Thanks. I just got back from Brazil where they don't have any fire codes and if you think this is uncomfortable you should see a meeting there -- people packed so tight that there was a good question whether the oxygen level would suffice. Fortunately, there wasn't a fire or it would have been a huge catastrophe.

Well, the title, you noticed, had a question mark after it and the reason for the question mark is that whatever has been happening for the past several months and is going on now, and however you evaluate it -- like it, hate it, or whatever -- it's pretty clear that it cannot be a war on terror. In fact, that's close to a logical necessity, at least if we accept certain pretty elementary assumptions and principles, so let me try to make those clear at the outset.

The first principle guideline, if you like, is that we ought to, I will try and I think that we should, bend over backwards to give the benefit of the doubt to the United States government whenever it's possible. So, that if there is any dispute about how to interpret something, we will assume they're right.

The second guideline is that we should take very seriously the pronouncements of leadership especially when they are made with great sincerity and emotion. So, for example, when George Bush tells us that he is the most devoted Christian since the Apostles, we should believe him, take him at his word and we should therefore conclude that he certainly has memorized, over and over again, in his Bible reading classes and in church, the famous definition of "hypocrite" that's given in the gospels. Namely, the hypocrite is the person who applies to others standards that he refuses to apply to himself. So if you are not a hypocrite you assume that if something is right for us then it's right for them and if it is wrong when they do it, it is wrong when we do it. That is really elementary and I assume that the President would agree and all of his admirers as well. So those are the principles that I would like to start with.

Well, a side comment. Unless we can rise to that minimal level of moral integrity we should at least stop talking about things like human rights, right and wrong, and good and evil, and all such high afflatus things because all our talk should be dismissed, in fact, dismissed with complete repugnance unless we can at least rise to that minimal level. I think that's obvious and I hope there would be agreement on that, too.

Well, with that much in place -- just that much for background -- let me formulate a thesis. The thesis is that we are all total hypocrites on any issue relating to terrorism. Now, let me clarify the notion "we." By "we," I mean people like us -- people who have enough high degree of privilege, of training, resources, access to information -- for whom
it is pretty easy to find out the truth about things if we want to. If we decide that that is our vocation, and in the case in question, you don't really have to dig very deep, it's all right on the surface. So when I say "we," I mean that category. And I definitely mean to include myself in "we" because I have never proposed that our leaders be subjected to the kinds of punishment that I have recommended for enemies. So that is hypocrisy. So if there are people who escape it I really don't know them and have not come across them. It's a very powerful culture. It's hard to escape its grasp. So that's thesis number one, we are all total hypocrites, in the sense of the gospels, on the matter of terrorism. The second thesis is stronger, namely, that the first thesis is so obvious that it takes real effort to miss it. In fact, I should go home right now because it is obvious. Nevertheless, let me continue and say why I think both theses are correct.

Well, to begin with, what is terrorism? Got to say something about that. That is supposed to be a really tough question. Academic seminars and graduate philosophy programs and so on -- a very vexing and complex question. However, in accordance with the guidelines that I mentioned, I think there is a simple answer, namely, we just take the official U.S. definition of terrorism. Since we are accepting the pronouncements of our leaders literally, let's take their definition. In fact, that is what I have always done. I have been writing about terrorism for the last twenty years or so, just accepting the official definition. So, for example, a simple and important case is in the U.S. army manual in 1984 which defines terrorism as the calculated use of violence or the threat of violence to attain goals that are political, religious or ideological in nature.

Well, that seems simple, appropriate. A particularly good choice because of the timing: 1984. 1984, you will recall, was the time that the Reagan Administration was waging a war against terrorism. Particularly what they called state-supported international terrorism a "plague spread by depraved opponents of civilization itself" in a "return to barbarism in the modern age" -- I'm quoting [Secretary of State] George Shultz who was the administration moderate. The other guideline is that we will keep to the moderates, not the extremists.

