

Religion, Terror, Politics and the Media

On Thursday, September 20, 2001 the University of Alberta's CJSR radio station presented a one hour news special on the September 11 attack on the United States. Host Zak Pashak was joined by Dr. Judith Garber, a political science professor at the U of A, who specializes in U.S. government and politics; Tim Weis, the spokesperson of the Muslim Students' Association; and Dr. Saleem Qureshi, a professor at the U of A, who specializes in Islamic, Middle-Eastern and South Asian politics. They discussed issues relating to the attack, including how public opinion is shaped by shallow, homogenized media presentations.

ZAK PASHAK: We've all heard a lot about who might have orchestrated this attack, and theories on the investigation. But the news media, and perhaps citizens themselves, avoid looking at why there seems to be such strong anti-Americanism in the world right now. Now, of course, at this point nothing has been proven, but many people feel that the attack was carried out by an extremist Muslim group trying to strike at the core of the United States. In this situation, religion, however, seems to have had nothing to do with the attacks, but instead, years of perceived American brutality. As I said, nothing has been proven, but my first question is why might these attacks have happened? Professor Qureshi?

PROFESSOR QURESHI: The root of discontent certainly lies in the Middle East. I do not think it's a matter of religion. I think it is a matter of colonialism. And you can go as far back as the beginning of the 20th century and you can build up case after case in which first it was Britain, and then Britain was replaced by the United States. But in each case, the aspirations of the local people were suppressed and the interests of the colonial power were given precedence and dominance. And so you have a liberation movement that has been germinating, and it has certainly utilized Islam because in Islamic countries Islam is the most powerful strategy for mobilizational purposes. Islam in the Muslim countries is not separate from everyday life, everyday vocabulary, everyday imagery—they're all saturated. And if you talk with a Muslim, he will not accept that there is any division between the temporal and the spiritual. So the use of Islam is germane for the purpose of mobilization.

ZAK PASHAK: Can you give us some examples of the colonialism that has angered people in the Middle East?

PROFESSOR QURESHI: Well you can go back to 1928 when the Muslim Brotherhood was founded by Hassan El-Banna. And while the language it used was Islamic, the purpose mainly was to get rid of the British domination of

Egypt. During the twenties and thirties, there was a lot of protest, political education and fighting in Palestine, which was against the colonization of Palestine. Britain was the ruler, and Britain was seen as making it possible for the Zionists, for the Jews, to occupy the land and dispossess the Palestinians.

You can see the United Nations resolution that split Palestine into Israel and the Palestinian State, in the security council there was not a single Arab voice, not a single Arab state was consulted. And actually in the case of Palestine, the British colonial office in 1922 declared that—and they said, we have no intention of consulting the wishes of the local people.

You can come to 1951 when a Nationalist government in Iran nationalized the Anglo Iranian Oil Company and looked toward the United States on the basis of democracy. The United States also had attained its freedom by fighting against the British, and the Iranians were fighting against the British, so they thought that the Americans would help them, but at that time United States threw its support behind Britain. And as a matter of fact, a coup was organized by the CIA; "Kermit" Roosevelt was the CIA operative in Iran. I think about a million dollars were spent, and the Shah, who had fled Iran, was brought back. Prime Minister Mosaddeq was overthrown. And it was this particular imposition of the Shah that many were able to use 40 years later to show that the Shah was actually a stooge of the Americans, of the imperialists, and he ruled in the interest of the foreigners. And I could give you many more examples.

ZAK PASHAK: All right, so you're outlining the strong connection of Islam and daily life and how, with an anger toward colonialism in that region, ideas like jihad have been used to justify certain forms of action against colonial powers, and specifically in this instance, the United States?

PROFESSOR QURESHI: There is very clear formulation of

the laws pertaining to war and peace, and there are a number of very good books dealing with that. There are two kinds of jihad: one is the greater jihad, which is to deal with your own conscience; and the other is the lesser jihad, which is to fight against those who fight against you. Now, a lot of petty Muslim princes over the centuries have invoked jihad. And there is quite a bit of debate on this; you can say jihad is a concept which has been abused by Muslim rulers.

ZAK PASHAK: Tim, obviously you're not an expert on international relations or even Islam, necessarily, you're the spokesperson for the Muslim Students' Association. But at the same time I'm wondering if I can get your thoughts on how the idea of jihad has been twisted.

