

Terrorism: Theirs and Ours

changing world of images in which we have to keep our heads straight to know what is terrorism and what is not. But more importantly, to know what causes it, and how to stop it.

Characteristic of the Official Literature on Terrorism

Inconsistency: The first point about our use of the word 'terrorism' is that posture of inconsistency necessarily evades definition. If you are not going to be consistent, you're not going to define. I have examined at least twenty official documents on terrorism. Not one defines the word. All of them explain it, express it emotively, polemically, to arouse our emotions rather than exercise our intelligence. I give you only one example, which is representative. In the State Department Bulletin of seven single-spaced pages, there is not one single precise definition of terrorism. What we get is the following:

Definition number one: "Terrorism is a modern barbarism that we call terrorism."

Definition number two is even more brilliant: "Terrorism is a form of political violence," says George Shultz. Aren't you surprised?

Definition number three: "Terrorism is a threat to Western civilization."

Definition number four: "Terrorism is a menace to Western moral values."

Emotive: Did you notice? Does it tell you anything other than arouse your emotions? This is typical. They don't define terrorism because definitions involve a commitment to analysis, comprehension and adherence to some norms of consistency. That's the second characteristic of the official literature on terrorism: it is purely emotive.

Globalistic: The third characteristic is that

the absence of definition does not prevent officials from being globalistic. We may not define terrorism, but it is a menace to the moral values of Western civilization. It is a menace also to mankind. It's a menace to good order. Therefore, you must stamp it out worldwide. Our reach has to be global. You need a global reach to kill it. Anti-terrorist policies therefore have to be global. Speaking on terrorism at the New York Park Avenue Synagogue, George Schultz, then Secretary of State said: "There is no question about our ability to use force where and when it is needed to counter terrorism." There is no geographical limit. On a single day the missiles hit Afghanistan and Sudan. Those two countries are 2,300 miles apart, and they were hit by missiles belonging to a country roughly 8,000 miles away. Reach is global.

Omniscient: Claims of power are not only globalist they are also omniscient. We know where they are; therefore we know where to hit. We have the means to know. We have the instruments of knowledge. We are omniscient. Shultz: "We know the difference between terrorists and freedom fighters, and as we look around, we have no trouble telling one from the other."!!!!!! Only Osama Bin Laden doesn't know that he was an ally one day and an enemy another. That's very confusing for Osama Bin Laden. I'll come back to his story towards the end. It's a real story.

Eschews causation: The official approach eschews causation. You don't look at causes of anybody becoming terrorist. Cause? What cause? Another example. The New York Times December 18, 1985, reported that the foreign minister of Yugoslavia, you remember the days when there was a Yugoslavia, requested the Secretary of State of the U.S. to consider the causes of Palestinian terrorism. The Secretary of State, George Shultz, and I am quoting from the New York Times, "went a bit

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red in the face. He pounded the table and told the visiting foreign minister, there is no connection with any cause. Period." Why look for causes?

Selective Revulsion: The moral revulsion that we must feel against terrorism is selective. We are to feel the terror of those groups, which are officially disapproved. We are to applaud the terror of those groups of whom officials do approve. Hence, President Reagan's, "I am a contra." He actually said that. We know the contras of Nicaragua were anything, by any definition, but terrorists. The media, to move away from the officials, heed the dominant view of terrorism.

Unrecorded Holocausts of Friendly Governments

The dominant approach also excludes from consideration, more importantly to me, the terror of friendly governments. To that question I will return because it excused among others the terror of Pinochet (who killed one of my closest friends) and Orlando Letelier; and it excused the terror of military dictatorships who have killed many of my friends. All I want to tell you is that according to my ignorant calculations, the ratio of people killed by the state terror of governments of Pinochet, Argentinean, Brazilian, Indonesian type, (*Israel*) versus the killing by the PLO and other terrorist types is literally, conservatively, one to one hundred thousand. That's the ratio. History unfortunately recognizes and accords visibility to power and not to weakness. Therefore, visibility has been accorded historically to dominant groups.

In our time, the time that began with this day, Columbus Day, is a time of extraordinary unrecorded holocausts. Great civilizations have been wiped out. The Mayas, the Incas, the Aztecs, the American Indians, the Canadian Indians were all wiped out. Their

voices have not been heard, even to this day fully. Now they are beginning to be heard, but not fully. They are heard, yes, but only when the dominant power suffers, only when resistance has a semblance of costing, or exacting a price. When a Custer is killed or when a Gordon is besieged. That's when you know that they were Indians fighting, Arabs fighting and dying. My last point of this section: U.S. policy in the Cold War period has sponsored terrorist regimes one after another. Somoza, Batista, all kinds of tyrants have been America's friends. You know that. There was a reason for that. Nicaragua, contra. Afghanistan, Mujahiddin. El Salvador, etc.

