

The India Terrorist Crisis

Muhammad Zafrullah at Pocatello

The India terrorist crisis, towards the end of November 2008, has been, to say the least, confusing . At the very start there were ten men who, alighted from rubber dinghies, fanned out into Bombay (now called Mumbai) and started carnage at different locations. Two hotels got a couple each, there was a railway station that got some, a certain financial center got some and Chabad House, a sort of Jewish center got a couple. There were reports that a couple got arrested.

Then there were reports that Israeli commandos were on their way to see if they could secure the release of hostages, at Chabad House, from the clutches of two terrorists. Then we heard that the Indian commandos took it on themselves to do what the Israelis had threatened to do. Then we heard that alas the Indian commandos could not secure the release of a single hostage alive and that everyone died in the operation, except for the Indian commandos of course.

Now we hear that the terrorists had actually sailed using a hijacked trawler, that nine of the terrorists had perished in the operation and one had survived to tell the story that he belonged to Lashkar-e-Taiba, a terrorist organization with roots in Pakistan part of Kashmir. (I think, Pakistan Government has long banned this organization in Pakistan.)

Now I do not care how many mad dogs went to Bombay, from Pakistan, to kill and be killed, if any. What worries me is why did the Indian commandos not wait for the Israeli commandos who have a lot of experience in this area? It took another few hours to rid the Taj Mahal Hotel of the terrorists; they could have waited for the Israelis. Were they afraid that if released alive the hostages might tell a different story?

The other problem that I have is how a hijacked trawler sneaked past the Indian navy? Let me mention that the Indian Navy is so active that it captures, every year, thousands of Pakistani fishermen who blunder into disputed waters. Let me also mention that the Indian Navy is a more than well-endowed Navy in that region, complete with surveillance air craft and helicopters. Then the trawler had to sneak past the well defended Bombay oilfields to get to Bombay. If it all happened the way the Indians would have us believe then the whole Indian Navy took a nap to let it happen.

I am usually not this skeptical, but India has played tricks, on Pakistan, several times before. Recently, there was an "attack" on Indian Parliament. The very resourceful terrorists sneaked past security and tried to "destroy" the Indian Parliament and died at the hands of the very efficient security forces, without even a single minister getting hurt, the same security forces that could not take care of a small number of miscreants in Bombay. The world never got to see the faces and never got to know the identities of the Parliament assailants.

The one trick that I remember as if it happened yesterday was the staged hijacking of an Indian plane Ganga in January 1971. The plane was hijacked by some so called Kashmiri freedom fighters at a time when Pakistan was in turmoil. Mujeebur Rahman in the then East Pakistan and Z.A. Bhutto in West

Pakistan were creating all sorts of problems for the then Military Rulers of Pakistan. Thanks to Mr. Bhutto, the initially skeptic Pakistanis gave a heroes' welcome to the miscreants, who later turned out to be linked to Indian secret service! This, sort of, became clear when India banned its airspace for PIA the Pakistani airlines and Shaikh Abdullah a veteran Kashmiri leader decided to work with the Indian government.

I was in Pakistan at that time, getting ready to leave for Britain for higher studies. PIA's flights to "East Pakistan" had to be rerouted via Sri Lanka, but that was not what split Pakistan into two. It was the folly of the then military rulers who forgot the simple fact that East Pakistan could best be defended from the eastern border of West Pakistan and started dumping their "military might" in East Pakistan. Sadly, when I realized that this was a folly it was already August of that year and in any case I could not do a thing. I left Pakistan in October and heard the news of the fall of Dhaka in London.

As a result of that coup, India became the policeman of the Indian subcontinent and Pakistan became a minor player. Later of course a universal wave of anti-Muslim sentiment, often fanned by India, pushed Pakistan further back. Pakistan's rulers tried to regain the trust by helping out in Afghanistan in the United States' proxy war against the USSR, but to no avail.

The US politicians took the credit saying that the fall of the Berlin Wall was proof positive that the Capitalist system was better than Communism, but those who played a significant role in bringing about this change were pushed aside. I think around that point Muslims in general started thinking that whatever they do, they cannot win the friendship of the non-Muslim, especially the Christian, world. When this happens religious minded people look inward.

