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## TOWARD A SOLUTION TO TERRORISM

Terrorism is not just a human problem. Most living creatures face problems comparable to terrorism. Among elephants we call terrorists rogues; among lions, nomads; among humans we call them fanatics, psychopaths, murderers. And, like most creatures, we attempt to exclude them from our society. The question is how to do it.

One way, of course, is to kill them. That is satisfying to those who have been harmed. Revenge is a very deep emotion among us all. But, this solution rarely accomplishes our aim even when, as often in history, it is applied not only to terrorists but more widely to those who offer them shelter or succor or even those who are even more vaguely associated with them.

In the dealings with those who offer shelter or succor or who share ethnic or religious affiliation with terrorists, however, is a hint of a way toward solution: to be effective, anti-terrorism must identify what turns fanatics, psychopaths and murderers into national heroes. If it is possible to get at that part of the process, there is a real chance to defeat terrorism. So what is it?

An analysis of terrorism, at least in modern times, points to two common aspects: the first is that large numbers of people will support terrorism only when all other means of redress of their grievances are blocked. Only when they feel that there is no other hope will ordinary people take this dangerous, costly and self-destructive path. The second aspect is that terrorism is the weapon of the weak. When a society is strong enough, it goes to war to redress its grievances; if it is weak, it strikes out in acts designed either to make the presence or the actions of those it regards as its oppressors so costly that they will go away or so spectacular that otherwise disinterested parties will pay attention to them and their condition.

Two corollaries follow: first, there are circumstances when otherwise uninvolved people will favor terrorism. The adage that my enemies' "terrorists" are my "freedom-fighters" has been proven time after time. The second is that merely suppressing or killing the leaders, or even many of their followers, is unlikely to do more than temporarily halt their supporters' quest; only if the underlying issues that make terrorists "popular" are addressed can the "climate of terrorism" be modified. What is that climate?

For nearly three centuries throughout the world, nationalism has been the most pervasive and persuasive creed, far more potent than any ideology or religion. Nationalism is not just political, as many have thought or just related to the nation-state, but is a far broader concept beginning at the very foundation of personal identity and is combined with language, religion, ethnicity to form a force transcending ideology, logic or reason. Even when it apparently is not the determinant of politics, it rests, barely submerged below the surface, ready to appear when challenged.

It has, moreover, a legal aspect in a world of nation-states, which ours certainly is. To be a member of an unrecognized nation is literally to be an outlaw. Without a passport, one is depersonalized, often to a file or serial number, restricted in movement and employment, attached to institutions which the rest of us take for granted only on sufferance or charity, relegated to the periphery at best and more likely to a timeless limbo, in which individual attributes count for little since, like it or not, identity in our world is achieved in the matrix of the state.

At the end of the First World War, President Woodrow Wilson recognized the fundamental importance of the nation. He realized that the drive toward national identity was not to be denied, but that it might be accommodated in a new world order that would "make the world safe for democracy." To that end, he sent out a clarion call for "the self-determination of peoples." Unfortunately, governments, even his, were deaf, but

terrorists/freedom-fighters have been listening ever since. And answering. When we liked them or agreed with their causes, we considered them the “George Washingtons of their peoples.” The list is familiar: Parnell against Britain in Ireland, Gandhi against Britain in India, Abdul Karim al-Khatabi against the French and Spanish in Morocco, and many others less well remembered. The enslaved peoples of Europe used the tactics of terrorism against the Nazis during their occupation of Europe; they or their children sometimes used them against the Communists. More recently, men who started as terrorists throughout Africa became popular heroes. Nelson Mandela became an icon for the fight he personified against apartheid. Jewish terrorists, struggling against the British in Palestine, were not only forgiven for hanging captured British soldiers, murdering a British cabinet minister in the midst of the Second World War and a few years later murdering the representative of the United Nations and blowing up a large Jerusalem hotel filled with innocent people, but went on to become prime ministers of Israel. Algerian and French terrorists fought a savage war within the war of national liberation in Algeria while the French state, relying heavily on torture, fought them both to a bitter end. And today we are coming to terms with the people we regarded as terrorists in Vietnam – and they with us.

Others, we have viewed, when we were even aware of them, with indifference. Who of us ever heard of the Çeçens before a few years ago? Yet the Çeçens have been struggling against the Russians – tsarist and Communist alike – since 1732. Tsarist and Communist, the Russians engaged in brutal search and destroy campaign against them, burning villages and massacring or starving peasants. Defeated and seemingly facing annihilation, roughly half of the Çeçen population fled to the Ottoman Empire in the middle of the Nineteenth century. In his short and relatively little known novel, *Hadji Murad*, which with eerie precision forecast today's conflict, Leo Tolstoy begins with a double metaphor: on a walk, he notices a "beautiful thistle plant of the crimson variety, which in our neighborhood they call 'Tatar' and

carefully avoid when mowing -- or, if they do happen to cut it down, throw out from among the grass for fear of pricking their hands." He continues, "when I had at last succeeded in plucking it, the stalk was all frayed and the flower itself no longer seemed so fresh and beautiful. Moreover, owing to its coarseness and stiffness, it did not seem in place among the delicate blossoms of my little bouquet. I threw it away feeling sorry to have purposelessly destroyed a flower that looked beautiful in its own environment. 'But, what energy and tenacity! With what determination it defended itself, and how dearly it sold its life!' I thought."

