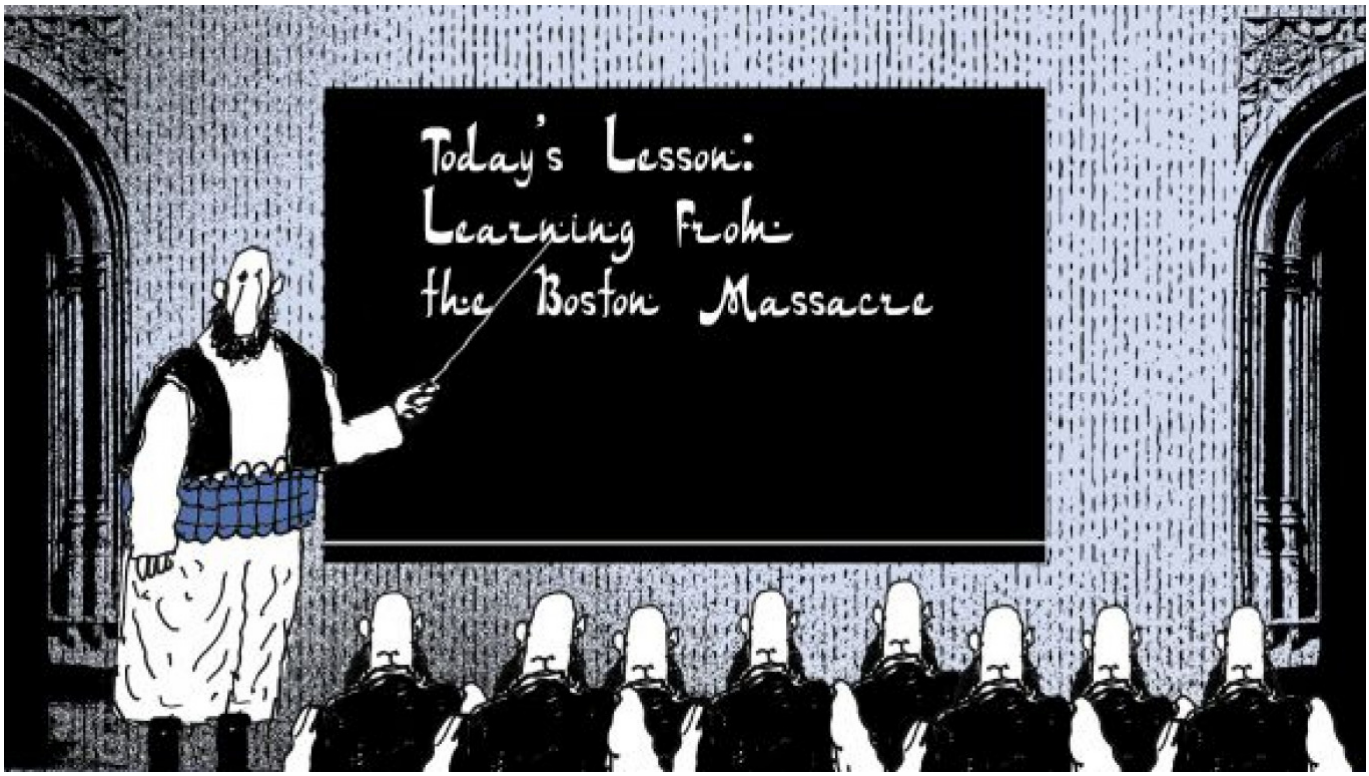
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The Lessons of Boston

By Richard Lourie

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Bad as the Boston terrorist attack is in itself, it's even worse in its ramifications.

