

ARQ 7 passage 3: Bill and Taylor argue badly:  
What are the fallacies?

**Bill:** <sup>1</sup>Countries that harbor terrorists who want to destroy the United States must be considered enemies of the United States. <sup>1</sup>Any country that does not relinquish terrorists to the American justice system is clearly on the side of the terrorists. <sup>3</sup>This sort of action means that the leaders of these countries do not wish to see justice done to the terrorists and care more about hiding murderers, rapists, thieves, and anti-democrats.

butler 3/23/10 8:07 AM

**Comment:** Sentences 1 and 2 are both **either/or (limited false choice)** fallacies. Sentence 2 may also be considered a **fallacy of extension (Straw Man)** as is sentence 3 (both unfairly represent any disagreement as an unacceptable interpretation or extreme explanation of the opposite opinion).

Bill fails to acknowledge the possibility that such nations may have other political/moral reasons for their actions while still remaining “friends” with the U.S.

**Taylor:** <sup>1</sup>That’s exactly the kind of argument that I would expect from someone who has relatives who have worked for the CIA. <sup>2</sup>But it seems to me that once you start labeling countries that disagree with America on policy as enemies, then eventually almost all countries will be considered our enemies, and we will be left with no allies.

butler 3/23/10 8:06 AM

**Comment:** Sentence 1 disparages Bill for being related to a CIA employee, as if that taints his ability to be truthful or objective. This is an **Ad Hominem**.

Sentence #2 is a **Slippery Slope**—Taylor cannot prove that this future consequence will follow.

**Bill:** <sup>1</sup>If that’s the case, too bad. <sup>2</sup>America stands for freedom, democracy, and truth. <sup>3</sup>So it can stand against the world. <sup>4</sup>Besides, the U.S. should be able to convince countries hostile to the United States of the error of their ways because our beliefs have a strong religious foundation.

butler 3/23/10 8:13 AM

**Comment:** Sentence 1 dismisses Taylor’s comment and assumes it is unimportant. Sentence 2 is a **glittering generality** that sounds good but proves nothing, and sentences 3 and 4 are **wishful thinking**: because Bill wants something to be true (we “should be able to convince,” and his religious reason for it.)

**Taylor:** <sup>1</sup>Do you really think most religious people are in favor of war? <sup>2</sup>A Gallup poll last week found that 75 percent of highly religious people didn’t think we should go to war with countries harboring terrorists.

butler 3/23/10 8:15 AM

**Comment:** Taylor commits a **Red Herring** by switching the topic to an **Ad Populum** claim based on a **Questionable Authority**: The Gallup Poll of popularity might be accurate, but it cannot be used to determine what is right or best.

**Bill:** <sup>1</sup>I think that’s an overestimate. <sup>2</sup>How many people did they survey?

butler 3/23/10 8:17 AM

**Comment:** Bill falls for the **Red Herring** and is now sidetracked from the real issue: the moral and practical consequences of countries’ actions.

**Taylor:** <sup>1</sup>I’m not sure. <sup>2</sup>But getting back to your original issue, the biggest problem with a tough stand against countries that harbor terrorists is that such a policy is not going to wipe out terrorism in the world.

butler 3/23/10 8:19 AM

**Comment:** In sentence 2 Taylor ends the Red Herring, but in a way that suggests Bill was the one to start it. But she then commits a **perfect solutions** fallacy in sentence 3: just because it won’t completely wipe out the problem, the policy shouldn’t be implemented.

**Bill:** <sup>1</sup>Why do you keep defending the terrorists? <sup>2</sup>I thought you were a patriot. <sup>3</sup>Besides, this is a democracy, and most Americans agree with me.

butler 3/23/10 8:24 AM

**Comment:** In sentence 1 Bill employs a **Straw Man/Fallacy of Extension**: Taylor is not defending terrorists, but criticizing a policy. He then uses a **glittering generality** in sentence 2 to imply she is disloyal—also an **Ad Hominem**. And he ends in sentence 3 with an **Ad Populum**—it doesn’t really matter than most Americans agree with him, for they could all still be wrong.