Like the Çeçens, the Kurds are little known among us, but they too have struggled, unsuccessfully, to come together and apart from Turks, Persians, Arabs – and their ancestors – for time out of mind of man. In Kashmir, the world community has generally washed its hand of the issues, whatever the rights and wrongs. Tibet is lost sight of in our larger concern with the Chinese. Dozens of other pockets of resistance in Burma are even less known or attended. No small part of the African tragedy today is the result of inattention to nationality in the European carving out of chunks of territory into colonies. To our astonishment even in Latin America nationality or ethnicity has become a powerful issue.

Mostly, we have been uninvolved in these issues but from time to time, when it fit our purposes, we have promoted terrorism. The "Afghan" terrorists – men and women of many different nationalities – whom we have now learned to hate, were, just a few years ago, our protégés, armed, funded, trained and encouraged by us. Then they were not terrorists but freedom-fighters because they were fighting against our then-enemy, the Soviet Union. Like Dr. Frankenstein, we were surprised when our creation turned on us. We did not attempt to understand them but only to use them, and they turned out to have their own agenda. Often, as in Afghanistan, we are so blinded by our shared hatred that we lightly toss the blanket of our beliefs over those with whom all we really share only a temporary hostility to others. The

Kurds again spring to mind: in our hatred of Saddam Husain, we fail to ask what our temporary allies want, what they believe, what they are like. Does anyone know what the new democrats of Afghanistan, the “Northern Alliance,” stand for? Are they really different from the Taliban?

Among the lessons I draw from reflecting, as I have for over half a century in government and out, on these issues are the following:

First, there will always be terrorists. Just as there will always be criminals. We must certainly do what we reasonably can to protect ourselves from them. But we must recognize that what we do is a police action, a “tactical” action, not a “strategic” or long-term action. A strategic action involves containing, diminishing or, hopefully, contributing to the solution of the problems that place them in the “hearts and minds,” as we said in Vietnam, of their peoples.

Second, terrorism harms not only the terrorists’ opponents but also innocent bystanders. As we have been painfully reminded by the tragic events in New York and Washington, those the terrorists identify as enemies or as friends of their enemies can get badly mauled in the fray. Hundreds of thousands of innocent Afghans are learning the same terrible lesson as they flee, starve and die. As the unlikely combination of John Donne and Usama bin Ladin have reminded us, “no man is an island, entire of its self; every man is a piece of the Continent, a part of the main...” There are no refuges, no “islands” any more.

Third, terrorism also harms those who engage in it. It is an ugly weapon and dirties the hands and minds of its practitioners. And also the hands and minds of those who fight against it. In Algeria, to take just one example among many, a whole generation of both Frenchmen and Algerians were sullied by their fight against one another. The French justified their use of torture as crucial to getting intelligence; the French paratroop officer Roger Trinquier called it the essence of *La Guerre Moderne*, what the machinegun was to trench

warfare in the First World War. What Frenchmen did horrified their nation and deepened the hatred of the Algerians toward them. Yet, within half a year after they left, the Algerians were torturing one another with the same implements, in the same dungeons the French had only just vacated. Torture was, as was then said, the cancer of a generation, both French and Algerian.

Often what begins as a national cause degenerates into sordid activities that are required to fuel it. Kidnapping and drug dealing are common because they produce the money needed to buy weapons. They were common to Vietnam, Columbia and Afghanistan among others. Having begun to use foul means, the practitioners can rarely avoid being corrupted by them. Torture, other forms of viciousness and murder are even worse because they grind down the thin veneer of civilization that separates us, “normally,” from savagery. Once that veneer is fractured, it is very hard to repair.

So what can be done?

First, on Usama bin Ladin. We should require that the Afghan government turn him over, as Qadafi did the suspects in the Lockerbie case, to the International Court of Justice in the Hague.

Why not just kill him? If we kill him, we are descending to the level of terrorism itself. Although we have tried from time to time (with Castro, Qadaffi, Nasser and Lumumba) to murder leaders we disliked, we generally have recognized that acting like the Mafia is not compatible with our national style and beliefs. If this sounds merely idealistic in a harsh and brutal world, then consider the *realpolitik* reason: murdered, Bin Ladin will become a martyr for future causes.

Then, why not kidnap him and bring him to America as we did Noreiga? The result would be similar: with all the attendant publicity and the reasonable question of whether an American court, undoubtedly influenced by the memory of the attack on New York and

Washington, can treat him dispassionately will pose, the image will be fixed in the minds of many today and in the future of rich, powerful, Christian American bringing a Muslim former protégé who no longer would do what we paid him to do before a biased court. This would violate a fundamental principle of our justice system: not only to be fair but to be seen to be fair.

In short, our aim, if we are intelligent and rational, should be to disable him and attach to him to the opprobrium we believe he deserves, not to take vengeance. The World Court can not only disable him but can, with accredited authority and presumed justice, condemn him.

