NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER
Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (http://ncronline.org)

Obama's Healthy Skepticism

Michael Sean Winters | Sep. 21, 2009 NCR Today

During his tour of all five major Sunday news programs, President Obama addressed the situation in Afghanistan where the new commander is calling for more troops. President Obama selected General McChrystal for the job so it will be difficult not to take his advice, especially in the one theater that Obama expressed time and again was vital to American national security.

But, in his remarks, President Obama spoke of his reluctance to send more troops, of his skepticism about any plan that requires him to put young men and women in harm?s way. How refreshing after eight years of Cheney-style ?shoot first, ask questions later? foreign policy. We do not want a President to fall in to the Pentagon?s often ridiculously cautious estimates of the amount of force needed for important operations. I recall with horror the way the Pentagon fretted and delayed in sending troops to the rescue of Sarajevo. They complained about the mountainous terrain and about the determination of the Serb fascists, but this was the same military that had, at least theoretically, been prepared to defeat the Soviet Union in the heart if Europe, no worried about a relatively few genocidal criminals. If memory serves, when the U.S. forces finally deployed, the number one reason for medical evacuations the first year was pregnancy complications.

Perhaps because I live in one, and near another, crunchy liberal college town, I see bumper stickers all the time that say ?War Is Not The Answer.? I always think to myself: ?Depends on the Question?? But, it is undoubtedly the case that war is never a good answer. It represents a failure of politics. Its consequences are unforeseeable but almost always bad. It may be necessary at times ? preventing genocide in the heart of Europe is one such time. But, the President skepticism is to be applauded. First, it will keep us out of boondoggles like Iraq. Second, when he determines we must send in the troops, those troops will know that our nation has turned to them as a last, not a first, resort and that there mission truly is essential. The rest of us will know that too. Most importantly, so will our enemies.

Source URL (retrieved on *12/25/2014 - 05:29*): http://ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/obamas-healthy-skepticism