

No Big Thinker

Parveen Sharif, sister of the suicide bomber Omar Sharif, said that he was a **big thinker**. This is an instance of a common fantasy about terrorists, that they have somehow seen something deeper than our petty, everyday concerns and gone off to explore it.

What, by redecorating the walls of some formerly joyful place with their own internal organs and those of as many innocent people as they can target? No, we rather doubt that Omar Sharif was a big thinker. Before he went to blow himself up in a bar in Tel Aviv, did he ever think carefully about the nature of morality? Did he ever bother to investigate Israel's history? Had he done so, he would have known that the war to destroy Israel is evil and he ought not to participate in it. Or about his own nature as a human being? Did he ever think for even two minutes about the strategic and tactical effects of such actions and whether they are likely to achieve the goals that he thought he died for?

The choice to become a suicide bomber is in fact a sign of mind-boggling shallowness.

One further comment: Parveen Sharif's evidence that Omar was a big thinker was that:

"He would contemplate a lot. He was mysterious. You did not see him smile much."

We don't think that somebody who thought deeply about the world would never smile. The world as it is now is better than it has been at any previous moment in human history. Technology is increasing human lifespan, ease of communication and every material indicator of quality of life. Tyranny and slavery are on the defensive throughout the world and free societies are prospering. Of course, the world still has problems, but they are mostly better problems than we had before. There does not seem to be any compelling reason why this progress cannot continue indefinitely. So someone who is a deep thinker ought also to be an **optimist**.

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Truly Remarkable

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Indeed, and when you think about it this is truly remarkable. And it is not just that the world has been getting better, it is that by many measures the world has been getting *exponentially* better. I truly cannot conceive what the world will be like in 20 years. It boggles my mind.

by a reader on Fri, 05/28/2004 - 05:08 | [reply](#)

Some problems are worse than we experienced before

"Of course, the world still has problems, but they are mostly better problems than we had before."

Not quite true when we speak about terrorism. There is no simple solution. Millions of people have to be somehow re-educated - but how? It is not that I am pessimistic about the future, but the terrorism wouldn't have a rise if people were not so scared and not so susceptible to it in general. Many developed western countries would rather give up some "ambitions" in return for a quiet life as before. Sadly, it is true.

by a reader on Fri, 05/28/2004 - 08:30 | [reply](#)

Optimist

Optimist, imho, are those who stare at a glass that is half full and assume it will not go down. In fact, it is likely to fill! Rain will pour down, fill the cup till it runneth over!

A pessimist looks at the same glass, sees it half full, assumes it will not go up. In fact, it is likely to empty completely! The sun will come out, and dry up all the water.

A thinker looks at the glass and thinks; this is good. Do I need all this water right now? Should I put some aside, share it? Do I need more? Where can I get more? How should I get more?

The realist then acts. If he or she is moral, acts in a way that benefits the world and the self.

The terrorist looks at the glass as half empty, and figures no one should have any more water than s/he does, goes around emptying and threatening to empty all the water in all the glasses reachable, including the water s/he owns.

Thats the difference, imho.

be well,
Rachel Ann

by [RachelAnn](#) on Fri, 05/28/2004 - 10:28 | [reply](#)

What about Bin Laden?

What about Bin Laden? Is he a big thinker?

by a reader on Sat, 05/29/2004 - 10:51 | [reply](#)

Re: What about Bin Laden?

Osama Bin Laden is not the same sort of person as a suicide bomber. As a thinker he would be best classified as a crank rather than an empty-headed gull. Cranks do think a lot, but not to any productive effect.

by **Editor** on Sat, 05/29/2004 - 15:40 | [reply](#)