Responses to Pervez Hoodbhoy's Essay

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I. Introduction

The following article consists of responses to Special Forum #07: "Black Tuesday: The View from Islamabad," by Pervez Hoodbhoy. This article contains responses from Alan Tidwell, Program Officer for Education at the US Institute of Peace; Laurent Murawiec, Senior Policy Analyst at the Rand Corporation; and Daniel S. Zbytek of the Polish Secular Society in Warsaw, Poland.

II. Comments by Allen Tidwell

Pervez Hoodbhoy, in his missive "Black Tuesday: The View from Islamabad" raises some interesting points. He is correct to draw our attention to the matter of the underlying causes of terrorism. It does seem to me that Osama's terrorism (if it is his) is immoral, but certainly not irrational. Those using terror are simply pursuing their political objectives - albeit badly - through the use of terror. Terrorism is not irrational, but it is bad policy. It is bad policy because it invites retribution and destroys the essence of political dialogue.

Hoodbhoy concludes that "To echo George W. Bush, "let there be no mistake." But here the mistake will be to let the heart rule the head in the aftermath of utter horror, to bomb a helpless Afghan people into an even earlier period of the Stone Age, or to take similar actions that originate from the spine. Instead, in deference to a billion years of patient evolution, we need to hand over charge to the cerebellum. Else, survival of this particular species is far from guaranteed."

The cerebral response would be a threefold one:

1. the use of means to destroy the terrorists' ability to repeat their attacks,

2. increased security that makes it harder for terrorists to strike, and

3. addressing the fundamental causes of terrorism (i.e. poverty, violence and so on).

It is the third point that will be politically difficult to sustain, but ultimately it is the point that will bear greatest fruit. Former Australian Prime Minister Paul Keating commented in a recent address that "In the end, there's got to be a guiding light in the way the world is managed and that guiding light just can't be about the bounty of the world resting with the foremost industrial nations and the rest running up the rear." Indeed, addressing the causes of terrorism is much more about how we envision the future of the globe. Hoodbhoy is correct in his observation that in addressing the fundamental causes of terrorism the US must "re-engage" with the world. I would add, however, that it is not just re-engagement, but also the manner in which it re-engages. The US must lead the way in reconsidering the way in which globalization is conducted - not whether globalization continues, but how it continues. In addressing globalization one gets closer to the root causes of terrorism. As Keating observed, "The answer [to conflict] has to be to make this world better by dealing with these problems at source." There is no doubt, for example, that rates of poverty have declined in many states where globalization has taken root (Indonesia for example), but one must wonder at the political and social costs of one-size-fits-all approaches to globalization. There is an alienating aspect to globalization that must be taken into account.

By addressing the root causes of terrorism, the post industrial world can better insulate itself against attack.

III. Comments by by Laurent Murawiec

Saddam Hussein orders the gassing of the Kurdish town of Halabja; thousands are killed; when the Republican Guard puts down the Shiite insurrection in the South of the country in 1991, dozens of thousands are slaughtered;

Hafez al-Assad orders the razing to the ground, by means of artillery and aerial bombing, of the city of Homs, the center of which had been taken over by the Syrian branch of the Moslem Brotherhood: an estimated 30,000 dead;

Elie Hobeika, head of a Christian-Arab Lebanese militia, orders the murder of 1,500 Moslems in two refugee camps in Beirut, Sabra and Shatila; he later becomes a government minister of Lebannon, under Syrian supervision. (This in the framework of 15 years of civil war with uncounted victims and hard to believe displays of cruelty);

Iraq invades Kuwait, and indiscriminately slaughters the locals; its leader invades Iran, and sets off a war that costs hundreds of thousands of Iraqi lives, and as many Iranian lives;

Iran's ayatollahs send dozens of thousands of boys to a giant massacre in the war against Iraq;

The Sudanese government (Arab-Moslem) routinely massacres and enslaves the Black Southerners, animists and Christians.

Etc.

But hear:

"Only a fool can believe that the services of a suicidal terrorist can be purchased, or that they can be bred at will anywhere. Instead, their breeding grounds are in a global superpower, indifferent to their plight, and manifestly on the side of their tormentors, has bred boundless hatred for its policies. In supreme arrogance, indifferent to world opinion, the US openly sanctions daily dispossession and torture of the Palestinians by Israeli occupation forces. The deafening silence over

the massacres in Qana, Sabra, and Shatila refugee camps, and the video-gamed slaughter by the Pentagon of 70,000 people in Iraq, has brought out the worst that humans are capable of. In the words of Robert Fisk, 'those who claim to represent a crushed, humiliated population struck back with the wickedness and awesome cruelty of a doomed people,' Prof. Pervez Hoodbhoy tells us.

Hear, ye all! It's "the Pentagon"! It's Israel! "refugee camps and in other rubbish dumps of humanity, abandoned by civilization and left to rot."