So that's 1984, Reagan had come into office a couple of years earlier. His administration had immediately declared that the war against terrorism would be the focus of U.S. foreign policy and they identified two regions as the source of this plague by depraved opponents of civilization itself -- Central America and the Middle East. And there was quite wide agreement on that and so, in 1985, for example -- every year the Associated Press has a poll of editors on the most important story of the year -- and in 1985, the winner was Middle East terrorism. So they agree. Right towards the end of that year, 1985, Shimon Peres, Israel's Prime Minister, came to Washington and Reagan and Peres denounced the evil scourge of terrorism, referring to the Middle East. Scholarship and experts also agree.

There is a huge literature for the last twenty years on terrorism, particularly state-supported international terrorism. We don't have time review it but a good illustration, which I will keep to, is the December 2001 issue of the journal Current History, a good and serious journal. Its article called "America at War" includes leading historians,
specialists and experts on terrorism and they identify the 1980s as the era of state-sponsored terror, agreeing with the Reagan Administration. I agree with that, too. I think it was the era of state-sponsored international terrorism. One leading author, Martha Crenshaw, says that in that era the United States adopted a pro-active stance to deter the plague. Mostly, it's about the Middle East but Central America is occasionally mentioned. ... One or two authors or co-authors from the Brookings Institution describe the U.S. Contra War against Nicaragua as a model for ... U.S. support for the Northern Alliance in the current phase of the war against terrorism. The seeds of contemporary terrorism however are much deeper, though.

The major historian in the group -- David Rapoport, the leading academic specialist on terrorism, editor of the Journal of Terrorism and so on -- he points out that it goes back to -- the origins of modern terrorism, like Osama bin Laden -- it goes back to the early 1960s and I am quoting him now, when "Vietcong terror against the American Goliath ... kindled the hopes that the Western heartland was vulnerable ..." I won't comment on that but, just as an exercise, you might try to find a historical analog to that statement somewhere. I'll just leave it at that. Without commenting, if you check through the scholarly literature you'll find the same story all the time, virtually no exceptions.

The world agreed with the Reaganites, too. In 1985, right after Reagan and Peres had denounced the evil scourge of terrorism, the General Assembly passed a resolution condemning terrorism, and in 1987, it passed a much stronger resolution and a much more explicit one denouncing terrorism in all its forms and calling on all states to do everything they can to fight against the plague and everything you like. It's true that that wasn't unanimous. There was one abstention, namely Honduras, and two votes against -- the usual two. They gave their reasons for voting against the major UN resolution on international terrorism, namely, both states -- the United States and Israel -- pointed to the same paragraph as the reason for their negative vote. It was a paragraph that said that nothing in the present resolution could in anyway prejudice the right to self-determination, freedom and independence, as derived from the United Nations Charter, of people forcibly derived of that right ... particularly peoples under colonial and racist regimes and foreign occupation, or could deprive them of the right to obtain support for others in these ends

in accord with the charter with the United Nations. That was the offending paragraph, and it is easy to understand why it raised a serious problem for the United States and Israel. The African National Congress was identified officially as a terrorist organization in the United States and South Africa was officially an ally. But the phrase "struggle against colonial and racist regimes" plainly referred to the struggle of the ANC against the apartheid regime. So that's unacceptable. The phrase "foreign occupation," everyone understood, referred to the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, then in its 20th year, extremely harsh and brutal from the beginning and continuing only because of decisive U.S. military, economic and diplomatic support that runs up to the present. So, obviously, that was unacceptable. So therefore it was 153 to 2 with one abstention. So it wasn't totally unanimous. It wasn't reported and it has disappeared from history. You can
check to find out. Incidentally, that's standard practice. When the master says something is wrong, it's down the memory hole, doesn't get reported and it's forgotten. But it's there, if you want to look, you can discover it, I'll give you the sources if you like.

