

Dilemma Theory and Our Current Crisis

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Using dilemma theory we should be able to respond to the current crisis and put together a coherent analysis of what is wrong and what will need to be done. Let me start with a number of viewpoints which are **thought** to be opposed, but which are in fact reconcilable.

Dilemma 1

The attack on the Trade Center is an expression of pure evil

The origins of this tragedy lie in mistakes in US policies

Dilemma 2

We must not appease this evil but fight it remorselessly

We must address the roots of others' hatred of us

Dilemma 3

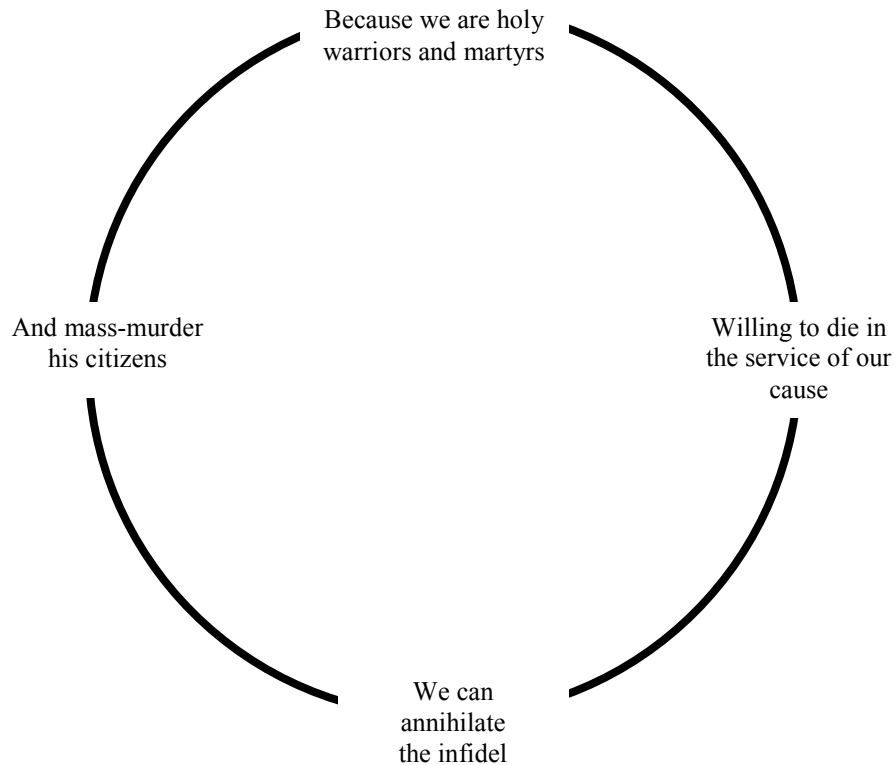
Terrorism threatens the whole civilised world

Terror is the weapon of last resort of the weak

Dilemma 1 The “Pure Evil” argument

Suicide bombing in which cut-throat (literally) terrorists fly a plane-load of innocent, screaming passengers, including women and children, into sky-scrappers full of office workers must rate as a good definition of “pure evil”. President Bush is right, except that he would not concur with the other horn of the dilemma, which might make us hesitate and which spoils sound-bites.

Evil consists of a **juxtaposition of extreme opposites**, of which mass-murder juxtaposed with self-destruction is a good example. Gregory Bateson, the cultural anthropologist, called this **schizmogogenesis**, “the growing split in the structure of ideas.” We have sometimes called it a vicious circle. Films like **The God Father** in which one Mafia family using the christening of its own child as a “cover” for a murderous attack on another juxtaposes the Sacred and the Profane. The camera keeps cutting from the sign of the cross on the infant’s forehead to machine-gunning a couple in bed, back to incense and incantation, back to mayhem. There is the same clash of holy martyrdom with mass murder in this case. The vicious circle which is a self-exciting, self-perpetuating downward spiral reads as follows.



The opposites are holy martyrdom/annihilation, killing self/killing others.

Let us compare these motives to those of New York firemen (and for that matter good Muslims and Christians in general). Such people are willing to Risk their lives, but their intention is to Secure others, including themselves. Risk remains integrated to Security, as if joined by a powerful strand of elastic, that both stretches apart yet comes together. Such people put their lives in danger **while still desiring fervently to live**. This tension between Courage and Caution is what evokes our admiration. They are truly brave, **because** they want to come

home again.

But suppose, as in the case of suicide bombers, that they don't want to come home again. The "elastic" holding values together has snapped. In that case we have not Courage and Caution but....