What is terrorism?

You shouldn't imagine that I have come to praise the other side. But keep the balance in mind. Keep the imbalance in mind and first let us ask ourselves, What is terrorism?

Our first job should be to define the thing, name it, and give it a description of some kind, other than "moral equivalent of founding fathers" or "a moral outrage to Western civilization". I will stay with you with Webster's Collegiate Dictionary: "Terror is an intense, overpowering fear," "the use of terrorizing methods of governing or resisting a government." This simple definition has one great virtue, that of fairness. It's fair. It focuses on the use of coercive violence, violence that is used illegally, extra-constitutionally, to coerce. And this definition is correct because it treats terror for what it is, whether the government or private people commit it.

Have you noticed something? Motivation is left out of it. We're not talking about whether the cause is just or unjust. We're talking about consensus, consent, and absence of consent, legality, absence of le-

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gality, constitutionality, absence of constitutionality. Why do we keep motives out? Because motives differ. Motives differ and make no difference.

I have identified in my work five types of terrorism: First, state terrorism. Second, religious terrorism; terrorism inspired by religion, Catholics killing Protestants, Protestants killing Catholics; Sunnis killing Shiites, Shiites killing Sunnis, God, religion, sacred terror, you can call it if you wish. State, church. Crime. Mafia. All kinds of crimes commit terror. Third, there is pathology. You're pathological. You're sick. Fourth, you want the attention of the whole world. You've got to kill a president. You will. You terrorize. You hold up a bus. Fifth, there is political terror of the private group; be they Indian, Vietnamese, Algerian, Palestinian, Baader-Meinhof, the Red Brigade. Political terror of the private group. Oppositional terror. Keep these five in mind. Keep in mind one more thing. Sometimes these five can converge on each other.

You start with protest terror. You go crazy. You become pathological. You continue. They converge. State terror can take the form of private terror. For example, we're all familiar with the death squads in Latin America. Government has employed private people to kill its opponents. It's not quite official. It's privatized. Convergence. Or the political terrorist who goes crazy and becomes pathological. Or the criminal who joins politics.

In Afghanistan, in Central America, the CIA employed in its covert operations drug pushers. Drugs and guns often go together. Smuggling of all things often go together. Of the five types of terror, the focus is on only one, the least important in terms of cost to human lives and human property [Political Terror of those who want to be

heard]. The highest cost is state terror. The second highest cost is religious terror, although in the twentieth century religious terror has, relatively speaking, declined. If you are looking historically, massive costs. The next highest cost is crime. Next highest, pathology. A Rand Corporation study by Brian Jenkins, for a ten-year period up to 1988, showed 50% of terror was committed without any political cause at all. No politics. Simply crime and pathology. So the focus is on only one, the political terrorist, the PLO, the Bin Laden, whoever you want to take. Why do they do it? What makes the terrorist tick? I would like to knock them out quickly to you.

Why do they do it? What makes the terrorist tick?

First, the need to be heard. Imagine, we are dealing with a minority group, the political, private terrorist. First, the need to be heard. Normally, and there are exceptions, there is an effort to be heard, to get your grievances heard by people. They're not hearing it.

A minority acts. The majority applauds. The Palestinians, for example, the super terrorists of our time, were dispossessed in 1948. From 1948 to 1968 they went to every court in the world. They knocked at every door in the world. They were told that they became dispossessed because some radio told them to go away, an Arab radio, which was a lie. Nobody was listening to the truth.

Finally, they invented a new form of terror, literally their invention: the airplane hijacking. Between 1968 and 1975 they pulled the world up by its ears. They dragged us out and said, Listen, Listen. We listened. We still haven't done them

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justice, but at least we all know. Even the Israelis acknowledge. Remember Golda Meir, Prime Minister of Israel, saying in 1970, "There are no Palestinians." They do not exist. They exist now. We are cheating them at Oslo. At least there are some people to cheat now. We can't just push them out. The need to be heard is essential. One motivation there. Mix of anger and helplessness produces an urge to strike out. You are angry. You are feeling helpless. You want retribution. You want to wreak retributive justice.

