

Setting The World To Rights

Ideas have consequences.

Various Missiles, Condi, And The Danger Of Moral Prevarication

One of the standard lines of argument of the campaign for unilateral nuclear disarmament during the late twentieth century was that weapons stockpiles cause wars. "Never in history," they would say "was a new generation of powerful, expensive weapons stockpiled, without then being used."

They may have been right about previous history, but since then there have been a handful of counter-examples. The most important was in regard to the very stockpiles they wanted us to extrapolate that history to, namely those of the United States' and the Soviet Union's thermonuclear weapons. Not just one but two or three successive generations of leading-edge weapons systems were designed, paid for, manufactured, integrated into doctrine and training, deployed, decommissioned, and sold for scrap, without being used once. The same is true of Israel's nuclear weapons capabilities, despite not being offset by any corresponding deterrent.

But evil regimes refrain from violence only when they are under intense pressure (Saddam in the first Gulf War, for instance, as well as the Soviet Union in its final years, both refrained from using their weapons of mass destruction) – the very situation that pacifists and other advocates of unilateral disarmament, appeasement and the like believe is the *least* likely to have a happy ending.

Over the last few years, the world looked on without applying any pressure at all as Iran and Syria poured sophisticated and massively destructive weapons into Hezbollah's stockpile. The world looked on as if there was some doubt as to what those thousands of missiles were for, or whether they would eventually be used if Hezbollah remained in a position to use them.

When they finally did what they were longing to do, and started to rain death and destruction on Israel's population centres, the world was slightly less enraged than usual with Israel for daring to defend itself (with the exception of President Chirac, who seems to have gone **stark mad**). President Bush, especially, let it be known that if Hezbollah "stopped doing that shit", everything would be fine.

But, unfortunately, that is not enough to halt or even slow the juggernaut – Iranian nuclear weapons – that is currently heading both for Israel and the United States. Hypocrisy and paralysis are

still the norm against which actions are judged. Condoleezza Rice

issued a **strong statement** in support of Israel:

First of all, Israel has a right to defend itself. No country would sit and continue to receive rocket fire against civilian populations and not try to do something about it.

Indeed. But unfortunately, she felt obliged to continue as follows:

What we have asked of the Israelis is that they act in a way to avoid innocent civilian casualties, to avoid the destruction of civilian infrastructure, because there does need to be another day. Israel will need to have those moderate allies in Lebanon and in the Palestinian territories in order to create a stable peace.

That is to say, "OK, for once, you're justified in using violence, but even so, please take care to *restrain* yourselves from indulging your natural tendency to slaughter civilians and drink their blood. We know you are deaf to moral arguments in general, but you are good at understanding material advantage, so please note that on this occasion, mitigating the slaughter will be of material advantage to you in the future."

That is how *friends* of Israel among the world's politicians and diplomats feel obliged to talk. This is especially irksome because, in fact, Israel has the most morally advanced defence and foreign policy in the world, so all these condescending strictures come from people, and polities, that are markedly inferior to Israel in that very respect. But also, if we may respond to Secretary Rice in kind: this moral prevarication is not only wantonly unfriendly and immoral. It is a serious material danger to the United States.

Wed, 07/19/2006 - 12:17 | [permalink](#)

Pressure On Israel

Editor,

" . . . please take care to restrain yourselves from indulging your natural tendency to slaughter civilians and drink their blood. . ."

I have a hard time extrapolating from her quote to paraphrase as you did above. Fortunately, so far at least, the US administration has not pressured Israel nearly as much as one might have feared. We can hope that there continues to be no substantial pressure and that Israel is able to achieve its main objectives -- but that is, I know, a lot to hope for.

If the US isn't clear about what is morally right, does pressure Israel, and as a result Israel stops too far short, it would certainly be a very " . . . serious material danger to the United States."

As for " . . . you are good at understanding material advantage, so please note that on this occasion, mitigating the slaughter will be of material advantage to you in the future," apart from determining the meaning of the word "mitigating," and your use of the

pejorative term "slaughter", I suspect that Israel views the situation in a not dissimilar vein, and such considerations go into their strategic thinking.

by **Michael Bacon** on Wed, 07/19/2006 - 20:43 | [login](#) or [register](#) to post comments

Too Clever

Editor,

You're obviously too clever for me. I guess all I can do in the circumstances is to continue to try and persuade folks to support Israel. . . .