Well, Reagan at that time, let's recall, he and Peres were talking about the evil scourge of terrorism in the Middle East. George Shultz didn't entirely agree. He thought that what he called the most alarming manifestation of state-sponsored terrorism was frighteningly close to home. Namely, it was a "cancer ... in our land mass," a cancer right nearby that was threatening to conquer the hemisphere with a "revolution without borders" -- a rather interesting propaganda fabrication, revealed to be a fraud instantly, but always used repeatedly afterwards, even by the same journals that explained why it was a total fabrication. It was just too useful to abandon. And this is also interesting, if you think about it, the fabrication had a certain element of truth in it, an important element of truth. We can come back to that if you like. Anyhow, this cancer in our land mass was threatening to conquer everything, openly following Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, and we plainly had to do something about that.

There is a serious day in the United States called Law Day -- elsewhere in the world it is called May Day -- May 1st, a day for the support of the struggles of the American workers for an eight hour day. But in the United States, it's a jingoist holiday called Law Day. On Law Day 1985, President Reagan declared a national emergency because the government of Nicaragua constitutes "an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States..." That was renewed annually. George Schultz informed Congress that we must cut the Nicaraguan cancer out and not by gentle means, things are too serious for that. And so, to quote Schultz -- recall, the administration moderate, the "good cop" -- to quote Schultz, he said: "Negotiations are a euphemism for capitulation if the shadow of power is not cast across the bargaining table." He condemned those who advocate "utopian legalistic means like outside mediation, the United Nations, the World Court while ignoring the power element of the equation." I'll avoid quoting hard-liners. At that time, the United States was exercising the "power element of the equation" with mercenary forces based in Honduras attacking Nicaragua. They were under the supervision of John Negroponte who was just appointed to run the diplomatic side of the diplomatic component of the current war on terror as the UN ambassador. The military component of the current war on terror is Donald Rumsfeld who at that time was Ronald Reagan's special envoy to the Middle East -- the other place where the plague was raging through 1985. In fact, the United States at that time was also blocking "utopian, legalistic means" that were being pursued by the World Court, the Latin American countries and others, and it continued to block those means, right until the end, until the final victory of its terrorist wars throughout Central America.

Well, how was the war against state-sponsored terrorism waged in those two regions by the people who in fact are leading the new phase? (So pretty close historical continuity, not just those two, of course.) Well, just to illustrate, let's pick the peak year, the worst year, 1985 in the Middle East, top story of the year. So who wins the prize for the worst acts of terrorism in the Middle East in 1985? Well, I know of three candidates, maybe you can suggest a different one. One candidate is a car bombing in Beirut in 1985, The
car was placed outside a mosque. The bomb was timed to go off when people were leaving to make sure it killed the maximum number of people. It killed, according to the *Washington Post*, 80 people. It wounded over 250, mostly women and girls leaving the mosque. There was a huge explosion so it blew up the whole street, killing babies in beds and so on and so forth. The bomb was aimed at a Muslim sheik who escaped. It was set off by the CIA in collaboration with British intelligence and Saudi intelligence and specifically authorized by William Casey, according to Bob Woodward's history of Casey and the CIA. So that is a clear-cut example of international terrorism. Very unambiguous and I think it is one of the candidates for the prize for the peak year of 1985.