First and foremost, a very bad example has been set. Now, any potential terrorist knows that an attack on a U.S. target on a day of symbolic importance will generate enormous publicity and cause enormous economic damage. The closing of Boston has probably cost tens of millions of dollars already. That means that for the foreseeable future holidays and events like the Thanksgiving Day Parade on 5th Avenue, the New Year's Eve celebration in Times Square, any 4th of July parade in any city and any major sporting event will be increasingly viewed as targets both by terrorists and law enforcement. Those events will inevitably lose some of their carefree character, a serious loss in itself since democracy thrives on free streets and open events. So the damage from the Boston marathon bombing will be ongoing and nationwide.

The exact motivations of the young Chechens are not entirely clear, but I assume that theirs was an act of jihadist vengeance for the deaths of Muslim civilians by U.S. military actions in Afghanistan, Iraq and Pakistan. There may also have been a specific local component like an insult by a Boston lout or abuse by bureaucracy. A macho cult of weapons and violence

coupled with a strong ethos of vengeance are a prominent strain in Chechen culture. In "The Gulag Archipelago," Alexander Solzhenitsyn notes that in the camps everyone was afraid of the guards, but the guards were only afraid of the Chechens.

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There may be further vengeance for the fate of the brothers Tsarnaev. Their parents have already indicated that they don't believe their two sons were guilty but have been "set up" by U.S. authorities. But even more important, the actions taken by the Tsarnaev brothers will become motivating factors for future terrorists in the United States and Russia. Not only was the timing and the choice of events perfect from a publicity point of view, but for some young, prospective terrorists, the attraction and glory of a wild shoot-out and car-chase coupled with jihadist martyrdom will be irresistible.

The Tsarnaev brothers chose the finish line of the Boston Marathon because they knew the cameras would be there and rolling. They could count on live coverage. Usually, the best the networks can hope for is some shaky cell-phone footage of an event taken by a chance bystander. The event and its aftermath happened in such real time that the television networks decided to delay transmission by a few seconds so not to show offending images, which later circulated on the Internet, and also to avoid undermining security.

Oddly, media savvy as the bombers appear to be, they forgot that all modern societies are under surveillance at all times. The images that identified them clearly came from surveillance cameras mounted above street level, not from spectators' videos. It is both reassuring and daunting at the same time to realize how immersed we all are in a constant stream of surveillance, that our pictures are being taken dozens of times a day without our awareness. Drones will no doubt soon become equally commonplace. Big Brother is indeed watching. These tools are most useful in capturing criminals and terrorists after the fact, good at solving crimes rather than preventing them. But it doesn't take a George Orwell to see what nefarious uses these technologies can be put to by authoritarian regimes. The Tsarnaev brothers have struck a double blow against liberty: by providing authoritarian leaders with a justification for future crackdowns and nudging free societies closer to the point where they sacrifice freedoms for security.

Early on, President Vladimir Putin offered assistance to the city of Boston in what seemed like a generalized good-will gesture, but in fact he may have been of assistance in more specific

and useful ways. In any case, Putin himself will benefit greatly from the Boston events. He will be able to defend his repressive, autocratic policies by saying these are the same people who caused the massacres at the Beslan school and in Moscow's Dubrovka Theater, who bombed Russian trains and Moscow's metro stations. He will be able to say that the massive law enforcement action in Boston, the effective lock-down on the city, far exceeds in scope and severity anything he has ever done in Russia when faced with a greater and more persistent terrorist threat. The timing is also ideal for Putin because the trial of the opposition leader and anti-corruption blogger Alexei Navalny is about to begin. Navalny will now not only be painted as an embezzler, but as an enemy of the state and social order. One United Russian leader, Irina Yarovaya, has already said that the country's opposition leaders "do not differ from terrorists."

With the Winter Olympics set to open in February 2014 in Sochi, which is only about 500 kilometers away from the hotspots of Chechnya and Dagestan, Putin will no doubt reference Boston during the crackdowns preceding the games. But Putin's numerous enemies in the North Caucasus will have also derived their own lessons from Boston — namely, that well-timed explosions can not only take lives but change the very way people live their lives in any city of the world. Especially if the cameras are rolling.

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