Recklessness  Cowardice

The gap in the line signifies that the values have split. They no longer contain or constrain one another. Indeed, the terrorist is **more** reckless because he has escaped from witnessing the consequences of his act through utter cowardice. Because he does not wish to go home again his reckless violence can escalate even further. Like Brunhilde in **The Ring of Nibelungen** (Hitler's favourite opera) she rides into the flames of the **Gutterdamerung**.

So far the hawks among my readers will probably be in agreement with me. They are evil. We are good. End of story. On the contrary, we have barely begun. It is nothing like as simple.

The US policy argument

To say that terrorists have behaved diabolically is not a sufficient explanation – unless you are a hell fire preacher who sees sin everywhere, as a kind of spontaneous combustion.

Values get split apart because people face dilemmas and oppressive circumstances, with which they cannot cope. Their personalities are split into pathological shards by these incessant traumas. A few of them become utterly enraged and deranged.

Have US foreign and economic policies helped to impose these dilemmas on Third World people, those of Muslim faith among them? I believe they have, although this is largely by **inadvertence**. US policies have had **unintended consequences** which sowed the seeds of this terrible tragedy. I have space here for only three examples.

The Arab-Israel dispute has been treated like domestic American politics

Democracy works very well in eliminating violent dissent, where dissenters can be heard and where legislators take note of their complaints. But a serious problem arises when the conflict is in the Middle East, where Arabs vastly outnumber Jews, while the debate takes place inside America where American Jews are vastly more influential and better organised politically than is the Arab lobby.

New York is said to have more citizens of Jewish ancestry than Israel. American Jews have made an extraordinary contribution to American cultural life and are deservedly very prominent in the media, in learned professions and in politics. I am myself an example of this influence. American Jews like Abraham Maslow have inspired my own work and scores of them are my friends and colleagues. I know intimately only one Arab (the Best Man at my wedding).

Politicians of both American parties who seek re-election are obliged to lean towards Israel if they are to satisfy constituents, thereby making enemies of populations and religious adherents vastly more numerous. (There are one billion Sunni Muslims at least). America is imposing a world order which **responds to domestic opinion** hugely at odds with majority opinions world-wide. This in a country where half the legislators have no passport and whose President has never visited Asia or the Middle East.

The discontents of globalism

American equity capitalism is spreading its influence across the globe, without vast segments of the Third World being consulted or participating in any way. Nearly half the world's largest economies are not nation states but global corporations. For persons of deep religious convictions who have always controlled their domestic traders by religious edict, the empires of fast food and soda pop are a secular blasphemy on sacred culture. The world is being taken over by a trivial materialism, an oligarchy of cheap food and drink purveyors.

Globalism has some calamitous consequences for poorer nations. Those providing raw material commodities have – with some exceptions like OPEC – been hit by declining commodity prices. Democracies have for many years looked after their **own** commodity suppliers, principally farmers and EU “butter mountains” and “wine-lakes” are notorious, but no one looks after countries, whose raw commodity exports are their principal life line and who, should they increase production, are likely to send prices into free fall. More than sixty

countries are so in debt to the World Bank and other institutions that debt repayments comprise most of their annual budgets.

Globalism also triggers “the race to the bottom”. Poor countries, desperate to escape the “Commodity Trap”, try to attract international cooperations with “free trade areas.” In such areas taxes have been abated for ten years or more, unions are typically banned, safety and environmental regulations waived and wages are rock bottom. A small, corrupt indigenous elite benefits from selling its own citizens to foreign employers at the lowest price possible.

Suppose, for example, a Nike representative checks into the Bangkok Hilton and invites bids from native sub-contractors to make running shoes. He will accept the lowest bid and the lowest bidder will treat young Muslim women worse than high bidders, since threats are cheaper than good conditions.

This is not, repeat not, an American plot, or even a deliberate policy of exploitation. It is an **unintended consequence** of free-market policies and **laissez-faire** doctrines. Free Trade has long been the watch-word of the economically powerful who want no markets closed against them. However, it is **not** an honest historical explanation of how these countries actually made it themselves. Britains used captive colonial markets. America developed behind the trade wall of the Munroe Doctrine and became the world’s armourer in World War I, World War II and the Cold War. It has the biggest command economy for defense expenditure in the world.

South Korea was massively subsidised to win the Cold War, Japan became America's armourer first in Korea then in Vietnam and is widely protectionist of all but top industries. Switzerland used its neutrality in all wars to attract world fund flows and protects its own companies from take over. **No nation** has made it to the top by free trade alone and most would be crushed by competition if they tried. The US imposes "world rules" that no powerful economy actually obeys, least of all America herself.

Dilemma 2

Don't appease	_____	We must
evil, fight relentlessly		address the roots
against it		of other's hatred

The "Don't Appease" Argument

Once again we **think** of these principles as alternatives, but they are not. They could become values in a crucial synthesis.