TIM WEIS: Jihad itself is a lot more complicated than people would like to simplify it to be. I'm someone who converted to Islam, and so what I can tell you is what I have learned as someone who lived in England, and has learned about it from a Canadian perspective from Canadian Muslims, and also from being in Egypt as well. And jihad itself does not translate into holy war, but in fact, translates into something more along the lines of a struggle. As Dr. Qureshi was outlining, the greater jihad is the struggle against yourself—against compulsions toward materialism and constraining yourself from inclinations that are not within the confines of Islam.

Of course, the other aspect of jihad is to defend yourself, or if there is oppression, then there is an aspect of it where violence may be unfortunately the last resort, given certain circumstances. And so, as Dr. Qureshi was outlining, there is a lot of desperation in certain parts of the Middle East; a lot of poverty, a lot of ignorance as well, just born out of poverty, and people are angry for one reason or another. And so you can twist certain concepts, too—if you pick an enemy, then you can twist a concept into convincing people that these particular people are attacking you and so you have, therefore, the right to turn around and attack them. Now, as I said, it's complicated—there's a lot more to it. One of the important concepts in Islam is that, regardless of the situation, you're never allowed to attack civilians or, in fact, even in times of war, you're not allowed to pollute the environment or cut down trees or that sort of thing.

So you can see how obviously—just in the simple explanation—how what we saw in New York City is certainly not what jihad is outlined to be.

ZAK PASHAK: There have been reports that the people who flew the planes into the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon and the one that went down in Pennsylvania, were drinking before. It seems like there's a clear distinction that this is not a religious thing at all and it has maybe nothing to do with jihad, nothing to do with Islam so much as to do with the oppression that these people feel they've suffered at the hands of the U.S. government.

But I'm just trying to get to the nature of the religious versus the political.

TIM WEIS: And I think people that are responsible for this have certain goals in mind, and they're stringing along people for whatever reason they can. Now, if you can convince someone through a perversion of Islam, then that's your method. If you can convince someone through secular reasons, then that would be your method as well. And so I think it appears these guys were drinking and going to strip bars and whatnot. Certainly they weren't convinced through religious reasons.

ZAK PASHAK: Exactly. Professor Qureshi.

PROFESSOR QURESHI: I have been thinking about this phenomenon quite a lot, and examining the people who provide the membership and the support of practically all of these kinds of organizations, whether it is jihad or Hamas or Hizbollah, any one of these, or even Osama bin Laden. It has been said that it is poverty. But Osama bin Laden is a multimillionaire.

ZAK PASHAK: Right.

PROFESSOR QURESHI: It's not poverty. Then there are people who are educated. And as a matter of fact, if the people who were involved in this operation come from the Middle East, then obviously they represent the educated; you can't fly any plane unless you can read the manuals and you can look at the gadgets and so on. I think the central point is not poverty, the central point is not the absence of education, the central point is not religion. The central point that I was saying is that the American policies, not American people, not the American civilization, American democracy, no, it is the policies of the government of the United States that affect countries. And those policies are seen as being negative to the interest of the population. Americans have tended to support tyrants like the Shah, like the Saudi rulers—even Saddam Hussein at one time—as against the will of the people.

ZAK PASHAK: All right. Well this is an excellent time for me to interject because we're moving back on to American reactions and American responsibility.

I'm going to go now to an article by Robert Fisk, who is a journalist for the London-based newspaper *The Independent*. He's interviewed Osama bin Laden, and is possibly one of the few voices in Western media seeking to understand the problems in the Middle East from a non-biased perspective.

The following article is Fisk's reaction the day after the attack on the U.S. and is read here by CJSR's Tiffany Brown Olsen:

The Awesome Cruelty of a Doomed People
By Robert Fisk

So it has come to this. The entire modern history of the Middle East—the collapse of the Ottoman empire, the Balfour declaration, Lawrence of Arabia's lies, the Arab revolt, the foundation of the state of Israel, four Arab-

Israeli wars and the 34 years of Israel's brutal occupation of Arab land—all erased within hours as those who claim to represent a crushed, humiliated population struck back with the wickedness and awesome cruelty of a doomed people. Is it fair—is it moral—to write this so soon, without proof, without a shred of evidence, when the last act of barbarism in Oklahoma turned out to be the work of home-grown Americans? I fear it is. America is at war and, unless I am grotesquely mistaken, many thousands more are now scheduled to die in the Middle East, perhaps in America too. Some of us warned of “the explosion to come.” But we never dreamed this nightmare.

