



laetus in praesens

Alternative view of segmented documents via Kairos

2nd August 2006 | Draft

Proportionate Response in the Eye of the Beholder

Educational fables for faith-based global governance (#57)

-- / --

Introduction

Exemplary fables of proportionate response

- Religious
- Culture
- Animal folk tales
- Authority vs Social unrest
- Institutionalized environments
- Community / Neighbourhood environments
- Interpersonal relationships
- Resource requirements
- Governance
- Wildlife
- Eugenics

Challenge for the beholder

Acclaimed disproportionality

Reframing proportionate response

Certification of disproportionality

Contemporary reformatization of ritual "human sacrifice"

Proportionate response, degrees of complicity and collateral damage

Proportionate response vs Proportional responsibility

Challenge of existential maturity and sense of identity

Proportionate response from other perspectives

Conclusion

References

Introduction

The issue of "disproportionality" figured prominently in assessments of the response of Israel to actions of [Hezbollah](#) in July-August 2006 [[more](#)]. Disproportionality may be understood in a variety of ways -- conditioned by learnings in many settings concerning what is fair and appropriate.

The challenge of such situations is highlighted by Eben Kaplan (*Targeted Killings, Backgrounder*, Council on Foreign Relations, 2 March 2006) noting:

Two customary principles of the Law of Armed Conflict, which is derived from international law, also apply to targeted killings: distinction and proportionality. Distinction requires combatants 'distinguish between combatants and non-combatants,' [[Gary Solis](#)] says, while proportionality is the principle stipulating the 'destruction of civilian property must be proportional to the military advantage gained.' These principles are intended to limit collateral damage, but targeted killings involving unreliable intelligence or the remote firing of missiles are at a greater risk of causing collateral damage.

The purpose of the following set of exemplary tales is to illustrate appropriately proportionate response in a global society subject to the high principles of faith-based governance. The various tales have been tentatively clustered for convenience. Where the tales are well-known, or reference can be made to other sources, only indicative elements are included with the link.

Exemplary fables of proportionate response

Religious fables of proportionate response

Many religions are very helpful in framing the nature of proportionate response, especially in response to any condition that can be framed as demonically engendered. Under such circumstances no compromise is justified and any measure to constrain or disable the demonic opponent, or one inspired by evil intent, is justified in the service of the highest values. The challenge is to ensure that the opponent is effectively demonized -- an evidence-based process that is the reverse of faith-based exorcism.

Of particular interest are fables and parables illustrative of (dis)proportionality of response. A notable example would be certain tales of [Mullah Nasruddin](#) [more]. Many religions place high value on such tales as a source of inspiration.

Cultural fables of proportionate response

In the light of religious principles and insights, efforts have been applied to ensuring that these principles are appropriately reflected in the cultural environment, especially in any form of iconography:

- **Prohibition:** Faith-based governance has also ensured proportionate response to the inappropriate cultural expression of peoples, notably those under colonial regimes:
 - **Music** traditional to a culture has been successfully prohibited as a proportionate response to inappropriate efforts to sustain the cultural and collective identity of subjugated peoples through such music. This has extended to the prohibition, in newly composed music, of particular chords (*diabolus in musica*) considered to render people vulnerable to demonic or satanic possession. Contemporary examples include rulings of fundamentalist Christians against rock music ("[Christian Rock Music: Christian or Satanic?](#) 1999) [more]. Music is widely prohibited in fundamentalist Muslim societies.
 - **Clothing** preferences may be regulated by religious and/or secular authorities as a proportionate response to tendencies to public indecency. Current examples include practices imposed by religious authorities in Israel and in many Muslim countries, and by secular authorities in France (and increasingly in other countries).
 - **Language** traditional to an ethnic group, and a vehicle for cultural identity and expression, may be forbidden or severely constrained as a proportionate response to the need to ensure appropriate dominance of a wider national identity. This practice has been successfully adopted under many colonial regimes, whether directly by edict or indirectly through failure to fund education, media or cultural activities using such languages.
- **Icon destruction:** The cultural history and trajectory of many peoples is reflected in the iconography associated with obsolete beliefs of the past, which may regretfully continue to be meaningful to some. Supported by faith-based governance, an appropriately proportionate response to this obsolete legacy of erroneous understanding is to ensure its destruction or (where impractical) its defacement. This proportionate response to the errors of the past has been appropriately pursued down the centuries by many faiths:
 - Muslim destruction of Hindu, Buddhist and Christian iconography and temples (cf [Afghan Taliban Begin Destruction of Ancient Buddha Statues](#))
 - Christian destruction of Muslim and pagan iconography and temples
 - Roman destruction of Jewish iconography and synagogues

Associated with this concern has been appropriately proportionate protest against representations and depictions considered blasphemously offensive. Examples include cartoon depictions of Mohammed, and questionable interpretations of the sexual inclinations of Jesus.

Animal folk tales of proportionate response

Many traditional folk (teaching) stories, about relationships between animals of different species, focus on the seeming disproportionality of their characteristics and the nature of an appropriate response. Such [animal fables](#) may be considered the most formative of understandings of proportionality. The role of fables has been well clarified by [Rudyard Kipling](#) (*Just So Stories*, 1902; *The Jungle Book*, 1894) in a poem that commences:

*When all the world would keep a matter hid,
Since Truth is seldom Friend to any crowd,
Men write in Fable, as old Aesop did,
Jesting at that which none will name aloud...*
(*The Fabulists*)

Examples of [fabulists](#), and sets of relevant fables

- Buddhism: [Jataka Tales](#)
- China: [The Dragon's Tale: and Other Animal Fables of the Chinese Zodiac](#)
- France: [Fifty Fables of La Fontaine](#) by Jean De La Fontaine
- Greece: [Aesop's Fables](#) [index] -- plus morals [1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | selected]
- Hindu: [Panchatantra](#) by [Bidpai](#), illustrating principles of political science [more | more]
- India: [Narayan's Hitopadesha of Friendly Counsel](#)
- Islam: [Kalilah wa-Dimnah](#), a book of political instruction
- Islam: Luqman Bin 'Ad [more more]
- Italy: [Discorsi degli animali](#) by [Agnolo Firenzuola](#)
- Japan: [Kodansha Nihongo Folktales](#)
- Judaism: [Fables of a Jewish Aesop: From the Fox Fables of Berechiah ha-Nakdan](#)
- Poland: [Fables and Parables](#) of [Ignacy Krasicki](#)
- Russia: [Ivan Krylov](#)

Authority vs Social unrest in fables of proportionate response

A key arena for proportionate response by authorities is in the process of dealing with any challenge to their authority. Throughout history, a range of responses have been considered proportionate by the dominant culture:

- **Roman Empire:**

- **Slave uprisings:** Cultures dependent on slave labour have necessarily had to measure the exemplary nature, and appropriateness, of their response to unrest. A particularly significant example, dramatized for current appreciation, was the Roman response to the slave uprising led by [Spartacus](#). Approximately 6,000 of Spartacus's followers were crucified
- **Masada:** A complementary example is provided by the Jewish revolt against the Roman empire, and the heroic choice of the Zealots besieged at [Masada](#) to commit suicide (or to arrange for the death of their dependents unable to do so)

- **European experiences**

- **France:** The French Revolution has been considered the exemplar of revolutions for other countries. In pursuit of their civilizing ideals, those responsible for bringing it about, and in subsequently governing the emergent Republic, may therefore be considered exemplary in the proportionately of their response to the aristocratic regime of privilege that was replaced.
- **Spain:** The situation in Spain leading up to the Civil War, offers a counter example in which the alliance of the landed aristocracy, with the military and the Catholic Church, effectively suppressed the popular uprising through measures deemed by the subsequent regime under Generalissimo Francisco Franco Bahamonde to be entirely proportionate to the safeguarding of the integrity of Spain and traditional Spanish values. Few challenges to this perception were offered by other European countries.
- **Germany:** The Nazi Reich offers numerous examples of internal protest (or of unrest within countries subsequently occupied) to which the response was deemed proportionate. A typical response to situations in a village, where members of the resistance were known to be hidden, was to present an ultimatum to the village population to give up the resisters or face the execution of many villagers. It was considered irrelevant whether the identity and location of the resisters was known to all villagers or to those selected for execution. The number of villagers executed is not then to be considered a factor in determining the proportionality of the response. Presumably Germany's ethnic cleansing initiative (articulated in 1942 in the [Wannsee Protocol](#)) was also understood as a proportionate response to the erosion of their racial identity.
- **Britain:** When the opportunity came for Britain (and the USA) to fire-bomb German cities during World War II, notably Dresden, this was deemed a proportionate response to the sustained aggression of Germany [[more](#)]. A similar strategy was employed in the fire-bombing of Tokyo by the USA [[more](#)]
- **Soviet Union:** Following the revolution of 1918, the proportionate response to those who had opposed the revolution, or who could be framed as continuing to do so, was their imprisonment in a network of labour camps (*gulags*). Some 18-20 million people had been prisoners in camps and colonies throughout the period of Stalinism at one point or another. The appropriateness of such a response is perhaps indicated by their continued existence until 1960, long after the USSR became a founding member of the United Nations in 1945, a permanent member of its Security Council and a signatory of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. [[more](#)]
- **Yugoslavia:** [Srebrenica massacre](#) (1995)