The Muslims looking inward meant looking toward the available religious leadership and the popular religious leaders came back with some twisted notions of regaining power in the world with war. So that is what some of them are doing, and possibly 9/11 was a result of that. Now India wants to use this wave of "Islamic terrorism" against Pakistan with reference to the Bombay Incident. The trouble is that if we follow the path laid out by India for us we would end up further alienating a major chunk of the world population, the ordinary peaceful Muslims.

I suggest that we look into this matter with compassion for both sides. On the one hand we must ask Pakistan to rein in the elements that want to wage war without any thought of the consequences. On the other hand we should make sure that India has proof behind its allegations that the terrorists came from Pakistan. For that it seems imperative that India should hand over the remains of the "terrorists" to a world body for forensic studies in order to establish their identities and their nationalities. If any or all of them are Pakistanis then knowledge of their identities will help Pakistani law enforcement agencies in arresting their cohorts.

While compassion for India is overwhelmingly evident the compassion for Pakistan is a somewhat alien concept. So, let me make a case for that. Right from the start (1947) Pakistan has been struggling with its Kashmir problem. India was divided into three chunks based on the predominant religion in those chunks but predominantly Muslim Kashmir was excluded from that rule. The resulting resentment on this has caused several wars between India and Pakistan.

On the other hand India has used force to subdue Kashmiris into accepting the biggest injustice perpetrated by the British. This caused Kashmiri refugees and a lot of resentment in Pakistan. This resentment coupled with India's move to strangle Pakistan's agriculture by building dams on the rivers that flow into Pakistan. Sadly Pakistan's complaints were never heard. Now historically, when Hitler felt boxed in, he started preparing for a major war. When he did prepare no one thought he was capable of pulling something like that off. Now a major ground for compassion for Pakistan is that it has not prepared for any war in spite of pressure from Al-Qaeda.

Another ground for compassion for Pakistan is indirect and may well be linked to the future of the world. Islam is the religion of a major chunk of the world population. Of course whatever views a non-Muslim may have about Islam, the Muslims see it as the Religion, and if Islam is badmouthed their resentment is natural. Let me put it this way; they are not sufficiently advanced yet to be able to laugh at their religion. Besides if Muslims have grievances such as Palestine, Kashmir and Iraq then any criticism of Islam will be regarded as a hostile act.

We should try to rein in the general belief that (the actual) Islam teaches cruelty to non-Muslims. Let me put it this way, if Islam were the kind of "kill all" religion that some elements try to paint it to be, including some Mullahs, then there would be no India Pakistan problem today. For during their thousand year rule over the Indian subcontinent, Muslims would have killed all the Hindus. So, it does not behoove an Indian to call Islam a killers' religion. Aside from India there are many more examples of places where Muslims ruled and where they now live as minorities. So curbing hostility towards Islam through education would be a positive step towards World Peace.

There is the pertinent question, "Why should we defend Islam?" Well, sentiment against Islam is a problem we created; hoping that perhaps this way the world would give us the mandate to capture the oil-fields in Muslim countries. Our recent misadventure in Iraq proves that we do not have that mandate and so we must clear the mess that is clearly our doing.

Of course we must respect India for being a large Democracy but we must also keep in mind that India is a twenty six state country with twenty one ongoing insurgencies. The ruling class in India must be doing something to aggravate the situation. What they are doing there, could have consequences for neighboring countries such as Pakistan. Plainly, it is not inconceivable that some Kashmiri freedom-fighters are holed up in Pakistan. So perhaps it would do the world a lot of good if we can somehow solve the Kashmir problem. It has dragged on for such a long time that it can be blamed for a lot of ills of both of these countries. How about creating an Independent state of Kashmir? A lot of friction between India and Pakistan would just evaporate, hopefully.

About the Bombay massacre, my heart goes out to the victims. Natural disasters and natural death are enough to poke holes in the fabric of our lives, violent deaths at the hands of some terrorists or some misinformed and misled jihadists is the last thing we want. But there is a natural rule governing behaviors in human as well as animal dealings. That is when two parties cannot reconcile their differences at least one of them resorts to violence. Let us hope that we humans separate ourselves from animals by finding a way of reconciling our differences amicably.