For those who may be interested, the following is the link to the White House for comments. If you support Israel, it may some help to let the administration know:

comments@whitehouse.gov

by **Michael Bacon** on Wed, 07/19/2006 - 22:49 | [login](#) or [register](#) to post comments

Rice

I would agree with **The World** that the statement by Secretary Rice would be offensive if spoken privately to Israeli leaders.

But, I think it was crafted to appeal to other, less enlightened, governments that the US is making the "right" noises towards Israel (without actually criticizing Israel for anything it has actually done).

I'm sure that Secretary Rice is aware of Israel's moral stature, and how unfairly it is regularly judged.

So, I agree with Michael Bacon that **The World's** extrapolation isn't a fair reading of her likely meaning.

I wouldn't have made the statement, but nobody ever accused me of being diplomatic.

Gil

by **Gil** on Thu, 07/20/2006 - 05:24 | [login](#) or [register](#) to post comments

Diplomatic Language

I agree with Gil and Michael Bacon. Any diplomatic statement that aims to bring about a peaceful solution must be targeted at a number of audiences. You have to try and get your message across to all of them and produce a statement that both sides can agree with in principle. So saying yes Israel has a right to defend itself but it should also be careful in how it exercises this right is a sensible place to start. You shouldn't read it as suggesting that Israel is being injudicious in exercising it's right but the statement needs to

appeal to those whose suspicion will always be that they are.

If Condi had issued a statement without the caveat you took offence to then it would be all too easy for opponents of Israel to characterise (again) the USA as an unthinking uncritical ally of Israel and therefore a supporter (of what they believe to be the case) of attacks on civilian infrastructure and civilian population centres. Any diplomatic capital, any chance of being an honest broker is set back if not gone altogether. The impact of an unbalanced statement is to polarise views and make consensus less likely.

Chirac's statements are a good example of the pro-Arab view that an honest broker needs to appeal to. He, and countless like him in the Arab world and in Europe, will see pictures of destruction in Beirut and draw his own conclusions about the morality and proportionality of it all. They will not be convinced by audacious claims of Israel having "the most morally advanced defence and foreign policy in the world" nor that they have responded in a proportional way. To bring these people and nations into a diplomatic dialogue you need to use language they can agree with but without compromising your position. I think Condi's statement is a very good example of this.

by RK on Thu, 07/20/2006 - 09:37 | [login](#) or [register](#) to post comments

Diplomacy

There are indeed various advantages to being diplomatic.

But haven't people been trying diplomatic statements for decades with little success?

Perhaps the advantages of clarity are also/more important?

Besides, there are other countries that say diplomatic things. But few others are remotely capable of saying clear and moral things. It's usually best to utilize our uniquely valuable trait instead of our fairly fungible trait.

-- Elliot Temple

[My Blog](#)

by [Elliot Temple](#) on Thu, 07/20/2006 - 09:46 | [login](#) or [register](#) to post comments

Clarity

It should also be noted that *the other side* has clarity. They frequently, loudly, clearly express their position. They have diplomatic announcements as well (not very good ones), sure. But the clear position that the Jews are bad and that the natural Jewish habitat is the sea is what wins them most of their supporters.

And this lack of diplomacy doesn't get *them* in much trouble.

People go way out of their way to pretend it isn't clear.

Acquiescing in this huge imbalance about which side can be how clear is harmful.

We are the good guys. *they* are the ones who should be hiding their true motives.

-- Elliot Temple

My Blog

by [Elliot Temple](#) on Thu, 07/20/2006 - 09:51 | [login](#) or [register](#) to post comments

Propoganda

I think you're absolutely right that the other side has *clarity* for which it isn't punished. Even handedness can sometimes imply moral equivalence and this is unfair on Israel. For example the statement from UN Human Rights Commissioner Louise Arbour suggesting both sides might be guiltily of war crimes through deliberately targeting civilians verges on the crass. It's fairly obvious that Hezbollah are targeting civilians and it should be equally obvious to anyone with an ounce of military knowledge that the IDF are not. To suggest that both parties actions are equally close to being war crimes is to let Hezbollah off the hook.