Another candidate surely would be the so-called Iron Fist operations that Shimon Peres' government was carrying out in occupied southern Lebanon in March of 1985. This is in southern Lebanon, which was under military occupation in violation of the Security Council order to leave, but with U.S. authorization. The Iron Fist operations were targeting what the high command called "terrorist villagers" in southern Lebanon. It included many massacres and atrocities and kidnapping of people for interrogation and taking them to Israel and so on. It reached new depths of calculated brutality and arbitrary murder, according to a Western diplomat familiar with the region, who was observing. There was no pretense of self-defense, rather it was openly undertaken for political ends. It was conceded, it wasn't even argued. So that's a clear case of international terrorism although here we might say that it is aggression. I'll call it just "international terrorism" in line with the principle that we bend over backwards to give the United States the benefit of the doubt. Of course, this is a U.S. operation: Israel does it because they are given arms, aid and diplomatic support by the United States. So we will decide to call this just "international terrorism," not the much more serious war crime of aggression. The same, incidentally, was true of the much worse operations of 1982 when Israel invaded Lebanon and killed maybe twenty thousand or so people, again with crucial U.S. military, economic and diplomatic support. The U.S. had to veto a couple of Security Council resolutions to keep the slaughter going, provide the arms, and so on, for it. So it's a U.S.-Israeli invasion, if we are honest. The goal was to install a friendly regime in Lebanon and oust the PLO, which would help persuade the Palestinians to accept Israeli rule in the West Bank and Gaza. That's actually accurate and I have to compliment the *New York Times* in saying that on January 24th. As far as I know, this is the first time in mainstream U.S. literature that anyone has dared to say what was absolutely common knowledge in Israel and in the dissident literature 20 years ago. I was writing this in 1983 just using Israeli sources but it couldn't penetrate U.S. commentary. You might check and see. As far as I know, this was the first breakthrough. I am not sure the reporter understood what he was saying. But anyway he did say that. James Bennet, January 24th, prize for James Bennet for telling the truth after 20 years. And it's true and, of course, it's a textbook illustration of international terrorism. This time we have to bend over backwards pretty far to call it international terrorism because it is hard to say why this isn't overt aggression -- the kind of action for which U.S. and Israeli leaders should be subjected to Nuremberg trials for real serious war crimes. But, again, let's keep to the guidelines and let's say it's only international terrorism. Well, that's the second example, the Iron Fist operations.
Third, the only other example from 1985 that I know of took place two days before Shimon Peres arrived in Washington to join Reagan in denouncing the evil scourge of terrorism. Shortly before that, Peres sent the Israeli air force to bomb Tunis killing 75 civilians, torn to shreds with smart bombs. It was all rather accurately and graphically depicted by a highly respected Israeli reporter in the Hebrew press in Israel and corroborated by other sources. The United States cooperated with that by withdrawing the Sixth Fleet so that they did not have to inform their ally, Tunisia, that the bombers were on their way, presumably getting refueled on the way. So that's the third candidate. I don't know of any other candidates that even come close to being candidates...

Incidentally, George Schultz, the moderate, immediately after the bombing, he telephoned the Israeli Foreign Minister to say that the United States had considerable sympathy for this operation but he backed away from open support for massive international terrorism or maybe aggression when the Security Council unanimously condemned the attack as an attack of armed aggression. The United States again abstaining against that.

So those are the top three cases that win the prize for 1985, to my knowledge, and again I'll assume that these are just international terrorism so we are not calling for Nuremberg trials. Just more "international terrorism" by "depraved opponents of civilization itself" and examples which are pretty hard to miss, remember, because these are the peak stories of the year for international terrorism in the Middle East. There are three perfect examples. In fact, the only three major examples that I know of. However, they aren't candidates. In fact, they are not even in the running. They are not competitive. The examples that are in the running are, for example, cited in the *Current History* issue, to which I referred, which does discuss 1985 and gives two examples of the evil scourge of terrorism, namely the hijacking of TWA 847, killing one American Navy diver and the hijacking of the Achille Lauro which led to the killing of Leon Klinghoffer, a crippled American -- both surely terrorist atrocities. Those are the two examples that are in the running, that are memorable, that count for international terrorism. Well, the hijackers for the TWA plane claim -- correctly, in fact -- that Israel was regularly hijacking ships in the international waters in transit between Lebanon and Cyprus, killing people and kidnapping others, taking them to Israel, either for interrogation or simply as hostages, keeping them in jail for years. Some people are still in jail without charges but that doesn't justify the hijacking on the assumption, which I accept at least, that violence is not legitimate in retaliation against even worse atrocities or as preemption against future atrocities. Violence is not legitimate in such cases so we can dismiss those claims though they are in fact correct. Incidentally, the U.S.-Israeli hijackings -- and remember, if Israel does it, we are doing it -- those hijackings are also out of the historical records.