And yes, Osama bin Laden comes to mind; his money, his theology, his frightening dedication to destroy American power. I have sat in front of bin Laden as he described how his men helped to destroy the Russian army in Afghanistan and thus the Soviet Union. Their boundless confidence allowed them to declare war on America. But this is not the war of democracy versus terror that the world will be asked to believe in the coming hours and days. It is also about American missiles smashing into Palestinian homes and U.S. helicopters firing missiles into a Lebanese ambulance in 1996 and American shells crashing into a village called Qana a few days later and about a Lebanese militia—paid and uniformed by America's Israeli ally—hacking and raping and murdering their way through refugee camps.

No, there is no doubting the utter, indescribable evil of what has happened in the United States. All America's power, wealth—and arrogance, the Arabs will be saying—could not defend the greatest power the world has ever known from this destruction. And there will be, naturally and inevitably, and quite immorally, an attempt to obscure the historical wrongs and the blood and the injustices that lie behind yesterday's firestorms. We will be told about “mindless terrorism,” the “mindless” bit being essential if we are not to realize how hated America has become in the land of the birth of three great religions.

Ask an Arab how he responds to twenty or thirty thousand innocent deaths and he or she will respond as good and decent people should, that it is an unspeakable crime. But they will ask why we did not use such words about the sanctions that have destroyed the lives of perhaps half a million children in Iraq, why we did not rage about the 17,500 civilians killed in Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon, why we allowed one nation in the Middle East to ignore UN Security Council resolutions but bombed and sanctioned all others who did. And those basic reasons why the Middle East caught fire last September—the Israeli occupation of Arab land, the dispossession of Palestinians, the bombardments and state sponsored executions, the Israeli tortures ... all these must be obscured lest they provide the smallest fractional reason for yesterday's mass savagery.

It would be an act of extraordinary courage and wisdom if the United States were to pause for a moment and reflect upon its role in the world, the indifference of its government to the suffering of Arabs, the indolence of its current president.

But of course, the United States will want to strike back against “world terror”—who can blame them? Indeed, who could ever point the finger at Americans now for using that pejorative and sometimes racist word “terrorism”? There will be those swift to condemn any suggestion that we should look for real historical reasons for an act of violence on this world-war scale. But unless we do so, then we are facing a conflict the like of which we have not seen since Hitler's death and the surrender of Japan. Korea, Vietnam, is beginning to fade away in comparison.

Eight years ago, I helped to make a television series that tried to explain why so many Muslims had come to hate the West. Last night, I remembered some of those Muslims in that film, their families burnt by American-made bombs and weapons. They talked about how no one would help them but God. Theology versus technology, the suicide bomber against the nuclear power. Now we have learnt what this means.

ZAK PASHAK: I'm going to ask a question now of Professor Garber. On TV it seems that in the U.S. there's a strong pressure to react to this. In your talk on Friday you spoke of American public sentiment and a perceived distaste for long-term or difficult solutions. What pressure is on the American government to respond to this?

PROFESSOR GARBER: That's a complicated question, because I think the relationship between public sentiment and governmental action is itself a complex relationship. Clearly the citizenry, if you measure public opinion, wants decisive and possibly even extreme action, which would obviously entail military action.

On the other hand, it seems pretty clear to me that public opinion in the U.S. is heavily shaped by the rhetoric and discourse that comes out of the government, and is filtered through the media that comes out of government in tandem with the major mainstream media sources, particularly TV, but not exclusively TV. So it's hard to know what—I think the question you ask is something like What do Americans want? What do Americans want their government to do? And I think that's a really hard question to answer, because I think what Americans want in these situations is now, as it has been historically, really shaped by what big interests in the U.S. want to do.

Clearly there seems to be sentiment for military retaliation, perhaps at any cost, even to civilian lives, in Afghanistan or Iraq or whatever country the U.S. chooses to respond in. But Americans are given so few options; they're exposed to so few options and dissenting voices in the mainstream media, where most people get their information, that it's hard to know what people would want if

they knew more about the historical context that Robert Fisk was detailing in his article. It's hard to know what Americans would want their government to do if people knew more widely about the complexities of the forces that cause these terrorists to act.

And I don't, unlike some other people, hesitate to use the word "terrorist." Simply because the U.S. or other Western countries have also supported or engaged in terrorist acts, to me, doesn't obviate the fact that these acts meant to instill terror in the hearts of a lot of people.