I think it's wrong to say that Hezbollah gather most support from their anti-Semitic statements. That is probably the case when it comes to appealing to Anti Semites (especially in the Arab and Muslim world) but when it comes to European public opinion the media footage from Gaza, West Bank and Lebanon does so much more. That's why Hamas and Hezbollah adopt tactics that will result in civilian casualties on their own side. If there was no propaganda value to it they wouldn't do it but they know that the cameras will be there when they wheel the children into the hospital. My particular despair is that the western media rarely comment on this when they show the footage. This cynical manipulated of the international media has been with us for a long time (I first became aware of how low some people will go during the Bosnian and Kosovan conflicts) but the media seem unwilling to address or even acknowledge it. Think I'm going off on a tangent here. I'll stop now.

by RK on Thu, 07/20/2006 - 10:43 | [login](#) or [register](#) to post comments

New Language

Editor,

Your suggested language has much to commend it, but it isn't relevant to the issue of whether [The World's](#) extrapolation was a fair reading of her likely meaning. Nevertheless, I agree that any party offended by your language would not have been influenced by the original to contribute to peace.

by [Michael Bacon](#) on Thu, 07/20/2006 - 12:17 | [login](#) or [register](#) to post

Diplomacy

The difference in the two texts is subtle but the difference in the way people would interpret them is vast. The first is balanced and hopes for peace and saving of innocent lives. The second backs Israel.

Moderate governments (and people) inclined to a pro-Arab position would read an uncritical support for Israel as opposed to the more neutral original. These governments would *know* that the statement was wrong (targeting civilian and civilian infrastructure) and would therefore see Rice as a partisan player and therefore not a credible person to negotiate a peaceful solution. It would also possibly encourage the likes of Chirac et al to put out counter-statements deploring the Israelis and calling for a ceasefire.

I'm not challenging the morality of the IDF or suggesting that your new text is wrong in any way. My point is that Rice doesn't need to say it. It would be undiplomatic and unhelpful. Consider Javier Solana's comments after he left Beirut the other day. Amongst a lot of balanced diplomatic language he said that having seen the damage he had to say the Israeli action was disproportionate. After that what Israeli can trust Solana to facilitate a peaceful resolution? He should have stuck to his first answer which was that if people considered the Israeli response disproportionate it would be harder to defeat terrorism. A statement moderates on both sides can agree with.

by RK on Thu, 07/20/2006 - 13:14 | [login](#) or [register](#) to post comments

The difference in the two tex

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I agree that the first one doesn't back Israel. That's a problem. Shouldn't Israel be backed?

BTW there is no such thing as a moderate supporter of jew killing. There are only the guilty and perhaps the really ignorant. Also there are the committed, and the people who can be scared into stopping. Stuff like that.

Perhaps moderates means the people who aren't sure about jew killing and are frequently complicit, but aren't motivated enough to start their own militia?

I also take issue with the idea of credible negotiators. The credibility of a negotiator doesn't matter, because neither side will, or should, put their trust and fate into some diplomat's hands. They can

evaluate offers based on whether they are good no matter who they are coming from.

-- Elliot Temple

<http://www.curi.us/blog/>

by **Elliot Temple** on Thu, 07/20/2006 - 20:00 | [login](#) or [register](#) to post
comments

No Offense

Some people think that the IDF has a right to defend Israel from Hizballah by cutting off their access to Syrian and Iranian arms and by tracking down and imprisoning or killing members of Hizballah, as it is currently doing. None of these people would be offended by Rice making a stronger statement of the kind provided by the World above.

What about the people who think that Israel is in the wrong? Of the politicians who have some influence over what happens in the Middle East, like the governments of Syria, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Turkey and so on, some are democratic and free, some are not. The countries that are not free are ruled by tyrants who propagate conspiracy theories and sometimes believe their own propaganda, as can be seen by looking at the media of these countries. A conspiracy theory addled dictator will either have a reasonable interpretation of American statements or view them through the corrupting lens of some conspiracy theory. In the latter case the tyrant will see any statement of support for Israel, no matter how mild, as a provocation.

