

The Importance of Ideology

by [Walter Block](#)

When I was young and foolish (the two don't necessarily go together), I used to believe that rationality, common sense, and pragmatism would overcome ideology. That is, I thought that when push came to shove, and it became clear that our economic or political system was not working, when people were actually dying as a result of it, that it would be jettisoned in favor of something that could actually work, and thus save lives.

1. My first rude awakening from this naïve and complacent view concerned the ideology of socialism-communism. The economic system of the USSR killed millions of people — this is entirely apart from millions more of actual murders also perpetrated in the name of the proletarian revolution — and yet it was allowed to persist for some seven decades. One could, perhaps, dismiss this occurrence on the ground that these people were, after all, foreigners, and the ordinary rules of rational human behavior do not apply to such persons, but for the fact that there were also legions of commie sympathizers cheering them on from the good old U.S. of A., in accents that were as American as apple pie.

2. The second ideology involved the AIDS — Red Cross — blood transfusion episode. In the early days of this debacle not only did not the Red Cross refuse to accept blood donations from gay men, it even declined to single out their donations for special testing. This would be an insult to the gay community. Yet, such was the prestige of this organization that they were able to stay in business, despite having in this way killed thousands of hemophiliacs, and other recipients of poisoned blood transfusions. (Since then I have resolved never to financially support the Red Cross, even indirectly as when it appears under the umbrella of groups such as the United Way.)

Here, again, was the triumph of ideology over rationality, morality and common sense. Gays, after all, are "good"; at the very least it is a mortal crime and sin to do anything that has even the slightest chance of insulting these people, and they insult easily. This holds even when actual lives are not only at stake, but, even, had already been lost.

A third episode which impacted my thinking is of recent origin. On 9/11/01, a day that will forever live in infamy, when 19 men, 15 of them Saudi Arabian males between the ages of 25-40, killed about 3,000 innocent civilians. This horrendous event has triggered several further ideologies, each of them still operational.

3. One of the new ideologies is the utter and total evil of racial profiling. Given that these murderers commandeered commercial airplanes, it is only natural that attention would be paid to Saudi Arabian men in their twenties to forties, in an effort to preclude a repetition of this tragedy. Has this been the case? It has not. Instead, while greater efforts have indeed been made to monitor passengers, none of it has focused on this age-gender-ethnic cohort. Indeed, the very opposite has occurred. That is, efforts have been made not only to search other groups too — such as black grandmothers, white

children, Orientals — but to *reduce* coverage of the very type of person responsible for the events of 9/11/01.

And why, pray tell, is this? Yet another ideology raises its ugly head. We must never engage in racial (or ethnic or gender) profiling, lest this offend other groups in society, mainly, in this case, young black males, and those who support their "rights" not to be singled out by the police as suspects for criminal behavior. Let us get something clear. The police have never engaged in "racial" profiling against blacks. Had they done so, their attention would have been paid, equally, to black grandparents, toddlers, teen-aged girls, disabled, etc. Instead, they have focused almost totally on male blacks in their teens and twenties. Why? Is this some sort of limited racism? Not at all. Rather, this is precisely the age-sex-race grouping most disproportionately over represented in the crime statistics. Thus, there has been *criminal* profiling, but no racial profiling at all.

And yet, because of ideological sensibilities, we have shown ourselves as a country willing to take on extra risks of a repeat of the World Trade Center catastrophe, merely so as to not be seen as treading on racial toes. For shame.

4. Next, gun control. The perpetrators of 9/11/01 did their evil deed based on the threat of no more than razor sharp box cutters. (There was also the fact that previously, air plane high jackers were not suicidal, so pilots were told to submit in order to save lives). Well, there is one way to obviate future such occurrences: arm, if not all passengers, then at least the pilots and staff. No more crashing into buildings, then, nor the need to shoot down a future hypothetical airliner for this purpose. In any rational world, anxious to avoid a repetition of 9/11, this is exactly what would take place. But ours, alas, is beset by destructive ideologies. Earnest entreaties by pilots' associations to this effect, signed by literally tens of thousands of them, have fallen on deaf Department of Transportation ears. Instead, they have contented themselves with meticulous searches for box cutters, nail clippers and nail files; talk about the Maginot Line.

According to the ideology now prevalent amongst our masters, we are to entrust the landing and takeoff skills of pilots with our very lives, but dare not rely upon them to be armed, even when specifically qualified to do so, as a last line of defense against evil doers. And this despite the best efforts of John Lott and other researchers who have shown that gun legalization saves lives.

5. Now consider Saudi Arabia, from whence emanated most of the terrorists. It is all well and good to seek out and punish the perpetrators of the events of 9/11 in Afghanistan, if that is where they are hiding. But business as usual with Saudi Arabia? Not even a strongly worded diplomatic note of protest? Not only do the monsters hail from that country, but so does Osama bin Laden, the arch criminal mastermind. Instead, President Bush puts out the welcome mat at his ranch in Texas for the head of this nation.