By whom? By Arab countries that always had an interest in and made a policy out of keeping Palestinian refugees in camps, perhaps (where they were succored by mostly Western money, via UNWRRA). Incidentally, do I remember properly that ALL Arab governments (there was no Palestine of course) rejected the original UN resolution mandating the partition of the British Mandatory Palestine--the only Palestine with any historical existence, if you please? Do I remember equally that part of the exodus of Arabs from said Palestine was encouraged by their leaders? Do I remember "Black September" well, when the king of Jordan, in order to save his Kingdom from an attempted PLO takeover, had to send his Army against them--several dozen thousand dead. I think I remember--do you?- -that several hundred thousand Jews were expelled from THEIR ancestral homelands, from Iraq (150,000 of them) to Yemen, by Arab governments, who stole their assets in the process, in 1948? They were integrated into Israel. Why could the Arab refugees not be in Arab countries? (Note that a very large part of the 1948 Arab population were very recent immigrants, from Syria, Lebanon, and even Bosnia!)

"The "video-game slaughter by the Pentagon of 70,000 people in Iraq"? Please, sir, please! Did Iraq invade Kuwait?

How about: these people are rotting because of their despotic, thieving, tyrannical, torturing, murderous governments? They are rotting because of the Arab-Moslem world's thoroughgoing rejection of the economic, social, cultural ways of lifting them out of misery? How about: how convenient it is to keep the populace mobilized (brainwashed) around the Palestinian question so as to avoid all the rest, and divert their attention?

For those imbued with a sense of justice--why not go after the Arab (or Moslem) governments who commit the crimes listed above? Oh! But that's just Arabs killing Arabs, isn't it? It's all so normal, usual, routine, no reason to worry, no cause to denounce. It's when the Faranji, the "Crusaders," "the Jews" do it, that righteous indignation is aroused. Where are ye, proud combatants for justice and truth, where were you?

Ah! But there are other agendas lurking behind the grand moralizing: "stop trying to force a new Cold War by pushing through NMD, pay its UN dues, and cease the aggrandizement of wealth in the name of globalization." Read, good old anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist rhetoric. American anti-missile defense, the cause of terrorism. Gee, that's a new one. The root cause of terrorism is the greed of American capitalists and their thirst for power. Thanks for letting us know. So, in short, while the crime of the World Trade Center is abominable, atrocious, terrible, to be condemned, etc. (gush of emotions, fountains of sentimentality), there are reasons, well not to that particular crime, but to, well, perhaps not terrorism as such, but, well ... there are reasons. There are good reasons. And if the victim--the United States--did not behave the way it does, then it would not feed the grievances.... Oh! Rhetoric! Oh! Ideology! Oh! Sanctimonious self- righteousness!

How about: the Moslem world needs a Renaissance, a Reformation, an Enlightenment all wrapped in one? How about: since the end of ijtihad in the 11th century, an intellectual, scientific, cultural and social decline has benumbed and stultified the Moslem world, with frightful consequences, in particular an inability fully to participate in the world of science, technology, industry, and the

persistence of archaic, dysfunctional forms of governance which make torture, killing, arbitrary and capricious rule, patrimonial appropriation of the State by tribes and clans, the norm in the Arab and in the Moslem world?

Before posing forever as the aggrieved victim, what about looking at oneself? In order to evade the paranoid world-outlook of the Great Conspiracy by America the Great Satan, the tempter forever trying to "subvert" innocent Moslems, how about some hard questions to oneself? What have we done (if I may be allowed to utter a proposopeia on behalf Arabs and Moslems) that we are so backward? So crassly indifferent to the suffering we inflict, or is inflicted in our name? Why are our cultures so brutal, so cruel, so reckless in their disregard for the life and well-being of people, our own included? Why do we remain silent when our people (part of the Ummah) commit horrors?

Please, answer. Not to me - to yourself, to yourselves.

IV. Comments by Daniel Zbytek

I think Mr.Pervez Hoodbhoy view from Islamabad is close to the approach, which we as human beings in the 21st century should adopt to secure our global peace and development.

Firstly, citizens of the North are obliged to rethink their approach to the South. People of Europe and North America all the time are making one important mistake. We are looking from the point of view of our society and not the societies that have produced terrorist organizations, breeding them and supporting them morally. For these societies, contact with us is very painful. We are proud of our achievements, of our technology, of our liberties. For the feudal societies of Afghanistan, Arab countries, it means, that their way of life is to be destroyed.

Look at Afghanistan, the country most affected. In the past they had a king and bosses of different tribes commonly agreeing by consensus. It was a stable society, backward in our understanding but in which each man's and woman's position was clearly defined. In the seventies, their country became a battlefield of strange powers. What has been offered for them by Russians and Americans? Weaponry, secret service operations - nothing else. We have destroyed their traditionally organized system without offering any replacement which they could understand. These people has been living in hostile natural environment--deserts and high mountains--having patriarchal families in which men have been masters of the outside world, and women masters at home. Rules have been known and accepted for centuries. These societies are not prepared for globalization, open civil societies achievement, equal rules for women, as we understand this and so on.

I think that it is now time to understand that we are unable to change them within one generation, offering them wealth and technology: even rich countries, like Saudi Arabia, mentally are still living according to other rules. It is in our interest to understand them and proceed in way that they will be able to understand us. This means we should react decisively to the terrorist attack - that is also understandable for our and their societies. But now when we are in the process of creating a global human society, we cannot use Third World countries as battlefields: economic or political.

Usually their territories are the margins of our activities, usually utilized by second grade entrepreneurs. But for them we are villains, destroyers of order. It is the most urgent time for our leaders--the group of G8 for example--to meet and decide about global policy, not globalization, which for the time being means only more freedom for the activities of multinational companies, and which in fact are responsible to a big extent for the actual situation. A New Deal is needed, on global scale.

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