

## **Terrorism**

(Chapter from 1993 Sequel to *World Peace?*)

### The Question, Some Responses, and Thought

One of the inquiries posed to each diplomat is on terrorism, and it's relation to fundamentalism. My opening statement and then question to the diplomats was approximately as follows:

Terrorism connected to Islamic fundamentalism continues to rise. Islamic fundamentalism is gaining strength in numbers. There is a series of other events that share some elements in common: recent rising of the Klu Klux Klan, racial strife signaled in the LA riots, nationalism to point of ethnic cleansing in Bosnia, and neo-nazis showing a face again in Germany, etc. We are connected to these problems, and all groping for solutions. Much of this I believe is economically based and much goes hand in hand with a restless youth without purpose, hope or job integration.

In 1983 the popular word was "terrorism". Today we are hearing more talk and concern about "fundamentalism". There is more cross cultural exchange and understanding than ever before, but at the same time we are seeing a rise of separatist national, ethnic, racial and religious movements. What is going on from your perspective? What do you think has been helpful in addressing this?

Most agreed with the basic assessment, the seriousness of our problems and our connectedness in them. The following are a rounding of some of the points:

The Representative of Iraq, Ambassador Nizar Hamdoon:

I can't really address the recent LA riots fully, but it is clearly the result and outcome of strife that has been unresolved for some time. When there is economic or other suffering of a people, it brings up the whole history in a more weighted and distorted manner.

Terrorism and fundamentalism is a mixture of failures in the economic and social spheres, and too complicated to be addressed as having any one single reason. But I think on top, is a failure of economic systems, which are connected to political

systems, especially those countries which are in the midst of developing their own political/social and economic systems after the Cold War. There has been a great failure of certain ideologies such as Marxism and other secular movements...

Another key issue is the lack of will to resolve the whole Arab/Israeli conflict, which has been stagnant for years, always bringing up resentment. The US and Western powers are often seen as being supportive and biased towards Israel which contributes to the anti-western movements in the Arab world. These movements are often clandestine and at times resort to violence because they are usually not allowed an official voice in our parliaments.

From Egypt, Minister Counsellor Abdulaleem El-Abyad:

There are zealots and religious nuts who are dangerous. Yes there is absolutely an economic base to this, and the fact there is little opportunity. A lot of these fundamentalists are really the uprooted, the disinherited of the urban ghettos and impoverished areas. They are people who feel that opportunities for them are blocked and they can't get anywhere, so they become easy prey to certain radical clerics who promise them paradise.

It is a serious problem and we are trying to address it. It will take a long time. For the time being there is more focus on security aspect, law and order, keeping these people violating the law, and from threatening the lives of other people.

We are beefing up our police forces, and rounding up suspects. But also, the government realizes this as a complex issue. It has to be resolved through education, expanding opportunities, and addressing some of the roots that led to the rise of these groups. And yes, that means also improving services, housing, and job opportunities. This takes time, money, and resources. Meanwhile, we can not wait for all this to fall into place, because by then they will have destroyed the country.

The Representative of Algeria, Minister Rabah Hadid:

In our country fundamentalism has become a major issue and has been quite a threat not just for political stability, but for the future of the country. Just two years ago we were on the verge of catastrophe. The phenomenon has been more or less latent, but shows its proportions when you have a major crisis, like when oil prices dropped in 1986 and severely effected our economy. That is when the fundamentalists really started gaining their momentum.

Like in many countries the level of expectation of the people for the government has risen steadily since independence. The population has risen dramatically, and with the economy in crisis, progress has not been able to keep pace with the demographic situation.

The society is already, and has been an Islamic society. It will remain an Islamic society. We don't need the fundamentalists to reconcile us with Islam. You would think that because we are all 100% of the Sunni school, without Shiites or sects of Islam, we should not have this kind of religious problem.

The basic problem is as you said, we have a lot of youth, and when they drop or finish from school, employment opportunities are practically nonexistent. There are tremendous social pressures, as many people have moved into the cities. They live in tiny places and have no where to go.

So the fundamentalists see this as their potential political force. They opened up Mosques, gave them some hope, and then used the Mosque as a political propaganda forum. There was no reaction from the government about this for a number of years.