ZAK PASHAK: No, that's a good point. You spoke on Friday about the distance between citizens in the United States and their government. How important is that right now?
PROFESSOR GARBER: I need to reconsider the way I put that in the forum on Friday. Because in a sense, the big issue is that Americans are very distanced from the decision-making that's going on, because Americans aren't presented, at least by their political leaders, with a lot of different options, because Americans are fed a unified rhetoric and discourse about war and about crusades and about evil and about freedom and so on and so forth. There is this gap between the making of choices about how to act and what people see. Americans only see the choices after they've been made; I guess that's another way of putting it. The choices have already been made somewhere in the bowels of what's left of the Pentagon and in the White House. And Americans just see the results of that choice, which are communicated very simplistically and in a warmongering fashion with—again, with the aid of the mainstream media.

So there is that distance. But also, in a sense, I think, Americans are too close to decision-makers. Citizens, when you see them interviewed on the street, are primarily voicing the exact same words that George Bush and Donald Rumsfeld and Dick Cheney and other political leaders are voicing. So there's a sense in which there's this distance and a sense in which there's too much proximity.

ZAK PASHAK: Right, yeah, I was just going to say that it does seem like there's also a reaction from the government to try and appease, at least they claim, that the government wants to. If the American public largely said let's try and forgive or understand, would you see a different reaction from the U.S. government?

PROFESSOR GARBER: I think so, because after all, elected officials are concerned at least in part with reelection. That's always in the minds of elected officials. So it's certain if 70 per cent of Americans or 80 per cent of Americans were saying no, let's not respond with military options or let's not respond in a way that puts civilians at threat or let's rethink our foreign policy on a larger level, let's rethink our hypocrisy and things we've done wrong in the past, then I think that decision-makers, policy-makers would act differently. But it's unreasonable to think that Americans will be able to overcome the dominant opin-

ions that are presented to them.

And I've heard a lot of comments over the past ten days—comments in letters to the editor and on the radio and in forums that have happened at the university—about the fact that Americans are not deep thinkers about America's role in the world. And I think that's true—and I don't absolve Americans of the responsibility of thinking critically, but I'm listening to the critical voices that do exist even within the United States. It's not as if every American within the United States is completely ignorant of the American role in diplomatic military history. But I do think it's unreasonable and naïve to think that people who get most of their news through mainstream media sources are really going to come up with, on their own, an oppositional political opinion.

ZAK PASHAK: It's been a hope of mine that this is going to create enough interest, and enough people are just going to say I'm not going to react the way that people on TV are, but I want to know why it happened. And so it's been a hope of mine that maybe people are going to start looking to other sources of news, and learning about people like Chomsky and whoever else.

PROFESSOR GARBER: Yes. But I don't know that Americans are all going to start reading Chomsky, or—

ZAK PASHAK: But maybe a few more.

PROFESSOR GARBER: Well, and I'm not clear that some regular American citizens, other than, say, political science professors, won't start thinking more critically. And it's interesting because these public opinion polls that have been taken recently, which I put virtually no stock in, because the questions are so simplistic and because they are taken at a time when people are very sensitive and emotional and reactive, and getting mostly the propaganda coming out of the government. I just don't put a lot of stock in those polls. But it's interesting that even those polls show a significant reluctance to go in and just bomb the hell out of other countries. You know, people might say well, okay, the polls say that 70 per cent of Americans, or whatever the figure is, support military action even if it harms civilians, even if civilians are killed, and again, in Afghanistan, for example. And that's a large and sobering number. You know, I wouldn't be among those people and I would hope that more Americans would not blindly support military action that might harm civilians.

But frankly, compared with the unanimity of public opinion in the United States and, I would add, in Canada and other countries during the Gulf War, and given the fact that these polls were taken directly after these attacks, I actually took some heart in the fact that a quarter of Americans or whatever, a quarter or 30 per cent, didn't just blindly rush in. So I think as time goes on there's this opportunity for critical reflection.

And I also wonder whether the fact that so many Americans have been killed in the United States might

actually make people more sympathetic to civilian losses that the U.S. might incur. That people—mothers and husbands, and sons and daughters—who have lost people in New York and on the planes and in the Pentagon might actually say oh my God why we can't—we can't be killing children in another country. Those children didn't do anything, just like my child who was killed in the World Trade Centre didn't do anything.