The experience of violence by a stronger party has historically turned victims into terrorists. Battered children are known to become abusive parents and violent adults. You know that. That's what happens to peoples and nations. When they are battered, they hit back. State terror very often breeds collective terror. Do you recall the fact that the Jews were never terrorists? By and large Jews were not known to commit terror except during and after the Holocaust. Most studies show that the majority of members of the worst terrorist groups in Israel or in Palestine, the Stern and the Irgun gangs, were people who were immigrants from the most anti-Semitic countries of Eastern Europe and Germany. Similarly, the young Shiites of Lebanon or the Palestinians from the refugee camps are battered people. They become very violent. The ghettos are violent internally. They become violent externally when there is a clear, identifiable external target, an enemy where you can say, "Yes, this one did it to me". Then they can strike back.

Example is a bad thing. Example spreads. There was a highly publicized Beirut hijacking of the TWA plane. After that hijacking, there were hijacking attempts at nine different American airports; pathological groups or individuals modeling on the others. Even

more serious are examples set by governments. When governments engage in terror, they set very large examples. When they engage in supporting terror, they engage in other sets of examples.

Absence of revolutionary ideology is central to victim terrorism. Revolutionaries do not commit unthinking terror. Those of you who are familiar with revolutionary theory know the debates, the disputes, the quarrels, the fights within revolutionary groups of Europe, the fight between anarchists and Marxists, for example. But the Marxists have always argued that revolutionary terror, if ever engaged in, must be sociologically and psychologically selective. Don't hijack a plane. Don't hold hostages. Don't kill children, for God's sake. Have you recalled also that the great revolutions, the Chinese, the Vietnamese, the Algerian, the Cuban, never engaged in hijacking type of terrorism? They did engage in terrorism, but it was highly selective, highly sociological, still deplorable, but there was an organized, highly limited, selective character to it. So absence of revolutionary ideology that begins more or less in the post-World War II period has been central to this phenomenon.

These conditions have existed for a long time. But why then this flurry of private political terrorism? Why now so much of it and so visible? The answer is modern technology. You have a cause. You can communicate it through radio and television. They will all come swarming if you have taken an aircraft and are holding 150 Americans hostage. They will all hear your cause. You have a modern weapon through which you can shoot a mile away. They can't reach you. And you have the modern means of communicating. When you put together the cause, the instrument of coercion and the instrument of commu-

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nication, politics is made. A new kind of politics becomes possible. To this challenge rulers from one country after another have been responding with traditional methods. The traditional method of shooting it out, whether it's missiles or some other means. The Israelis are very proud of it. The Americans are very proud of it. The French became very proud of it. Now the Pakistanis are very proud of it. The Pakistanis say, "Our commandos are the best." Frankly, it won't work.

Ameliorating the Causes of Terrorism

A central problem of our time are the political minds, rooted in the past, and modern times, producing new realities. Therefore in conclusion, what is my recommendation to America? Quickly. First, avoid extremes of double standards. If you're going to practice double standards, you will be paid with double standards. Don't use it. Don't condone Israeli terror, Pakistani terror, Nicaraguan terror, El Salvadoran terror, on the one hand, and then complain about Afghan terror or Palestinian terror. It doesn't work. Try to be even-handed. A superpower cannot promote terror in one place and reasonably expect to discourage terrorism in another place. It won't work in this shrunken world. Do not condone the terror of your allies. Condemn them. Fight them. Punish them.

Please eschew, avoid covert operations and low-intensity warfare. These are breeding grounds of terror and drugs. Violence and drugs are bred there. The structure of covert operations, I've made a film about it, which has been very popular in Europe, called *Dealing with the Demon*. I have shown that wherever covert operations have been, there has been the central drug problem. That has been also the center of the drug trade. Because the structure of covert operations, Afghanistan, Vietnam, Nicaragua, Central America, is very hospitable to drug trade.

Avoid it. Give it up. It doesn't help.

Please focus on causes and help ameliorate causes. Try to look at causes and solve problems. Do not concentrate on military solutions. Do not seek military solutions. Terrorism is a political problem. Seek political solutions. Diplomacy works. Take the example of the last attack on Bin Laden. You don't know what you're attacking. They say they know, but they don't know. They were trying to kill Qaddafi. They killed his four-year-old daughter. The poor baby hadn't done anything. Qaddafi is still alive. They tried to kill Saddam Hussein. They killed Laila Bin Attar, a prominent artist, an innocent woman. They tried to kill Bin Laden and his men. Not one but twenty-five other people died. They tried to destroy a chemical factory in Sudan. Now they are admitting that they destroyed an innocent factory, one-half of the production of medicine in Sudan has been destroyed, not a chemical factory. You don't know. You think you know. Four of your missiles fell in Pakistan. One was slightly damaged. Two were totally damaged. One was totally intact. For ten years the American government has kept an embargo on Pakistan because Pakistan is trying to build nuclear weapons and missiles. So we have a technology embargo on my country. One of the missiles was intact. What do you think a Pakistani official told the Washington Post? He said it was a gift from Allah. We wanted U.S. technology. Now we have got the technology, and our scientists are examining this missile very carefully. It fell into the wrong hands.