In 1988 we had some major riots that were not fundamentalist riots. They were primarily young people being completely fed up and dissatisfied. It was not led by the fundamentalists. After the riots, the political system was democratized to a multiparty system. The Islamic Fundamentalist party was authorized, in spite of an article in our constitution which prohibits parties formed solely on religious grounds. It was unconstitutionally authorized. Then there was a lax attitude of allowing them to continue to use the mosques, the press, and having them appear almost daily on TV to put out their message. They are very effective at propaganda.

They constantly criticized all our shortcomings, and then as a simple answer to all the problems would repeat that they are governed by Allah, by the Koran. With this they were about to win the elections and the party was banned. The last year has shown us that they don't have a popular base, but what they do have are armed groups.

What we have learned is that you have to master democracy. And if you allow democracy to be used by whomever, negative groups can destroy everything.

The Representative of Indonesia, Ambassador Nugroho Wisnumurti:

The problem is extremism. It goes hand in hand with economic deprivation. With 220 different languages, the basic characteristics of the majority of Indonesians is tolerance. But with global communications, we are exposed to the threat of extremism from a certain section of Muslims from the outside. This exposure if left unattended would certainly nurture fundamentalism and separatism here as well.

We are basically considering that economic development, the fair distribution of wealth is key to prevent this kind of threat of separatism, communism, and fundamentalism. We try to dampen conflicts which are based on religious differences. We ask the press to use some self restraint and not sensationalize small conflicts between different religious, racial or cultural backgrounds. We ask them to tone things down.

It is the opposite in the press of the West, because of money. You exploit whatever bad things happen in the society. Once you exploit a small conflict between a Christian and a Muslim and make a big front page headline, then it will provoke greater conflict. Our press is aware of this and the resulting consequences.

We have something like a town hall in communities that help mediate these conflicts. We have a forum at the local and national level, a forum for consultations for religious groups, be they Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Catholic, or Protestant.

Recently some small riots were provoked by rumors that there was unlabeled meat fat in biscuits being sold. (Against the Hindu law to eat meat products). The religious leaders came together immediately. They verified this was not true and ate the biscuits as proof. This quieted things down quickly.

The Representative of Germany, Ambassador Dr. Hans-Joachim Vergau:  
Ethnic cleansing, or violations of human rights by fundamentalism regimes are part of the policy of such regimes. There are leading forces who push these measures, and who deliberately take the responsibility of these violations.

The trouble in Germany is with a small minority, mainly certain younger people who don't respect the established law. What is different is, these people are clearly rejected by both the population and the Government.

You're right. In so many countries, and in industrialized countries as well, there are acts of aggression, elements of radicalism, tensions against minorities, and frustrated young people largely because of unemployment. The climax of this problem did come as a direct consequence of the reunification, the

collapse of the economy in east Germany, and the very sudden growing unemployment, especially of younger people.

Personally as a German, I am not interested in excusing what happens in my country. We Germans should deal with our problem seriously, and hope that others deal with their problems. In Germany I am ashamed of certain things that have happened, and about the recent violence against helpless foreigners. It is absolutely shameful and unacceptable. It is our task to see that these things are condemned.

We are increasing the efforts not only to protect the victims, but to deal with the motivation, and the frustration of those young people, to turn them around and reintegrate them into the society. That is very important.

We deal with these problems by, first, a systematic build up and integration of the East Germany economy into our economy. Second, we have to continue to support the omnipresent awareness of this problem, which has every German citizen be a guardian against such crimes. That is happening as you can see with these candlelight demonstrations of more than a million people, all over the country.

But also very importantly are the political measures. Now the government is striking against right wing radical organizations, strengthening the police force, and training them specifically for the protection of interests of foreigners. This is what we have to do, and are doing.

From Ireland, Second Secretary Pat Kelly:

Yes, the phrase that is used is the "totality of relationships", which means we have to work with reconciliation within 3 sets of relationships. There is our relationship with Britain, Northern Ireland's relationship with Britain, and Northern Ireland with us [The Republic of Ireland].