- **American experiences:**

- **Native Americans:** Settlers in early America, imbued by their sense of manifest destiny, necessarily saw as totally inappropriate any resistance by indigenous tribes to encroachment on their traditional lands. As documented by Nathaniel Philbrick (*Mayflower: a voyage to war*, 2006), the early colonists demonized the Indians as agents of evil, implying that "there was nothing to be achieved through diplomacy". In what was subsequently called [King Philip's War](#), the Plymouth Colony lost 8% of its male population, however "Overall the Native American population of southern New England had sustained a loss of somewhere between 60 and 80 per cent". History has demonstrated that such a proportionate response -- sanctioned by various branches of the Christian faith -- involving the decimation of Indians and the enclosure of the remainder in reservations under questionable treaties, was appropriate, successful and a source of national pride. A range of incidents, often inappropriately named as [Indian massacres](#), subsequently characterized relations with the settlers
- **Revolution:** The relationship between the parties in the American revolution against English forces can usefully be explored in terms of proportionality.
- **Civil War:** Proportionate response is clarified through the kinds of distinctions made in *Partisans, Guerillas, Irregulars and Bushwhackers "The Truth Behind The Names"*. (*The Missouri Partisan Ranger*, 1995)
- **Latin America:** (cf Greg Grandin, *The Last Colonial Massacre: Latin America in the Cold War*, 2004)
- **Vietnam:**
 - **My Lai:** The US military action in the village of [My Lai](#) (1968) was deemed to be a proportionate response by those involved, as indicated in a letter by an investigating officer [Colin Powell](#) in arguing against criticism of it: "In direct refutation of this portrayal is the fact that relations between American soldiers and the Vietnamese people are excellent.". Recently declassified papers (Nick Turse and Deborah Nelson, *Civilian Killings Went Unpunished*, *Los Angeles Times*, 6 August 2006) show that U.S. atrocities went far beyond My Lai. Some 320 alleged incidents, involving every Army division in Vietnam, were substantiated by Army investigators. Hundreds of soldiers described a violent minority who murdered, raped and tortured with impunity.
 - **Agent Orange:** The widespread use of [Agent Orange](#) as a defoliant in Vietnam (from 1961-1971) reflects a particular understanding of proportionate response (which was however widely contested by the American public)
- **Iraq:**

- **Suicide bombers:** Exemplify one extreme understanding of proportionate response to conditions that they believe to be poorly addressed.
- **Ancillary factors:**
 - **Modern weaponry:** It is fortunate that modern weaponry, enhanced by artificial intelligence facilitating detection of political allegiance, ensures extremely precise identification and targeting of insurgents and their infrastructure -- with a minimum of collateral damage to civilians. The proportionality of measured response is illustrated by the case of the Israel-Lebanon conflict where, after 11 days of Israeli use of such intelligent weaponry (*The Guardian*, 22 July 2006 [*plus estimates of 11 August*]) [[more](#)]:
 - Lebanese casualties were reported as 66 military [*100, but 500 claimed by Israelis*], 345 [*1,009*] civilians, with +1000 wounded
 - Israeli casualties were 15 military [*78*], 19 [*37*] civilians, with +300 wounded
 - [*Addendum 11 August*: Curiously it is estimated that there are approximately the same number of refugees in Lebanon as in Israel -- the difference being that those in Israel are living in bomb shelters near their undestroyed homes, whereas it is the homes of those in Lebanon that have been bombed and they have been forced elsewhere to seek shelter]

The intelligence capacity associated with use of such weaponry in identifying insurgents is further clarified by Declan Walsh (*Apaches and Land Rovers versus a guy with a detonator*, *The Guardian*, 10 July 2006):

A powerful video lens means the co-pilot/gunner can... accurately target a Talib two miles away... One pilot... admitted it was often difficult to tell a Talib from an Afghan policeman. "The Taliban and the police look the same - black beards and dark clothes," he said.... The principal danger is civilian casualties.... Apache pilots insist they only fire when they have recognised Taliban targets.

The success of this capacity is evident in the indication that "More than 600 suspected Taliban fighters have been killed over the past month..." (Richard Norton-Taylor, *600 Taliban killed in bloodiest month for 5 years*, *The Guardian*, 26 July 2006). The problem of course lies in the use of the term "suspected" to qualify the affirmation of the title -- raising questions about the capacity of such weaponry to distinguish Taliban from others. It may be however that computer-assisted profiling has been secretly developed to the point that resemblance to a suspect is now considered to be a legitimate basis for destruction of the suspect. However, as asserted by Rebecca Grant (*In Search of Lawful Targets*, *Air Force Magazine*, February 2003), "*In determining 'military necessity' and 'proportionality', the commander's judgment is more critical than ever*", but raising the question of the weaponry significance of "ingrained" in her conclusion that:

... highly refined concepts of what constitutes a lawful target are deeply ingrained in the American military. High-visibility campaigns and instant media reporting simply underline the need to exercise great care, on political as well as legal grounds. The laws of war leave plenty of room for commanders to judge when a target must be struck due to military necessity.

This capacity of such weaponry is confirmed by the following case in the Israel vs Lebanon crisis as described by Suzanne Goldenberg (*Red Cross ambulances destroyed in Israeli air strike on rescue mission*, *The Guardian*, 25 July 2006):

The ambulance headlamps were on, the blue light overhead was flashing, and another light illuminated the Red Cross flag when the first Israeli missile hit, shearing off the right leg of the man on the stretcher inside. As he lay screaming beneath fire and smoke, patients and ambulance workers scrambled for safety, crawling over glass in the dark. Then another missile hit the second ambulance.

A UN observation post in Lebanon was destroyed by a precision guided Israeli missile on 25th July (*Four UN observers die in Israeli air strike as heavy fighting continues in Lebanon*, *Independent*, 26 July 2006). This followed frequent cautionary communications from the post to the Israeli forces (cf *Israel troops 'ignored' UN plea*, *BBC News*, 26 July 2006; *UN: Observers made many calls before strike*, *CNN*, 26 July 2006) [[more](#)]. Several conclusions are possible (in anticipation of the results of a formal investigation by Israel as the interested party):

- **deliberate intent:** This was the view initially taken by the UN Secretary-General, deploring an "apparently deliberate targeting by Israeli Defense Forces of a UN Observer post" -- a view upheld by John Egeland, UN Emergency Relief Coordinator. Although vigorously denied by Israel, as prejudging the conclusions of the investigation, some noted that the bombing of the UN compound had striking parallels with the shelling in April 1996 by Israel of the UN compound at Qana, Lebanon (cf *John Quigley, Israeli Bombing of UN in Lebanon: Then and Now*, Institute for Public Accuracy, 26 July 2006). Many will claim that, aside from its known contempt for the UN, Israel had every reason to want the removal of observers if it did not wish reporting of its tactics and any use of problematic weaponry (cf uses of white phosphorous and depleted uranium), as new censorship guidelines indicate (cf *Israel bans reporting of use of "unique" weapons in Lebanon*, *Redress Information and Analysis*, 25 July 2006), and as medical observers have provisionally remarked.

- **rogue elements:** The investigation may focus on the responsibility of rogue elements in the Israeli forces who can be suitably scapegoated with a token reprimand.
- **accident:** The investigation may conclude that the bombing was an accident -- a position already taken in declarations by Israel in anticipation of the conclusions of the investigation. If such is the conclusion regarding use of "precision-guided" weaponry, this would completely undermine any arguments made with regard to the capacity of countries (such as Israel) to manage nuclear weapons responsibly, in comparison with other countries (such as Iran) perceived to be dangerously irresponsible in that respect.

Given the intelligence built into modern weaponry, even though its technical basis is necessarily a military secret, it is a great consolation for many to know that the capacity of such weaponry to determine allegiance in a conflict is such as to obviate the need for confirmation. Use of such weaponry and its munitions is the essence of proportionate response -- guaranteeing that only opponents are targeted, minimizing collateral damage, and obviating the need for any judicial processing of "suspects". The secret to this development is the integration of precision-guidance with faith-based targeting.

The approach is exemplified by the precision shooting at point-blank range, by unnamed UK security officers, of [Jean Charles de Menezes](#) on 22 July 2005 in the light of their faith in the evidence that he was a suicide bomber. This response was subsequently deemed to be proportionate.

- **Interrogation:** The issue of proportionate response has been helpfully clarified in relation to extreme forms of interrogation by civil and military intelligence services (cf Dershowitz: *Torture could be justified*, CNN, 4 March 2003; Charles Krauthammer, *The Truth about Torture: it's time to be honest about doing terrible things*, *Weekly Standard*, 011, 12, 12/05/2005; Michael Kinsley, *Torture for Dummies Exploding the "ticking bomb" argument*. Slate, 13 December 2005)
- **Sentencing:** Proportionate sentencing and [retributive justice](#) (*Lex talionis*), in response to crime, are matters of continuing concern (cf Andrew von Hirsch and Andrew Ashworth, *Proportionate Sentencing: exploring the principles*, 2005). Frequently cited as fundamental to any associated principles is the Biblical phrase "*an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth*" (*Exodus 21:23-27*) leading to an understanding of proportionate punishment, often expressed under the motto "Let the punishment fit the crime". In the case of faith-based justice, this can be interpreted as a blank cheque justifying punishment of the same order as that associated with the crime. It is however considered important to maintain a sense of perspective when the crimes are executed by agents of the prosecuting state in the course of their duty. Typically, if convictions are not disallowed under conditions of impunity, sentencing is then extremely light. Examples of proportionate sentencing include: Jean Charles de Menezes (*No charges for Menezes officers*, *BBC*, 17 July 2006), [Abu Ghraib prisoner abuse](#), etc. In the case of abuses involving rape and murder in Vietnam (cf Nick Turse and Deborah Nelson, *Civilian Killings Went Unpunished*, *Los Angeles Times*, 6 August 2006), ultimately, 57 soldiers were court-martialed with only 14 receiving prison sentences -- ranging from six months to 20 years, with most winning significant reductions on appeal. The strongest sentence went to a military intelligence interrogator who served seven months of a 20-year term. Many substantiated cases were closed with a letter of reprimand, a fine or, in more than half the cases, no action at all.
- **External support:** Determination of proportionality in any interaction is necessarily highly conditioned by the presence or absence of external support -- as in the classic dramatizations, whether the "little guy" standing up to a "big guy" in the absence of friends, or with a "large friend" standing by to offer assistance. For a balanced discussion of proportionality, such comparisons are however particularly inappropriate in the case of Israel vs Lebanon with respect to the extent of assistance by the USA and Iran (whether before or during the conflict). Given that much of the support takes the form of armaments, it is even less appropriate to extend the analysis to the manufacturers and suppliers of weaponry who benefit most directly from any conflict at least cost. [NB: According to the SIPRI Arms Transfers Database, the top [arms exporters](#) in 2001-5 were (*Millions -- G8 countries in bold*): **Russia**, \$28,982; **USA**, \$28,236; **France**, \$8,573; **Germany**, \$5,603; **UK**, \$3,933; Ukraine, \$2,226; **Canada**, \$1,971; Netherlands, \$1,868; **Italy**, \$1,858; Sweden, \$1,760]. It is admittedly difficult for outsiders to comprehend the logic of proportionality, as perceived by those involved, when after several days of the Israeli vs Lebanon crisis:
 - the Israelis assert the need for Iran to cease supplying, or acting as a conduit (via Syria), for arms to Hezbollah
 - the Israelis request delivery of more powerful weaponry from the USA as their principal arms supplier (*U.S. Speeds Up Bomb Delivery for the Israelis*, *New York Times*, 21 July 2006) [[more](#) | [more](#)]
 - the UK indicates that its arms exports to Israel in 2005 were double those in 2004 [[more](#) | [more](#)]
 - Hezbollah indicate that the weaponry used to attack Lebanon is primarily from the USA and the UK
 - regarding the visit of Condoleezza Rice, it is asserted by Israeli journalists that :"*She's coming to check up that we're not getting this war wrong and not messing up the opportunity to be the long strong arm of the US, just as Hezbollah is the long arm of Iran*" (Simon Kamon, *Yediot Aharonot*) [[more](#)]

Given the importance to G8 countries of arms exports, especially to those involved, it is understandable that the G8 meeting in July 2006 failed to recommend an immediate ceasefire in the Israel-Lebanon conflict.