So don't do that. Look for political solutions. Do not look for military solutions. They cause more problems than they solve. Please help reinforce, strengthen the framework of international law. There was a criminal court in Rome. Why didn't they

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go to it first to get their warrant against Bin Laden, if they have some evidence? Get a warrant, then go after him. Internationally. Enforce the UN Enforce the International Court of Justice, this unilateralism makes us look very stupid and them relatively smaller.

Coming back to the story of Bin Laden, the Saudi in Afghanistan, the point about Bin Laden would be roughly the same as the point between Sheikh Abdul Rahman, who was accused and convicted of encouraging the blowing up of the World Trade Center in New York City. It's the same as that of Aimal Kansi, the Pakistani Baluch who was also convicted of the murder of two CIA agents.

First, let me see if I can be very short on Jihad. Jihad, which has been translated a thousand times as "holy war," is not quite just that. Jihad is an Arabic word that means, "to struggle." It could be struggle by violence or struggle by non-violent means. There are two forms, the small jihad and the big jihad. The small jihad involves violence. The big jihad involves the struggles with self. Those are the concepts. The reason I mention it is that in Islamic history, jihad as an international violent phenomenon had disappeared in the last four hundred years, for all practical purposes. It was revived suddenly with American help in the 1980s. When the Soviet Union intervened in Afghanistan, Zia ul-Haq, the military dictator of Pakistan, which borders on Afghanistan, saw an opportunity and launched a jihad there against godless communism. The U.S. saw a God-sent opportunity to mobilize one billion Muslims against what Reagan called the Evil Empire. Money started pouring in. CIA agents starting going all over the Muslim world recruiting people to fight in the great jihad.

Bin Laden was one of the early prized recruits. He was not only an Arab. He was also a Saudi. He was not only a Saudi. He was also a multimillionaire, willing to put his own money into the matter. Bin Laden went around recruiting people for the jihad against communism. I first met him in 1986. He was recommended to me by an American official of whom I do not know whether he was or was not an agent. I was talking to him and said, "Who are the Arabs here who would be very interesting?" By here I meant in Afghanistan and Pakistan. He said, "You must meet Osama." I went to see Osama. There he was, rich, bringing in recruits from Algeria, from Sudan, from Egypt, just like Sheikh Abdul Rahman. This fellow was an ally. He remained an ally. He turns at a particular moment.

In 1990 the U.S. goes into Saudi Arabia with forces. Saudi Arabia is the holy place of Muslims, Mecca and Medina. There had never been foreign troops there. In 1990, during the Gulf War, they went in, in the name of helping Saudi Arabia defeat Saddam Hussein. Osama Bin Laden remained quiet. Saddam was defeated, but the American troops stayed on in the land of the Kaaba (the sacred site of Islam in Mecca), foreign troops. He wrote letter after letter saying, Why are you here? Get out! You came to help but you have stayed on. Finally, he started a jihad against the other occupiers.

What is the Mission of Osama bin Laden?

His mission is to get American troops out of Saudi Arabia. His earlier mission was to get Russian troops out of Afghanistan. See what I was saying earlier about covert operations?

You are my friend. You keep your word. I am loyal to you. You break your word, I go on my path of revenge. For him, America has broken its word. The loyal friend has betrayed. The one to whom you swore blood loyalty has betrayed you.

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A second point to be made about him is that these are tribal people, people who are really tribal. Being a millionaire doesn't matter. Their code of ethics is tribal. The tribal code of ethics consists of two words: loyalty and revenge. *You are my friend. You keep your word. I am loyal to you. You break your word, I go on my path of revenge. For him, America has broken its word. The loyal friend has betrayed. The one to whom you swore blood loyalty has betrayed you. They're going to go for you. They're going to do a lot more. These are the chickens of the Afghanistan war coming home to roost.* This is why I said to stop covert operations. There is a price attached to those that the American people cannot calculate and Kissinger type of people do not know, don't have the history to know.