Some people will say that the alternative to Rice's statement outlined above by the World is undiplomatic. However, this is based on their experience of living in a free society that isn't unconditionally ruled by a conspiracy theoretic crackpot. In a free society minor differences of phrasing will make some difference to the way that a government will respond to some offer. For example, an offer from Japan to America to reduce a tariff by 10% as opposed to 5% might make or break a trade agreement. Hizballah doesn't care if people want to meet them halfway and only let them kill half of the Jews in Israel, say, nor does the Iranian government. None of these people will take steps that will hurt Israel in any major way, although they might refuse to buy Israeli fruit or something like that. But they wouldn't support anything Israel does anyway, so it's wrong to care what they think.

by **Alan Forrester** on Thu, 07/20/2006 - 21:30 | [login](#) or [register](#) to post
comments

"It's wrong to care what they

"It's wrong to care what they think"

You (meaning not only Forrester, but all the rest of you at **The**

World), and those who share your attitudes are just as much the reason World War Three now looms as are the Muslim immoderates. You will change your tune when the missiles start hitting the quiet leafy avenues/bustling urban centres where you live.

Except that doesn't happen to people like you, does it? It happens to people in other countries, whose lives are worth rather less than yours. If only you and yours were the eggs that had to be broken to make the omelette, you might find that you took the loss of lives a little more seriously.

Sorry, had to say that in the vague hope of cracking your callous shell of cold hard logic; you know, the one from the safety of which you talk about bloodshed as if it were something right and necessary. I'm sure you won't reply to this comment, since I haven't engaged your insane arguments enough for you to pick me up on some semantic irrelevancy or other.

by a reader on Fri, 07/21/2006 - 08:23 | [login](#) or [register](#) to post comments

Jew Killers

Elliot,

I have a high regard for the quality of the writing on this site and frequently agree with the principles being promoted. However in this string I think your passionate support for Israel is clouding your judgement and your last post verged on the offensive.

The most striking example of this is the phrase you wrote in reply to my mentioning of "Moderate governments and people inclined to a pro-Arab position". You said "...there is no such thing as a moderate supporter of jew killing. There are only the guilty and perhaps the really ignorant...". That statement is breath taking in it's arrogance. It's the kind of extreme "all our opponenets are infidels and apostates and must die" bull I'd normally expect to dribble from the mouths of Nasrallah or al-Zawahiri. It paints everyone who doesn't agree with you as the enemy and leaves no room for compromise and little room for dialogue. Some states do want the descrtuction of Israel. I'd include most countries with a Muslim majority in this camp. But the vast majority of people and nations are not "supporters of jew killing". They are opponents of killing and in this crisis (like many before) Israel is doing quite a lot of killing. Hence the calls for them to stop and their sympathy for Lebanon and disdain for Israel. You can and do argue on the validity of the IDF cause. That the killing is justified in the pursiut of their military objectives and self defence. Fair enough but don't start flining hyperbole around that means everyone who disagrees with you is a secret anti-semite who longs for the destruction of Israel. It is devisive, polarising and offensive.

I also have to disagree with you on the role of credible negotiators. Take a look at the resolution of the Bosnian war, even Kosovo and

the roles played by Russia, the EU and the US. As long as the

current conflict doesn't result in the complete destruction of Hezbollah (which of course it won't, even if there was a massive land war) then there will be a need for some kind of mediation. Sure you could possibly patch together a deal without one but the complete lack of trust by both sides would make a future conflagration almost inevitable. What a credible negotiator allows you to do is put more trust in the promises of your opponent that you would normally because you know they are being monitored and a break of the promise will be recognised as such. The negotiator / facilitator / mediator needs to have power (economic or military) behind it and it needs to be viewed as objective and fair. Given that the US is already seen as partisan it would need to exclude them or at least balance them against another party, perhaps the EU or Russia. Undiplomatic utterings make this future diplomacy much harder and probably mean more lives will be lost before we get there.