Institutionalized environments and proportionate response

These offer a variety of formalizations of the relationship between an authority structure responsible for the institution and the incumbents (who may react against their institutionalization in a number of ways that invite a duly considered proportionate response, whether by the responsible authority or by those to whom they delegate power):

- **Penal institutions:** Throughout history prisoners have sought to test the boundaries of their incarceration, challenging rules and

seeking to subvert them. At the same time prison warders and their trustees have sought to take advantage of their position of power in their interaction with prisoners. Whilst the abuses of such systems are a matter of continuing concern to penal reform, the discomfort of prisoners is a feature of a proportionate response to their disruptive impact on society. The frequency of physical, sexual and other forms of abuse is to be considered incidental or exceptional, even when publicity is given to the frequency of deaths in custody. In the case of the war of terrorism, the incarceration and treatment of prisoners in institutions such as Guantanamo Bay or Abu Ghraib is appropriately considered a completely proportionate response to their threat to civilized society -- as with the rendition of any suspects to regimes where it is known that they can be handled more effectively.

- **Educational institutions:** Claims regarding abuse by teachers or [bullying amongst students](#) should be seen in a context of the need for a system that imposes a degree of discipline on a potentially unruly group. Apparent abuses, including correctional physical punishment, should be understood as a proportionate response to the pressures on the institution and its authorities. Incidents of bullying between students (to the extent that they are acknowledged by authorities) should be understood as part of the process of socialization through which the weaker are toughened up and come to understand their relationship to the stronger in the wider world.
- **Workplace:** So-called [workplace bullying](#) should be understood as the proportionate response of employees to newcomers (or disruptive individuals) who may otherwise fail to understand their place in the workplace as a social institution. Seemingly aggressive and unreasonable behaviour is a feature of the processes whereby the workgroup ensures its coherence through appropriate manifestations of respect. Occasional incidents of systematic mistreatment of one employee, targeted by one or more other employees (with a mix of humiliation, intimidation and sabotage of performance), should therefore be considered exceptional, whether or not they are associated with violence or death..
- **Military institutions:** Training in the military typically involves the use of physical strength, punishment and abuse to intimidate or victimize trainees in ways that may be deemed excessive. Such processes should however be seen as a proportionate response to the need to toughen up and discipline soldiers -- enabling them to develop strength of body and spirit through tolerance of what might be labelled as bullying -- especially when it is a feature of "rite of passage" hazing rituals through which team solidarity is developed. Resistance of military establishments to inquiries into the extent and implications of bullying, and any associated deaths, should be seen in this context. [[more](#) | [more](#)]

In each such setting, the response of newcomers (and of those who have not fully understood the cohesive spirit of the institutionalized environment) may be experienced as irritants on the part of those lacking appropriate respect and an awareness of their place in the social system. The response of those who embody these values is then necessarily to be understood as proportionate to such irritation and the threat it constitutes to the viability of the institution.

Community / Neighbourhood environments and proportionate response

As with institutionalized environments, communities and neighbourhoods are social systems whose coherence and viability may be disrupted by those who fail to adopt patterns of behaviour consistent with those systems. Remedial measures therefore need to be understood as proportionate in their response:

- **Neighbourhood disruption:** Well-established neighbourhoods are necessarily sensitive to the appropriate degree of respect accorded to their environment by newcomers (including "travellers"), marginal groups, or through traffic. In this sense seemingly aggressive responses (insults, waste-dumping, house-burning, etc) to "people like that" should be understood as a proportionate response to behaviour that is experienced as deeply offensive and challenging to the identity, integrity or security of the neighbourhood. Similar arguments are to be made with respect to the proportionate response to harassment of individuals in a neighbourhood -- as with the widely publicized case of Tony Martin jailed for manslaughter for shooting two burglars, one fatally [[more](#)]. [Vigilantism](#) emerges as a response considered to be totally proportionate to neighbourhood disruption.
- **Neighbourhood gangs:** Of major importance to gangs is the evocation of appropriate respect from others in relation to their chosen territory -- especially gangs from contiguous neighbourhoods. Where this leads to conflict of any kind, the parties involved will consider that doing what it takes to maintain or enhance that respect is a proportionately appropriate response.
- **Disputes between neighbours:** The challenge of relations between occupants of neighbouring dwellings is widely acknowledged, whether it is a matter of height and/or overhang of trees (and falling leaves), infringing walls, noise, odours, handling of waste, vulgar language, indecent exposure, invasion of privacy, or otherwise. Under such circumstances each party rightly considers its responses proportionate, whether or not these lead to a degree of escalation that is widely publicized.
- **Ball-astray cases:** A classic example of proportionate response is provided when a ball in a game falls into a neighbour's property, with or without causing damage. The owner of the property is free to respond in a variety of ways -- most probably determined by the frequency of the occurrence. The ball may be returned without comment, with warning, temporarily confiscated, permanently confiscated, returned in damaged condition -- or the parents or police may be called.
- **Local "wateringholes":** Whether it is a pub, a bar, a cafe, a restaurant, or a club, the identity of a neighbourhood may be defined by the dynamics amongst those who use it -- or seek to use it. Frequently the subject of dramatic representations are the dynamics following a perceived slight or deliberate challenge.

Interpersonal relationships and proportionate response

It is with respect to such relationships that there is the greatest understanding of proportionality in response to a variety of familiar situations:

- **Domestic violence:** It is within the family, where family values and authority may be challenged, that the proportionality of response is best understood:
 - **Inter-spouse:** The proportionality of response by a husband, to what is perceived as inappropriate behaviour by a wife, has been extensively explored within the different religious currently fundamental to faith-based governance -- some of

which accept chastisement as a means of keeping order in the home. The issue of proportionality in [spousal abuse](#) encompasses any violence in the sexual relations between husband and wife (including [marital rape](#)), as sanctioned by such belief systems, irrespective of the views of the wife.

- **Parent-child:** Issues of proportionality in relations between spouses extends into relations between parents and children. It is central to concerns relating to corporal punishment ("[spanking](#)") irrespective of the level of provocation. Attitudes vary widely between cultures and with respect to the genders of those involved. The parent child metaphor has been applied to the dependency relationships of colonial and client countries.
- **Inter-sibling:** [Rivalry between siblings](#) is a widely recognized phenomenon, whether simply traumatic or associated with extremes of violence. The challenges of proportionality increase in the case of differences of gender and age. The dynamics of sibling rivalry have been applied metaphorically to the relations between Arabs and Jews, and between Shia and Sunni Muslims.
- **Honour killings:** Typically an extreme form of domestic violence encompassing the extended family, [honour killing](#) is perceived as a proportionate response to supposed sexual or marital offenses by a female. It is deemed appropriate because of the degree of dishonour it brings to the family. Such killings continue to be reported within Muslim communities. According to interpretations of *Leviticus* and *Deuteronomy*, provisions of the Halakha (Jewish law) envisage capital punishment for certain sexual misconduct of men and women.
- **Crimes of passion:** In such cases one of the parties, typically in a romantic relationship, responds by assault or murder or heartbreak (without premeditation) to a situation triggering a jealous rage. Such a [crime of passion](#) may be considered a proportionate response to such provocation.
- **Road rage:** The widely recognized phenomenon of [road rage](#) is deemed, by the person exhibiting it, to be a proportionate response to an unacceptable provocation by others.

Resource requirements and proportionate response

The nature of proportionate response is well-illustrated in the case of use of limited resources, especially in the event of crises of various kinds:

- **Population pressure:** Pressure on scarce resources is highly conditioned by population levels. Faith-based governance makes every effort to facilitate the increase in population levels in proportion to the lack of resources of any population. For some, this is considered unashamedly as a vital means of striving for the numeric primacy of the faith in question. For some, persuaded by prophecy, this may also be seen as the most effective means of triggering irrecoverable combinations of disasters -- necessitating divine intervention sooner rather than later.
- **Non-renewable resources:** Many studies have demonstrated the extent to which the rightful use of resources per capita worldwide is proportionate to the GNP per capita of the country in which those resources are used.
- **Withholding assistance to those in need:** Aid from countries endowed with resources, and with the capacity to make them available, is effectively withheld (when it is envisaged) in proportion to the need for it. This is evident not only between countries (as with the challenges of developing countries) but also within countries (as with the challenge of the impoverished and the marginalized).
- **Humanitarian crises:** Resources are typically allocated by a country in proportion to the number of nationals of that country endangered by the crisis -- and are effectively for the sole benefit of those nationals. The proportionality of response is most dramatically illustrated in the case of humanitarian disasters, notably those involving acts of genocide. This has been well-illustrated (and documented) in the case of UN involvement in the massacres in Cambodia, Srebrenica, Rwanda, and Dafur -- too little, too late.

Typically, when assistance is provided, its provision is proportionate to the media coverage that it can engender, notably in relation to the electorate of the country or to the voting capacity of the country in international decision-making bodies.

Governance and proportionate response

Response to issues is justly prioritized in terms of the proportion of the electorate supporting such a response, whether directly or indirectly. Democratic governance could therefore be usefully understood as responding to issues in proportion to their visibility as a consequence of the reframing of their seriousness or urgency by government through news management -- or by suppression of information for reasons of national security. Aid, notably military aid, may be provided to one country in preference to another as a proportionate response.