ZAK PASHAK: Yes, there have been reports, actually, that in New York especially, there's been fairly strong sentiment not to bomb.

PROFESSOR GARBER: That's interesting, I hadn't heard that. I guess I'm not really surprised.

(A tape of Noam Chomsky is played)

This is Noam Chomsky. I've just had the privilege of having a discussion at the CJSR Community Radio in Edmonton. I'd just like to say how important it is, in my opinion, for such radio to exist. Wherever it does, anywhere in the United States or Canada that I've seen, it contributes enormously to understanding, education, community, activism and the ability of people to do something meaningful with their lives. Because it's a resource that they can participate in, that they can hear other things in, that allows them to get around the power of the institutional structures that try to indoctrinate and control them. It's just a major force for freedom and democracy, and I think—I hope—it will continue to be supported and will flourish.

ZAK PASHAK: All right, we are back. Tim, my next question is for you. With the possible thirst for revenge within some people in the U.S. as a response to the attack on the U.S. government, but also in Canada, possibly because of a perceived attack on Western ideals, and also on our neighbour and ally, the U.S., there have been reports out of New York and out of various different places about retaliation against Muslim people. Has there been any evidence of that in Canada and in Edmonton specifically, that you've witnessed or—

TIM WEIS: Yes, there certainly has been. In fact, New York has actually been one of the better places for Muslims to be right now, ironically. As ironic as that might sound. But actually I was just thinking about this when Dr. Garber was speaking a minute ago. There have been attacks in Edmonton, although they're isolated; there have been threatening phone calls and threatening e-mails and there was a fire bomb at a mosque in Montreal. The list goes on. But at the same time, it is an improvement over what we've seen in the past. In the Iraq war and the aftermath of the Oklahoma City bombing, the backlash was actually much worse. In fact, I think during the Iraq war, Edmonton sent over 60 Muslims and Arabs to the hospital, students after being attacked at school or wherever. So

there have been a few isolated incidents, but they haven't been anywhere near as bad as we've seen before. Of course the West hasn't started dropping any bombs yet, so that may deteriorate.

But at this stage in the game, another important point to note is that the mosques and the Arab groups such as the Canadian Arab Friendship Association and the Islamic Family and Social Services Centre, for example, here in Edmonton, have all received more positive phone calls from community members, saying we understand that this is really nothing to do with your religion nor the people here in Canada. And so there are signs of hope that people are starting to learn to sit back and think critically about things before reacting right away.

ZAK PASHAK: Yes, I wanted to get into that. What positive stuff has come out of it, like what phone calls or letters have people been dropping off? Where has it mostly been coming from?

TIM WEIS: There's been a lot of phone calls to the different mosques. There's been quite a few letters to the editor, in the *Edmonton Journal*, for example, which have been heartening to see as well. There was also—there's neighbours of the mosque who have come over and just handed a letter to someone they've seen just saying we have no reason to believe that anyone here would be responsible for any tragedy like that, and we also—and the most important thing that I think I need to get across and the Muslims need to get across, that something like this really has nothing to do with the tenets of Islam. And a lot of the letters and the e-mails and the phone calls we've been receiving, people are saying that we understand that this is not part of your religion. And so I think that's encouraging because I think that's really the message we need to be getting out there to these people.

ZAK PASHAK: Excellent. Yes, and after this you're being whisked off to the next radio station. Has it been almost annoying that there's so much focus on you, the Muslim Students' Association, and maybe the religion of Islamic faith in regards to this, or is it still—it's good that you're at least being asked to just give your mindset.

TIM WEIS: Well, yes, I guess—we were debating whether we should even be involved or engaged in the media at all, because at the end of the day, up until I guess recently where they're starting to say they have substantial evidence, it's all been purely speculative.

ZAK PASHAK: Right.

TIM WEIS: And I watched CBC pretty extensively the first day it happened, and after about five or six hours you started to see pictures of Osama bin Laden and then every two or three hours you'd see another picture, and then by midnight it was every hour on the hour they were showing him. And the American government hadn't said anything about who their suspects were but people were pointing the fingers at us already. And so our initial reac-

tion was we shouldn't even dignify these responses because it's just—it's almost racist that people are pointing a finger at us before really any substantive accusations have been made.

ZAK PASHAK: And also pointing the finger at people of a similar faith to the people who carried it out like they're all part of the same team or something.