Britain is in agreement and working with us now to further this process as well. They understand now that it is not a simple question of being a security problem, nor just a question of terrorism. They now accept that there is a political aspect to it too.

At the end of the day, there is no justification for the violence of the IRA, nor that of the Ulster Defense Force. Violence is just going to make things worse. There has to be more true political dialogue.

The main effort now is to try to get the talks between all the parties and governments resumed, and see what progress can be made towards new forms of governments in Northern Ireland.

Ireland and the UK are cooperating to get these talks going. We meet on a fairly regular basis, every month or more.

The Representative of Sudan, Ambassador Ahmed Suliman:

The poverty was severe. All my generation [in the early 1950's] swung pretty much to the left. Communism spread very fast in Africa then. Islam was growing but not yet an organized force. People were and are taken by and very attracted by slogans, and simple rhetoric talking about "freedoms for the people" and so on. [see his segment in China chapter]

The Representative of Lesotho, Ambassador Monyane Phoofole:

I really do not know why in this new era, people are behaving the way the neo-nazis, fundamentalists, and the like are. We are talking about deep seated hatreds, but with modern communications whereby all people have been meeting each other, you would think by now we would be coming to the understanding that we are all human beings on the same globe. All of us should be working towards a better understanding of one another, of tolerance.

With fundamentalists all we are seeing is intolerance towards other human beings, other peoples cultures, and other people's religion. If we would all subscribe to the Human Rights Declaration we have all signed at the UN, we wouldn't be having these problems. Imagine if all countries did not allow foreigners into their country? This is contrary to the whole idea and principles of a United Nations, and a world working together.

The Representative of Turkey, Ambassador Mustafa Aksin;

(February, '93) Fundamentalism is really another word for extremism, or taking things literally. If you take your religion literally, you are a fundamentalist. If you take you Christianity literally, you are a fundamentalist. They have them in this country (USA), in Britain, everywhere. They have them in Northern Ireland, where some are prepared to kill because someone is of another branch of a religion.

In Sudan you have a nasty civil war. You have the government in the North which is trying to impose their own religious law on people who are not members of that religion. It is religious intolerance.

When you have terrorism on a grand scale in Liberia, no one got excited, because it wasn't one religion against another. In Somalia, with Muslim against Muslim no one got excited either,

until much later. Bosnia was not creating waves because it is Christians doing it to Muslims. But if the perception is that Muslims are against Christians, then the West takes it to heart.

The West seems hopelessly biased in the Muslim countries, showing little standards or principles. There is a tendency to degenerate any basic ethnic conflict, or tribal conflict, into a Islam/Christian conflict. That is very very dangerous.

Now that we don't have the east west conflict anymore between communism and capitalism, we could end up with Christianity vs Islam.

The Catholics tend to be universal in the sense that they have a broad vista. Their members are of many backgrounds around the world. The Islamic world is also universal with a broad membership. But Serbs have their own church. Their nationalism and the church are closely intertwined. This creates a narrow focus on the world, without this broad vision. They are paranoid. They feel themselves to be surrounded. They have this sense that "others are out to get us, so, we have to get them first." Being bigger and well armed, they are now getting their neighbors.

We are for the victims of this aggression. We think their cause is righteous and just because these people all lived in exemplary tolerance with one another in complete harmony. This business of "they have hated each other for hundreds of years" is not true. For the most part, they lived in peace. In Bosnia they constantly intermingled. There is intermarriage. In the cities of Sarajevo, Zagreb, Belgrade, and others you have Catholics, Muslims, and Orthodox Serbs who have lived together and never questioned one another's faiths.

All that is happening essentially is the result of Serbian nationalism, chauvinism, greed and what have you. [And retaliation from WWII] They have ruined the society. They have literally turned millions from their homes. They have raped women and caused the cruel deaths of more than 150 thousand people.

It is the sort of situation that existed in Hitler's time against the Jews. We are seeing it again, being carried out with immunity, against another people in Europe. And the world has been just ringing its hands saying, "Oh, this is terrible," appeasing their consciences, and doing nothing.