As an example, Israel (23rd country on the global development index) has been the largest annual recipient of direct economic and military assistance from the USA since 1976, and is the largest recipient of USA aid in total since World War II -- amounting to over \$140 billion (in 2004 dollars). Israel receives about \$3 billion in direct assistance from the USA each year, roughly one-fifth of the foreign aid budget of the USA, and worth about \$500 a year for every Israeli. Additionally, Israel also received \$2.2 billion of military aid in 2005. [\[more | more | more\]](#)

Wildlife and proportionate response

Proportionate response is well-illustrated in communities interacting with wildlife. Some animals may be defined as dangerous -- tigers (India), bears (Alaska), wolves (parts of Europe), snakes (Africa), sharks (Australia), etc. The challenge is to determine whether all such animals in the region should be killed (if it is possible), or whether resources should be allocated in proportion to the challenge, or whether people should accept the danger and act with greater vigilance. Variants of all these policies are adopted. Efforts are even made to avoid excessive slaughter of wildlife, even when that is technically possible, in order to benefit from their function in natural ecosystems. Clearly the death of a person from any such animal may focus attention on the desirability of the elimination of the entire species; the killing of sheep may raise questions about tolerating (or reintroducing) predators in the area. In the case of some insect

species (mosquitoes, locusts) there may be no compunction about endeavouring to eliminate the whole species. In the case of virus, successful elimination may lead to the need to preserve live specimens in special laboratories (eg smallpox) in case they have any further function.

Curiously children and teenagers are now recognized as having a tendency to "go wild" and are in fact described as "feral" (notably in Australia). Other forms of marginalization are evident in society, notably associated with criminality. Despite calls by their victims for their total elimination -- as with the victims of wild animals -- this measure is not considered proportionate.

Eugenics and proportionate response

As a policy of social improvement, [eugenics](#) offers many insights into proportionate response to those who do not meet selected criteria - genetic selection. It has been applied to the seriously handicapped, possibly associated with a progressive elimination of part of the population (notably indigenous peoples). In the past, almost all non-Catholic western nations adopted some eugenics legislation, mainly focused on forced sterilization. It is then useful to consider the proposals for the "rooting out" of "terrorists" in the light of past and present thinking with regard to eugenics. Framing them as representative of a dangerous behavioural characteristic in society, it is clear that eugenics offers arguments for the destruction of such people when it is impossible to re-educate them -- a process of "[memetic selection](#)"? One of the challenges of this approach, as a proportionate response, is the rate at which prisons are being filled with people convicted of violent crimes (which they are likely to repeat on release) and the question of whether a policy of eugenics should be applied in some way to their "elimination" from humanity. The number of people killed by criminals tends to exceed by far the number killed by "terrorists".

How evil can the other be framed to be
in order to provide a scale that enhances any measure of one's worth
in righteously overcoming that evil by whatever means?

Challenge for the beholder

Proportionality of response is a challenge of perception -- especially in the case of "terrorism". This is highlighted by the remarks of a former editor of one of the most prominent right-wing newspapers in the UK, [Peregrine Worsthorne](#), writing in a newspaper of a quite contrasting perspective (*War psychosis in the Middle East*, *The Guardian*, 25 July 2006):

In the midst of the third world war psychosis being whipped up over Lebanon by the American right, I cannot help recalling those pictures a year ago of the suicide bombers at King's Cross station looking so serene and happy, without a care in the world - the world from which they were about to depart.

Ever since a doubt has nagged my mind that the description "terrorist" may not do them justice. For the expression on their faces was not in the least diabolical, but rather innocent and happy, confident they were about God's business. No, I am not gratuitously seeking to excuse or justify their actions, but to encourage a true evaluation of the kind of enemy we are about to fight a third world war against: **not so much monsters bent on evil, as religious fanatics bent on good.**

Tragically, in the feverish mobilisation of opinion which a war psychosis requires, **the possibility that freedom and democracy are not the only uplifting causes for which good men can be inspired to kill and die tends to get overlooked.** What the west is in danger of doing, I fear, is to exaggerate grotesquely the physical challenge of terrorism - so as to whip up a war psychosis - and **greatly to minimise the spiritual challenge.** For God may not be on the side of freedom and democracy as much as Senator Gingrich, glibly assuming a third world war -- a truly evil thing to do -- likes to assume. (*emphasis added*)

Making for differences of perception, and failure to agree on proportionality, are:

- temporal frame: one party may focus on immediate events -- to the exclusion of past events in which offence has been taken and unresolved offences are an active concern
- spatial frame: one party may focus on a local context -- to the exclusion of events elsewhere, possibly to others with whom that party identifies
- existential challenges: in the absence of actual physical damage, one party may challenge the right to exist of the other
- respect: each party may reframe "facts" in order to save face or gain (or sustain) respect amongst others

As an extreme example, under what circumstances can terrorism or ethnic cleansing be considered to be proportionate responses -- by those advocating them? More generally, what responses considered proportionate by some are rejected as disproportionate by others -- and why? When is disproportionate response appropriate?

Acclaimed disproportionality

Two extremes of disproportional response are acclaimed in military strategy, as illustrated by the following examples:

- "**Shock and Awe**": This is an implementation of the military doctrine of "rapid dominance" that has as its main principles "overwhelming decisive force," "dominant battlefield awareness," "dominant maneuvers," and "spectacular displays of power" as a means of destroying an adversary's will to fight and adversely affecting the psychology and the will of the enemy to resist. Examples include: Hiroshima and Nagasaki, as well as the invasion of Iraq in 2003 [[more](#)]. As a strong advocate of that invasion in his capacity as Chairman of the US [Defense Policy Board Advisory Committee](#), [Richard Perle](#) now argues that "Israel must now deal a blow of such magnitude to those who would destroy it as to leave no doubt that its earlier policy of acquiescence is

over.... and without regard to mindless diplomatic blather about proportionality" (*New York Times*, 23 July 2006). Analysts recognize the use of such a "shock and awe" strategy in Israel's approach to Lebanon (cf *What happens when 'shock and awe' no longer works?* *Daily Kos*, 15 July 2006)

- **"David vs Goliath":** Goliath was famed as warrior of great size and strength -- a champion of the Philistines -- rendered legendary in the *Bible* by his defeat in the battle in the 11th century BC with David, the young Israelite boy armed only with a sling. David was later reported to have been chosen by God and anointed by Samuel to become the King of Israel. The battle is a founding myth within Israeli culture, echoed in the official Israeli narrative of the first Arab-Israeli war (15 May 1948-20 July 1949) [more]. Its status has been eroded and twisted by the modern development of the Israeli army and its occupation of Lebanon (cf Christopher E Whitting, *When David became Goliath*, 2001). The disproportionality of the Israeli response to the kidnapping of two of its soldiers in 2006 suggests a form of psychodramatic role reversal (*enantiodromia*) in which Israel now takes on the role of Goliath in facing what in military terms can only be described as slings. A similar argument might be made with respect to the Israeli people's experience as victims of ghettoization [more] -- now transformed into their treatment of Palestinians. The classical Greek concept term was reintroduced by Carl Jung to define a situation in which the superabundance of any force inevitably produces its opposite. It is considered equivalent to the principle of equilibrium in the natural world, in that any extreme is opposed by the system to restore balance.

Reframing proportionate response

Despite claims and counter-claims regarding the proportionality of response in particular situations, the clearest guideline credible to faith-based governance is that associated with retributive justice, epitomized by "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth" (as noted above). This offers relatively little guidance on the nature of a disproportionate response and how it is to be recognized. There is as yet no *Universal Declaration of Proportional Response* -- a possibility rendered highly problematic by the well-documented difficulty in defining "aggression".

Possible clues to richer understanding of proportionality are offered by:

- **Dramatization:** Many media dramatizations of action and response explore understandings of proportionality and disproportionality -- especially to the extent that any sense of "unfairness" is a natural trigger and justification for the subsequent dynamics of a fictional plot.
- **Proportionate fear in response to threat:** Any level of threat is well-recognized as being to a large degree a matter of perception. This may even be highlighted by challenging those concerned to see the glass as "half-full" rather than "half-empty" -- too be "positive" rather than "negative". Many kinds of *phobia* are associated with a high degree of genuine fear -- perceived as irrational or exaggerated by others. Fear is also experienced in relation to superstition -- evoking responses deemed proportionate, including consultation of an intercessionary priesthood in faith-based cultures, notably for *exorcism*. Fears may also be engendered in the form of threats of "bogeymen" or "ghosts", especially as a means of controlling the behaviour of others. All such phenomena require judgements of proportionate response. Proportionality is also illustrated by fears engendered by the threat of neighbourhood violence and mugging -- with responses ranging from unlocked and tripled bolted doors (as dramatically highlighted by Michael Moore in *Bowling for Columbine*) to "armed response". The claimed world-wide threat of "terrorism" can usefully be explored from this perspective in order to assess the proportionality of any response. Should the possibility of "exorcising" the Lebanese people be explored in order to "root out" the demonic influence that possesses them through Hezbollah? And yet, in the Israel-Lebanon crisis, there is a curious symmetry reversal between fear of "bogeymen in the cellar" and retreating to the shelter of a cellar for fear of terrorist attacks.
- **Proportionate sentencing:** Reference has been made above to careful exploration of this issue by Andrew von Hirsch and Andrew Ashworth (*Proportionate Sentencing: exploring the principles*, 2005)
- **Proportional salaries:** There has been widespread concern regarding pay differentials and the proportionality of salaries (cf Miriam Golden and Michael Wallerstein, *Domestic and International Causes for the Rise of Pay Inequality: Post-Industrialism, Globalization and Labor Market Institutions*, 2006). Standard measures of disproportionality are provided by the ratio of the average pay of a worker at the 90th percentile to that of a worker at the 10th percentile, or the ratio of a worker who receives the median pay to one at the 10th percentile. For example in OECD countries between 1980 and 2000, the average ratio of the worker at the 90th percentile to a worker at the 10th percentile increased from 2.90 to 3.07 -- a rise of 5.5 percent. Of much greater concern is the disproportionality in pay between the lowest paid worker and the highest executive. [more]
- **Proportional representation:** The thinking devoted to proportional voting endeavours to clarify the need to move beyond cruder variants of proportionality associated with classical voting systems. It could be argued that "an eye for an eye" is of the same conceptual order as "one man one vote" -- and equally dangerous, given the abuse to which they are both subject. A democratic majority of 1 in a population of 10 may be an acceptable basis for governance, less so in the case of a population of 100, 1000 or 100 million. The proportionality of representation of "we the peoples" within the United Nations is a matter of continuing discussion in relation to UN reform.
- **Proportional exchange:** Any trading transaction offers insights into proportional response to challenge and opportunity. A much cited example of a proportionate exchange rate is the early purchase of Manhattan by settlers from the indigenous population -- in exchange for beads. The issue of trading proportionality is illustrated in July 2006 by the challenge of Hezbollah to exchange

prisoners long-held by Israelis against those just captured by Hezbollah. Israelis hold several thousand Palestinian prisoners -- some for decades and many without charge. Israel was initially not prepared to consider any such exchange -- preferring to engage in an exchange of missiles and rockets.