Occasionally, you find a reference to them in the bottom of a column on something or other but they are not part of the history of terrorism. The hijackers of the Achille Lauro claimed that this was retaliation for the bombing of Tunis a couple of days earlier. Well, we dismiss that with contempt on the same principle, namely, violence is not justified in retaliation or preemption. Assuming that we can rise to the minimal, moral, level that I mentioned earlier -- if we are not confirmed hypocrites, in other words -- then some consequences follow about other acts of retaliation and preemption but that's too obvious
to talk about so I will just leave it for you to think about. Well, that's 1985, the peak year of international terrorism in the Middle East.

As a research project, you might see if I have left out anything that is a competitor for the prize that I am not aware of. None are mentioned in the literature on terrorism. As I said at the beginning, you don't really have to work very hard to see these things. You have to work very hard not to see them. It takes a really good education to miss this. 1985 was, of course, not the first or the last act of international terrorism in the Middle East. There are many others that are very important. For example, in 1975, Israel, meaning Israeli pilots with U.S. planes and U.S. support, in December 1975, they bombed a village in Lebanon killing over 50 people. No pretext was offered but everybody knew what the reason was. At that time, the UN Security Council was meeting to consider a resolution which was supported by the entire world with marginal exceptions -- only one crucial exception, the United States, which vetoed the resolution -- calling for a diplomatic settlement of the Israel-Palestine conflict, incorporating UN 242 and all of its wording of the main resolution, security and territorial integrity and all those nice things on the internationally recognized border. The offending part of this one was that it also referred to Palestinian national rights and that's not acceptable to the United States. It rejected them then and it rejects them now, contrary to a lot of nonsense that you read. The U.S. vetoed the resolution. That continued year after year and is still going on now, of efforts of diplomatic settlement, which the U.S. has unilaterally blocked. Israel does not have a veto at the Security Council so they reacted to the debate by bombing Lebanon and killing about 50 people without a pretext. That's not in the annals of international terrorism either. The U.S. supported both of them, lots of deaths, hundreds of thousands of people driven out and so on. Clinton had to back off his support for the 1996 invasion after the Qana massacre, over a hundred people in a UN refugee camp. At that point he said, "can't handle this any more, you better leave." There was no pretext of self-defense in this case. This is just outright international terrorism or maybe aggression. And it continues.

So let's go up to the current intifada, which broke out on September 30th of year 2000. In the first couple of days, there was no fire from Palestinians, some stone throwing, but Israel was in fact using U.S. attack helicopters to attack civilian apartment complexes and so on, killing and wounding dozens of people in the first few days. The Clinton Administration responded to this by, I'll borrow our President's phrase, by "enhancing terror." You recall President Bush condemned the Palestinians for "enhancing terror" last month, so I'll use his phrase in line with the guidelines. The Clinton Administration committed itself to enhancing terror on October 3rd by making a deal for the biggest shipment in a decade of military helicopters to Israel along with spare parts for the Apache attack helicopters that were sent a couple of weeks earlier. That's enhancing terror. In the days right after, these helicopters were being used to murder and wound civilians, attacking apartment complexes and so on. The press cooperated by refusing to report this. Note: not failing to report it -- refusing to report it. It was specifically brought to the attention of editors and they simply made it clear that they were not going to report it. There is no question about the facts, incidentally, but to this day it has not been reported, except in the margins. That policy continues.
Skip to December 2001. George Bush was condemning the Palestinians for enhancing terror and he contributed in the conventional ways to enhancing terror, in crucial ways, in fact. On December 15th, the UN Security Council debated a European-initiated resolution, calling on both sides to reduce violence and calling for the introduction of international monitors to assist in monitoring a reduction of violence. That's a very important step. That was vetoed by the United States. ... It's hard to think of any other interpretation for this. The press didn't have to bother giving an interpretation. The press didn't have to bother giving an interpretation because it was barely reported. It then went to the General Assembly where it wasn't reported at all and there was an overwhelming vote supporting the same resolution. This time, the United States and Israel were not entirely isolated in opposition as several Pacific Islands joined in -- Nauru and one or two others. So, therefore, not the usual splendid isolation. I don't recall that that was reported. About ten days before that there was another major contribution to enhancing terror. The Fourth Geneva Conventions, according to the entire world, literally, outside of Israel, applied to the occupied territories. The United States refuses, it doesn't vote against this when it comes up in the United Nations, it abstains. I presume the reason is the United States doesn't want to take such an open blatant stand in violation of fundamental principles of international law, particularly because of the circumstances under which they were enacted.