Second, we should use the unprecedented momentum against terrorism that the Bush Administration has so wisely and competently created to clean out the seedbeds of terrorism. Doing so will be a truly Herculean task. But never has the opportunity been greater and never the dangers of inaction so apparent. We are, in it seems to me, at one of those rare historic moments, perhaps not unlike that seized by President Wilson at the end of the First World War, truly to begin a new era. If President Bush is looking for his place in history, this is it. And we have simple criteria that not only have reasonable chances of success, but also fit our national character and beliefs and those of at least some of the members of the coalition we have formed. Moreover, no one has been able to suggest any alternative that offers more hope of creating a more peaceful, more decent world.

Specifically: we need, one after another, to look at the seedbeds of terrorism. The order is flexible and certainly would be governed by other considerations, but consider that in the immediate neighborhood of Afghanistan are the Çeçens and the Kashmiris. Both have long struggled for the right to answer the question, "*what do you want?*" We have rather suddenly begun to think positively about the United Nations; so we should encourage it, under the able leadership of Kofi Annan, to turn seriously, cautiously but actively to enable these people to express their self determination.

Simple the question is, but to ask it is, of course, much harder: the Russians will be unwilling to allow the Çeçens to answer, and the Indians, the Kashmiris. The weight of world opinion must be marshaled, as only the U.N. can do, to start the process and both powers are on weak ground to resist. The issue cannot be fudged or the process will never begin and terrorism will continue. Addressing Kashmir, moreover, might just have the enormously valuable side effect of saving the already shaky government of Pakistan, in whose hands are nuclear weapons, from overthrow once again by the officers of its army, about one in each three of whom is a Fundamentalist in sympathy with the Taliban.

Once this process is begun – somewhere, anywhere – it will have to spread. And, we should realize in advance that it will rarely be welcomed by governments or states. Neither the French nor the Spaniards will want to hear what the Basques want. The Turks, Iraqis and Persians certainly do not want to listen to the Kurds. The Burmese would rather kill their suppressed nations. The Nigerian government will not wish to reopen the Ibo question. The Israelis have shown themselves unwilling to concede the Palestinians’ desire to achieve what they themselves struggled, and with the same weapons and means, to achieve, statehood. And so on for the “unrequited nations.”

The reasonable objection will be raised that not all or even many of these unrequited nations are politically viable. That should be conceded and indeed made into a virtue. The European Union offers us a model: today, such residual groups as the Bretons can both live in a state (France) while by-passing it on some “national” issues by appealing directly to the European Union. In this way, even short of becoming nation-states, nation-groups can achieve a probably satisfactory degree of autonomy within a reasonably secure supra-national framework. That model should spread.

Like it or not, the world we are moving into cannot be adequately judged by the criteria of the one we would like to use. But, curiously, it much resembles the world we left a few

centuries ago. There were 900 sovereign states in “Germany” until the 1648 Treaty of Westphalia, which ended the Thirty Years’ War, reduced them to 355; in 1803 Napoleon reduced the remaining states to 150; and the more recent Germanic Confederation still numbered 36 members when Bismarck ended it in 1866. This is history, but today we are in the midst of a reverse process: the 29 delegations that made up the 1919 Paris Peace Conference have proliferated into hundreds of members of the United Nations. That trend will continue.

What about economic viability? Will mini-nations be able to survive? Most certainly will not be able to do so completely separately, but then what single nation state really can? Overarching state or regional associations will be necessary as will be the continued, and probably expanded, transfer of assets from the rich “north” to the poor “south.” In the past, this has proven to be an inefficient and inadequate system and needs to be improved, but even if it remains wasteful and largely unproductive, it is cheap when compared to the vast outlay occasioned by military action.

How can we adjust to a world in which many nations want to become states? It seems to me that, perhaps only briefly, in the aftermath of the Afghan war, probably only in the early months of 2002, we will have uniquely the moral, economic, diplomatic and military capacity to do what normally would be impossible. I believe that beginning to make such a change in our policies could do more to alter for the better, and safer, the context of world affairs than any thing that has happened since President Wilson made his call for self-determination of peoples. Then, from the experience gained, the precedent set and the reaffirmation of our own moral position, we should turn, one after another, to the similar problems in the Middle East, South Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Easy it will certainly not be and it will require great patience, a willingness to accept shortfalls and failures and an ability to learn from them, but the alternative, let us be clear, is

to fall into a trap. Indeed, we are on the edge of the trap today. In our hurriedly constructed coalition, we can easily make the fatal mistake of considering all expressions of the desire for self-determination as terrorist and of using against them police or military repression. “Come join us,” a number of world leaders are already saying as President Putin did, “your Afghans are our Çeçens.” Or Kurds, Palestinians, Tamils, Kashmiris, Tibetans, Irish, Basques or dozens of other current and future minorities that wish to achieve self determination. “They are all terrorists. Let us fight them together!”

In that direction lies not only failure to stop terrorism but, far more important, the destruction of the fragile fabric of our civilization, with its respect for freedom, decency and human rights, that we have so painfully, laboriously and expensively struggled, for so long, to create; at the end of that road is not only a garrison state but a world prison.

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October 5, 2001