I think one reason we should not allow the tragedy in Bosnia to go on, besides the terrible human misery, is the example of inaction. It is all being contrasted to the instantaneous reaction against Iraq. If there is any transgression on Iraq's part, immediately there is a vigorous, sharp reaction from the West. In Bosnia, people get wishy washy. They don't get excited. We ask, what if Muslims started this against Christians?

If you can feed nationalism with a sense of grievance as these people do, then you have fascism. You can switch very quickly. You have a sense of mission, and a sense of grievance. You are creating greater Serbia, or protecting Croatia. We see both Croatia and Serbia as being fascist regimes. They are by no means the opposite of communism, they are direct outgrowths of communism. Extremism of the right and the left are one and the same. At the other end of these are the moderates.

The Islamic fundamentalists, extremists, are having a field day. All the moderate Muslim countries are feeling threatened because the Islamic fundamentalists are getting tremendous extra mileage from this inaction.

There has to be the perception from the world community of "Look, we are all human beings. These people regardless of their religion are suffering for no fault of theirs. They must be protected. They must be defended and saved."

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Many of the answers lie within the above statements. They must be protected. We need jobs and education, an attempt at fairness in life, and understanding the sources from whence these questions arise. Below I'll share some of my rambles.

The challenge is to understand the extremist's mind, at least seeing that part of it which is also within ourselves. Most everything in our lives, yes including randomness, is related to the conditions around us. If you have been starved, or even very hungry, you know what a joy the smallest amount of food is. If you have suffered extreme oppression or hardship, you will know the value of the smallest taken for granted freedoms. If you have been a lost soul (who hasn't ever entered such territory?), finding a rock of faith to hold on to is beyond measure.

The stereotype of a fundamentalist is one who is enslaved by a passion for their beliefs, not necessarily freed by their beliefs. Indeed this all absorbing passion is enviable at times. In overcoming our many obstacles today we could all use this amount of passion, amount of sheer energy, and sense of purpose that comes from being so focussed, and single minded.

Evil, conflict, destructiveness, cruelty and negativity are a few words we relate to terrorists. These are the same words

terrorists relate to the world we live in. But these are words describing part of the nature of life on earth. Our nature.

We don't have the power to just eliminate part of nature, especially death, but it is the power of courage, integrity, truthfulness, community, knowledge, and respect that "educates" the evils of the world.

These qualities balance out the onslaught of trails of fire, hardships, within us and without. Fundamentalists live in an especially "we/they" world emphasizing differences, and a simplistic and opportunistic world of non-believers and believers.

One of the precepts in community building activities is to try to separate the problem from the person or group, to work hard on the problem without doing harm to everything and everyone around it. Thus, "evils" can be isolated and condemned, without condemning all else that may be good, healthy or helpful about a person or group. For our own sake, it behooves us to make it our task to get to know and understand what is behind an extremists mind, not condemn them wholly outright. The action yes, not the persons. Stop destructive actions, but our work is to perceive and support what is good about the people, and ourselves as well.

I like to ask, tell me where is God in fear? Is it possible for "God" to exemplified in fear, or hatred? Aren't these the emotions God saves and delivers us from? I get afraid. There is much to fear in life from those separated from the "moral flow of the Universe", as some might put it. It's those who use God's name propoting fear or hatred that seem to me the greatest of the "evildoers".

Taking the time to know what people are going through, what hurts them, and why extremists, or friends and family, act the way they do, is the powerful empathy we need more than ever today.

Pain is often a influencing factor in fundamentalism. It may be emotional, psycho/social, spiritual or physical pain. Pain is a natural part of life right there from the start: birth. Birth. And re-birth?

Pain is both a parent and child of fear. And our teacher? Hasn't pain often awoken us, deepened our understanding, and sensitized us more to the plights of others? On the negative side, does not continuous pain tend to make us obsess over it, obscure our rationality and narrow our ability to see or hear outside the experience? Empathy and learning through the pain seems to be a path forward through this challenge.