If our policymakers do not adopt this new paradigm and consider it too hard a pill to swallow and insist on maintaining the status quo by pursuing their failed policies then, more than likely, we would be looking at an entirely different and dangerous world.

(A Presentation at the University of Colorado, Boulder, October 12, 1998 Eqbal Ahmad, Professor Emeritus of International Relations and Middle Eastern Studies at Hampshire College in Amherst, Massachusetts, also served as a managing editor of the quarterly Race and Class. A prolific writer, his articles and essays have been published in The Nation, Dawn (Pakistan), among several other journals throughout the world. He died in 1999.)

Nations Under Siege
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The changed scenario therefore has completely exposed futility of the notion of total security. As a consequence, developed nations are gripped with a terrible state of insecurity, fear and revenge, characterizing a siege mentality, in sharp contrast to Taliban frame of mind, who have fully submitted to the will of God and are overly proud of the fact that no power on earth has ever been able to sub-

due their will for freedom. As they have not lost any war, they would not let USA win this war.

Two civilizations are about to collide in the fieriest duel in human history. One is overly intoxicated with sense of being a super power, boiling from within with anger and urge for revenge. The other having resigned to their destiny, and faith in Allah, which makes death an adorable commitment is ready to face the challenge. Both are under siege. Who would win and prevail, no one can foretell, as divine will asserts in its own way. The dialectics of the opposing will determine the outcome. The moving finger, having moved will write the verdict.

It is time for the world's most formidable power, to transcend anger and dispassionately come to grip with the reality. The infinite justice is only in the domain of Allah and becomes an attribute of mankind, if he possesses the serenity of judgment, to discern the truth and the courage to act, as truth is revealed. If war strategists only adhered to Thomas Paine - the great freedom lover of America - who said: "The world is my country, all mankind are my brethren and to do good is my religion", the world would not be as Hobbesian as it is today.

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Geopolitics Review

Terrorism: Theirs and Ours

By Dr. Eqbal Ahmad

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GEOPOLITICS REVIEW

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In the 1930s and 1940s, the Jewish underground in Palestine was described a "terrorist." Then new things happened. By 1942, the Holocaust was occurring, and a certain liberal sympathy with the Jewish people had built up in the Western world. At that point, the terrorists of Palestine, who were Zionists, suddenly started to be described, by 1944-45, as "freedom fighters." At least two Israeli Prime Ministers, including Menachem Begin, have actually been defined as 'terrorists'; you can find them in the books and on posters with their pictures, saying, "Terrorists, Reward This Much." The highest reward I have noted so far was 100,000 British pounds on the head of Menachem Begin, the terrorist!

Then from 1969 to 1990 the PLO, the Palestine Liberation Organization, occupied the center stage as the terrorist organization. Yasir Arafat has been described repeatedly by the great sage of American journalism, William Safire of the New York Times, as the "Chief of Terrorism." On September 29, 1998, I was rather amused to notice a picture of Yasir Arafat to the right of President Bill Clinton. To his left is Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Clinton is looking towards Arafat and Arafat is looking literally like a meek mouse. Just a few years earlier he used to appear with this very menacing look around him, with a gun appearing menacing from his belt. You remember those pictures, and you remember the next one.

In 1985, President Ronald Reagan received a group of bearded men. That was the time

I was writing in The New Yorker. They were very ferocious-looking bearded men with turbans looking like they came from another century. President Reagan received them in the White House. After receiving them he spoke to the press. He pointed towards them, I'm sure some of you will recall that moment, and said, "*These are the moral equivalent of America's founding fathers.*" These were the Afghan Mujahiddin. They were at the time, guns in hand, battling the Evil Empire. They were the moral equivalent of our founding fathers!

In August 1998, another American President ordered missile strikes from the American navy based in the Indian Ocean to kill Osama Bin Laden and his men in the camps in Afghanistan. I do not wish to embarrass you with the reminder that Mr. Bin Laden, whom fifteen American missiles were fired to hit in Afghanistan, was only a few years ago the moral equivalent of George Washington and Thomas Jefferson! He got angry over the fact that he has been demoted from "Moral Equivalent" of your "Founding Fathers". So he is taking out his anger in different ways. I'll come back to that subject more seriously in a moment. You see, why I have recalled all these stories is to point out to you that the matter of terrorism is rather complicated.

Terrorists change. The terrorist of yesterday is the hero of today, and the hero of yesterday becomes the terrorist of today. This is a serious matter of the constantly

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