- **Aesthetics:** The principles of aesthetics, notably as embodied in the theories of harmony (exemplified by *ikebana*, and *haiku*), point to much subtler approaches to proportionality in which complementarity of diverse elements reframes binary quantitative oversimplifications. Aesthetic preferences help to clarify the distinction between a "quantitative" and a "qualitative" approach to proportionality as they are differently favoured in different cultures and under different circumstances. This is most strikingly seen in relation to personal physique. Some cultures interpret "well-proportioned" in ways that would be understood elsewhere as "over-weight". Food preferences may oblige those held to be "over-weight" as simply "well-endowed". Fashion may promote certain proportions -- impossible to achieve by many -- as a desirable ideal, whether or not some perceive them as verging on the obscene. These well-understood variants point to the reality of a spectrum of behavioural analogues with respect to proportionality of response.
- **Proportionality in sexual relations:** Curiously the issue of proportionality in response is perhaps of most concern in sexual relations -- even to the point of obsession (as suggested by media coverage and widespread concern with enhancements and aphrodisiacs). There is a case for exploring the traditional insights of the *Kama Sutra* in categorizing partners of different genital proportions in terms of the nature and possibility of their mutual responsiveness. As discussed elsewhere (*Sustainable internet penetration of rural areas*, 2003), the *Kama Sutra* effectively provides a form of coding system for the variety of conditions that may govern any relationship. With respect to proportionality, the chapter referring to "dimensions of desire", distinguishes three classes of man (denoted metaphorically by "hare", "bull", "horse") according to the size of the *lingam* (penis); and three classes of woman (female "deer", "mare", female "elephant") according to the depth of the *yoni* (vagina). The *lingam* might, for example, be usefully understood as a metaphor for the size and penetrating power of a response, whereas the *yoni* might be understood in terms of the provocation evoking the response. The *Kama Sutra* then uses these categories to distinguish three "equal unions" between persons of corresponding dimensions (denoted by metaphors) in contrast with six "unequal unions" where the dimensions do not correspond -- making nine possible unions in all. The "equal unions" may provide an understanding of the categories of "proportional response", whereas the "unequal unions" point to the challenging categories of "disproportional response".

Sexual metaphors are of course extremely common in descriptions, within the military at every level, regarding tactical and strategic response to the enemy -- predisposing soldiers to the abuse of civilians and prisoners, notably to rape. There is widespread recognition of the Freudian symbolism of weapons, especially the rockets that are the key to modern military interaction, and the importance of "absorptive capacity" in sustaining any attack (cf Henri Myrtilinen, *Disarming masculinities*, 2003). The proposed use of the *Kama Sutra* has the merit of providing an alternative metaphoric framing for discussion about proportionality. Does this point to the possibility of combining (and fruitfully reframing) the slogans "*War is the continuation of politics by other means*" (Karl von Clausewitz), with "*Make love, not war*", into "*Making war is another way of making love*"?

- **Proportionate regard:** Though simple and obvious, the challenges and dilemmas of proportionality of response are well-embodied in how looks between people are exchanged, namely how one looks at another and the nature of the response evoked. These are exemplified by:
 - **Staring:** When undertaken unilaterally, this may be interpreted by the person stared at as a challenge or an indicator of attractiveness and/or respect. Although certain regards may be treated as a direct challenge, in some cultures they may be interpreted as evidence of an *evil eye*.
 - **Establishing / Maintaining eye-contact:** *Eye-contact* is a form of non-verbal communication which is interpreted differently and occurs at greatly different frequencies across cultures. The process of "looking another in the eyes" may be of considerable significance. Allies are those who can maintain eye-contact. A viable agreement to cease hostilities depends on the capacity to look the other in the eye.
 - **Eye-aversion** (not-looking): This is the avoidance of eye-contact which may be variously interpreted as an indication of respect (or lack thereof), timidity or lack of honesty. It is notable that the USA has assiduously avoided any eye-contact with representatives of Iran and Syria -- or with Hezbollah..

At one extreme, it is a precept of Islam that the gaze should be lowered as a means of avoiding "adultery of the eyes" -- temptation into immorality (cf Muhammad Saleh Al-Munajjid, *Twenty Tips for Lowering the Gaze*, 2004) [more]. Both Christianity and Islam recognize that individuals are not accountable for any inadvertent, first look at a source of temptation -- but they are for any subsequent gaze. In the secular world, how people engage in looking -- following the fashion-enhanced efforts to make themselves attractive or enhance their status -- is very much a question of proportionate response in an interactive process with which all are familiar. The process is intimately related to the behavioural analogue of "*bella figura*" vs "losing face" -- fundamental to relationships in many Mediterranean cultures [more]. A further extreme is the notion of facelessness -- to which many Arabs feel condemned..

- **Diplomatic protocol and etiquette:** The *diplomatic protocol* is a widely accepted exemplification of an elegantly proportionate response to differences of every kind. It is in part inspired by an international formalization of *etiquette* having similar objectives.

The reconciliation of quantitative and qualitative approaches to proportionality is significantly explored in the aesthetics of design -- exemplified by the so-called "divine proportion" of the golden mean as the cross-cultural epitome of good proportion. In reflecting on retributive justice and the issues highlighted by the debate on proportionate sentencing, there is a case for exploring the possible

implications of the [golden mean](#) -- justice as the golden mean. Two extremes then suggest themselves as alternatives to "*an eye for an eye*":

- Restraining the response: Assuming damage assessed quantitatively as Y units, the proportionate response is fixed at $Y / 1.6$ (namely 62% of Y)
- Exaggerating the response: Assuming damage assessed quantitatively as Y units, the proportionate response is fixed at $1.6 \times Y$ (namely 160% of Y)

The apparent naivety of such an approach is "reframed" by the following considerations in reaching agreement on Y, namely how to discount (making allowances) or the need to make an example

- Restraint option: Here the proportionality of the response is discounted, making allowances. The response is defined as 62% of Y. This would be typical of a response from a position of maturity
- Exaggerating the response: Here the proportionality of the response is compounded. The response is defined as 160% of Y. This would be typical of a situation when repeated warnings, notably in response to previous incidents, had not been heeded.

In this sense a proportionate response is then "framed" by the proportions of the golden mean, where the responder either accepts restraint to the relative advantage of the offender, or else the responder opts for exaggerating the response to make an example of the offender. This approach has the advantage of framing a proportionate response in ways that highlight the dangers of excessive restraint or of an exaggerated response.

An alternative approach -- reflecting views expressed by John Bolton (US Ambassador to the UN), is that there is no moral equivalence between Israeli and Lebanese civilian deaths [\[more\]](#) -- is to explore the approach advocated by Alan Dershowitz ("*Civilian Casualty? It Depends -- those who support terrorists are not entirely innocent*". *Los Angeles Times*, 30 July 2006) in weighting the numbers according to how "civilian" the civilians really were, ie, how complicit with Hezbollah. (cf Gideon Lichfield, *Six degrees of civilianity*, *Foreign Policy*, 24 July 2006). Unfortunately, this argument completely fails to take account of the extent of Israeli "civilian" formal involvement in the [Israeli Defence Force](#) as reservists (male or female) -- illustrated by a common joke concerning civilians as soldiers on 11-month furlough.

Certification of disproportionality

There is clearly a degree of acceptance of disproportionality. There is a case for investigating the possibility of providing greater objectivity to processes characterized by disproportionality -- as suggested by two other domains:

- **Money:** This can be understood as a means of managing disproportionality through issuing monetary tokens. Monetary wealth is a tokenization of disproportionality in relation to the impoverished -- entitling the wealthy to act disproportionately within the socio-economic system
- **Carbon credits:** These are measured in units of certified emission reductions (CERs) in which each CER is equivalent to one tonne of carbon dioxide reduction. In the event of disproportional carbon emissions, notably by industrialized countries, credits may be borrowed or bought from developing countries.

In the light of these examples, it is possible to envisage a system of:

- **Moral credits:** In this case disproportional action by morally challenged countries could be compensated by borrowing or purchasing credits from countries that are more morally upright. Such disproportionality credits might already be understood to be effectively interwoven into official aid. By supplying aid, some countries effectively acquire the moral right to act disproportionality, through their military intervention, assassination (a "license to kill"), and action above the law. The Rome conference of 26th July 2006 regarding the Israel-Lebanon conflict might be understood as an instance of issuing moral credits to legitimize such disproportionality.

These three types of credit might be fruitfully understood as specific cases of a more generic framing of disproportionality and its management.

Such a process could be enhanced by insights from three quite distinct areas:

- **Insurance:** The insurance industry has considerable experience in handling related notions. Being subject to disproportionality could be understood as a form of insurance premium enabling "entitlements" for a period. Key issues are: for how long (notably in the light of centuries old blood feuds, massacres, etc), from whom is compensation due and can they be reduced by intermediary payments, do entitlements get progressively reduced, or are they in some way sustained by a form of "no claims bonus"?
- **Panetics:** This is an evolving, pan-ethical search for ways to reduce human suffering inflicted by individuals acting through governments, institutions, professions, and social groups. [Panetics](#) is based on a synthesis of insights from East and West, notably in the light of measurement of *dukkha* as a generalized understanding of suffering (R. G. Siu, *Panetics and Dukkha: Integrated Study of the Infliction of Suffering and the Reduction of Infliction*, 1994) [\[more\]](#) [\[more\]](#)
- **Karma:** This classical framework provides some sense of the accumulation and loss of "merit" over time that is fundamental to some forms of faith-based governance -- but how does it apply to collective merit?