If you recall, the Geneva Conventions were established right after the Second World War in order to criminalize the acts of the Nazis, so saying they don't apply is a pretty strong statement. However, outside of the United States and Israel, the whole world agrees. The International Red Cross, which is the agency responsible for applying and interpreting them, agrees. In fact, as far as I am aware, there is no further question about this. Switzerland, which is the responsible state, called a meeting of the High Contracting Parties for the Geneva conventions -- that is, those like the United States that are legally obligated by treaty to enforce them, a high solemn commitment -- called a meeting on December 5th in Geneva and the meeting took place and passed a strong resolution determining that the Geneva conventions do apply to the occupied territories which makes illegal just about everything that the United States and Israel do there. They went through the list -- settlements, displacements and everything that goes on. The United States boycotted the session. They got another country to boycott them, Australia. According to the Australian press, under heavy U.S. pressure, Australia joined in boycotting them. If the U.S. boycotts it, it's like a negative vote at the Security Council or the General Assembly. It doesn't get reported and it's out of history. But that's another important step to enhancing terror. All this took place, incidentally, in the midst of a twenty-one day truce, a one-sided truce. The Palestinians weren't carrying out any acts but a couple of dozen Palestinians were killed, including a dozen children. That was right in the middle of these efforts to enhance terror... Maybe that's an unfair interpretation and there is some other motive that I'm not thinking of but that's what they look like to me. You can think about that.

In any event, international terrorism in the Middle East certainly continues and has a long history and if you look over the record, of course, it is mixed and complicated but I think you will find that the balance is pretty much along the lines that I described, in fact, the
balance reflects the means of violence available, as it usually does. If you look around at
terror, in fact, that's why, in the whole range of terror, state terror is far worse than
individual terror for the obvious reason that states have means of violence that
individuals don't have, or groups. And that's what you find if you look, I think,
overwhelmingly. It is commonly said that terrorism is a weapon of the weak. That's
completely false, at least if you accept the official U.S. definition of terror. If you do that,
then terror is overwhelming the weapon of the strong, like most other weapons. Well,
that's history but all of this stuff is out of history. History is what is created by well-
educated intellectuals and it doesn't have to have any resemblance to that thing called
"history" by naive people and if you check this, I think you will find this true.

Well, that's the Middle East. Let's turn to Central America, the other main focus of the
plague by depraved opponents of civilization itself. Here, I will be brief because the core
parts are uncontroversial, at least, uncontroversial among people who have minimal
regard for international law and international institutions and so on. Actually, the size of
that category is very easily estimated, namely, ask yourself how often what I'm about to
say has appeared in the discussions about the evil plague of terrorism in the past five
months. Huge flood, but how much has been devoted to some uncontroversial cases,
again, uncontroversial if you think the World Court and Security Council and
international law have some significance. Well, in 1986, the International Court of Justice
condemned the United States for international terrorism -- "unlawful use of force" -- in its
war against Nicaragua. Again I am going to keep to the guidelines, bend over backwards,
and allow this to be interpreted just as international terrorism, not the war crime of
aggression. So we will call it "international terrorism." The court ordered the United
States to terminate the crimes and to pay substantial reparations, millions of dollars.
Congress reacted by instantly escalating the war by new funding... Nicaragua took the
matter to the Security Council, which debated a resolution calling on all states to observe
international law, mentioning no one but everyone knew who was meant. The U.S.
vetoed it. Nicaragua then went to the General Assembly which passed similar resolutions
in successive years. The United States and Israel opposed and in one year they got El
Salvador [to join them].