The lessons of pain have become clearer over the years dealing with the sick and dying, but we've all had the experience, yes? I had a most terrible toothache recently. It built over a week. Most of us can handle pain when we see the end of it, but here I thought I'd lose my mind. I did. I finally gave in to using pain killers, to little avail. But how irrational I was getting in my work day. I was not only short fused, I was getting destructive. When a bus driver refused to open his door for me after shutting it in my face, I slammed my fist on the bus as he drove off. I cursed, and my hand hurt like crazy. Later, folding my clothes at the laundry, part of a shirt got caught on a handle. Instead of taking the time to free it, I just yanked and ripped it off destroying the shirt. Both these things only hurt myself. I am happy nobody accidentally bumped against me on the street. In a simple review of much of my recent behavior, I witnessed when under intense stress, how quickly we are not our normal selves. It is by no means true of all terrorists, but often, some experience with pain or empathy with another, is a motivating factor that gets them to join up in extremism. After that joining, it is the companionship, the support, and the repetitious self delusion that they are the chosen, special messengers of God, of "the Truth", the world's saviors. We have to know that they see themselves as doing good. Can we outdo their good? Can we reach them?

The first literary agent to look at the earlier 1983 manuscript tried to convince me to change the title to contain the word "terrorism". More catchy, more marketable. She may have been right, but the title reflects what the book was more accurately about; exploring the questions and solutions to the underlying problems that lead to such acts, not playing to the newspaper headlines.

Terrorism has not been universally defined, and therefore is largely subjective. What most of us are primarily focussed on is state sponsored or state sanctioned terrorism. This is often hard to prove and pin point. The terrorism we hear of often is roving gangs of Protestant Northern Irelanders killing a Catholic, or the IRA setting up a bomb in a shopping mall killing innocents. The hooded hijackers taking over the Israeli athletes plane in the '72 Olympics. Or the ANC or Inkatha rampaging with machetes on a train of returning working people. Pan Am exploding over Lockerbee, and now a bomb that finally hit our shores at the World Trade Center. When I turn on the news I am hoping I won't hear that another mass grave has been found in Bosnia, or another story of rape and slit throats as the world watches.

Being truly terrorized is not uncommon in daily life. Visit a child abuse center. For them it is a mother or father terrorizing their child. Or speak to one of the too many children of an alcoholic. Or a parent that just lost a child today in a drive by shooting in the inner city.

For the homeless it is a group of hoodlums, sub zero weather, or others in the shelter itself.

I know one secretary from overseas who has been at the UN for many years who actually feels terrorized (her words) psychologically by her department head and says there is no safe avenue in the system to bring it to light.

For Iraqi citizens in Bagdad it is either Saddam's Baath Party, or the fear of American cruise missiles. Either are terrorizing. For us in America it may be the weeks front page serial killer, or a loaded truck again like that which that drove into our soldiers barracks outside Beirut.

Nature knows all about terrorism. On a farm I recently witnessed a loose dog terrorizing a whole flock of free roaming chickens, as we ran desperately after her and screamed with all our might for her to stop, she just chomped and killed. I was terrorized by nature when I was 15. At that time an earthquake splintered a building I was next to along with many others, killing many in my area. I spent much of the night digging for bodies and survivors through the rubble. I was terrorized when a wave in a mighty storm completely covered a tugboat I was working on in 1971. I was terrorized in 1968 by sudden unrelenting lightening bolts striking the top of our mountain. Our troop of 15 scrambled down as fast as we could with our muscles locking and seizing up as we got knocked clear off the ground by each terrorizing jolt.

At 16 I was terrorized with a knife blade pressed several long minutes to my throat by an inner city youth telling me I was going to die, and another episode at 23 by a hunter threatening to shoot me with his gun pointed at my back as I ran zig zagging for cover from tree to tree, and a few years latter yet again when I was mugged, "taken down", and robbed by a group of armed youths.

But I know many have had to endure much worse. I have never had to endure the horror of the "anything goes" attitude occurring with any war, or civil war. I've never had to undergo the impossible fear and agony of torture. I never had to witness the separating of family as they are shot before me, or the rape and slitting of throats that is occurring today in too many parts of the world. I've never been called out to witness a public execution for political differences at the firing squad, or have loved ones trucked off into the woods or deserts never

to be seen again, whether it be South and Central America, or the Middle east, or Africa, Asia and most recently now again, Europe.

