

Handout 1: Readings

Introduction

Since the September 11 attacks, public discussion of international terrorism has largely been framed in conventional terms, and policy responses have relied on traditional state-based approaches (such as military force and secrecy). This module encourages you to explore other means of understanding and addressing terrorism – to think outside the box by employing your personal values and, working within the framework of global civil society, to develop ethical responses to this contemporary global problem.

Begin by completing the assigned readings. As you read and browse, consider the following questions:

- In what way(s) does the notion of global civil society change how you think about world politics? About international terrorism?
- How is terrorism different from other “isms”? Why do disagreements persist about how to define this phenomenon?
- How have your actions and interactions with others shaped your social context? How has your social context influenced your personal identity, interests, and behaviors?

Study Questions

After reading assigned materials, reflect upon these questions:

- How important are states, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and individuals in world politics? How influential is each type of actor? Upon what understandings or personal experiences do you base your answers?
- Are all states significant? Are any non-state actors more powerful or influential than state actors? How big an impact can an NGO or individual have on world politics? Explain your answers.
- Name and describe the basic goals of an NGO with which you are affiliated or have had some personal contact. How do the organization’s mission and activities correspond to your personal values and ethics?
- What personal values and experiences influence your understanding of (a) world politics and (b) international terrorism? In what way(s)? How might someone who is another race or gender, lives in another country, or subscribes to another religion answer these same questions?
- How does a people-centered understanding of international politics differ from more conventional state-centered understandings? Toward which perspective do you lean? Why?
- Provide a specific example of how international politics is socially constructed. How difficult was it to come up with your example? What does this tell you about the nature of world politics?
- In what specific ways do you participate in civil society? What influence has doing so had on (a) your daily life and (b) your political activities and opinions?
- What does it mean, in practical terms, to say that global civil society’s channels of opportunity are ideologically variable? Is this a good thing or a bad thing? Why? Is your response different now than it would have been before September 11, 2001? Explain.