All of this is out of history. It has to be. It is just inconsistent with their preferred image
of what history is supposed to be and, as I say, you can check how much these
uncontroversial cases have been referred to recently. And remember who were the
individuals responsible: people like Negroponte, proconsul of Honduras, Rumsfeld,
special envoy to the Middle East, and so on, plenty of continuity. The U.S., as I said,
reacted by escalating the war and for the first time giving official orders to its mercenary
forces to attack what are called "soft targets." That's what the Southern Command called
them, "soft targets," meaning undefended civilian targets like agricultural cooperatives
and so on. That was known and it was discussed in the United States. It was considered
legitimate by the "Left," so Michael Kinsley who represents the "Left" in the mainstream
debate, in an interesting article -- he was then editor of the New Republic -- in which he
said that, we shouldn't be too quick to condemn State Department authorization for
attacks on undefended civilian targets because we have to apply pragmatic criteria. We
have to carry out "cost benefit analysis" and see whether, as he put it, the amount of
blood poured in is compensated by a good outcome, namely, democracy. What we will
determine to be democracy and what that means you can see by looking at the states next
door like El Salvador and Guatemala which were okay democracies. And if it passes our
test, then that's it, okay. So, in other words, international terrorism is fine -- assuming it
meets pragmatic criteria, now across the spectrum, Left or Right among "we" -- that is
educated and privileged intellectuals, not the [general] population, of course.

In Nicaragua, the population had an army to defend it -- it was bad enough, tens of
thousands of people killed, the country practically devastated, may never recover -- but it
had an army to defend it. In El Salvador and Guatemala, that wasn't true, the army was
the state terrorists. The U.S.-supported state terrorists, they were the army. There was no
one to defend the population and, in fact, the atrocities were far worse. Also, they are not
a state so they could not go to the World Court or the Security Council to follow legal
means -- of course, without any effect, because "we," people like us, have determined
that the world is going to be ruled by force, not by law. And since we have the power, as
long as we determine that, a state that tries to follow legitimate means of responding to
international terrorism doesn't having anything to do. But that's our choice, nobody else's
choice. You can't blame anyone else on that. There was, however, popular resistance, not
elite resistance, but popular resistance to the atrocities there so that the U.S. had to resort
to an international terrorist network -- an extraordinary international terrorist network.

Remember, the U.S. is a powerful state, it's not like Libya. If Libya wants to carry out
terrorist acts, they hire Carlos the Jackal or something. The United States hires terrorist
states, we're big guys. So the terrorist network consisted of Taiwan, Britain, Israel,
Argentina -- at least, as long as it was under the rule of the neo-Nazi generals, when they
were unfortunately removed, they fell out of the system -- Saudi Arabian funding, quite a
substantial international terrorist network, never been anything like it. In contemporary
terms, we might call it an "Axis of Evil," I suppose. The outcome -- again keeping to the
guidelines: we believe our leaders -- was hundreds of thousands of people slaughtered
and millions of orphans and refugees, every conceivable atrocity, the region devastated.
The single uncontroversial case, Nicaragua, which was the least of them, that alone far
surpasses the crimes of September 11th -- and the others suffered far worse. Again we are
bending over backwards and giving the U.S. the benefit of the doubt so we are only
calling it international terrorism organized by depraved opponents of civilization itself.
Well, that's the second major area, Central America.