Of particular interest is how to understand the "entitlements" that are held to justify long-term resentments and any associated conflict. Over what period should Europeans be called upon to compensate for slavery and colonial massacres? Over what period should Europeans be called upon to make allowances arising from their history of anti-semitism? How are such "accounts" managed when extensive efforts at reparations and compensation are made? To what extent is "aid" to be considered as a form of reparation? At what

rate should past moral debts be discounted? Is there any relevant [statute of limitations](#) restricting the period over which claims to disproportionality can be made -- or are some debts considered to be eternal?

What then is proportionate response?

Contemporary reformalization of ritual "human sacrifice"

New understandings of the widespread traditional practice of [human sacrifice](#), especially as a means of placating divinity under past regimes of faith-based governance, may provide a way of reframing disproportionate response. A prime example is [human sacrifice in Aztec culture](#) in which 84,400 were sacrificed over the course of four days in 1487.

The following phenomena may be understood as modern variants of human sacrifice:

- **Abortion:** The pro-life movement legitimately frames this as a form of human sacrifice to the god of convenience, whatever the implications of birth for the mother or the subsequent life of the child
- **Withholding contraceptives:** This can be understood as ensuring that many are born, notably to most impoverished circumstances where a high rate of infant mortality is guaranteed
- **Withholding health care:** The consequences have been evident in relation to the millions who face an early death, notably in Africa
- **Withholding the possibility of voluntary euthanasia:** This maximize the level of suffering, lack of dignity and meaninglessness, and the benefits to the medical profession
- **Withholding food:** This has long been evident in the inadequate response to mass starvation
- **Withholding protection from those subject to violence:** Again the consequences have long been evident in the inadequate response to those subject to genocidal acts -- notably Srebrenica, Rwanda, Cambodia, Dafur and Eastern Congo.
- **Massive investment in weaponry:** Whether in the form of small arms, landmines, cluster bombs, or weapons of mass destruction, this ensures the increasing quantity and effectiveness of human sacrifice (far in excess of Nazi gas chambers), notably to the financial advantage of the principal manufacturers and purveyors of such weaponry (who happen to be the permanent members of the UN Security Council)
- **Suicide bombing:** This is certainly to be understood as a form of voluntary human sacrifice by the individuals involved, but especially by their supporters and mentors.
- **Holy wars:** Whether as [crusades](#) or [jihads](#), these offer every opportunity for personal sacrifice and for sacrificing others in one's cause
- **Indiscriminate military intervention:** This can be usefully understood as sacrificing humans (notably civilians) in order to make some political point. Again it is noteworthy that it is typically the permanent members of the UN Security Council, as major purveyors of arms to combatants, that are most active in inhibiting initiatives towards the early termination of such conflicts.
- **Inhibiting preventive action on future causes of human sacrifice:** This is most evident in the case of climate change and global warming with their expected exacerbation of resource issues on which people's lives are dependent (from reduction of arable land through rising sea levels and constraints on fresh water supplies)

Most of the above are undertaken with some form of religious support.

Despite disclaimers by the EU ([EU denies giving Israel green light](#), 27 July 2006), the conclusions of the Rome conference of 26 July 2006 regarding the Israel-Lebanon crisis, may be understood as an international commitment to human sacrifice of innocents in order to allow the situation to mature to the point at which the parties involved are prepared to shift their positions.

Whereas modern civilization perceives itself to have long abandoned principles such as those that inspired Aztec sacrifices, there is every possibility that the role reversal process of [enantiodromia](#) is effectively giving credibility to such practices once again -- in the name of "universal values" rather than Aztec gods. In confirmation of this, it has been recognized that the 20th century was the bloodiest in the history of humanity. Faith-based policies have done as much to exacerbate this trend as to dampen it.

Ritual sacrifice in centuries past, and notably in the Roman Empire, was an explicit feature of decision-making -- formally ministered by a priesthood. Curiously modern decision-making may be said to follow a similar pattern. Concrete decisions of governance are not actually taken until a sufficient sacrifice of human life has been made -- in order to ensure an auspicious outcome. Avoidance of a concrete decision on 27 July could be considered a deliberate anticipation of a propitious sacrifice -- in this case the slaughter, mainly of children, at Qana on 30 July 2006 -- enabling the decision-making process could evolve. Christian faith-based governance played the primary role in delaying decision-making until after an appropriate sacrifice had been made -- as could be said to be the case with respect to other massacres of this era.

Curiously [Qana](#) (or [Cana](#)) is recognized as the Biblical site where Jesus is reported ([John 2:1](#)) to have turned water into wine at a wedding -- his first miracle. Wine subsequently became a key element of the sacrificial symbolism in the [Christian Mass](#) -- notably through its symbolic conversion into blood by [transubstantiation](#). An [earlier massacre](#) was perpetrated there under similar circumstances in 1996 -- and with similar explanations by Israel. Given the Judeo-Christian myths and ["end times"](#) prophecies which govern some underlying religious agendas in that region, conspiracy theorists may well suspect that the slaughter at Qana is best understood as an effort by some at a perverted emulation of a Mass -- namely a form of [Black Mass](#), or a "christening" of the Israelis' new "Qana-missile" (or is it the USA's)?

Proportionate response, degrees of complicity and collateral damage

"Collateral damage", involving death of innocents, may be usefully understood as a form of human sacrifice. The proportionality of response is partially determined by definition of the boundaries of complicity that clarify the acceptability of such collateral damage.

Three extremes can be compared:

- **Suicide bombing:** Here there is every possibility of killing or wounding people who may be considered innocent -- whether they are associated with the intended target or not. Arguments put forward in justification for such collateral damage are (a) death of innocents is regrettable but cannot be avoided, (b) there is a degree of complicity of seemingly innocent people, (c) those who are not active combatants are complicit by their passivity. In effect the suicide bomber may treat bystanders as targettable human shields
- **Targetting human shields:** Here the intended target is assumed to be deliberately using innocent people as a human shield -- with or without their consent. Arguments put forward in justification for such collateral damage are (a) death of innocents is regrettable but cannot be avoided, (b) there is a degree of complicity of seemingly innocent people, (c) those who do not actively avoid being used as human shields are necessarily to be considered as complicit to some degree.
- **Targetting infrastructure shields:** This is an extension of the previous point where it is argued that it is the dwellings of people, that are being used as shields for the intended target, and that consequently need to be destroyed to prevent their further use as shelter. The fact that, despite warnings, the dwellings may be inhabited (and notably by those unable to move) may then be considered regrettable. The very destruction of such dwellings, as with the killing of civilians, is presented as clear and incontrovertible proof that they were being used by opponents.

In all these cases the action is considered to be a proportionate response. In each case an emphasis may be placed on the "precision" of the targetting. If death of civilians is to be considered a measure of lack of precision, then in the Israel-Lebanon case further questions need to be asked regarding the contrast between "indiscriminate" rocket attacks by Hezbollah (resulting in only 19 Israeli civilian deaths) and the "precision" bombing attacks by Israel (resulting in 345 Lebanese civilian deaths) [*figures of 22 July 2006*]. This gives a ratio of 1 to 18 -- far in excess of the golden mean as presented above.

Definitional game-playing: "Precision targetting" with "Cluster bombs" ?
The U.N. Mine Action Coordination Center indicates (26 August 2006) that there are over 285 unexploded cluster bomb locations across south Lebanon -- some 100,000 unexploded bomblets. Some 30 locations are being discovered each day. Many are in civilian areas, on farmland and in people's homes -- at the entrances to houses, on balconies and roofs. Investigations have commenced into Israel's use of these American-made cluster bombs and whether their use violated secret agreements with the USA [CNN.com Reuters Guardian]

With regard to complicity there is a further dimension associated with how it is proven and to whom. Issues here are:

- how the intended target has been proven to be an enemy combatant (cf the Taliban example cited above). This raises issues of the validity of information provided by torture or surveillance, in the absence of confirmation by independent parties
- whether the intended target was actually at the physical location targetted, namely within civilian dwellings when they are struck
- whether civilians are in fact being used as human shields, inadvertently or with their consent, and how this is to be proven (and to whom) -- especially if the intended target is not in fact being shielded by them

The difficulty in the Israel-Lebanon conflict is that the only proof that Hezbollah is using civilians as human shields is that provided in assertions by Israelis -- who would naturally resist providing verifiable factual confirmation on the grounds of military security. Indeed they would consider that they had no obligation to provide such proof. This assertion then provides the military with the justification (notably to the Israeli population) to take any action they please. Any inappropriate or disproportionate response is then provided with a form of "information shield" corresponding to the "human shield" that is considered so inappropriate in the case of Hezbollah. This information shield may even be used as a device "behind" which military units can undertake actions without the full authority of the political authorities. This may be how the explanation for the bombing of the UN observer post will finally be presented.

Discourse on responsibility is however acquiring new twists. Every proportionately disastrous response perpetrated by Israelis in Lebanon leads to an explanation to world opinion that, whilst Israeli military action may have been the proximate cause of regrettable deaths (as presented by Israel to the UN Security Council in the case of the Qana slaughter on 30 July 2006), it is in fact Hezbollah that elicited that destructive action and is therefore more obviously to be held primarily responsible. This logic bears a curious similarity to that familiar to feminists as [blaming the victim](#) -- in decoding the language of rapists (cf [Why people blame the rape victim: a victim blame bibliography](#)). Whilst regretting harm done to a woman, the rapist may even argue that it was the "evil temptress" hiding behind that feminine innocence that evoked the violent act for which he should not then be held responsible -- a "wicked temptress" that should be "rooted out" so that "men can live in peace". This familiar logic of the "evil" associated with women drives many faith-based efforts to repress women -- notably in more fundamentalist forms of both Islam, Judaism and Christianity.

For those subscribing to faith-based governance, especially Judeo-Christians, there is a special twist arising from complicity in disproportionate response as recognized in the much-cited Biblical reference to "the sins of the fathers will be visited upon the children even unto the seventh generation" (cf "The sins of the fathers are visited upon the children to the third and the fourth generation", *Exodus* 20:5).