We need not go into the history books or film archives of Hitler's Germany, or Japan's Rising Sun for evidence of these gutless and cowardly horrors. They very clearly are occurring today. Though very little of it gets TV coverage.

I admit to not wanting to hear more of it either, and wishing it away, however, the awareness, large or small, being exposed to us is, I hope, a positive factor. Positive only in the sense that the truth and reality might get us off our duffs and do something about a troubled and well armed world. The primary frustration is the watching while knowing we can do something about much of this man made abhorrence.

It is not useless cliché to recall the words used by Churchill for our present circumstances, "The only thing we have to fear, is fear itself." We each now have to do battle with "fear itself" again. As the reality grows that none of us, including our precious children, are safe from such senseless, and often random cruelties. It is denial and then the fear that freezes us from the required effective, clear and responsible action.

My mother came back looking ashen (terrified?) and shaken up after spending the day serving food to the homeless, as she does every week. I asked her if she was OK. What had happened at the shelter? No, she said, nothing there. It was the radio news on the way home. We again bombed a building in the center of Bagdad. One of our missiles missed it's mark and civilians were killed. "Doesn't he [the President] know that bombing is also terrorism? That if this is the language we speak, we only support their ways?" Isn't this the bare honest truth?!

She doesn't have an ounce of sympathy for Saddam Hussein, but she is always thinking of the ordinary people, the citizens trying to live normal lives. I tend to think most people feel the same. The ordinary people are the people we didn't think of when we bombed Cambodia in the 70's. They are the people the Russians forgot about in Eastern Europe and in Afghanistan, or that China forgot about when it claimed territories in the west in the 1950's. These are the people all nations and groups forget about when they get into war, and these are the people all "terrorists", be they heroes in their own home or not, forget about with their bombs. That is the worst thing about terrorism, isn't it? That people not at all connected to the suffering or political process being rebelled against, are the ones to pay the ultimate sacrifice.

Terrorism by bombing really got magnified greatly with World War Two when Germany, after rolling over Poland torching towns, lining up and executing too many thousands to count, bombed nightly the city of London. We eventually in return carried out day and night bombings over Germany's cities. These were cities containing mostly civilians. Civilians! The surprising results of these bombings, which terrorists and nations seem not to have learned lessons from, was the resolve of the people in either case was not weakened. Instead, the brutality of the bombings bolstered the general resolve of both the German and English people. In WWII we had no problem with recruiting people to offer their all, their very lives. When innocent loved ones are killed, we are drawn to offer all we have.

However, very few transcend to what will be needed to end the cycle of horror; to modify the mighty instinct of revenge. After our all out effort to stop the destructive, egocentric aggressions of Germany and Japan, these peoples were guided and allowed to live in such a way that they are now two powerful, and peaceful leaders in the world today.

As written in the 1983 work, some things remain constant: The old adage; if you want revenge, dig two graves. This cycle of revenge is what has been re-stirred and re-fueled in Bosnia now, 45 years later. Revenge becomes an increasingly dangerous, and irrational cycle that takes over anything that is worthy of human life in us. The "an eye for an eye makes the whole world blind," phrase is exactly what has happened and continues to happen to millions of us in conflicts throughout the world. It does not make sense to me that if your uncle dropped a bomb on, or shot my uncle, that I need to kill you to uphold my honor, his honor, my family's honor, national honor, or any honor.

One may not have to accept the teachings of Buddha, Moses, Mohammed, or Christ, but one helps the world greatly if we're open enough to accept others who do so. I think this is common practice for most of us around the globe. Most people get along and let live. And there have been large pockets of time in all our cultures where people lived in this harmony, exchange and acceptance. This way of relating is not new to humanity.

As the earlier book wrapped up, we have the guiding words of Martin Luther King, jr. about love. Love is not some weak and sentimental emotion he reminded us. It's not a flirtation or a whim, a mere notion, or an ideal. But for our sages and leaders of humanity, founders of our great religions, love is "recognized as the supreme unifying principle of life." The most powerful force in the universe? Yes. Especially that element of it, compassion.

In our challenges, we all can return occasionally to the wisdom, "Honor is given to him [soldiers] who kills, but greater honor is given to him who heals."