In the current crisis I support Israel's actions and feel that the blame lies squarely with Hezbollah. I'm also sure that if there are any war crimes being committed it is by them. But I also think there is a risk that Israel will go too far. Every Lebanese civilian that dies is a propaganda victory for Hezbollah. Take a look at the BBC message board and you will see that the majority of people support Israel because they can recognise the provocations they have suffered. This support will ebb away the more Lebanese non-combatants die and will flow even faster when you call any doubters "Jew killers".

We're on the same side here Elliot and I hope you read this as constructive criticism.

Ruairidh

P.S. In response to Alan's post. True the difference in phrasing will be lost on Hezbollah but it's not Hezbollah this is aimed at but the wider pro-Arab world. Not all of whom will be blind to the subtleties of diplomacy.

P.P.S. I don't know how many of you are based in the UK but if you may want to read the front page of the Sun. Omar Bakri Mohammed (remember him?) has asked for a visa to visit the UK and was turned away from a UK warship evacuating women and children. Hilarious

by RK on Fri, 07/21/2006 - 09:30 | [login](#) or [register](#) to post comments

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But the vast majority of people and nations are not "supporters of jew killing". They are opponents of killing and in this crisis (like many before) Israel is doing quite a lot of killing. Hence the calls for them to stop and their sympathy for Lebanon and disdain for Israel.

I wish it were so. But it is not. If it were, those people would be equally opposed to other killing that takes place world wide. They aren't.

We're on the same side here Elliot and I hope you read this as constructive criticism.

Yeah, no problem. Criticise away. I enjoy lucid arguments in favor of any position.

-- Elliot Temple

<http://www.curi.us/blog/>

by **Elliot Temple** on Sat, 07/22/2006 - 01:00 | [login](#) or [register](#) to post comments

Re: "It's wrong to care what they..."

Somebody wrote:

You (meaning not only Forrester, but all the rest of you at **The World**), and those who share your attitudes are just as much the reason World War Three now looms as are the Muslim immoderates. You will change your tune when the missiles start hitting the quiet leafy avenues/bustling urban centres where you live.

They've already attacked London and threatened British people like Salman Rushdie with death.

Except that doesn't happen to people like you, does it? It happens to people in other countries, whose lives are worth rather less than yours. If only you and yours were the eggs that had to be broken to make the omelette, you might find that you took the loss of lives a little more seriously.

Islamists are killing people in Sudan, in Indonesia and in many other countries. I think the civilised countries of the world should help their victims to get rid of the Islamists. Unfortunately, that involves some risk that innocent people will be killed. If people don't resist Islamism it is certain that many people will be killed as the Islamists want to establish theocratic states that will murder and oppress people. The choice is not between a diplomatic policy that entails no risk that anyone will be hurt and a reckless policy that will hurt people. It is between a rational policy of taking out terrorist groups and the tyrannical governments that support them and an irrational policy of pretending that they have demands that we should be prepared to grant. What is the halfway house between Israel being a judenrein Islamist theocracy and Israel being a free society?

by **Alan Forrester** on Sat, 07/22/2006 - 20:04 | [login](#) or [register](#) to post comments

The Pacifist Tendancy

"I wish it were so. But it is not. If it were, those people would be

equally opposed to other killing that takes place world wide. They aren't."

To be honest they usually are. Speaking about the UK at least the people currently wringing their hands over Lebanese civilian deaths would also have complained against the Iraq war, the Afghan invasion, the Kosovan bombing campaign and so on. It is a pacifist tendency that a lot of people here share. Any military action *that makes it onto the news* will be similarly disapproved of. The key point here is that it needs to make it onto the news. Most people won't go out of their way to find out the current state of play in Kashmir / Darfur / Eritrea / Sri Lanka / Algeria / Columbia / Chechnya or wherever. Ask them to explain any one of the above conflicts and they'll struggle but show them the picture of a bombed out house and they'll chorus "this is terrible". Tell them that the house was being used to store missiles that were to be fired on civilians and they'll squirm but their view won't really change. They are not "anti" or "pro" one side or the other in any meaningful ideological way. They take the side that seems to be suffering the greater civilian casualties.

I know people who think what Israel is doing is terrible. I disagree with them and try and discuss the issue with them. Their knowledge is patchy and their logic simple. To call them supporters of Jew killing would be grossly unfair. I'd rather call them pacifists, with all the naivety that tag implies.