The importance of this notion of seventh generation was embodied in [Great Law of the Haudenosaunee](#) (Six Nations Iroquois Confederacy), requiring that chiefs consider the impact of their decisions on the seventh generation. Partially as a consequence, the notion has more recently been echoed in environmental proposals (cf [Our Responsibility to The Seventh Generation: Indigenous Peoples and Sustainable Development](#), International Institute for Sustainable Development, Winnipeg, 1992)

Proportionate response vs Proportional responsibility

The notion of "proportionate response" implies a notion of "proportional responsibility" although the two are not typically associated. Of particular interest is the relationship between:

- the strong case made by the USA, the UK and Israel for the disarmament of the Hezbollah militia as an inappropriate armed force within a modern democratic state
 - *as contrasted with*: the fundamental importance attached within the USA to the Second Amendment to the US Constitution (that forms part of the *Bill of Rights*) which reads as follows: "***A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear arms, shall not be infringed.***" (cf *Arming Civil Society Worldwide: Getting democracy to work in the emergent American Empire?* 2003; Jack Perrine, *Nine Myths of Gun Control, Free Republic*, 2000) [more]
- the strong case made for preventing the supply of arms to Hezbollah by Iran (with the complicity of Syria)
 - *as contrasted with*: the openly acknowledged massive supply of arms to Israel by the USA (with the complicity of the UK)
- the policy of **Corporate Social Responsibility** widely upheld by multinational corporations, and articulated within the World Economic Forum and the UN's Global Compact
 - *as contrasted with*: the total dissociation of multinational arms manufacturers (including companies with major government participation) from any responsibility for the use made of those arms

The irony is variously illustrated by the following cases regarding the focus of "responsibility" (placed in a more systematic context in the table below) :

- Conventional weaponry: Here the focus is on the responsibility of the operators of conventional weaponry and not on the suppliers. The distinction is even clarified in certain jurisdictions where it is legal to sell certain equipment that it is illegal to use.
- Hard drugs: Curiously however the focus on the campaign against hard drugs is on the suppliers ("the pushers") and to a far lesser degree on the users.
- Inhumane weapons: In comparison with hard drugs, there is no pressure whatsoever against the "pushers" of weaponry -- although there is some "embarrassment" in the case of "inhumane weapons" (eg white phosphorous, depleted uranium, etc).
- Nuclear weapons: More curiously the same logic does not apply to manufacture of nuclear weapons, where (with the exception of Israel) very severe pressures are placed on those suspected of manufacturing them or of supplying them -- as well as of being in possession of them.
- Pharmaceutical drugs: In the case of pharmaceutical drugs a different logic applies. Here there is no question of the responsibility for the manufacture and supply of such drugs (except with respect to intellectual property rights). But there is severe pressure relating to authorization for use of such drugs, and commercial constraints may severely restrict their use even when their life-saving qualities are recognized

Responsibility: indicative constraints (situations will vary from country to country, and by community)										
Impact is indicated on the right in terms of Pers(onal), Comm(unity), Cumul(ative) and Persist(ent) <i>NB: Some products below are included primarily for comparative purposes</i>										
	Research	Patent / Copyr.	Govt. approval	Manufacture	Supply / Trade	Fiscal benefit	Possession	Use	Impact (immed.)	Impact (after)
Propaganda (hate, blasph.)	None	None	Tolerated ?	None	Some	None	Some	Some	Comm.	Cumul.
Pornography (incl. spam)	None	None	Tolerated ?	None	Some	None	Some	Some	Pers.	Cumul
Tobacco products	None	None	Yes	None	Some	Yes	None	Some	Pers.+	Cumul
Alcoholic products	None	None	Yes	Some	Some	Yes	None	Some	Pers.+	Cumul
Homeopathic products	None	None	None ?	Some	Some	?	None	Some	Pers.	?
Pharmaceutical drugs	None	None	Yes	Some ?	Some	Yes	Some	Some	Pers.	Cumul
Hard (illegal) drugs	None	None	Yes	Yes	Yes	None	Some	Some	Pers.+	Cumul
Poisons (euthanasia?)	None	None	?	None	Some	?	None	Some	Pers.	?
Pesticides (garden, agriculture)	None	None	Some	Some	None	Yes	None	None	Comm.	Cumul
Knives, clubs, etc	None	None	Tolerated	None	None	Yes	Some	Some	Pers.+	?
Small arms, handguns	None	None	Tolerated	None	None	Yes	Some	Some	Pers.+	?
Automatic weapons	None	None	Some	None	None	Yes	Some	Some	Comm.	?
Explosives	None	None	Some	Some ?	Some	Some	Some	Some	Comm.	?
Missiles, landmines, etc	None	None	Some	None	None	Yes	Some	Yes	Comm.+	Comm.?

Thermobaric weapons	None	None	Some	Some	Some	?	Some	Yes	Comm.+	?
Biochemical weapons	None	None	Some	Some	Some	None	Yes	Yes	Comm.+	Persist.
Nuclear weapons	None	None	Some	Yes	Some	None	Yes	Yes	Comm.+	Persist.

The above table makes it clear that, in terms of any sense of "responsibility" with respect to products variously perceived as problematic:

- there are no significant constraints on:
 - **research** on development of potentially harmful products, within universities and elsewhere, despite issues raised in debates on [social responsibility of science](#) notably in relation to "defence research"
 - **patenting** and intellectual property ownership relating to components of potentially harmful products, from which the patent holder may continue to derive financial benefit when the product is manufactured or sold
- there tends to be inconsistency in:
 - **approval** by government (or statutory professional bodies) of potentially harmful products, despite ethical debates and treaties, notably regarding "inhumane weapons" ([depleted uranium](#), [thermobaric bombs](#), [white phosphorous](#))
 - freedom to **manufacture** potential harmful products, despite promotion of [corporate social responsibility](#) and concerns expressed regarding the [military-industrial complex](#) -- further complicated by the issue of [ethical investment](#) and shareholder responsibility (notably under [Jewish religious law](#))
 - freedom to **supply or trade** in such harmful products, or finance such trade, despite concerns expressed with respect to [small arms trade](#), [landmines](#), etc. -- complicated by the case of complex equipment (like F-16s and Apache helicopters) for which spare parts may continue to have to be supplied under a contract, that may be deliberately broken by the supplier to prevent use of the equipment by countries that come to be perceived by the supplier as unfriendly (cf the case of Venezuela [\[more\]](#))
- there are ambiguities regarding:
 - derivation by government of **fiscal benefits** from transactions involving potentially harmful products (notably the case of alcohol and tobacco)
 - **possession** of potentially harmful products, where responsibility may possibly be complicated by whether the product is wholly owned, leased or rented
 - **use** of potentially harmful products, possibly including the enabling of such use with satellite tracking/targeting systems of complicit countries (whether provided freely, leased or purchased); a complicating factor arises when the actual operator is obeying orders from a command and control centre ("just following orders"), failing to obey such orders ("operator error"), or following secret orders ("rogue operator") -- possibly ensuring a distinction in responsibility, where one or other can disclaim responsibility.

With respect to "proportional responsibility", given the sequence of parties (ie the columns of the above table) effectively complicit in ensuring final use, the employment of descriptors such as "Israeli" warplanes (to refer to F-16s or Apache helicopters) then becomes a cynical exercise in definitional game-playing and denial of responsibility. As noted earlier, such questions of degrees of complicity have been usefully raised by Alan Dershowitz (*'Civilian Casualty'? It Depends -- those who support terrorists are not entirely innocent*. *Los Angeles Times*, 30 July 2006) with regard to Lebanese "civilians" -- although such logic also applies to weaponry. Again, as mentioned earlier, it is unfortunate that Dershowitz's argument fails to recognize the degree of complicity of the average Israeli citizen in the military -- most working-age adults are reservists, and many beyond working-age have had military training and could be called up under exceptional circumstances.

As argued in debates on [gun control](#) (notably in relation to [school shooting](#) massacres in the USA), responsibility does not only lie with the owner or user of a potentially harmful product. This is especially the case with the Apache helicopter, for example, where spare parts and munitions may be continually supplied under provision of a commercial contract governing the period of use of the equipment (cf *Made in the UK, bringing devastation to Lebanon: the British parts in Israel's deadly attack helicopters*, *The Guardian*, 29 July 2006). In this instance the Apache helicopter may be as much a "USA" or "UK" warplane -- with many as effective "shareholders" in responsibility for use of such lethal devices.

For the [Apache tribe](#), however, with its quite different understanding of property ownership and responsibility for its use, employing its name in this instance could be understood to be especially questionable, and an exemplification of the cultural violence done to that people.

Challenge of existential maturity and sense of identity

The capacity to accept apparently unfavourable responses as appropriate, or proportional, is a measure of maturity -- especially in a highly asymmetric situation. Examples include:

- **Age-related:** The extreme example is a parent-child situation, where the parent may find it appropriate to be extremely restrained in response to extreme provocation by the child. Variants apply in the case of mentors and students. The reverse applies in the case of extreme provocation by the elderly and the restraint considered appropriate by the young and by carers.
- **Gender-related:** Constraints arising from disproportionality of response associated with gender are widely explored in dramatizations featuring restraint by those of one gender in the face of advantages exploited by the other.
- **Experience-related:** Whether in the form of experience, intelligence or wisdom, extreme forms of restraint may be considered appropriate in response to extreme provocation by the relatively ignorant. The reverse may however apply in the case of the inexperienced faced with the apparently eccentric provocations of those they may otherwise have every reason to admire.
- **Strength-related:** Whether in the form of personal physical strength, skill or technical enhancements (weaponry, martial disciplines, etc), extreme forms of restraint may be practiced in the face of extreme provocation by the weaker, especially those

unaware of their relative weakness. This is exemplified by the philosophy of practitioners of certain martial arts concerning the conditions under which they should be used. Again the reverse may be practiced by those of relative weakness in order to avoid undue provocation -- notably when faced with arbitrary and disproportionate use of strength.

