

Clowns to the Left of Me, Jokers to the Right ...

As sure as the sun rises in the east, you knew that President Obama would be taking flak for staying at the baseball game the other day in Havana (and doing the tango in Buenos Aires) despite the deadly terrorist attacks in Brussels.

This is a president who is determined not to let terrorists disrupt our lives. In fact, in explaining why he stayed at the game, Mr. Obama said, "You want to be respectful and understand the gravity of the situation, but the whole premise of terrorism is to try to disrupt people's ordinary lives."

So, a while back, right after he went before the cameras to condemn the beheading of an American by ISIS, he went off to play golf.

He wasn't going to let terrorists disrupt his life. You either buy his logic or you don't. But be assured that President Obama understands that symbols matter. But understand too that he believes the picture of him enjoying a baseball game in the wake of what happened in Brussels is a more important symbol than one of him hurrying out of the ballpark and disrupting his day because of ISIS.

Reasonable people will either agree or not.

I'm not weighing in on the wisdom of staying at the ballgame. Though dancing the tango so publicly in Argentina while our allies in Belgium were mourning seemed like a very bad presidential decision. What bothers me as a journalist is how partisan we've become, and how it's infected opinion journalism.

If George W. Bush had stayed at the baseball game, liberals in the media would have bashed him. (That's pretty much what they

did when after being told what had just happened on 9/11 he briefly continued reading stories to kids in a Florida classroom.) But it's a safe bet that conservatives on talk radio and Fox News would have defended Mr. Bush if he had stayed at a ballgame in Havana, saying something like, "President Bush showed that he's not going to cower to ISIS! We can't let terror dictate our lives! Hail to the Chief"

This is the hyper-partisan world in which we live. The media both reflect that hyper-partisanship – and fuel it.

Chris Matthews, a reliable liberal, made a lot of sense regarding Mr. Obama at the ballpark – and not because he said the president was "off base" by staying at the game. I'll leave it to you to agree or disagree with Matthews. But when a liberal guest, Jonathan Capehart of the Washington Post, told him that Republicans "constantly kick the president for not doing something that they think he should do," Matthews responded: "There might be another sin there too, to defend him on every front."

In other worlds, liberals too often defend President Obama no matter what he does – and conservatives wouldn't give him credit if he found a cure for cancer.

I've spent most of my life as a journalist and one of my fundamental beliefs is that it isn't only straight news reporting that must be fair, it's also opinion journalism. And here's the news flash: very often it isn't – and the culprits are on the left *and* on the right.

Instead of honest analysis, too often what we get on talk radio and conservative television is partisan ideology. The same kind we get from politicians. That can't be good.