So perhaps the question should be is there more criticism of Israel in the media than other countries in conflicts, and why? I think that there is. Take the examples above, especially Chechnya and Kashmir (both big motivators for the global jihad) and compare with Israel. Why is that? Certainly the Russians or Sudanese are more ruthless so it can't be that. I think there is an anti-Israeli agenda in some parts of the media and this dovetails conveniently with the fact that it is generally easier and safer for westerns to report from Gaza / West Bank / Beirut than it is from Grozny or Srinagar.

I'd be interested in your thoughts on the role now being played by Dr Rice given your earlier assertion that there was no need for a credible negotiator. Do you think she will bring peace by mediating or is she just a conduit through which Israel and Lebanon can discuss terms without the loss of face / momentum from direct negotiations?

by RK on Tue, 07/25/2006 - 10:44 | [login](#) or [register](#) to post comments

An explanation from the BBC

As to the question why does Israel get more negative coverage from the media here is a comment lifted from the BBC website.

BEGINS

Here are some stark statistics:

- Around 30 to 40 people are killed every day in the current Israel/Lebanon conflict.

- About 100 people are killed every day in the violence in Iraq.
 - And 1,200 people are killed every day in the war in the Congo.
- All three of these stories are due to appear on tonight's Ten O'Clock News. They will probably run in that order - with the Middle East getting by far the most attention.

Does this say something about how we value human life? It's a fair question and one I worry about.

Here is our reasoning for not reversing the order. The war in the Congo has been going on for decades - it is desperately important (as we will reflect tonight), and a story we will keep returning to. Similarly the Ten has led the way in attempting to show the scale of the violence in Iraq in recent months - we have regularly led the programme with stories from there, and the BBC is the only British broadcaster with a full time commitment to being there.

The Middle East needs more time and space for a variety of reasons:

- The sheer complexity of the situation requires space to help provide context and analysis.
- The current conflict plugs into so many other stories around the world, from what Tony Blair and George W. Bush call the "War on Terror", through to the price of oil, even the situation in Afghanistan.
- Many people fear the consequences of conflict in the Middle East more than anywhere else, and it is our job to help people understand a "scary world".

In short, our judgement is that Middle East is currently the biggest story in the world - by a wide margin - and it has the greatest implications for us all.

Craig Oliver is editor of the Ten O'Clock News

ENDS

Complexity - sorry don't buy that. The current crisis is quite simply really. Certainly more straight forward than the complete mess that is the Congo.

So there you have it. It seems to boil down the fact that the BBC are more worried about Israel because their actions could stire up the hornets nest of Islamism and Arab nationalism and what this means for the war on terror.

by RK on Tue, 07/25/2006 - 10:59 | [login](#) or [register](#) to post comments

media bias

RK:

I agree the media presents a very biased view, and some people are ignorant enough not to be aware of this. But I think many people are complicit. It's hard to never ever hear about the Congo even once. It is going to be on the news tonight, as you've posted. Not as much attention, but still there. So anyone who really cared about killing -- a true pacifist -- would quickly see the Congo issue was most important, (even from a brief mention) and tell all his

friends. Some proportion of those people would look into it more

and start websites to inform other people who were ignorant. This growing movement would get attention. More people would find out. They would demand the media change its practices. etc

But all that does not happen. Because, as I said, many people are complicit.

Note also that many people read some blogs but choose not to read ones that would broaden their perspective. And many people choose not to watch Fox which would also help some. All those people who don't understand the other side, and don't want to know, are complicit.

You mentioned pacifists being naive. I agree and consider this quite important. It's common place that these people simply have not thought about the issues. However, if that's the case, why do they have opinions on them? Can it be that the leaders of anti-Israel marches, for example, have never really thought about combat, killing, terrorism, hostages, etc?

This is somewhat appealing because it may mean they are not bad people. But it is perhaps not very plausible. It looks to me like there must be something wrong with their thinking (on these issues) that has the effect that they don't figure anything out.

I presume you're aware that your examples of killing people don't like were all involving USA? Israel's ally.