All of this, however, is off the record, too. [In] the Current History journal -- and it's
typical in this respect -- nothing that I have just referred to is mentioned. Nor is it in the
whole scholarly literature, in fact, except way out at the margins. You can check and see
it just doesn't count. The '80s are described as the era of state-sponsored international
terrorism but they are not referring to any of these things. The U.S. was trying to prevent
state-sponsored international terrorism by taking "pro-active" means like the most
massive international terrorist network that's ever been known. That's very typical of the
scholarly literature, journalism and, again, you can do a check. There has barely been a
word on any of this as the second phase of the war on terrorism has been declared once
again with pretty much the same people and every reason to expect some more [similar] outcomes.

Well, from all of this an obvious conclusion follows: there is an operational definition of terrorism, the one that is actually used -- it means terror that they carry out against us -- that's terrorism, and nothing else passes through the filter. As far as I know, that's a historical universal, I can't find an exception to that. You might try. For example, the Japanese in China and Manchuria [claimed they] were "defending" the population against Chinese terrorists and going to create an earthly paradise for them if they could control the terrorists. The Nazis in occupied Europe [claimed they] were "defending" the "legitimate" governments like Vichy and the population from the terrorist partisans who were supported from abroad, as indeed they were. They were run from London, Poland and France and so on. ... Also, as far as I am aware, this is virtually universal among intellectuals, educated folks like us. Apart from statistical error, this is the line that they take. Now, it doesn't look that way in history, but you have to remember who writes history.

That ought to leave you with a little skepticism. If you look at actual history, not the one that's written, I think you will find that this is the case and I could even maybe suggest it as a research topic to some enterprising graduate student who aspires to a career as a taxi driver. Just to continue to the present, let's just take the last couple of months. September 11th was a perfectly clear example of international terrorism, no controversy about that so we don't have to waste time on it. What about the reaction? Well, it turns out the reaction is also an uncontroversial case of international terrorism. Again, let's keep to the guidelines -- we'll just listen to what our leaders say. So, on October 11th, President Bush announced to the Afghan people that we will keep bombing you until you hand over people who we suspect of terrorist acts although we refuse to provide any evidence and we refuse to enter into any negotiations for extradition and transfer -- a clear case of international terrorism.

On October 28th, the British counterpart, Admiral Sir Michael Boyce, who is the chief of the British defense staff, took it a step further. Remember, getting rid of the Taliban regime was not a war aim -- that was an afterthought. Three weeks after the bombing began, that [aim] was added, presumably so that intellectuals would have something to feel good about or something, I don't know. Anyway, three weeks after the bombing, that was added as a new war aim and Admiral Boyce announced to the Afghan people accordingly, I think this was the first mention of this war aim, that we will continue bombing you until you change your leadership. First, that was all very prominent, page one of the New York Times in both cases. Two, both cases are textbook illustrations of international terrorism, if not aggression, but we are still bending over backwards, and it's all off the record by usual convention. We're doing it so it doesn't count. It's only when "they" carry out what we officially define as "terrorism" that it counts.

Well, it's easy to go on but let me just return to the weak thesis: there can't be a war against terrorism as terrorism is defined in official U.S. documents, it's a logical impossibility. This is a small sample of illustrations -- you can go on easily -- but it's
enough to show that that can't be true. Well, that's the weak thesis. What about the strong thesis, that it is all so entirely obvious that it would be embarrassing to talk about it because it's all right on the surface, nothing hidden about any of this? Everything that I mention is perfectly well known, you don't have to penetrate anything to discover it. No obscure sources, nothing, just the obvious evidence. And you can easily add to it, there's a ton of literature about it for the last twenty years but that literature also can't be discussed because it comes out with the wrong conclusion. So it's treated the same way terrorism is in our intellectual culture. Again, choice, not a necessity. So we end up with a kind of dilemma. If we are not honest, forget it. If we are honest, there's a dilemma. One possibility is just to acknowledge that we are total hypocrites and then to at least have the decency to stop talking about human rights, right and wrong and good and evil and so on and say "we are hypocrites and we have force and we are going to run the world by force, period. Let's forget about everything else." The other option is harder to pursue but it's imperative. Unless we would like to contribute to still worse disasters that are likely to lie ahead.