Why? It is difficult to reject the hypothesis that the U.S. is dependant upon oil from that corner of the globe. But if our purchases of this mineral even indirectly enable the financing of terrorism, why do we not seek out alternative energy sources, for example in our own country, e.g., in Alaska?

Let's take the troops out of Saudi Arabia, indeed from the whole region, and stop the foreign aid and other meddling, including the murderous sanctions on Iraq. We can't solve ancient hatreds, but we can follow the example of

Switzerland, and mind our own business. Thus we may even avoid further terrorist attacks.

6. The failure to develop oil in Alaska is due to the power of yet another powerful ideology, left wing environmentalism. It would appear that not only are bald eagles, spotted owls, snail darters and various types of salamanders and frogs more important than human well being, but this applies, also, to land itself. Case in point: the pristine nature of the Alaska wilderness, plus, perhaps, inconveniencing a few brothers of ours of field and stream, such as the caribou. Let it be said once and for all, loud and clear, however; private property rights are not the enemy of a clean a safe environment. Indeed, the very opposite is the case. Free market environmentalism is not an oxymoron. Just go and ask the environmentalists on the other side of the Iron Curtain about how well socialist governments treat the land, air and water. As long as private property rights include the right to sue trespassers, e.g., perpetrators of mud slides, oil spills, wayward dust particles (air pollution), this system is the last best hope for a sound ecological system.

7. But this does not at all exhaust our tour of pernicious ideologies. What of the much vaunted Immigration and Naturalization Service, which a half year after the tragedy was still granting papers to terrorists who had already committed suicide? Has the INS lost profits and been forced into bankruptcy? It has not. Has this bureaucracy even had its wings clipped administratively? Had its budget cut? Been supplanted by a more efficient government agency, better able to sift through immigration applications, and prevent terrorists from arriving upon our shores? To ask this question is to answer it.

8. And this is to say nothing of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. The failure of the FBI to protect the American public was horrendous. Records are even now coming to light indicating that the lower level operatives of this "intelligence" community had foreknowledge of an impending World Trade Center attack. But the organizational apparatus was so inept no use could be made of this information. Yet the popular, nay, exalted status of the FBI is such that it, too, paid no penalty for its abject failure. Indeed, it is no exaggeration to say that the FBI's reputation remains untarnished in the aftermath of 9/11.

9. Worse, far worse, is the statolatry (worship of government, for the uninitiated) which has taken deep root in our society. For victims of this particular ideology, the government simply can do no wrong. Or, if it can, then the motto of the people is, "My state, right or wrong."

Consider the facts. For years the U.S. government has been poking its snout into hornet's nests the world over. The American state has a standing army, contrary to its own constitution. Nor does it leave these men under arms within its own borders. Much to the contrary, it stations them abroad, in the seas and on the territory of foreign nations. It has more soldiers abroad than the combined numbers of all other countries taken together (and most of them, e.g., from the United Kingdom, are there at the behest of Uncle Sam).

Unhappily, the government of the United States has not adhered to the advice given to it by George Washington, in his "Farewell Address," to avoid entangling alliances. It has spurned the dictum of President Adams to the effect that we wish all other nations their freedom but will fight only for our own.

Finally, finally, a few of the hornets from abroad we have disturbed in their own lands have struck back in a big way. Does the American public blame

its government for its unconstitutional meddling into the affairs of others? Not a bit of it. George Bush's approval ratings have shot through the roof. A wave of "patriotism" sweeps the nation. But this is not the patriotism that befits a free country, one that minds its own business, one that limits itself to a defensive posture in world affairs. This is the jingoism of a veritable empire. Let's face it. Were any *other* country to have acted as we have done in world affairs, say, a triumphant Nazi Germany, or a super bellicose China (now *that* is an oxymoron) or a reinvigorated bad old U.S.S.R., the only one with massive numbers of troops stationed abroad, and people in this country would know full well how to accurately label such an entity: as an Empire, not a Republic. According to the famous Peanuts cartoon, "we have met the enemy, and he is us." The U.S. has become the Darth Vader of the earth. It is our country which is now out of control. Yes, the perpetrators of 9/11 were terrorists, in that they targeted innocent civilians. But they were hardly the first to engage in so heinous an act.

Let us hope and pray for a return of the U.S. to sanity on the world stage. But if this is to occur, we must renounce the evil ideologies of socialism, communism, obeisance to homosexuality, opposition to racial profiling, gun control, to the claim that Saudi Arabia is not a "rogue" state, to left wing environmentalism to the INS, the FBI, and most important, to the notion that the U.S., the first of the modern "rogue" Empires, is really a completely innocent victim of oppression.

According to that old saw, the reason disputes amongst the professoriate in academia are so vicious is that there is so little at stake. But if our analysis is correct, this is about as far from the truth as it is possible to be. For faculty members at universities inculcate their charges with ideology, and there is scarcely anything more important for the future of the human race. Professors are in charge of nothing less than the ideological development of the entire next generation of leaders and scholars.



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