-- Elliot Temple

<http://www.curi.us/blog/>

by **Elliot Temple** on Tue, 07/25/2006 - 17:08 | [login](#) or [register](#) to post comments

Ignorance is Bliss

Your description of what an active pacifist might do is all very sensible but most are not active. So I think complicit is too strong. It implies a conscious decision and I think their naivety is more coincidental. Consider what proportion of "Live8" marches knew the first thing about global economics beyond what they'd read in the fliers, or the number of "Stop the War" marchers who could find Darfur or Congo on a map but felt moved to protest against Israel. The answer, I suspect is low in both cases. So why do they march? They march because they have their consciences pricked by the media and because it's cool. Political dissent and direct action are de rigueur these days, especially with the dash of celebrity glamour usually thrown in.

So why does exposure to other views not enlighten them? I think it is because their lack of knowledge means they don't know just how ignorant they are. (See this paper, I imagine you've seen it before

but it encapsulates my point
<http://www.apa.org/journals/features/psp7761121.pdf>). Yes they've thought about combat and terrorism etc but their starting from a simple world view where everyone is fundamentally decent and every thing could be worked out if we just sat down and talked about it. Therefore any violence is uncalled for. Complete bull I know but that seems to be what they think. You said "It looks to me like there must be something wrong with their thinking (on these issues) that has the effect that they don't figure anything out." I agree there is. It's ignorance in the most part. Ignorance is different from stupidity. Lots of these people are intelligent enough to develop a deep understanding but they don't put the time in. Ironically I believe because they don't think they need to – they think they understand perfectly.

"I presume you're aware that your examples of killing people don't like were all involving USA? Israel's ally."

Sorry I don't follow you here. My examples covered conflicts the USA are certainly not involved in, at least not in an active military sense. Colombia yes but Chechnya, Darfur, Eritrea, Sri Lanka, Algeria, Kashmir no.

by RK on Wed, 07/26/2006 - 09:05 | [login](#) or [register](#) to post comments

Ignorance

Children have way more ignorance than the adults we are discussing, but it does not prevent them from learning things, including things about the Middle East (every knowledgeable middle eastern scholar was once ignorant about it, BTW). Ignorance isn't a force that stops people from improving.

The examples I was referring to were Iraq, Afghanistan, and Kosovo. Those were the ones I thought you said that people don't like (which, of course, only includes ones they know about).

-- Elliot Temple

<http://www.curi.us/blog/>

by [Elliot Temple](#) on Wed, 07/26/2006 - 16:27 | [login](#) or [register](#) to post comments

Wars people don't like

The common theme of those three is also that British forces were involved so there was a lot of media coverage and a debate about what the UK should or should not do, hence the protests from the anti-war lobby. In fact these are the only major conflicts involving the British Armed Forces since the first Gulf War except Sierra Leone.

It is true that the SWP/STWC backbone of the anti-war(s)

movement is also anti-american so that may have an influence here but that's another discussion. Come to think of it I don't remember the Sierra Leone deployment being quite so controversial.

by RK on Thu, 07/27/2006 - 08:45 | [login](#) or [register](#) to post comments

Afghanistan

I should explain myself a little more on the Afghanistan comment. I choose this example because I think anyone who was against this war is either deluded, ignorant or a pacifist. The case for action was incredibly compelling and the majority of people knew this. I sometimes use it as a sanity test to gauge what kind of person I'm speaking with if we end up discussing geopolitics. If they were against the Afghan campaign then they're a cretin.

I can remember leaving work and going into Westminster tube in the month between 9/11 and the start of the bombing campaign. I took what I thought was a free newspaper from a guy handing them out at the entrance. When I settled down to read the thing I was disappointed to find I had a four page 'Stop the War' flier in the mock up of a newspaper. For a laugh I decided to read it anyway. What was enlightening was just how stupid and uninformed the whole thing was. The only thing that stuck in my mind was the article that seriously claimed the **only** reason the USA was going to invade Afghanistan was to allow the construction of a gas pipeline from Central Asia through Pakistan to the Indian Ocean. I wish I'd kept it but I felt embarrassed to be seen reading it so I ditched it long before I got home.

by RK on Thu, 07/27/2006 - 09:03 | [login](#) or [register](#) to post comments