RISE OF THE TERRORISM AND SECESSIONISM IN SOUTH ASIA: A BAHA'I VIEWPOINT

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1. Introduction

Terrorism, so often sponsored by nations and magnified by the media, plants seeds of fear throughout the world. and fear can imprison free men and women more surely than the stoutest walls.

Rushworth M. Kidder

Present-day humanity has reached the strange position where, although people in every country cry out for peace, it has come to think that it is impossible to achieve because selfishness and aggression will always be part of human nature. We need to move on from this kind of thinking and realize prejudice, war and unfair treatment of others have been part of humankind's growing up process. We can see that we should now progress to a period of greater maturity where we can put this childish behaviour behind us.

2. Causes of Terrorism

A number of causes for terrorism can be identified. In some ways, selfish, uncaring behaviour on the parts of groups of people mirror the adolescent stage of individuals where personal concerns or grievances become out of proportion. "The human race...has passed through evolutionary stages...of infancy and childhood... and is now in... its turbulent adolescence approaching its long-awaited coming of age". Part of the background to current waves of terrorism is the lack of a proper balance between the liberty of the individual and the needs of society as a whole. The rights of an individual to act as s/he wishes can never be absolute. The cause that the terrorists espouse is driven by a sense of injustice, as when a nation does not have independence in the family of nations, or where a minority feels that its rights are ignored. Much of modern terrorism is connected to the struggle for separate territory within given national boundaries resulting in clashes between two cultures, religions, ideological groups, *inter alia*. For instance even if the problems between India and Pakistan were resolved, the

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world would still have to deal with terrorist groups and separatist forces in the Middle East, Sri Lanka, Ireland, Latin and South America, Puerto Rico, and parts of Africa, to name just some of the hot spots. The world must ensure that no situations of political injustice continue, thereby removing the terrorist's motivation, justification and support. The terrorist, as an excuse for his actions, frequently uses religion, despite the fact that every religion forbids murder, and demands that individuals love others. The golden rule, found in each religion, is that we should treat others as we wish to be treated. The moral codes of true religion have lost their impact. The cancerous paradigm of materialism has extinguished the spiritual power of traditional religions and led to, according to the Baha'i teachings, the "perversion of human nature, the degradation of human conduct, [that] reveal themselves, under such circumstances, in their worst and most revolting aspects. Human character is debased...the voice of human conscience is stilled, the sense of decency and shame is obscured".

3. · What is Terrorism?

Whilst there may be more than one description of "terrorism" Webster's New World Dictionary states as follows: "ter'ror-ism: n. *[Fr. Terrorisme]* the act of terrorizing; use of force or threats to demoralize, intimidate, and subjugate, esp. such use as a political weapon or policy the demoralization and intimidation produced in this way". The US Department of Justice, 1984 described it as: "violent criminal conduct apparently intended (a) to intimidate or coerce a civilian population; (b) to influence the conduct of a government by intimidation or coercion, or (c) to affect the conduct of a government by assassination or kidnapping". Terrorism's central weapon is fear itself. It consists of an attempt by the weak to gain dominion over the strong. And since its ultimate target is not the victim but the public at large, terrorists seek access to channels of communication. As previously stated terrorism stems from some of the baser elements of human nature - hatred, revenge, and territoriality. Yet it often come in the guise of religious or political movements, a just attempt to gain a homeland or a remedy for past injustices.

4. Terrorism in India

The history of post independent India is replete with repeated occurrences of prolonged and ongoing battle with terrorism that has spread its deadly tentacles in many states all over the country. The terms used to

describe those who indulge in these nefarious activities are militants, extremists, insurgents, naxalites, anti-nationals, mercenaries and terrorists. In Jammu and Kashmir alone there are more than two dozen outfits, of which some of the well-known, are Al-Jehad Forum, Muslim Jambaz Force, Al-Mustafa Liberation Force, Al-Umer Mujahideen, Ikhwan'ul-Muslimeen, Tulba Islami Students, Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), Jammu Kashmir National Liberation Army, Lashkar-I-Toiba, Kashmir Jehad Force, Arkaj-I-ad-Dawa'ul-Arshd. Elsewhere, in India we hear of the United Liberation Force of Assam (ULFA), the People's War Group, the Bodo militants, etc.

Today's terrorists are armed with the most sophisticated weapons, and capable of destroying targets with a high degree of success, effective manipulation of news media, use of home video equipment to make tapes for release to commercial networks. Many of the Indian terrorists groups are openly backed by the rogue Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) of Pakistan which supplies state-of-art weapons and explosives. ISI has supplied pen-shaped pistols, cigarette bombs that are laced with deadly explosives, solar energy powdered land mines, ant-aircraft guns, shoulder fired Stinger Missiles, AK-47s and 56s.

5.   Terrorist Mind-set

In his five-part paper entitled "Unmasking Terrorism" by Rushworth M. Kidder, published in *The Christian Science Monitor*, June 21-27, 1986, the author offers a penetrating analysis sub-titled "The Terrorist Mentality": "Is there, then, a terrorist mind-set? From dozens of interviews over four months with longtime students of terrorist ideology and psychology, certain common characteristics begin to emerge. Not surprisingly, given the typical age of the terrorist, these characteristics also often reduce to complex issues to black-and-white". Dr. Franco Ferracuti points to the intensely intellectualized, inward looking, and politically naïve theorizing of many groups. (a) The terrorist, he says, "no longer tests his ideas against reality by [engaging in] dialogue with people with different views." Instead, he lives out **"a fantasy war"**, convinced that he has broad support from numerous like-minded followers.   (b) **Frustration**.   Pent-up concerns about an individual's inability to change society figure strongly in this mind-set. Italian historian and journalist Giorgio Bocca notes: They have no patience, these terrorists. They are totally absorbed in their cause. One of the slogans of one of these movements [I studied] was 'We want it all and we want it