TIM WEIS: Yes, it's—I find some of the discourse that's gone on just sad. It's like we've gone back in time 50, 60 years, you know. Just hearing people talk. I hear it on the radio all the time; one person of this faith doesn't necessarily represent the entire group. And it's like it's amazing that we have to reiterate that. This is something I learned in kindergarten.

ZAK PASHAK: Yesterday when you and I were speaking, you said something about the Timothy McVeigh thing and how they weren't interviewing the head of the Scottish—or the spokesperson of the Scottish students in reaction to that bombing.

TIM WEIS: Yes, we have to admit that some of this is brought upon ourselves in a sense in that we haven't done a good job of being out there. And I guess this is—to answer the original question—this is why I'm here, is that people have been speaking about us for a long time instead of having the Muslims speak for ourselves. And so when you're having people speak on your behalf they could be saying anything. And I guess that has been a problem. Islam had a really bad picture of it painted because whoever, with whatever agenda, is speaking instead of having Muslims speak about Islam.

ZAK PASHAK: Professor Qureshi, do you have any thoughts about—

PROFESSOR QURESHI: Well, just to add to what Tim said. When it is one of 'ours,' it's all with an individual. But when it is one of 'theirs,' it's the collectivity. And yes, it's right. Nobody said in the case of Timothy McVeigh that Christians were involved, or all the Americans were involved. Yes, when Baruch Goldstein killed 29 Palestinians in the mosque, no house was destroyed, no gardens were dug up, nothing was done. But when a Palestinian does something of that kind, all Palestinians are guilty. So it's normal human nature.

ZAK PASHAK: At the same time, though, if—say that it was someone who—I don't know, I'm just totally off the top of my head, someone who practised Baha'i or maybe—if all the people—

PROFESSOR GARBER: That would be the least likely person in the world to carry out that.

ZAK PASHAK: Absolutely. It would be the least likely, and I acknowledge that. But say that the pilots of these planes were found to have been practising Baha'i, I don't think there would be quite such a strong ferocity of response towards Baha'i people. It would be like, wow, this was a small group of really whacked-out Baha'i people. Why is it

that there's so much of a strong sentiment against Islam?

PROFESSOR QURESHI: Oh, because the conflict between Muslims and Christians is not something that has started only now. Just think of, in the seventh century, Muslims were knocking on the doors of Constantinople. In the eighth century, they were practically in the suburbs of Paris. And over the years, Muslim empires have ruled over large tracts of Europe. Like, for example, the Ottoman rule for about four, five hundred years, right up to Vienna. And the Mongols who conquered Russia right up to Poland, after conquering, they became Muslim. And so the history—and then, of course, everybody talks about the Crusades. And then the reversal is that Europeans have started to colonize Muslim lands. So you can see you have 1,500 years of conflict between Muslims and Christians.

And there's one more very important factor, and that is, because Islam is younger than Christianity, if you look at the earliest writings by Christian scholars on Islam, they're all trying to prove that Islam is a false religion, like Mohammed is a false prophet, that it is no religion, it can not be given any credence because all that was necessary for religious credence had already been done by Jesus.

ZAK PASHAK: Right. All right, there was a forum on Friday and Professor Garber was there. Also there, was Professor Thomas Keating. I'm going to play a clip of him now. This is from the Friday forum titled, "The End Of The World As We Know It."

Thomas Keating: Three options present themselves to the United States. The first option is the unilateral striking out at those who the United States thinks is responsible for what has taken place. This would be very much in line with the way the Bush administration has acted on virtually every other foreign policy issue that has confronted it since it's been elected, and while not totally unique to the Bush administration, it has displayed greater unilateralism, greater disregard for international opinion and international agreements and international institutions than probably any government in American history that I can recall. At the same time, the fact that the United States has not struck out in such a way—yet, is significant.

The second option is a Western option. This is presented, seen, defined by some as the West, against the others, the challenges to the West. And part of the problem with the response is that there may, indeed, be a Western response. And I think if you look at the support, the coalition that the Bush administration is pulling together, this support is nowhere stronger than it is in the West as evidenced by the decision made by NATO. But I think it's important not just to read the NATO decision as signing on to the Americans wholeheartedly. I think it's important to read the NATO decision, the invoking of Article 5, as an attempt on a part of the Europeans to say, 'You're with us, remember. This is a collective thing.' And it's an attempt on the part of Europeans to say 'Don't go alone. Don't act

alone. Wait for us.' And within that lies an opportunity for, again, I think, a voice of moderation.