We cannot appease this kind of terrorism, because it could potentially kill thousands of us and only countervailing force can stop a fanatic willing to die, who could jump from any building or theatre gallery into crowds below, detonating himself. A free society is extremely vulnerable. So, yes, the terror network must be hunted down, and captured, if possible, so as to yield information.

There is no way we are going to change the mind of those “psyched up” for years to kill themselves and us.

The “Address the Roots” Argument

But this does not stop us addressing the roots of this hatred. How can Muslims get access to world investment flows without irreligious usury? The Aga Kahn Foundation supplies seed capital to the poor all over the world. Can we learn from its methods? Is not repayment of loans a form of escalating reciprocity in which you give back more than you received? This has to be consistent with Islamic beliefs and beneficent exchanges.

Can we abolish the debt trap? It would cost far less than America’s \$40 billion anti-terror bill being voted by Congress. Can we encourage infant manufacturers by **buying** from the Third World nations? Can we consult with poorer nations about the downside of heedless globalism? Can we insist that Palestinians get an unoccupied homeland and economic investment, while safeguarding Israel’s security? There are, believe it or not, dozens of joint ventures between Israeli and Palestinian companies, as well as companies with employees from both populations. Why is the world not eagerly **buying** their produce to encourage

more such ventures? Are they not providing us with a priceless service? So why not reward them in the market place?

Yes, we must “fight relentlessly” against terrorism, but not as we did in Vietnam, where anyone in “a free fire zone” was fair game and we ended in recruiting for the VietCong all those living in such areas. If we kill thousands of civilians in our pursuit of our shadowy foe, their cause will multiply and flourish.

Dilemma 3

Terrorism
threatens the
whole civilised
world



Terrorism
is the weapon of
last resort for the
weak

Yes, indeed, all nations built on trust, on the belief that discontented people will **talk** to us, before they try to kill us, that civilians should be kept out of deadly disputes, that the vulnerable and helpless should not be ambushed and slain, all such nations stand to lose their norms of civilised discourse.

What happens when a person of dark complexion walks towards us, apparently beaming with pleasure and in friendly greeting. Does he have a bomb strapped to him? Should

we dive for cover when Arabs approach us? We have to realise that civilisation as we know it, will become impossible if every airliner can become a potential missile, every high-rise building a tomb, every gas or water utility a source of poison. First Amendment rights cannot survive such terror. It is the end of our liberties, will slowly yet inexorably erode as the cloud of suspicion spreads. We have to fight terror, no question about it. We give to the State the monopoly of violence, subject to government restraints and review. In a seemingly lawless world we have to give the world's sole remaining super-power rights of enforcement. There is no alternative.

The “last resort of the weak” argument

Many states including France, Ireland, Israel, Algeria, Cyprus, Kenya, Mexico and Russia were created in part through terror tactics.

We must **both** move against hardened agents of international terror **and** understand that all such evil has its origins in suffering and despair. Was Communism evil? Probably yes, but it took seventeen **million** Russians to perish in World War I plus national humiliation before it took hold and there were almost as many in World War II. Suppose 34 million Americans had died violently in the 20th Century, would democracy have survived? I doubt it. We have to stop the suffering first.

Britain has oppressed Ireland for eight hundred years and more recently gave titles and lands to Protestant Scottish colonists. That is why there is terrorism in Northern Ireland today. Spain and Basques, Turkey and the Armenians and Kurds, White South Africa and its black majority, who were called “communists” as well as “terrorists”, all were the products of prolonged oppression.

America is today the world’s only remaining super-power and with this comes great danger and huge responsibilities, because those suffering believe, rightly or wrongly, that America has done this to them, or has at least allowed this to happen to them, without protest or prevention. The vast inequalities shaping our modern world contain many ironies. In Afghanistan there are no known targets more valuable than the cruise missiles sent to destroy them. The cost of our weapons are several times that of the value of their entire economy. Many American corporations could buy up “rogue states” many times over. Like Afghanistan, North Korea has been starving. What terrorists do to us is relatively cheap. They fly American planes into American buildings. It takes not much money but it does take hatred of the most intense kind.

The events of September 11 should warn us that in a world of poverty and misery, contrasted with affluence and prosperity, this difference is the greatest diversity of all, a cultural divide far vaster than nation, custom or religion. We can look down at those struggling out of debt traps and commodity traps and harangue them, but we won’t be heard. Crawling out of that pit of outcasts will be a few score demons with so little to lose, with values so disgraced by their

own marginality, that only self-immolation can give meaning to their wretched lives. They fantasise and they die and that may be more life than we have allowed them.

This paper has argued the relevance of dilemma theory to our present impasse. Resolution will take much harder work and much longer. In the meantime we can claim some measure of expertise. We have begun to frame the issues. Big political and social changes will be necessary if the dilemmas are to be addressed.