now'". (c) **Self-righteousness**. "They believe in [their] total rectitude," notes Prof. Paul Wilkinson, who adds that "intolerance, dogmaticism, authoritarianism, and a ruthless treatment of their own people who deviate from their own view are common to their mentality". (d) **Utopianism**. Many terrorists seem to feel that a new-perfect future lies just around the corner, once the present order is destroyed. This utopianism, coupled with frustration at the slow pace of social change, often leads to political extremism on both the left and the right. "Unless you catch this utopian aspect", notes Prof. Ferracuti, "it is difficult to understand the mind-set." (e) **Social isolation**. "Terrorists", says Dr. Jerrold M. Post, are often "people who really are lonely." Terrorists groups use religious or political ideals to interest potential recruits. But those taking up political violence often share traits that are less religious or political than mental and emotional. For many of them, Post says, the terrorist group is "the first family they have ever had." (f) **Assertion of their own existence**. Terrorist actions are often loaded with symbolic overtones, involving the choice of captives, locations, weapons, and timing. They are frequently meant to send messages. Leaute calls terrorism "a communication system" in which frustrated people are "trying to express through violence their own message". (g) **Willingness to kill**. Perhaps the most startling characteristic, however, is the cold-bloodedness of some terrorist murders. Students of terrorism relate this characteristic to a harsh oversimplification that allows killers to see victims simply as objects - a habit of mind observed among Nazi.killers during the massacre of Jews in World War II. Researchers have noticed, however, that captors who hold hostages for protracted periods tend to develop a kind of bond with them that makes cold-blooded murder less likely. Much of the so-called suicide bombing is not carried out by fanatics who believe they are dying for a cause. Interviews with would-be suicide terrorists who were captured alive indicate they were often tricked into believing they could escape before the bomb exploded or were blackmailed into accepting the task on threat of harm to their families".

6.   Possible Remedies

With the collapse of the nation state there is a proliferation of factionalism and such a situation can only be overcome through the creation of a world government which would be responsible for ensuring the territorial integrity of each sovereign state. To establish such a world authority we need to re-think the role of the existing United Nations Organization, which, to my mind, has lost its mandate of preserving peace

throughout the world. The globalization process demands the holding of a world conference at which the international frontiers should be permanently determined and the levels of national armaments reduced. Every nation, big or small, would be assured of its safety and every minority within each country would have its rights guaranteed. Terrorists use different states around the world as places of refuge from justice, and a number of countries harbour, supply, finance, and train and sponsor terrorist groups for their own ends. Until some sort of world law is established, terrorism can never be completely eliminated. "The law must reign and not the individual; thus will the world become a place of beauty and true brotherhood will be realized."

Only a new world system of governance structured on an international rather than a national level, to deal with the urgent global problems of terrorism and secessionism, deteriorating environment, spread of poverty, HIV/AIDS, to name a just few of the global crises, can provide the much needed panacea. Global problems have been mounting in magnitude and danger, yet there seems to be little progress in the creation of the political will or the institutional mechanisms for dealing with them. The series of United National convened conferences during the decade of 1990s has certainly generated tremendous awareness and some cooperation among member nations. In the words of a United Nations executive: "We cling to concepts of national sovereignty which are outmoded and ineffective...and to world of nation states no longer able to deal with some of the principal issues that determine the future security and well-being of their people". Most existing international institutions lack a cutting edge and the means of enforcement. Some governments are happy to frustrate progress. They do no want to see global institutions with real powers, and can point to their many defects, including lack of accountability. The power of inertia remains strong. The short term always looms larger than the long term.

A new worldview based on the ideal of world citizenship and the concept of the prosperity of humankind can replace the narrower and more violent goals of the terrorist. The creation of a world executive, a world police force and other allied agencies accompanied by common laws to be upheld and enforced by all the federated members of the world commonwealth would also be beneficial. There is no danger in a rational and reasonable level of patriotism, but what needs to be developed is a love of humanity as a whole. With this ideal as a goal, replacing the fierce nationalism that is used to justify acts of terror, a sense of world citizenship

can be developed. Loving all the peoples of the world should include a love of one's own country. "The well-being of mankind, its peace and security are unattainable unless and until its unity is firmly established." "The earth is but one country and mankind its citizens," Baha'u'llah proclaimed over a century ago.

All the human sciences - anthropology, physiology and psychology - agree that there is only one human species, although we differ endlessly in lesser ways. "Fighting and the employment of force, even for the right cause, will not bring about good results. The oppressed who have right on their side must not take that right by force; the evil would continue. Hearts must be changed".

In such a world as envisaged above there would be strict regulations on the carrying of arms by individual citizens. The aid agency Oxfam has estimated the global trade in small arms between 1990 and 1995 at $ 22 billion. Traditional arms control methods - treaties and inspection rules - can work against costly and hard-to-hide tanks and nuclear missiles. But light weapons, the mainstay of terrorists groups, are cheap, portable and easily hidden.

7. Conclusion

Progress towards a new society demands that we move away from the worldview founded on the mechanics of a clock and the interactions of billiard balls to the acceptance of an organic change in the very structure of present-day society accompanied by an equally profound change in human consciousness. This is within the power of all who share this planet as their common homeland, Baha'is believe. "To build a New World is no easy task. The road is stony and filled with obstacles, but the journey is infinitely rewarding".

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