The danger, of course, is that it becomes simply a West versus non-West, a West versus fundamentalist religious groups, a West versus the Middle East, the West versus another part of the world. That presents a danger. We don't want to see Samuel Huntington's clash of civilizations. We don't want to see this simply being the West. Because if civilization has any meaning at all, it means the human rights of all individuals, regardless of where they live, regardless of what their beliefs are, regardless of what ethnicity they are. If this is indeed an attack on civilization, if we want to use those sorts of words, then we need to reflect on the concerns of all, the human rights of all.

And the third option, then, is a more inclusive option, one that draws from all parts of the world, that recognizes the common humanity that we all share, and recognizes that these extremist acts present a threat to all of us. And Muslim people, people of Islamic faith have been as subjected to terrorist activities through the years as we have now recently experienced in the United States. This is not something that is exclusive to the West. It's something that affects all humanity; and therefore we need a more inclusive response.

What is encouraging is the widespread support for addressing this problem. And one can only hope that we take advantage of this opportunity, given this widespread support, to develop a truly inclusive and a truly international response. Not an American response, not a Western response, but a truly international response, and begin to address not only the perpetrators, but the underlying causes.

ZAK PASHAK: Professor Thomas Keating teaches Canadian and international politics at the U of A. The preceding excerpt was from Friday's forum on campus.

Now, in the piece we just heard, Thomas Keating outlined three different possible approaches that the U.S. could take: an isolationist response; a Western response as has just been started with NATO; and the third, something that I think he expressed hope for, and that was a multilateral response that could possibly get the United Nations involved and the countries of the world working together to fight terrorism, not to blame countries for terrorist acts.

I wanted to go through possible things that the panel hopes can come from this, or maybe thinks is going to come from this. I'm going to start with Tim Weis. What do you hope for on a city level for maybe something positive that can come out of this.

TIM WEIS: Well, I'm glad that we're ending on this note because we—despite the desperation of the situation—we have to hope that we can somehow move forward from here instead of deteriorating.

There's two things that I hope come out of this on a local level: one of them is for the Muslim community and

one of them is for the non-Muslim community or Canadians at large. I think for the Muslim community this really needs to be a wake-up call for us to be out in the community a bit more, letting people know who we are, what we stand for, what Islam is really about. There's over 30,000 Muslims in Edmonton. In fact, Islam is the second biggest religion in Canada, and we have seen how little Canada really knows about Islam. And so I think that's an onus we have to take upon ourselves. And the flip side of that coin is, what I'm hoping for Canadians to do, is to take a deeper look at Islam before they react against it, not to understand Islam out of context, and to try to learn a little bit more about Islam, because as our world is shrinking we all have to learn how to get along. So that's what I'm hoping to see in the future.

ZAK PASHAK: All right. And Professor Garber, I'll ask you to talk a bit about your hopes for North America in result of this, and also to talk about anti-American sentiment or how to deal with things that are going on right now.

PROFESSOR GARBER: Well, my hope for the United States is that citizens become more critical and demand more information from their government. And certainly in this day and age with so many sources of information other than the mainstream electronic media, and I'm thinking here of the Internet specifically, it certainly seems that people should be able to find more information than they can get from Dan Rather or on CNN. So I'm hoping that people do become more discerning and demanding and critical. And that Americans start to think a bit more, to pay more attention to American foreign policy. One of the big problems, I think, is that Americans just don't pay that much attention to foreign policy.

Americans are far more interested in domestic policy issues, and that comes out in elections, that comes out in day-to-day political talk, so that politicians, decision makers, are able to get away with just about whatever they want in terms of foreign policy.

I hope, too, that although these acts were clearly not taken with the consent or probably with the knowledge of the Palestinians, with Yasser Arafat, that they have an effect on what's going on in the Middle East between the Palestinians and the Israelis. I hope that the U.S. may start to bring pressure on Israel, as well as the Palestinians, to get back to the negotiating table, not to fuel the flames that are part of the bigger picture of these attacks. And part of that, I think, requires Americans, including American Jews, many of whom are quite critical of the Israeli government, to start being more vocal about demanding that the U.S. get back in as a peacebroker. Something that the Clinton administration had hoped to do was to get back in and try to broker a peace accord rather than sitting back or actively supporting Israel. So those are some of the things I hope for.

