, should have provided UN encouragement for this mode through his labelling of those opposing capitalist globalization as 'rejectionist' [more; more] -- in anticipation of the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations (2001). Is there no shame on the part of the UN at its irresponsible failure to create a more adequate approach to dialogue between those of opposing views -- rather than unashamedly siding with a particular view? Is its use of the label 'rejectionist' an unconscious recognition of its own rejection of the views of one group of 'we the peoples'? In this sense does mutual rejection not effectively define the dynamics between all sides in any pattern of dissent?

If any form of protest can be challenged as disloyalty to the war effort against terrorism, with what evidence are the actions of change agents to be distinguished from those of terrorists -- and by whom? Given the extent to which American culture has prided itself on its ability to innovate and change, is any proposal for change now to be considered a threat to the 'non-negotiable' American Way of Life? To what extent will this mindset lock American culture into stasis? Has change itself become 'terrifying' and consequently associated with 'terrorism'? Is a consultant, as an agent of change, to be considered a 'terrorist' -- as downsized employees may have reason to believe? Does the current mindset set the seal on inability to change? Is this symptomatic of the 'change phobia' from which ill-specified systems typically suffer? How does such 'change phobia' relate to premature cultural senility? Has the crude US-led western response to abhorrent events exemplified the weaknesses of western civilization and its own shameful contempt for standards to which it has sought
to hold others -- who may well subscribe to richer and less polarized systems of categories?

The approach taken by this document suggests the need for some form of 'International Agency for Standards of Evidence' that might review the rules of evidence in all their forms and under a variety of conditions. Its objective might be to guard against manipulative game-playing with the different rules of evidence as applied in various domains - and to clarify the possibilities for such game-playing. The degree of civilization might be said to be defined by the coherence and integrity of the set of rules of evidence on the basis of which policies are formulated and approved.

Additionally, given the unique role that 'evil' has been called to play in polarizing debate at this time, the religions with the largest stake in sustaining such definition, in support of the conflicts they inspire, could usefully benefit from an associated 'Inter-faith Agency for Evidence in Dialogue'.

Given the recognition accorded 'evil' by the Bush and Blair administrations, as the 'Axis of Good', would it not be imperative within their logical framework to establish some kind of 'International School of Exorcism' to improve professional resources for processing terrorists possessed by such 'evil' -- perhaps benefitting from the insights of the Pope's recent De Exorcismis et supplicationibus quibusdam (more)? Or, given the estrangement between Protestants and Catholics, should the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (formerly the School of the Americas) be seen as the modern equivalent (more; more)? How can the techniques it prescribes, described in the classified US Army Field Manual 30-15: Intelligence Interrogations (Section II: Use of Force), as referenced in Physical Interrogation Techniques (Richard Krousher, 1985) and described by John Sutherland (Guardian, 21 January 2002), be adapted to this end (more; more)?

Can the place of 'terrorism' in society be usefully understood as a modern form of 'witchcraft' to which the Inquisition's judicial processes were designed to respond? How should the methodology of interrogation of those suspected of being possessed by 'evil' differ from the Inquisition's process that 'Put People to the Question' according to judicial procedures laid down, for example, in the Malleus Maleficarum (1486) (more; more)? The current challenge for the 'Axis of Good' would be to extend such methodology to the exorcism of networks and groups possessed by the devil. But, for a person giving primacy to faith, is it not extremely difficult to distinguish between those perspectives in disagreement with their own and what their faith encourages them to perceive as a manifestation of 'evil' -- and hence the tendency to warping of judgement of dissenting opinion?

I know of no safe depository of the ultimate powers of the society but the people themselves; and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them, but to inform their discretion.

Thomas Jefferson (Founding Father of the USA -- and allegedly father of an illegitimate child by his slave (more; more))

References

Over 160 references in the above text (and the associated Source Materials) are given as direct hyperlinks to web documents -- using [more]. Such links are not visible in printed versions of this document. They are not necessarily the most appropriate links, or of the highest quality, but they do serve to illustrate the concern and may offer links to other more relevant sites. Those that follow are essentially in addition to the items in the body of the text.

Child abuse

Sheila Vives and Robin Shepherd. URLs of webpages exposing child 'protective' system practices [text]

Creationism

Stephen E. Jones. Creation/Evolution Quotes. [text]

Cults

Scientology expert on clear evidence [text]

Environmental witch hunts

Latter-day witch hunts. Civil Defense Perspectives November 1994 (vol. 11, #1) Physicians for Civil Defense [text]

HUAC

Richard Rovere. Senator Joe McCarthy (1959)
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