- **Wealth-related:** Wealth may provide a degree of self-confidence that obviates the need to respond to extreme provocation. Correspondingly, relative poverty typically constrains response to extreme provocation by the wealthy.
- **Status-related:** Those conscious of their status, whether as acknowledged publicly, within some group of peers, or otherwise, may be relatively untouched by what otherwise constitutes extreme provocation by those without that sense of self-esteem. Again, however, awareness of such status may exert a constraint on those lacking such status, even when the provocation to them is extreme.

Any subjective judgement of proportionate response is to a high degree conditioned by a sense of [self-esteem](#) associated with one or more of the above -- as it relates to identity. However, research (Roy F. Baumeister *et al.*, *Exploding the Self-Esteem Myth*, *Scientific American*, 20 December 2004; Nicholas Emler, *Self-esteem: the costs and causes of low self-worth*, 2005) has shown that boosting self-esteem is of itself of little value in preventing undesirable behaviour -- namely responses to situations that could be described as disproportionate.

At issue is the context in which any sense of fairness is established and what then is considered proportionate response to situations assessed as unfair. The particular challenge in conflicts relating to territory is the manner in which individual or collective identity is intimately bound up with land and ancestral bonds to the spirit of a place -- irrespective of any modern legalistic concepts of ownership. This is especially striking for some faith-imbued peoples (eg Muslims or Jews) and for many indigenous peoples (eg Australian Aborigenes). A proportionate response may then be understood to be one of "doing what it takes" -- under perceived threat -- to sustain a sense of identity. Unfortunately little attention is given to this psycho-spiritual dimension -- one that is beyond comprehension within concepts of ownership defined by law but which may be fundamental to the formative myths conditioning the relationship of peoples in conflict (cf. Darrell A. Posey (Editor). *Cultural and Spiritual Values of Biodiversity*, 1999).

From such a perspective, efforts to resolve the conflicts between Israel and Hezbollah (or Palestinians) according to essentially "superficial" terms, meaningful in international law, offer relatively little prospect of long-term viability. Ironically the right-wing Judeo-Christian mythology driving American foreign policy in the Middle East is similarly dissociated from the legal instruments through which it manipulates such conflicts. The question is what else is open to such peoples in order to sustain their sense of identity and destiny -- if it is understood to be intimately bound to the land?

What is most extraordinary in the Israel-Lebanon crisis is the manner in which it is reframed by the Israelis to preclude any response by them whatsoever -- other than a violent one. Despite their uncontested brilliance as a people, the Israelis trap themselves in a belief that they must necessarily respond in the same language as those who do violence against them -- thus playing into the hands of their opponents and demonstrating an immaturity that dishonours them. As declared by policy scientist Geoffrey Vickers: "A trap is a function of the nature of the trapped." (*Freedom in a Rocking Boat: Changing values in an unstable society*, 1972).

Despite their recognized creativity, Israelis are reported as being unable to imagine any other option -- for fear of "being driven into the sea". Like an elephant stampeded by a wasp? When the situation is later analyzed, will the Israeli leadership be recognized to have succumbed to [groupthink](#) -- a combination of "intelligence failure" and "failure of imagination" -- as with the manipulated panic in response to Iraqi weapons of mass destruction? (cf *Report on the U.S. Intelligence Community's Pre-War Assessments on Iraq*, 9 July 2004; Lord Butler's *Review of Intelligence of Weapons of Mass Destruction*, 13 July 2004; David Leventhal *Bush's groupthink caused failure of imagination*, 11 September 2004).

[*Addendum of 11 August:* Despite repeated predictions during July and August 2006 by Israeli political and military authorities, regarding the speed with which they would achieve victory over Hezbollah, they have been suprised to discover (despite the renowned intelligence capacity of Israelis) the capacity of Hezbollah in terms of morale, tactics and sophisticated weaponry (obtained from permanent members of the UN Security Council) which have effectively neutralized Israel's military capacity and made complete victory difficult to achieve. [\[more\]](#)]

As a consequence of such fears, when the whole of the Middle East has been laid to waste by the unmatched Israeli military power, what is the story that Israelis will tell their children -- to help them understand proportionate response, perhaps when the neighbour's kid's ball breaks a window or kills the cat?

Proportionate response from other perspectives

It is clear that agreement on what constitutes proportional response will remain a matter of debate for the foreseeable future. Claims and counter-claims will continue to be made with the greatest of moral authority in the service of particular interests. Four perspectives may bring further dimensions to the debate:

- **Extraterrestrials:** Should humanity ever make effective contact with extraterrestrials, they would in all probability apply their own values in reframing the proportionality of their response to humans -- as colonializing powers did in response to indigenous tribes around the world. Their response may range from inspired application of human values, in ways that humanity may find surprising, to a degree of severity that may be difficult to comprehend -- especially if it is inspired by an alien form of faith-based governance.
- **Future:** Humanity in the future is likely to have a very different understanding of proportionate response -- as suggested by the significant evolution in human understanding over recent centuries. As with current condemnation of the disproportionality of response of centuries past, the "proportional responses" of today may even come to be recognized as crimes against humanity (or

the planet). On the other hand, there is the possibility that the younger generation may be surprisingly radical in its understanding of proportionality. Indications are the attitudes of young suicide bombers regarding their impact on innocents, the unexpectedly brutal ability of the pre-teens to manage the labour camps of the Pol Pot regime, and the measures considered proportionate by youthful animal rights activists.

- **Divine intervention:** With the increasing role of faith-based governance, and the driving predictions regarding [apocalyptic "end times"](#) scenarios leading to divine intervention, the sense of proportionality of response may change dramatically. This is already heralded by the radical doctrines of the fundamentalist branches of the major religions -- righteously merciless in their willingness to exterminate those they perceive as the "agents of satan". Of particular interest is the notion of the proportionality of divine response to the actions of humanity -- which may not be so evident to those who expect to comprehend divine justice.
- **Social dynamic engendered by disproportionality:** It may become useful to recognize the manner in which psychosocial dynamics are engendered by disproportionality -- especially of the most tragic kind. As pointed out by Kenneth Boulding (*Ecodynamics; a new theory of societal evolution*, 1978): "Disappointment forces a learning process of some kind upon us; success does not."

Conclusion

In a commentary referencing a range of recent military analyses of the use of force, Richard Norton-Taylor (*The Futility of Force*, *The Guardian*, 1 August 2006) notes that senior army officers have begun to accept that military power might never win a war again. Specifically he remarks:

Israel is learning a lesson that the armies of other countries, including the US, have already grasped. Military force can no longer guarantee victory, certainly not in the conflict Israel and its western allies say they are engaged in -- the "war on terror", as the Bush White House calls it, or the "long war", as the Pentagon now prefers.

The questions raised here focus on the extent to which disproportionality of response lies in the eye of the beholder. Curiously a similar point is made with respect to recognition of aesthetic proportion -- namely "beauty lies in the eye of the beholder".

This exploration has been placed under the heading of "fables". Each interprets any so-called "facts" to enhance the "aesthetic" quality of a story. Whilst this may be an acceptable response to a dramatization unrelated to reality, it is entirely irresponsible when real people are sacrificed to make a good story -- somewhat as was the Roman practice with regard to the games in the [Colosseum](#). It is even more repugnant when that story is designed to serve the covert agendas of faith-based governance. The role reversal process of [enantiodromia](#) would appear to exhort humanity to deeper understanding when it is now Christians who are demonstrating their capacity to support the sacrifice of innocents in service of their agenda -- and when "terrorism" is evoked as a primary threat by a people who have themselves been falsely, and tragically, promoted as a threat.

Public opinion, manipulated by news management ("spin") and propaganda, plays a major role in framing conflictual relations between states and cultures. It provides the fundamental legitimation for the use of lethal missiles. In a world where missile warfare is intimately sustained by [information warfare](#), there is a case for exploring new (and more civilized) forms of information warfare that may contribute to reframing understanding of a conflict. This is the potential of [memetic warfare](#) in relation to belief systems (cf *Missiles, Missives, Missions and Memetic Warfare*, 2001).

Little is to be lost by experimenting with "bombarding" opponents with parables and fables potentially capable of simultaneously destroying cognitive infrastructure and shelters (and recreating them) -- destroying cognitive bridges and building them anew -- repositioning existential bonds in a more integrative manner. Such was the traditional role of fables embodying cultural wisdom -- comprehensible to all at many levels. It is these "memetic weapons" that could be deployed -- at least in a parallel, more intriguing, and less physically lethal, battle. In principle, use of such memetic devices would be more consistent with faith-based governance.

What are the key fables that each protagonist would select in endeavouring to wrestle the other to the cognitive ground -- as the "sumo wrestlers" and "martial artists" of inter-faith dialogue? Could such fables mark the "stations" in the dynamic of existential cycles of violence? What are the "mything links" -- in the pattern that connects?

Those who live by their own understanding of proportionate response
are liable to die by a response considered proportionate by others

References

David Anderson. Literature of Human-Animal Studies [[text](#)]

Karen Armstrong. A Short History of Myth, 2005 [[text](#)]

Anthony Judge:

- Humour and Play-Fullness: essential integrative processes in governance, religion and transdisciplinarity. 2005 [[text](#)]
- Honour Essential to Psycho-social Integrity: challenge of dishonourable leadership to the nameless. 2005 [[text](#)]
- Spontaneous Initiation of Armageddon: a heartfelt response to systemic negligence, 2004 [[text](#)]
- Future Challenge of Faith-based Governance. 2003 [[text](#)]
- Transforming the Encounter with Terrorism. 2002 [[text](#)]

- Promoting a Singular Global Threat -- Terrorism: Strategy of choice for world governance. 2002 [[text](#)]
- Missiles, Missives, Missions and Memetic Warfare: Navigation of strategic interfaces in multidimensional knowledge space. 2001 [[text](#)]
- And When the Bombing Stops? Territorial conflict as a challenge to mathematicians. 2000 [[text](#)]
- Aesthetics of Governance in the Year 2490. 1990 [[text](#)]
- Comprehension of Appropriateness. 1986 [[text](#)]

Darrell A. Posey (Editor). Cultural and Spiritual Values of Biodiversity: a complementary contribution to Global Biodiversity Assessment, Intermediate Technology, 1999 (for the United Nations Environment Programme)

Gary Solis. Proportionality: A History. Paper for the New York Military Affairs Society, 2002.



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](#).

For further updates on this site, [subscribe here](#)