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Blame America's 'haves'

Floyd Abrams misses the point even as he asks whether we will "destroy our privacy and our freedom" as we seek ever greater security from terrorism. ("Price of security," Viewpoint, March 21).

The history of the world is largely the story of the "haves" trying to prevent the "have-nots" from acquiring even the smallest measure of control over their own resources. In this century, the United States played this game with consummate skill. The list of CIA-topped governments whose only sin was to demand a share of their country's wealth explains the bitter hatred felt for the United States worldwide.

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For generations Washington's realpolitikers made the rules. Then the Iranian students changed the rules, and we have cried "foul" ever since. The American hostages were only the first installment on the price to be paid for a morally bankrupt foreign policy.

The foreign sources of terrorism are, in a sense, accidental. As the spectre of scarcity inevitably looms larger, America's haves will naturally become more skittish, as their increasingly militant have-not compatriots demand a fairer portion of the diminishing pie. Sooner or later, the growing gap between the rich and the poor will lead to violence, and the cry of "terrorism" will be raised. By then it will be only a small step to transform the nation's police forces into internal security forces. Those who protest will do so at their peril, while the majority looks away.

How could Abrams not know the answer to his own question is "yes."

— Bill Becker
Woodland Hills