Just briefly because I know we don't have much time

here, in terms of the anti-Americanism, I guess I would separate the clear anti-American message that was embedded in the attacks. It's hard to get more anti-American than flying airplanes into crowded buildings in the cities of a country. But I guess I would separate that anti-Americanism from the anti-Americanism of people in the U.S. and in Canada and in Europe and elsewhere, who are critical of U.S. foreign policy and what they see as U.S. imperialism or colonialism or hypocrisy or aggression or however that's framed.

I, as somebody who is American, who is originally from the U.S.—but who is extremely critical of U.S. politics, or, sorry, U.S. foreign policy and of the Bush administration—still find this mindless anti-Americanism on the part of, for example, Canadians, not to be a helpful addition to the dialogue. It's one thing to be critical of U.S. foreign policy, it's one thing to be critical of the way in which Americans give over all decision-making power to elected officials without really subjecting those decisions to inspection, but the cynical anti-Americanism that I've seen among a lot of Canadian commentators in particular just isn't that helpful.

ZAK PASHAK: It's okay to be really saddened by what happened, but it doesn't necessarily mean you need to pick up an American flag and chant U.S.A.

PROFESSOR GARBER: Oh, for sure. And I actually, as somebody who is an American citizen, as well as a Canadian citizen now, I find the flag waving in Canada to be really odd. I have to say I find it really disconcerting. It's okay if that's the way people want to express their sympathy, their empathy, their solidarity, but I find it disconcerting.

ZAK PASHAK: All right. And Dr. Qureshi, in closing, I was wondering if you could talk about your hopes for this on an international level and maybe specifically to do with your specialty of the Middle East.

PROFESSOR QURESHI: Well, I hope it is possible that different parts of the world, different countries, can all join their effort to prevent the happening of the kind that happened ten days ago in the United States in which a large number of people who did not have any direct role in the American government policies became victims. But something of that kind would require quite a few things, and I will just mention two for example.

I think a redistribution of the world's resources is a primary condition. If 20 per cent of the world's population that is West controls 87 per cent of the world's wealth, if the consumption of energy and other resources in the West is horrendous as against a stark poverty and deprivation in certain other parts of the world, for these two extremes to be able to work together or even to understand that there are common problems is not really very possible; that's at the economic level.

If I were to look at particularly the Middle East, I think Judy mentioned the Palestinian/Israeli issue, this

issue has been hanging for a very long time. Conferences started on the 1st of November, 1991; it's ten years. On the 13th of September, '93, the Oslo process was started, and what I have not been able to understand is why are the negotiations necessary? There are United Nations Security Council resolutions 242 and 338, which lay down the formula under which peaceful relationships can be established. Every time an attempt is made to resolve this conflict, reference is made to these two resolutions and yet somehow these resolutions are never brought to the level of practicality.

The other point, the other issue which is very important, is Britain and the United States cannot go on bombing Iraq weekly. Britain and the United States cannot go on imposing sanctions on Iraq because they hate Saddam Hussein, the sanctions that are killing hundreds of thousands of Iraqi children and have turned Iraq back into pre-industrial age in spite of the fact that Iraq was the most secular, most educated, most advanced, most tolerant of women in the entire Middle East, and that is the one country that has been targeted by Britain and the United States to be totally destroyed. I think for a world conscience to be generated for the purpose of dealing with acts that harm everybody it will be necessary to deal with issues of this kind.

ZAK PASHAK: Thank you very much, Professor Qureshi. I want to thank the whole panel. Thank you very much for tuning in and we're going to go out with a song by a very political band.

("Ghost of Tom Joad" written by Bruce Springsteen and performed by Rage Against the Machine)

He pulls his prayer book out of his sleeping bag
Preacher lights up a butt and takes a drag
He's waiting for the time when the last shall be first and
the first shall be last
In a cardboard box 'neath the underpass
With a one-way ticket to the Promised Land
With a hole in your belly and a gun in your hand
Looking for a pillow of solid rock
Bathing in the city's aqueduct ...
Now Tom said "Ma, wherever you see a cop beating a guy
Wherever a newborn baby cries
Wherever there's a fight against the blood and hatred in
the air
Look for me, Ma, I'll be there
Wherever somebody's fighting for a place to stand
Or decent job or a helping hand
Wherever somebody's struggling to be free
Look in their eyes, Ma, you'll see me."

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